The Politics of Expertise in Cultural Labour

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Abstract

What is expertise? In cultural work, the idea of expertise is commonly associated with a specialised knowledge of cultural forms and products, often possessed by art critics, dealers and cultural intermediaries. In the majority of literature on cultural work, the status of these 'experts' is mostly treated as normative and accepted as legitimate, with little attention paid to the expertise of the primary producers of the cultural forms which are judged. This thesis argues that expertise as a concept is taken for granted in cultural work scholarship, and thus requires further interrogation. The particular focus here is on the social media use of cultural workers to promote themselves, their aesthetic output and availability for work. As argued here, the status of their expertise is problematised in an ostensibly accessible and democratised space where 'anyone' can engage in cultural production. In this context, how do cultural workers signal their aesthetic expertise online?

Signalling involves conveying information about one's credentials. This concept is utilised in a framework to analyse the social media output of a group of UK cultural workers, who were also interviewed, in order to gain insight into their aesthetic expertise and how they manage signalling expertise online as part of cultural labour. The research reveals the expertise of cultural producers to be of a dynamic and fluid quality, worked on over the course of a cultural work career, where opportunities to build expertise can be constrained or enabled depending on access to resources. As these cases suggest, aesthetic expertise can be staged on social media by revealing creative skills and methods - the 'back stage' of production, then potentially enhanced through audience interaction, which can also put expertise signals at risk. The analysis also reveals gendered strategies for signalling expertise

undertaken by the women cultural workers, to facilitate a potential collective raising of visibility online, but also raising questions about the exclusivity of such collective activity.

The research concludes by suggesting ways in which cultural policy could widen access to creative skills and training, so that anyone who wishes to develop their own aesthetic expertise can do so.

Contents

Acknowledgements

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Many of the opportunities undertaken during this PhD would not be possible without the support of the AHRC and the Midlands 3 Cities Doctoral Training Partnership. The past three years have undoubtedly been the most rewarding, challenging, fulfilling, stimulating and enjoyable of my life, and that is due not only to the tremendous supervision I have had, but also the opportunities afforded to me through Midlands 3 Cities support. I would particularly like to thank Sharon Montieth, Susanna Ison and Claire Thompson from Midlands 3 Cities, and the BCU-based

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Preface

At times throughout this thesis I will reference my own position as a social media practitioner. It is necessary first then to provide an overview of my professional background, as it undoubtedly informed my approach. During the process of this PhD I had the opportunity to work part-time at Birmingham City University as a social media officer, helping to promote the University's research externally. The role helped me to build my knowledge of social media, keep up with the latest developments in social media and tap in to creative networks in Birmingham and beyond which were invaluable for the research experience. My approach to the research and the interviews were informed by my position as a social media practitioner, and the process enabled me to think about my own expertise.

The work experience was only one enhancing aspect of the myriad of opportunities I took advantage of during the thesis, thanks to the AHRC's Midlands 3 Cities Doctoral Training Partnership. The funding and support available enabled me to present at conferences around the world, and conferencing was not only crucial for getting my research 'out there', but for the chance to discuss it with esteemed colleagues and peers. In two cases conferencing has led to opportunities to publish during the course of this thesis, which were valuable experiences in themselves for helping me to develop the ideas in my PhD. First, my participation in a conference on collaboration in the creative industries at the University of Middlesex in 2015 led to an opportunity to contribute a chapter to an edited collection by Alessandro Gandini and James Graham (Patel, 2017, copy in Appendix 6). This was my first publishing experience and helped me get to grips with the process. Because I wrote it relatively early on in the PhD during the beginning of my second year, it served as a starting

point for developing chapters in the thesis. Within that published chapter are the first iterations of the signalling expertise framework developed in this thesis, and my take on the concept of 'mutual aid' which will appear in Chapter 6.

The second publishing opportunity which occurred through conferencing was a co-written book chapter with Dan Ashton of the University of Winchester (Ashton and Patel, 2017, copy in Appendix 7) on vlogging labour, in an edited collection by Stephanie Taylor and Susan Luckman on 'the new normal' of cultural work. Working with Dan was thoroughly enjoyable and I learned a great deal from him about how to properly structure a chapter and put forward arguments convincingly. I learned even more about co-writing and how to make work by two authors appear a coherent whole. This can also be said of the third publishing opportunity undertaken during this PhD, with Annette Naudin (Naudin and Patel, forthcoming, copy in Appendix 8) on women entrepreneurs on social media. Annette's knowledge of the literature and issues around gender and feminism were valuable for not only the development of that paper, but in my consideration of gender in this thesis. In both co-written papers, I have used my adaptation of the signalling expertise framework in different contexts, which demonstrates how the framework has made an important contribution outside of this thesis to both social media methodology and knowledge of how we can study expertise.

I completed my MA with the School of Media at Birmingham City University in 2010, directly after I completed my degree in journalism in the same school. Within that MA (in Media and Creative Enterprise) was a cultural policy module (taught by my director of studies for this PhD Paul Long) which sparked my interest in creative industries and cultural policy research. Even though after the MA I went on to work in social media for various companies, I still maintained an interest in cultural research

and hoped there would be an opportunity for me to revisit it. That opportunity came when I earned a Midlands 3 Cities scholarship and I was able to combine my interests in social media and cultural labour. I did not know why more work was not done about social media and expertise in cultural work, and so the PhD was an opportunity to address these oversights. What results is this thesis, which is a unique insight into the nature of expertise in cultural work - the politics of expertise in cultural labour.

Introduction

What does expertise mean in cultural work? This research was formulated as an attempt to address this question. Over the course of the research I discovered its increasing pertinence to contemporary issues. I realised that whenever 'experts' were discussed in popular and academic discourse, their status as experts was often assumed. This was particularly the case during the EU referendum in the UK and the election of Donald Trump as US President in 2016, when the advice of experts was routinely dismissed by certain politicians (Mance, 2016). In cultural labour literature I found that experts were discussed in normative terms; certain groups of cultural workers, such as art critics and dealers were assumed to be expert. But how did they come to be regarded as experts? What is an expert in cultural work? Cultural work is defined here as involving the "activities of artistic, creative or aesthetic production that take place within the cultural industries" (Banks, 2017:10) and the 19 UK cultural workers featured in this research are involved in a variety of such activities including visual art, writing, craft and composition. All do, or at least aspire to, make a living out of cultural work; and the specific act of creation and its experience is referred to as cultural labour in this context. The participants in this research all use social media to promote themselves and their work online, and by social media I mean websites or applications such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

As the research progressed I came to an understanding of expertise specific to cultural work, which I label as aesthetic expertise. I found that the expertise of the cultural workers who produce the *primary* cultural objects, was by and large not acknowledged in literature on cultural work. Aesthetic expertise was often discussed in relation to the expertise in *judgement,* such as that of critics and dealers (Bourdieu, 1996). What of the expertise in creation of cultural objects? Drawing on

various literature and ideas about expertise from cultural work scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu (1996) Howard Becker (2008), Science and Technology Studies work by Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus (1986) and work on aesthetics by Martha Woodmansee (1994) among others, I came to an understanding of aesthetic expertise. In this thesis, aesthetic expertise involves a knowledge of aesthetic codes and classifications, and skill in mastering the tools and techniques to produce a work of aesthetic value that is recognised and legitimated as such.

The aim of this thesis is to bring expertise into focus as a concept worthy of attention generally and within the specific focus of cultural work. To do this I show how cultural workers signal aesthetic expertise on social media, to reveal the character of expertise in contemporary cultural work and the implications of the act of signalling for cultural labour. I argue that it is important to interrogate expertise in cultural work because expertise is related to power, and reproduces social relations which could potentially restrict and exclude others. The character of expertise in cultural work, including the aesthetic expertise of cultural producers, tells us something about the unequal and exclusive nature of cultural work (Banks, 2017) which is reinforced through social relations that constrain or enable opportunities for individuals to develop and signal expertise. The accumulation and circulation of expertise in cultural work, as shown by the cases in this thesis, suggests how certain groups are able to forge and maintain a creative career, at the expense of others in less privileged positions.

By signalling expertise, I mean the process of communicating signals which include "activities that showcase one's Identity through prior projects […] competencies in skills and genres […] and relationships" (Jones, 2002:209). The concept of signalling expertise as developed by Candace Jones (2002) is an

important one for this research because it considers the various ways in which expertise is communicated, and I adapt Jones' signalling expertise framework to analyse how expertise is signalled by cultural workers on social media platforms (see also Patel, 2017). The framework considers the individual context of the person posting on social media, the content of social media posts which help to signal expertise, such as aesthetic style of the posts, exhibiting requisite skills and showcasing relevant relationships, and the strategies employed to signal expertise on social media including status enhancement, types of relationships pursued, and impression management. Throughout the thesis I demonstrate the usefulness of this framework as a methodological tool for qualitative analysis of expertise on social media. I also show the value of combining social media analysis with interviews. By getting to know the people behind the social media posts I provide important insights into the specific experience of cultural workers.

Social media platforms are ostensibly democratised spaces where seemingly 'anyone' can participate in the production of content and potentially make a career out of it. Indeed, some of the participants in this thesis have done exactly that. However, opportunities to participate are not available for everyone and even for those who can, being able to develop and signal aesthetic expertise also appears to be a reserve of the relatively privileged. Cultural and digital work are becoming more central to the economy and policy in the UK: the Government's inclusion of 'Digital' in the new Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is testament to that. So it is important that *everyone* should be able to participate in this space if they want to.

Four major lines of argument are pursued throughout this thesis and form its contribution to knowledge:

1. We need to know more about the aesthetic expertise of cultural *producers* – those who produce the primary object which is judged by those who are assumed to be aesthetic experts, such as critics and dealers. Focusing on the expertise of cultural producers adds to our understanding of the contemporary character of expertise in cultural work as a form of power, which potentially excludes and restricts others who are less privileged and contributes to the unequal nature of cultural work.

2. An individual's ability to develop and signal aesthetic expertise is bound up in access to resources - or capital, to use Bourdieu's (2011[1986) term. Access to capital determines the power relations of expertise in cultural work, and opportunities for people to develop and signal aesthetic expertise.

3. When aesthetic expertise is signalled on social media, it is *mediated* by the platform and the interactions of others. Such mediation contributes to the dynamism of expertise in contemporary cultural work. A consideration of how aesthetic expertise is mediated also adds to our understanding of the cultural *object* as a practice and social relation (Born, 2010).

4. Social media platforms create possibilities for expertise to be signalled, but they also present reputational risks. Cultural workers must carefully manage their relationship with the audience in order to maintain and enhance their reputation. For instance, for women artists, online spaces are particularly volatile, and the creation of relatively 'safe' online spaces to share work and signal expertise is a significant aspect of cultural labour for some in this research.

These arguments are dealt with at different points in the chapters which follow, and it is necessary to outline where and how in this thesis.

The structure of this thesis

The first chapter of the thesis provides a conceptual and contextual background to the research, organised around the four lines of argument described above. First I discuss what expertise is and what it means, drawing from literature in STS and the arts to illustrate different conceptions of expertise across disciplines, which enabled me to come to a general understanding of what expertise is, which I draw from Fleck as having "something to do with knowledge of some sort, coupled with a facility for deploying and exploiting that knowledge - that is, some sort of skill or competence" (1998:145) as well as being related to power. I then briefly discuss different forms of expertise which are required by the cultural workers in this thesis, such as social media expertise and entrepreneurial expertise. This is followed by an explication of how I came to my understanding of aesthetic expertise, drawing from literature in aesthetics and art to show how it is not necessarily all about taste and judgement, though that is important. Aesthetic expertise can also involve practical skill and mastery in creation. However, opportunities to develop expertise are not equal, and the work of Pierre Bourdieu is useful for conceptualising this. His theories of cultural production, particularly the concepts of field and capital help to illustrate how social and cultural background and access to capital resources have some bearing on claims to expertise, suggesting that expertise tends to be associated with the privileged. In this respect, taste is pertinent to discussions of aesthetic expertise, as Bourdieu points out that legitimate taste or "the taste for legitimate works" (1984:16) is the taste of the privileged and educated, and reproduces what is or judged to be good art, by aesthetic experts in judgement.

Of increasing concern in cultural work scholarship is the industry's exclusive nature (Banks, 2017; Oakley and O'Brien, 2016; O'Brien, Allen, Friedman and Saha,

2017). It is argued in such work that the most successful cultural workers are the privileged, with certain credentials and dispositions (Banks, 2017), while the rest are resigned to working precariously. Neoliberal political regimes resulting in cuts to arts funding and state support exacerbate this situation (McRobbie, 2016). As already mentioned, social media platforms provide opportunities for seemingly anyone to create a presence online and potentially make a living from creative work. However, the democratising potential of social media is limited, not only because of inequalities in digital literacy and the fact that not everyone can use or access social media (Ragnedda, 2017), but because having the time and means to develop social media expertise is also not available to everyone. I finish Chapter 1 with a critique of existing literature which deals with the perceived benefits and risks of social media use for cultural workers.

How can we research expertise in cultural work? Candace Jones (2002) devised the signalling expertise framework to conceptualise expertise signalling in creative industry careers, however the framework itself has not been used as a means of empirical analysis. For this research I took an opportunity to extend and adapt the framework for the qualitative analysis of social media platforms. My development of the signalling expertise framework (see also Patel, 2017; Ashton and Patel, 2017) is one way to research online presentations of expertise, and I reflect on this methodology in Chapter 2. Much social media research misses the vital context of the individuals behind the posts, at the expense of a preoccupation with purely online analysis and an uncertainty about ethical issues. The chapter also provides a reflection on interviews for gaining the context needed for social media analysis and ethical challenges which could be addressed with a flexible approach.

The individual context of the cultural workers is further explored in Chapter 3, which examines how expertise develops throughout the artistic career. Though the majority of this thesis is about how expertise is signalled on social media, it is important to first acknowledge that there are people behind those expertise signals, with social backgrounds which have some bearing on their ability to develop expertise over the course of their careers. Each cultural worker is introduced with a discussion of their background and career trajectory, and are grouped in the discussion by their career stage and status in the field.

The cultural workers in this thesis do not all work in the same specialist sector; they are a mixture of visual artists, writers, craft workers and musicians, however Bourdieu's concept of field can help to illustrate how each worker's career has progressed within their particular area. Bourdieu (1993a) describes a field as a field of forces, within which agents struggle for position. The agents aim to move into positions within the field which would benefit them, and this involves some strategizing. The concept of capital refers to resources, and forms of capital in Bourdieu's reckoning (2011[1986]) include money (economic capital), social connections and networks (social capital) and education and upbringing (cultural capital). I suggest that in cultural work, aesthetic expertise is a form of embodied cultural capital, which when recognised as legitimate, functions as symbolic capital (honour and prestige) and can be synonymous with an authoritative position in the field. The cultural workers with a certain degree of aesthetic expertise are also more confident in signalling that expertise on social media platforms, using the affordances of platforms to enhance their expertise signalling. The use of social media in this way raises questions about how social media expertise can implicate the online signalling of aesthetic expertise.

When aspects of personal life are also intertwined with expertise signals on social media, it presents a set of challenges which cultural workers must negotiate, particularly in managing their relationship with an 'imagined audience' (Marwick and boyd, 2010). The cultural workers in this research approach this in different ways – ranging from very regular, seemingly 'random' posts to communicate aspects of their personality, to a standardised, 'professional' output which contains almost no aspects of their personality or their personal lives – all contributing towards their online construction of 'being' a cultural worker. For effectively signalling aesthetic expertise on social media, revealing more about one's life and work process can be valuable but also challenging, as I show in Chapter 4. Cultural workers in this research who are advanced in their careers seemed to be more confident in revealing aspects of their artistic process, which can be a convincing display of one's creative or artistic expertise, but also risks further scrutiny of their work and process by leaving it open for comments and criticism. It is up to the cultural worker to either embrace or withdraw from such opportunities, which those in this research did to varying degrees.

I utilise Erving Goffman's (1959) ideas of 'front stage' and 'back stage' and Hogan's (2010) metaphor of exhibitions to illustrate cultural workers' negotiation of personal and professional, home and work space, process and finished product when signalling expertise on social media. The work space can be an important element of the cultural workers' online presence, and I found some gendered issues had arisen in this regard. The women cultural workers mostly worked from home, and the presence of their home working space on social media was sporadic at best. I link this to arguments around the studio as a traditional marker of professionalism, and the domestic space still as a feminised, 'amateur' domain (Bain, 2004). Even so,

some of the women cultural workers used their domestic status to communicate their tastes, and say something about themselves and their work online even in the absence of a tangible finished product for signalling.

The cultural workers in this research take time out of their daily practice to browse, update and reply to messages on social media, alongside and in addition to their creative practice. Scholarly work on digital labour points out that individual use of social media and the internet is a form of labour which generates value for corporations (Arvidsson and Colleoni, 2012). Other work highlights how social media users are increasingly tied in to using these platforms (Couldry and van Dijck, 2015). I acknowledge these are important concerns which should be taken into account in empirical work on social media use, and therefore be considered *as* cultural labour – i.e. the labour and experience of creating, and the ways in which this manifests is illustrated in Chapter 5. In particular, pressure plays a large role in how the cultural workers feel about their social media use – the pressure to 'presence' (Couldry, 2012) i.e. keep their online presence up to date, the pressure to be recognised on social media, and the pressure to have, or gain, social media expertise. A preoccupation with gaining followers and increasing engagement on social media adds pressure too and also raises questions about the value of cultural forms as presented on social media. At the same time, I contend that users are not duped in to using such platforms and in fact enjoy the possibility of forms of creative expression they enable, such as curating Instagram profiles to display tastes and inspiration from other sources. Furthermore, some of them owe their success to using social media to promote themselves and their work.

As the research progressed, gender emerged as a significant theme. This was initially prompted by one of the cultural workers in the research who attended a

talk about women printmakers, which highlighted how women used print in its early manifestations as a means to raise awareness of women's creative work. That conversation encouraged me to consider women artists and the issue of gender inequality in the art world; inequality which prevails today. While social media platforms offer a potential means for women artists to signal their aesthetic expertise and disseminate work on a wide scale, they are also volatile and women artists are generally more likely to experience online abuse than men (Michael, 2016). How do women cultural workers negotiate this and potentially create safe online spaces to signal expertise? Among the women in this research I found particularly collaborative forms of signalling expertise on social media which resonate with Howard Becker's (2008) account of the collaborative aspects of cultural work in *Art Worlds,* and furthermore, are particularly feminine. I demonstrate how social media platforms provide positive opportunities for women cultural workers to connect with others and raise their visibility online. There remain reputational risks in such strategies, particularly for those who choose to express their emotions and self-disclose on social media. Some strategies could also exclude and cause potential divisions between women, such as the online sharing of certain privileged tastes in the form of familiar 'bonding' icons, which are not accessible to everyone.

The conclusion outlines what this research means for how we understand expertise not only in cultural work, but in wider society, where expertise in any form tends to be associated with privilege and power. I argue that opportunities to develop aesthetic expertise, whether it be to make a living or simply to flourish through creative expression, need to be widely available regardless of access to resources. I provide some recommendations for widening access to cultural participation and

skills development, so that people who want to develop aesthetic expertise and digital literacy can.

This research is only a starting point in what should be a broader interrogation of expertise, and I finish with recommendations for further work.

Chapter 1: Contextualising expertise in cultural work

What is expertise?

How has expertise been defined and conceptualised? The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the literature which has contributed to my understanding of expertise in cultural work, which I refer to as aesthetic expertise. As indicated in the Introduction, the term expertise is, by and large, treated as normative in literature on cultural work, with little interrogation of what expertise is. It is worth exploring in the first instance then, what others have said about expertise, which is the focus of this section. This is followed by a discussion of the literature context within which this research sits, with particular attention paid to the areas it problematises. The literature discussion is structured around four major themes to which this thesis contributes: perceptions of expertise in cultural work; the politics of expertise in cultural work; the mediation of expertise; and social media and reputation for cultural workers.

My own understanding of aesthetic expertise involves knowledge of aesthetic and cultural codes, and appropriation of that knowledge to create a work of aesthetic value, which is recognised and legitimated as such. I will now outline various ways in which expertise has been conceptualised in scholarship, which informed how I came to this understanding. Existing definitions of expertise are disparate and inconsistent so it makes sense first to pin down what is actually meant when we discuss expertise.

Some conceptual disparities in scholarship are outlined by Williams, Faulkner and Fleck (1998), who note how certain understandings of expertise are associated with the cognitive acquisition of knowledge. This is an individualist perspective, where expertise is said to consist of 'the knowledge in people's heads' (Shadbolt,

1998) developed with little or no input from other people. Such a perspective overlooks the role of peer judgement, recognition, training and cooperation in the development and application of expertise (Addis, 2013). Williams et al (1998) note at the other end of the scale, expertise is seen as a purely social construction, or a constructivist position, where expertise is "shaped by the external context of the would-be 'expert' rather than by any intrinsic qualities" (1998:14), thus overlooking the individual effort it takes to develop expertise.

Williams, Faulkner and Fleck's reference point for these opposing positions of expertise is scientific scholarship, particularly Science and Technology Studies (STS), which is concerned with the sociology of science. STS scholars such as Latour and Woolgar (1986) problematised the authority of scientific experts and sought to debunk common conceptions of the all-knowledgeable 'expert' figure. Scholarship in STS acknowledges the historical, cultural and material conditions of science, which both produce and describe our reality. This approach is demonstrated in Latour and Woolgar's influential study of a laboratory environment, documenting the myriad of practices between agents, material objects and physical surroundings. Their study suggests that scientific expertise is not an innate quality of one authoritative figure, but produced through practices.

The STS approach exemplified by Latour and Woolgar lies somewhere in between the individual and constructivist positions on expertise, because it describes how knowledge is created in social practice, and practices include individuals, architectures and objects, all of which have agency - or the ability to act. While useful for its acknowledgement of individual action and material objects in practice and use, the approach by Latour and Woolgar does not account for power relations and societal inequalities. I argue that social background and conditions have some

bearing on individuals' ability to gain, develop and make claims to expertise. This is where the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1996) is of use, to which I return later in this chapter.

Another conception of expertise is the phenomenological approach of Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus (1986), who proposed that expertise is grounded in individual bodily experiences and activities, otherwise known as 'expertise-in-context'. They understood expertise as pervading everyday tasks such as cooking, cleaning and driving. Dreyfus and Dreyfus perceived these forms of expertise – what could be understood as everyday expertise - as embodied and second nature to people, once mastered. Their 'expertise-in-context' approach consists of a spectrum from novice to expert: Novice, Advanced Beginner, Competence, Proficiency and Expertise. One moves along the spectrum by acquiring skills and knowledge through practice, and when they become 'expert' at something, it is evident in a fluid and embodied performance, where the expert is able to respond quickly and intuitively to a variety of problems. These everyday experts 'know how' rather than 'know what' (Ryle, 1984), or in other words, expertise is primarily about knowing how to do something, which is common in most conceptions of expertise I discuss in this chapter and informs my own understanding.

Selinger and Crease (2006) criticise this phenomenological model, arguing that it equates all forms of practical expertise, with no regard for the value socially attributed to it. This is an important point, particularly as scientific expertise has been regarded as the ultimate authority on various issues (Williams et al, 1998; Wynne, 1991). This is because scientific expertise has long been associated with ideas of power over others, as demonstrated in Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* (1988). Foucault described how doctors in mental asylums were

assumed to be in power over the patient due to their position as a doctor, regardless of any competence or knowledge they may or may not have. He calls this the "medical personage" (or personality) with "powers borrowed from science only in their disguise" (1988:258). Foucault suggests that science as a field is powerful, and thus has legitimacy because its authority is widely accepted. Because of the authority of science, "people often have no choice but to consult 'experts'" (Code, 1991:182) especially in relation to medical matters. Williams, Faulkner and Fleck (1998) point out that the years of training and qualifications undertaken by doctors gives them an 'expert' status and authority which we are expected to rely on.

Despite its perceived power and authority, the legitimacy of scientific expertise has been under question by the public for decades. This is argued to stem from high profile scientific misjudgements and mistakes during the 1980s and early 90s such as the Chernobyl disaster and the BSE/mad cow disease epidemic in the UK (Wynne, 1991). Yet the fact that scientific expertise continues to be routinely challenged and dismissed publically by politicians such as Donald Trump reaffirms the field of science as the authoritative field of expertise, above, say, aesthetic expertise. In this sense, it is worth remembering there is a hierarchy of expertise in society, which the Dreyfus and Dreyfus model of 'expertise-in-context' obscures. Their approach remains useful however for acknowledging individual agency in working on expertise in a practical sense.

Fleck (1998) provides a useful general understanding of expertise which considers both individual agency and social influences, as well as power relations:

"On the one hand it clearly has something to do with knowledge of some sort, coupled with a facility for deploying and exploiting that knowledge -

that is, some sort of skill or competence. However, there is also an element

of power involved. This enables certain practitioners, rather than others, to

defend a claim to particular forms of expertise."

Fleck (1998:145)

This conception of expertise is not fixed; it appreciates that knowledge is involved,

deployed through practical skill, which is pertinent to ideas of aesthetic expertise in

creative work.

Fleck also acknowledges competence as a part of expertise. Competence is

being able to exhibit "requisite skills" (Jones, 2002:213) in one's occupation, a part of

the signalling expertise framework by Candace Jones (2002) which I develop as a

method for analysing expertise on social media, discussed in much greater depth in

Chapter 2. According to Jones, signalling is conveying information to others, and

examples of signals include education, experience and appearance. Jones argues

that signals are multidimensional, "for example, education conveys information about

status by the institution attended, personal interest by the major chosen, and

intelligence by the ranking achieved" (2002:210). The context in which signals are

used are important for deciphering their meaning and thus their applicability and

value in that particular context.

Jones' signalling expertise framework is partly based on a set of

competencies for expert performance identified by DeFillipi and Arthur (1994). Their

competencies are based on knowledge – *know-why, know-how* and *know-whom.*

Know-why competencies "answer the question 'why?' as it relates to career

motivation, personal meaning and identification" (1994:308). To use the example of

this research, why is someone an artist? What is their story and background, which

led them to being an artist? Being able to exhibit *why* one is doing what they do – the

back story – helps to formulate an identity, and according to Jones, signalling identity is a part of signalling expertise. Also a part of signalling expertise are *know-how* competencies which "reflect career relevant skills and job-related knowledge" (DeFillipi and Arthur, 1994:309) and are related to what one can actually do and the skills they have. Finally there are *know-whom* competencies which "reflect career-relevant networks" (ibid.). Drawing on DeFillippi and Arthur's competencies, Jones (2002) suggests that being able to convey one's identity, career relevant relationships and skills are fundamental to signalling expertise. She illustrates this in her analysis of the TV industry, however she applies her framework conceptually rather than empirically. I develop this framework to analyse how aesthetic expertise is signalled on social media platforms. The idea of competencies and how these are communicated to signal expertise is useful for thinking about how individuals could do the same on social media. For cultural work, specific abilities and competencies are required in order to be considered an expert in this domain - an aesthetic expert. My research also suggests that additional forms of expertise are required for cultural workers.

Forms of expertise in this research

My understanding of aesthetic expertise in cultural work involves knowledge, skill and mastery in the production of the primary cultural products which are judged. Skill and mastery are also a feature of other occupations, such as sport or cooking. These occupations are argued by some to be cultural industries too (Mato, 2009). What is different about cultural work? A work of art or a cultural product is argued to possess "aesthetic, expressive or symbolic value" (Banks, 2017:10) which differentiates it from other products, according to David Hesmondhalgh (2013):

"There is something distinctive about that area of human creativity often called 'art'. The invention and/or performance of stories, songs, images, poems, jokes and so on, in no matter what technological form, involves a particular type of creativity - the manipulation of symbols for the purposes of entertainment, information and perhaps enlightenment."

Hesmondhalgh, (2013:6).

Here Hesmondhalgh draws attention to the *symbolic* function of cultural work which seems to differentiate it from other forms of production, and thus, I argue, require a specific type of expertise – aesthetic expertise. This aesthetic expertise is in the primary creation of a cultural product and not aesthetic judgement as it is commonly known, for example in Bourdieu (1996), and such assumptions will be questioned in the next section.

As well as aesthetic expertise, other forms of expertise could also be required by cultural workers using social media, as the participants in this research do. Bassett, Fotopolou and Howland (2015) point out:

"Today a politics of expertise pertaining to work spheres more obviously bleeds into other realms. This is so, at least, in relation to computational technologies and is thus relevant to forms of critical practice developed around questions of use and expertise."

Bassett, Fotopolou and Howland (2015:4)

In this quote the authors highlight how digital technologies could play a part in work-related expertise bleeding into other spheres, such as home life. I highlight this specifically in relation to the cultural workers in this research, whom I suggest require social media and entrepreneurial expertise in order to effectively signal their aesthetic

expertise on social media platforms. Furthermore, I argue that the use of social media is becoming a necessary element of cultural labour around which individual routines are shaped, for signalling expertise and selling work.

Menger (1999) identifies key similarities between self-employed artists and entrepreneurs, including:

"The capacity to create valued output through the production of works for sale, the motivation for deep commitment and high productivity associated with their occupational independence-control over their own work, a strong sense of personal achievement through the production of tangible outputs, the ability to set their own pace, but also a high degree of risk-taking, as shown by the highly skewed distribution and high variability of earnings, as well as the low amount of time allocated on average to their primary creative activity"

Menger (1999:552)

In this sense, the expertise for cultural workers in this thesis involves maintaining the balance between their 'primary creative activity' – or mastering their aesthetic expertise - and other aspects of entrepreneurialism. The demanding requirements to self-manage, self-market and be highly productive as Menger describes requires some practice and mastery in itself, so with this in mind I understand entrepreneurial expertise as skill and knowledge in entrepreneurial activities, which are effectively managed alongside the primary creative activity.

An understanding of social media expertise could be gleaned from my own experience as a social media practitioner, or 'expert'. I could reel off a list of conventions - things to do and not do on social media in order to gain recognition and

maximise engagement. However a more succinct way of putting it is again related to knowledge and skill, but this time in the mastery of the use of platforms, which I characterise as 'signalling as expertise', elaborated from Candace Jones' (2002) framework. Signalling as expertise is being able to signal expertise effectively, in the case of this thesis, on social media platforms. So in the context of cultural work, social media expertise is defined as mastering the knowledge and skills for signalling *as* expertise, and effectively managing this alongside aesthetic and entrepreneurial activities, for the benefit of an online presence.

The understandings of aesthetic, social media and entrepreneurial expertise I have outlined in this section are not intended to be fixed or standard definitions. They are based on my appraisal of the literature on expertise and my own empirical understandings in this thesis which will be elaborated throughout. Expertise cannot be generalised as a fixed entity which is possessed or not possessed; it is worked on, gained, signalled and mediated, and in this mediation, the signal can change, be enhanced or potentially be damaged. It was important to state at the outset my primary understandings of expertise to ground the remainder of the discussion in this chapter. Next, I focus on aesthetic expertise in cultural work, including its origins and normative perceptions which are challenged in this research.

Perceptions of expertise in cultural work

I described in the Introduction to this thesis how the idea of aesthetic expertise is commonly associated with the judgement of aesthetic work, and somewhat linked to this is the notion that artists are geniuses, bestowed with special creative gifts, enabling them to create extraordinary work to be judged by the aesthetic experts. These understandings - of expertise in judgement as learned, and genius as an innate gift, have some roots in the work of scholars such as Immanuel Kant, who is

one of the most influential writers on aesthetics. In *The Critique of Judgement* (1790) Kant argued that the judgement of art is an individual, subjective experience based on how a work of art makes a person feel. He believed that humans can enjoy art purely for its beauty without any need to find a use for it – or what he called 'disinterested enjoyment'. A factor in the judgement of beauty, for Kant, is how genius, or the "talent (natural endowment) that gives the rule to art" (1790:175) is manifest in the work. He argued that genius is an innate talent which enables the artist to produce exemplary original works which do not arise from imitation of nature, for example. The process of genius is not one which can be recalled by the artist and it does not arise from any planning, and genius cannot be taught because that is a form of imitation. Kant's work helped to substantiate the idea that great art is created by geniuses.

In addition, Kant affirmed the aesthetic expertise of critics of beauty, otherwise known as "critics of taste" (1790:148), who had the power to attribute 'beauty' to works as if beauty is an objective property of art which is universally understood, and he offers an example here of how his subjective enjoyment of a work cannot be influenced by critics:

"If someone reads me his poem, or takes me to a play that in the end I simply cannot find to my taste, then let him adduce Batteux or Lessing to prove that his poem is beautiful, or [bring in] still older and more famous critics of taste with all the rules they have laid down moreover, let certain passages that I happen to dislike conform quite well to rules of beauty (as laid down by these critics and universally recognized): I shall stop my ears, shall refuse to listen to reasons and arguments, and shall sooner assume that those rules of the critics are false, or at least do not apply in the

present case, than allow my judgment to be determined by a priori bases

of proof; for it is meant to be a judgment of taste, and not one of the

understanding or of reason."

Kant (1790:148)

In this passage Kant is challenging the authority and aesthetic expertise of critics, by

instead asserting his own subjective judgements of taste with regards to cultural

forms he enjoys (or does not enjoy). Yet in his challenge, Kant is simultaneously

reaffirming the power of the "critics of taste" who are experts in judgement, who have

laid down the rules which determine which work should be considered beautiful. The

notion of the aesthetic expert in judgement, with the power to elevate artists and art

above others persists in most literature on art production since, not least in the work

of Bourdieu (1996).

The idea of the genius artist as purported by Kant persisted in much aesthetic

scholarship according to Paul Oskar Kristeller (1951; 1952) who challenged Kant's

notion of genius in his two volumes of *The modern system of the arts.* Within this

work, Kristeller critiqued the widely used notion of the five basic categorisations of art

– painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry. He argued that these

categorisations did not seem to have existed before the eighteenth century and their

origins had been taken for granted by scholars in aesthetics. Kristeller demonstrates

evidence in the work of Ancient Greek writers such as Aristotle and Hippocrates how

the arts have not always been considered a separate practice from other forms of

human activity, such as the sciences, and involve skill and technique which is not the

product of genius, but is learned:

"Whereas modern aesthetics stresses the fact that Art cannot be learned,

and thus often becomes involved in the curious endeavour to teach the

unteachable, the ancients always understood by Art something that can be

taught and learned"

Kristeller (1951:498).

Here Kristeller acknowledges that the creation of art is not innate or an outcome of

genius. He also points out that during the ancient times of Aristotle and through the

Middle Ages (approximately between the fifth and fifteenth century), the activities

associated with art were not considered a separate realm or category from other

activities which were regarded as functional, such as carpentry. This understanding

of creation as learned, not innate, is important for my understanding of aesthetic

expertise in creation.

Drawing on the work of Kristeller, Martha Woodmansee (1994) describes how

during the Renaissance (between the fourteenth and seventeenth century) the artist

was believed to be first and foremost a craftsman who was also said to receive some

inspiration from a muse or even God. Woodmansee importantly highlights the

masculinised perceptions of craftsmanship during that time, which continue to persist

(McRobbie, 2016). She describes the craftsman as a "master of a body of rules, or

techniques, preserved and handed down in rhetoric and poetics" (1994:36). Here

Woodmansee hints at the mastery of techniques required – what we could regard as

the expertise – of creation. She also acknowledges the role of the audience in the

'livelihood' and 'social status' of artists, because the audiences in the Renaissance

usually comprised patrons who bought the work and commissioned the artists.

These patrons were crucial for the consecration of artists during this time, which is

highlighted by Pierre Bourdieu (1996) in his work on art and artists, however

Bourdieu does not pay sufficient attention to the individual learning and mastery of

artistic creation as described by Kristeller and Woodmansee.

Bourdieu did however reject the idea that the artist is a 'genius', stating in *The Rules of Art* (1996) that the act of creation is a social process, rather than an act of inspiration by a gifted individual. He asked: "What makes a work of art a work of art and not a mundane thing or simple utensil? What makes an artist an artist, as opposed to a craftsman or Sunday painter?" He then goes on to wonder if an artist's signature has some bearing on what makes them an artist, the fact that their signature is recognised. In considering that, he asks "who, in other words, has created the 'creator' as a recognized producer of fetishes? And what confers its magic efficacy on his name, whose celebrity is the measure of his pretension to exist as an artist?" (1996:290). Bourdieu argued that the artist is not known as an artist, and their art not known as art, until recognised. Bourdieu demonstrates how the role of the powerful is particularly important in the art world, describing how great artists were only considered great when they were consecrated by those in power, such as the Bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century. The powerful could permit artists to be consecrated, and this happened when a consensus was reached about an artist's credentials and artistic ability.

The *Illusio* is fundamental to consecration – it is an acceptance and adherence to the rules of the field, or "The collective belief in the game". Belief in the game "and in the sacred value of its stakes is simultaneously the precondition and product of the game; it is fundamental to the power of consecration, permitting consecrated artists to constitute certain products, by the miracle of their signature (or brand name) as sacred objects." (1996:230). Consecration is a result of a recognition of artistic competence, or expertise, and recognition is vital for symbolic capital – which Bourdieu describes as honour and prestige. So the *Illusio* is the rule which maintains a belief and consensus about the legitimacy of an artist's aesthetic

expertise, even though Bourdieu never uses the word 'expertise' to describe it. He reinforces the notion that aesthetic experts in judgement are powerful, part of an elite who had the power to consecrate artists through the process of *naming* - "an authorisation of an individual's credentials where qualifications are not available" (1991:239).

According to Bourdieu, the critics' knowledge of art and aesthetic codes is superior to that of artists, and therefore the critics are the authority because they determine the artists' career trajectory. What Bourdieu fails to adequately address is what makes artists great - his theories of cultural production and emphasis on 'who created the creator?' (1993b) while crucial, focus on the 'already great' artists, and reinforce normative assumptions about who the experts are in cultural work – the powerful, supposedly knowledgeable judges of taste, and not the creators.

A useful aspect of Bourdieu's work in relation to aesthetic expertise in judgement is that he acknowledges what it entails, namely the concept of artistic competence, which is useful for understanding aesthetic expertise in creation too. In *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993a) Bourdieu observes that the act of judgement is a social process, rather than individual and subjective as Kant suggested. He argues that "any art perception involves a conscious or unconscious deciphering operation" (1993a:215) where the deciphering of meaning is dependent on the observer's familiarity with cultural codes and rules, which are historically constituted, and concurrently, the artist's ability to master those cultural codes and classifications. Both the observer and artist therefore require a degree of "artistic competence" which for artists, Bourdieu defines as:

"The previous knowledge of the strictly artistic principles of division which enable a representation to be located, through the classification of the

stylistic indications which it contains, among the possibilities of

representation constituting the universe of art"

Bourdieu (1993a:221-222)

Here Bourdieu highlights how knowledge of artistic principles is important in order to

create art, and the degree of art competence possessed by an agent can be

measured by "the degree to which he or she masters the set of instruments for the

appropriation of the work of art, available at a given time" (1993a:220). Here there is

an acknowledgement of mastery, and the practical knowledge and skill which

defined aesthetic expertise in creation before the eighteenth century, which

continues to be relevant for understanding it today.

It is important to note that Bourdieu believed one's ability to both observe and

create art according to aesthetic codes and classifications is determined by their

social class, evinced by the dispositions and taste developed during their upbringing

(Bourdieu, 1984). Again this calls to attention the power relations of expertise – who

is able to develop expertise, and who is perceived to be expert, in cultural

production.

In this section I have discussed how ideas about expertise in cultural work

have been dealt with in scholarship, and how they inform my understanding of

aesthetic expertise. Primarily these ideas include the critics as experts, the artist as

genius, who is able to be elevated above others by the powerful. We can see that

by and large these accounts do not pay due attention to the expertise of artists and

creators – the people mastering the cultural codes and skills to produce the work

which is judged by critics. Bourdieu's theories on cultural production are important

for understanding the power dynamics of aesthetic expertise in both judgement and

production.

Politics of expertise in cultural work

For Bourdieu, works of art fundamentally emerge from what he terms the 'field' of cultural production. According to Bourdieu fields consist of objective relations between subjects, who take up positions within those fields, such as the political field, the cultural field, and so on. The literary or artistic field is "a *field of forces,* but it is also a *field of struggles* tending to transform or conserve this field of forces. The network of objective relations between positions subtends and orients the strategies which the occupants of the different positions implement in their struggles to defend or improve their positions" (1993a:30, emphasis in original). Here Bourdieu is highlighting the power struggles in the artistic field, as agents strategise to improve their own position. An agent's ability to take up positions is determined by their access to resources, or capital.

Bourdieu defines capital as "accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its incorporated, 'embodied' form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e. exclusive basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor" (2011[1986]:83). According to Bourdieu, capital exists, transforms and accumulates within fields as agents struggle to take positions of power. He describes three fundamental forms of capital, which I mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis: economic capital, which includes money and property and is the primary form of capital because all other forms of capital can be exchanged for it; cultural capital which exists as embodied dispositions, cultural goods and educational qualifications; and social capital, which refers to the resources which are accumulated through social relationships and connections. Symbolic capital is the form that various other forms of capital take when they are recognised as legitimate, such as honour and prestige (Bourdieu, 1991). Aesthetic expertise could be

considered a form of cultural capital because it comprises embodied dispositions and tastes, which allow cultural workers to appropriate knowledge of cultural codes to a work of art. When aesthetic expertise is recognised as legitimate by others in the field of a higher status, it can then operate as symbolic capital. Therefore, aesthetic expertise as I understand it here is bound up in power relations, and I argue that access to resources can have implications for cultural workers' ability to develop, mobilise and signal aesthetic expertise, which is discussed further in Chapter 3.

It is worth devoting some thought here to taste, which has been mentioned several times so far particularly in relation to aesthetic judgement and the tastes of critics, whose authority and expertise was affirmed by scholars such as Kant. Bourdieu (1984) argues that taste, particularly the tastes of the ruling upper classes, places intrinsic value on the aesthetic experience and forms the legitimate basis for what is considered "good taste" (1984:260). For the middle classes, taste was related to a desire to compete for social status – they engage in 'cultural goodwill', investing and engaging in elements of legitimate culture as they aspire to a better social status. While Kant argued that taste is subjective and beyond reasoning, Bourdieu contended that taste is a form of social distinction between classes – legitimate taste is determined by the ruling classes, and popular taste is determined by the necessity of the working classes – i.e. popular taste is designed to serve a need, rather than enjoyed disinterestedly. Taste is important for our understanding of expertise because legitimate taste is related to aesthetic judgement, as affirmed by Bourdieu and Kant, and if we expand this to more general terms, expertise is possessed by the powerful, because the powerful get to determine what should be considered good art. In the work of Bourdieu the artist is not powerful. They are subject to forces within the field of cultural production, are enabled or inhibited by

their access to capital resources, and they rely on the powerful to legitimise and consecrate their work. Even so, the artist is privileged in some ways, and this can be said of many of the participants in this thesis as I will show throughout.

Antoine Hennion argues that taste is a pragmatic, reflexive activity rather than a social disposition. He asserts that taste depends on "its situations and material devices: time and space frame, tools, circumstances, rules, ways of doing things" (2004:136). This is a useful perspective on taste which accounts for the qualities of the cultural object, which Hennion argues is in itself a "deployment, a response, an infinite reservoir of differences that can be apprehended and brought into being." (2007:101). The idea of the object in use as generative of taste is important for thinking about expertise and the mediation of cultural products on social media, which I focus on in the next section. Hennion criticises Bourdieu for his passive treatment of the creator as an agent subject to external forces. For Bourdieu the creator is unable to assert any major change, instead struggling to take up positions, while the powerful determine tastes and cultural codes to be adhered to. While I acknowledge that access to resources and capital indeed play a part in cultural workers' ability to develop their aesthetic expertise in creation, it does not mean they are passive in power relations. In fact, certain groups of cultural workers play some part in reproducing power relations themselves. For example, cultural intermediaries, which I will expand upon shortly, and even some of the participants in this thesis through their online activity and communication of taste, as I demonstrate in Chapters 3 and 6.

Howard Becker's (2008) *Art Worlds* is a conception of cultural production which acknowledges the agency of individuals, and highlights collaboration and cooperation between people. Art worlds is a term used by Becker to describe "the

network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for." (2008:xxiv). Becker focuses on the specificities of cultural production, arguing that the production of art involves a large division of labour, and, like Bourdieu, is critical of the myth of the 'genius' artist. Becker emphasises how reputation is crucial for artists to succeed, and reputations are forged from value judgements of their work, by critics. He recognises, like Kant and Bourdieu, that critics have a degree of power – they are "more entitled to speak on behalf of the art world than others" (2008:150) but for Becker this entitlement comes from recognition by peers of a critic's knowledge and experience. The expertise in judgement, for him, is legitimised through a consensus about that critic's abilities. This has some relation to Bourdieu's idea of the *illusio* and the consecration of artists – which Bourdieu describes as a social process, of the powerful coming to a consensus about the value of an artist's work. In Becker's conception however, the people involved in the process of consensus are cooperating, not necessarily strategising to better themselves or to gain power.

Though Becker stresses that art production is a networked, cooperative activity, he also acknowledges the individual skills and knowledge of creation. His description of this is useful for thinking about the aesthetic expertise of creation:

"While much of what artists do is conventional, it is not therefore easily changed. They experience conventional knowledge as a resource at a very primitive level, so deeply ingrained that they can think and act in conventional terms without hesitation or forethought."

(Becker, 2008:204)

Becker mentions artistic knowledge, and how that knowledge is learned so it

becomes deeply ingrained, a fluid and embodied performance in a similar way that Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) described their conception of expertise. In this sense, aesthetic expertise can be learned and practiced to the point where it can become conventional and seems instinctive, enabling the creator to respond to situations almost intuitively, and for cultural workers this includes both the aesthetic codes and conventions of their field, in the Bourdieusian sense, and the practical appropriation of that knowledge. Becker's conception of cultural production is focused on the people and processes of cooperation and collective activity. He argues that his approach is entirely different from Bourdieu's field, which he perceives as a spatial metaphor which reduces people to their minimal capacities, preoccupied with domination and strategising (2008:374). Becker argues that in Bourdieu's idea of a field, cooperative activity cannot really happen because not everyone can participate in a field, they need to be accepted into it on the basis of their capital resources. Becker's idea of art worlds is cooperative and open, allowing possibilities for resistance and social change, which Bourdieu's field does not account for (McRobbie, 2004).

There are examples in this thesis of such cooperative activity occurring, particularly in Chapter 6 where I demonstrate how the women participants engage in online forms of reciprocal sharing, which I characterise as 'mutual aid'. However, even these activities are geared towards self-promotion and a wider individual strategy towards signalling expertise. While Becker raises some valid points about Bourdieu's field, power relations, strategizing and inequalities all still play some part in an individual's ability to work on their aesthetic expertise and progress in their career. We need to know more about individual expertise in creation to understand what could be done to make cultural production more accessible to everyone,

whether it be for work or individual flourishing and expression.

In literature on cultural labour there has been little investigation into what individuals actually do to develop their practical expertise. Richard Sennett's *The Craftsman* (2008) gives an indication of the time and effort it takes to work on skills in craft, which he argues does not need to fulfil any function or purpose, because the art of craft is doing things well for their own sake. Sennett claims that the principles of craft can not only apply to craftspeople, but to doctors, computer programmers, parents, as well as artists.

Sennett's emphasis is on the material, the act of creating by hand, and the thought which goes into craftsmanship of any kind. He points out that a common touchstone for one to become an expert in creation is "ten thousand hours" dedicated to practice and/or knowledge, a claim made by psychologist Daniel Levitin (2006). This is apparently how long it takes for skills to become deeply ingrained so they become second nature. Angela McRobbie (2016) argues that Sennett's idea of the obsessive craftsperson is far removed from the women crafters of today selling their products online, as do a few of the artists in this research. She argues: "With the rise of digital media, the realm of craft has opened up far beyond the realms of concentration and attention to detail described by Sennett. This raises questions about gender and new hierarchies within the 'arts and crafts' of the present-day cultural economy" (2016:147).

Indeed this raises questions too about masculinised ideas of the expert and the digital – the crafts*man* as Sennett describes is quite different from the women who create and sell work online, who will be appropriating possibly just as much skill and knowledge in their creation as Sennett's 'craftsmen' but are not necessarily regarded as 'expert'. Instead they are widely referred to as 'makers', 'Etsypreneurs'

or 'mumpreneurs' (Ekinsmyth, 2014; Luckman, 2015), gendered descriptions which obfuscate women's expertise and foreground their domestic location or status as mothers. I unpack this issue in relation to media coverage of one of my own participants, Gillian, in Chapter 3.

One's ability to spend possibly ten thousand hours developing their expertise in creation is, I argue, determined by a number of factors. These include their home situation such as family responsibilities, which can be a gendered issue, access to a comfortable space to work, access to materials, having the time to dedicate to their practice, particularly if they have other non-art jobs to pay the bills, and whether they have the basic education, knowledge and skills needed to develop a practice. These factors do depend on access to capital resources - economic and cultural in particular. Though the cultural field is not a completely closed space only open to people with certain credentials, it can be exclusive, within which resources and rewards are unevenly distributed (Banks, 2017; Caves, 2000). As a result, the majority work in precarious conditions (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). I will finish this section with an overview of this precarious cultural work context within which my participants are operating, albeit to varying extents.

Precarious work refers to generally flexible, freelance and insecure work, relying mostly on project or piecemeal assignments, and can also refer to casual and temporary employment. Some scholars point out that precarity has been happening in work for centuries, and particularly in women's work, such as domestic work (Fantone, 2007; Jarrett, 2015). Though often perceived as a negative condition, scholars warn against the idea that cultural workers are 'victims' of precarity. Banks, Gill and Taylor (2013) point out that cultural workers are well aware of the precarity of their work, and that we "need to avoid the various caricatures of either the cultural

dupe or the rational maximizer of information or (economic) benefits" (2013:7). Many cultural workers may even enjoy such working conditions and use them as opportunities for creative freedom and expression (Banks, 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). Some may refuse work, as a form of 'bohemian' resistance to the market (O'Connor, 2010). McRobbie discusses the refusal of work among young women in Western countries, who are increasingly refusing mundane work and instead choosing independent, precarious work as an opportunity for self-realisation (McRobbie, 2016).

The concept of the refusal of work derives from the autonomous Marxist tradition, which has its origins in labour movements and protests in Italy during the 1960s and 1970s. Activists and writers such as Antonio Negri (see Hardt and Negri, 2000) and Paolo Virno (2004) stressed the possibilities of labour autonomy, developing the Marxist critique of work beyond its fundamental idea that workers are subject to capitalist structures. The movement was concerned with better labour conditions and pay for workers, and the idea that workers can bring about change. The refusal of work is an important element of the movement, as it helps to construct a vision of life which is no longer organised around work (Hardt and Negri, 2000). McRobbie (2016) argues however that such radical politics have potentially exacerbated individual labour anxieties, creating tension and individualised contestation, which is "refracted through ideas of creativity and self-organised work" (2016:93).

Some scholars do acknowledge some of the positive possibilities of self-organised, precarious work, which could include "the potential for new understandings, new forms of socialisation and new kinds of politics" (Oakley, 2009:42). There is some evidence to suggest that the shared experience of

precarious labour conditions could bring about collective solidarity. For example, De Peuter and Cohen (2015) who discuss collective action by creative industries workers in response to poor labour conditions, which they label 'mutual aid'. For them, mutual aid "establishes the social bonds necessary to contest labour precarity and affirms the self-organization necessary for alternative economies." (2015:309). So within the unequal, precarious conditions of cultural work, there are possibilities for collective activity which could benefit all parties involved, and such activity, I suggest, can be facilitated through social media.

The political context to precarious work, in the UK at least, has origins in neoliberal policies (Hesmondhalgh, 2013). Neolberalism is defined by David Harvey as:

> "A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade."

(Harvey, 2005:2)

Here Harvey notes the individualisation of work and entrepreneurial ethos which is characteristic of neoliberalism, and increasingly pervasive in contemporary society (Brouillette, 2013; McRobbie, 2016). Neoliberalism is also a term often used to describe the contemporary political values which are associated with "anti-democratic or pro-corporate power" (Davies, 2014:310). William Davies notes that the political characteristics of neoliberalism include the privatisation of activities which traditionally lie outside the market and the encouragement of competition leading to inequalities (Davies, 2014:310).

In relation to cultural work, government shifts towards neoliberal policies during the 1970s and 80s in the UK and USA had a significant impact on the cultural industries. In reference to this, Hesmondhalgh uses the term 'information society' to acknowledge the thinking behind these policies, where "information and knowledge are now central, as never before, to the way that modern societies operate" (2013:100). For the cultural industries, the rise of 'information society' based policies meant an increased emphasis on intellectual property exploitation, entrepreneurship, 'creativity' and 'innovation'. These were buzzwords of the New Labour cultural policies during the late 1990s and 2000s which included the birth of the 'creative industries' construct. The 'creative industries' was an umbrella term created by the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport or DCMS (now the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport), as a means to place culture at the centre of public and economic policy. The 'creative industries' in the DCMS typology consisted of the arts, design, games, advertising and marketing, publishing, journalism and ICT.

Why are such policies relevant for independent cultural workers? The emphasis on intellectual property exploitation and by implication, entrepreneurship, means that cultural workers face increasing pressure to find new ways to make money from their work – not only does work need to be original, it needs to be creative, innovative and therefore exploitable. In order to keep up, they need to embrace marketing and business principles in order to be successful. For the participants in this thesis, social media enables them to market themselves and make money from their work. Some of them must keep up to date with the latest opportunities for projects and funding because the process is so competitive, and therefore need to work on and signal their expertise effectively to stand out from the

rest. This situation demands an 'always on' (Gregg, 2014) worker subjectivity, where the pressures from work are constant and pervade all areas of life. Melissa Gregg describes this condition as 'presence bleed' which is exacerbated by the presence of mobile technology in the home. She says that in the age of presence bleed, people take responsibility for their work "at all hours, crafting a professional habitus fitting the always-on networks of communication." (2014:126).

New Labour's policies shared some traits with the neoliberal regimes of the Conservative government which preceded them, including the emphasis on individual entrepreneurship and the preference for commercial privatisation over public approaches and state subsidy (Hesmondhalgh, Nisbett, Oakley et al, 2014; Oakley, 2006). Since then however, neoliberal ideals and policies have almost certainly gathered momentum under the Coalition government in 2010 and the current Conservative leadership. Naidoo (2015) notes that the years since the Coalition government have seen an "intensification of the idea that the cultural sector must meet the shortfall in state funding by attracting more private investment" (2015:62). Nadioo argues that this neoliberal economic model is increasingly the only option for policy, "making many who work in the arts, culture and heritage, fear that they have no alternative but to get on board or be left behind" (ibid.) Being able to secure funding and opportunities in this context also requires economic justification (Belfiore, 2002) and this applies to a number of participants in this thesis who are involved in publicly funded arts work.

It is important to note that such conditions are not unique to cultural work, as pointed out by Brouillette (2013) who argues that the ethos of the cultural worker as being flexible, self-managing and able to "to turn an innate capacity for "innovation" into saleable properties" encapsulates the ideal neoliberal working subject. Mark

Banks (2014) argues that the principles of neoliberalism obscure the realities of independent work as "workers are willingly seduced and entrained to self-produce, uphold and refine the productive interplays of power and knowledge that ensure their subjection to the prevailing logic." As a result, "the worker-subject's desire becomes seamlessly enjoined to the accumulation imperative" (2014:249). Here Banks highlights the entrepreneurial imperative which pervades cultural work – promising independence and freedom from the constraints of working within an institution, yet obscuring its harsh realities (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011).

Angela McRobbie (2016) draws on the governmentality theories of Michel Foucault to highlight how neoliberal ideals have extended into the realm of everyday life to encourage the kind of activities that enhance the place of the market in society, and in turn govern how people live their lives. She links the neoliberalism of the 1970s and 80s to the entrepreneurial spirit of today – where work pervades all aspects of everyday life, and in the cultural industries the idea of "passionate work" becomes a normative requirement, where:

> "The cheerful, upbeat, passionate, entrepreneurial person who is
> constantly vigilant in regard to opportunities for projects or contracts must
> display a persona that mobilizes the need to be at all times one's own
> press and publicity agent" (McRobbie, 2016:74).

According to McRobbie, people are increasingly required to be self-managing and 'productive' subjects in contemporary work contexts, less reliant on institutional support and the safety net of welfare, and instead constantly working towards bettering themselves, their working situation, and their lives. This is the context for the cultural workers in this thesis – where the need to be known as expert in what

you do and effectively promote yourself is crucial in order to make a living, and social media platforms can be one way to do that.

In this section I have shown how in much of the literature about cultural work, the cultural worker is often depicted as a victim of external forces – power, precariousness, the value judgements of others. This characterisation of cultural workers is partially why their skills and knowledge are not commonly referred to as 'expertise'. It is also partially because of the popular notions of genius, and also 'talent' (Banks, 2017), which obfuscate the skills, knowledge and dedication in building expertise in creation, which this thesis brings into focus. I argue that cultural workers do need to be able to develop and effectively signal their expertise in order to survive and potentially thrive in the precarity of cultural work, but opportunities for cultural workers to do this are dependent on their access to capital resources.

The next section acknowledges other groups commonly referred to as experts in cultural work – cultural policy makers and cultural intermediaries. This leads into a discussion in the final section about how expertise *itself* can be mediated when signalled online.

Expertise, intermediation, and mediation

The literature on the role of expertise in UK cultural policymaking is useful for illustrating how policy experts are thought to have the power to make decisions which affect cultural workers, whilst knowing relatively little about the conditions of cultural work (Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009; Cohen, 2012; Oakley, 2006). Russell Prince (2010) provides a useful analysis of the nature of expertise in UK cultural policy making, identifying an 'emerging expert system' where "a small community of actors have realigned their practices and cast themselves as creative industries experts" (2010:2). According to Prince these actors are already situated

within particular epistemic communities for which cultural policies have important ramifications, and they have the ability to reshape government policy to favour their own ideas. He understands expertise as a social relation based on an actor's access to knowledge, which gives them authority over others.

Prince conceptualises such actors as active subjects who are deliberately and strategically seeking to gain power, however his account could have benefitted from an acknowledgement of the barriers to access and inequalities in cultural work, as it is the privileged who are able to access such opportunities in the first place. Indeed this is highlighted by Phillip Schlesinger (2009) in his research on 'think tanks' in UK cultural policy. He defines think tanks as:

> "Organisations that describe themselves as such and which are engaged in the production of policy discourses that make claims to knowledge. Those who work in think tanks, as policy advisers or consultants, are a tiny and select segment of the university-educated intelligentsia. They operate within elite circles where the costs of entry to knowledgeable policy discussion are high"
>
> (Schlesinger, 2009:3)

Schlesinger's description affirms the elite, educated and select nature of common claims to expertise. He notes that there are particular barriers to entry for experts which are based on class and education, which I find parallel reported barriers to cultural work and contribute to persisting inequalities (Oakley and O'Brien, 2016). Schlesinger presents a case study of how certain people have worked their way to prominence in government, most of them from the media and communication industries. For think tanks this skillset is useful because the "public face of thinktankery is concerned with airing ideas, in particular through media coverage"

(Schlesinger, 2009:14). Schlesinger's case demonstrates how social and economic background and access to resources plays a part in enabling or constraining the development of, and claims to, expertise.

Another group which are associated with claims to expertise in cultural work are cultural intermediaries. Smith Maguire and Matthews (2014) provide a useful working definition of cultural intermediaries as: "market actors who construct value by mediating how goods (or services, practices, people) are perceived and engaged with by others" who are also defined by "their claims to professional expertise in taste and value within specific cultural fields" (2014:2). In this sense there are some linkages between the cultural intermediary and the idea of the aesthetic experts in judgement described earlier in this chapter, in that they judge culture and are believed to be experts in taste, however cultural intermediaries deal in aspects of both 'high' and 'low' culture and package it for the market, whereas aesthetic experts as traditionally known are said to deal with 'high' culture only (Bourdieu, 1984).

The term 'cultural intermediary' has some origins in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984), who discusses the 'new cultural intermediaries' as a subset of the relatively privileged 'new petit bourgeoisie'. The aesthetic experts in the arts as conventionally known - the art dealers and critics – were considered the 'old' cultural intermediaries. The 'new' cultural intermediaries, which in Bourdieu's conception included TV and radio producers, newspaper critics and journalists, were able to bridge the gap between high and low culture "to produce, through the mixture of 'genres', 'styles' and 'levels', those objectified images of petit-bourgeois culture, juxtaposing 'easy' or 'old-fashioned' (i.e., devalued) legitimate products with the most ambitious products of the field of mass production" (Bourdieu, 1984:326).

The expertise of the cultural intermediaries in Bourdieu's conception lay in

their ability to negotiate high and low culture and package it for wider consumption, and this particular role of the intermediary has spurred much debate in the academic field about the relationship between cultural production and consumption, and a subsequent critique of Bourdieu's concept of cultural intermediaries. Calvin Taylor (2015) argues that the nature of intermediation in the creative economy encompasses three modalities: the transactional, which is relating and connecting between social and economic agents; the regulatory, the social and political norms and rules; and the strategic, the structure through which relations and subjectivities are produced (2015:364). Taylor proposes that there are a wider network of actors in intermediary processes than merely the 'new petit bourgeoisie' which Bourdieu describes. He uses the term 'associational economy' to place primacy on the importance of associations and networks in cultural intermediation, whilst also acknowledging its market orientation. The acknowledgement of associations is paralleled in Becker's (2008) conception of 'Art Worlds', where cultural production consists of networked, social processes. Cultural intermediaries, however, are cultural workers with claims to expertise because of their perceived knowledge of taste and of the market.

Other work on cultural intermediaries tends to take their status as experts for granted. For example, Nixon and du Gay (2002) take issue with what they claim to be the all-encompassing nature of Bourdieu's use of intermediaries, which "tends to cut across distinct occupational formations, cultures and forms of expertise, as well as the rather different social compositions of discrete cultural intermediary occupations." (2002:498) yet they never elaborate on what they understand as expertise. The authors call for further empirical work on the nature of cultural intermediation; claiming that by focusing on the 'expertise' of intermediaries and

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their practices, the relationship between production and consumption can be better understood.

David Wright (2005) builds on the work of Nixon and du Gay with his empirical work on bookshop workers. He mentions 'experts' and expertise many times in his account, and like Nixon and du Gay, does not define exactly what he means by those terms, or how cultural intermediaries seemingly come to embody expertise (2005:115). Wright's work is useful for highlighting potential inequalities in cultural work that are also prevalent in intermediary occupations, which could exclude the working classes "from so much of 'cultural' life" (2005:118). Negus (2002) highlights inequalities of access too, and also claims that intermediaries also serve to reproduce the distance between production and consumption, rather than bridge it as in Bourdieu's conception.

The debates about the 'gap' between production and consumption bridged or reproduced by cultural intermediaries seem outdated when considered in light of more recent work on consumer co-production (see Arvidsson & Colleoni, 2012; Banks & Deuze, 2009). So who, or what are the intermediaries in modes of cultural production which include social media and digital platforms? Candace Jones et al (2015) argue that digital devices are the 'new intermediaries' between artists and consumers, as they explain: "download services like Apple's iTunes now dominate music CD sales. Google provides access to music (Google Play), video (YouTube) and publishing (Google Books). Spotify shares music. Netflix not only distributes but produces content-first episodes, and now movies, that can be rented, streamed and even watched all at once (rather than weekly)" (2015:20). Jones et al show that the nature of intermediation requires more scrutiny in relation to the digital, and also in relation to claims to expertise and taste. The platforms described by Jones et al are

designed to curate and give people access to cultural forms – they appear to perform some kind of intermediary function, but what about the role of digital platforms in cultural production processes? I argue that social media platforms *mediate* expertise signals and I explore how this occurs throughout the thesis. Social media platforms, in their structure, algorithms and affordances (such as likes and shares) *do* something to cultural forms when they are shared online and form a part of an artist's aesthetic expertise signals. Mediation requires some serious consideration with regards to the nature of expertise when it is signalled online, and by extension the character of aesthetic expertise in contemporary cultural production. To clarify, algorithms refer to the functions of social media platforms to achieve certain outcomes, they are "encoded procedures for transforming input data into a desired output, based on specified calculations" (Gillespie, 2014:167).

All media should be understood in terms of their processes of mediation, according to Kember and Zylinska (2012). For them such an understanding is essential to move past the 'newness' of so-called 'new media' and digital technologies. Their definition of mediation is "a complex and hybrid process that is simultaneously economic, social, cultural, psychological, and technical" (2012:xv). Kember and Zylinska's approach to mediation appreciates the "liveness (or rather, lifeness)" (ibid.) of media, with 'lifeness' referring to "the possibility of the emergence of forms always new, or its potentiality to generate unprecedented connections and unexpected events" (2012:xvii). Thought they insist that we have moved beyond 'new media' and the 'newness' of social media we still do not know enough about it in some respects, and I argue this is true with regards to the role of social media in cultural labour. We do not know enough about what cultural workers do with social media and what they post on there. This thesis will demonstrate in particular how

posts can be mediated by the platforms, changing the nature of expertise signalling and contributing to our knowledge of expertise in the 'social media age'.

Couldry and Hepp (2016) argue that social life is constructed *through* mediated communications, and our "necessarily mediated interdependence as human beings – is therefore not based on some internal mental reality – but on the *material* processes (objects, linkages, infrastructures, platforms) through which communication, and the construction of meaning, take place" (2016:4). When we think about expertise signalling on social media in this way, it means that the very architecture of social media, and its algorithms, are as much a part of, for example, the painting being posted as the painting itself. Couldry and Hepp purport that mediation has a bearing on how social life is constructed – for this thesis this includes how art is presented and judged on social media, and how cultural workers present themselves, *as* cultural workers.

Georgina Born (2010) argues that studies of cultural work should consider not only the cultural field and its agents (in the Bourdieusian sense) but also the objective and aesthetic properties of cultural products *in use,* in a similar way to Latour and Woolgar's conception of laboratory practices, but with a focus on the aesthetic properties of cultural objects. According to Born, objects exist as "an assemblage of mediations" (2010:183) which I find to be a resonant point in relation to social media platforms and their role in mediating the presentation of cultural objects online, as opposed to them hanging in a gallery. Mediating factors could include platform features such as shares, likes and comments which potentially affect the circulation and reception of a cultural product online, and the very character of the expertise signalled by the cultural worker.

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When a cultural worker decides to create and maintain a presence on social media, they are exposing themselves to a number of risks, and the degree of risk can vary, I argue disproportionately, depending on a person's gender, race or social background. Social media can also help enhance reputation, which is a key element of signalling expertise as highlighted earlier in this chapter. In the following section I discuss current literature on the dynamics of reputation on social media and what this could mean for signalling expertise.

Social media, reputational value and risk

Howard Becker (2008) believes that reputation is key for artists to build a successful career:

> "The reputation of the artist and the work reinforce one another: we value more a work done by an artist we respect, just as we respect more an artist whose work we have admired. When the distribution of art involves the exchange of money, reputational value can be translated into financial value, so that the decision that a well-known and respected artist did not do a painting once attributed to him means that the painting loses value."

> Becker (2008:23)

Here Becker talks about reputation in relation to respect and value. The value of a work, and the cultural worker's desirability for potential commission hinge on reputation, which, for Becker, is built through a social process of consensus as described earlier in this chapter. For Becker, the art worlds as he conceptualises them "routinely create and use reputations, because they have an interest in individuals and what they have done and can do" (2008:351). This is important because it acknowledges the *individual* in cultural production – the person who

creates the cultural product to be judged by others, the person who works on their aesthetic expertise to produce work of value. When an individual decides to put themselves and their work out into the public domain, they could put their reputation at risk. This is particularly the case on social media, which provides a means to signal expertise and build a reputation, but also presents reputational challenges.

I show in this thesis how reputation management is integral to signalling expertise, but only a part of it. There are other elements involved in signalling expertise too, such as providing the content or evidence of the expertise (such as the art work) and the appropriate associations and networks to enable that expertise to be recognised. Social media is an accessible, almost instant means by which to manage reputation and exchange work for financial value in the way Becker describes, but the way it could be done is complex, unpredictable and as potentially damaging as it could be beneficial.

Yet, social media is pushed as a potential solution for artists to gain visibility and promote themselves. For example, in Figure 1 is a screenshot of a blog post titled 'How to Promote Your Art on Instagram' by Agora, an art gallery in New York:

Figure 1 Agora Gallery screenshot

The blog post begins as follows:

"*A successful artist in today's fast-paced world not only needs to create art but also should focus on promoting their art. Gone are the days of the "starving artist" and elite art dealers. Art is becoming more open for everyone to enjoy, and also forces artists to preserve quality both online and offline*"

This quote, and indeed the whole blog post, is a demand to artists that they keep up with the rigours of the art world – they need to promote themselves, make sure they stand out against the rest. The blog post affirms the well-worn perception of the 'starving artist' but more crucially, it uncritically treats social media platforms, namely Instagram in this case, as a solution to gaining exposure. While it is true that social media platforms present positive opportunities for cultural workers to promote themselves and signal their aesthetic expertise, they also present challenges.

One challenge in particular is online abuse; women especially are susceptible to online harassment, otherwise known as 'Gendertrolling' (Mantilla, 2013). Gendertrolling is described by Karla Mantilla as a particularly threatening online phenomenon characterised by gender-based insults, hate language, threats and online attacks towards women over a prolonged period of time, and negative reactions to women speaking out. In her article she presents many examples of incidents where women have experienced prolonged and serious abuse on blogs and on Twitter, especially when women have spoken out against sexism and misogyny, or campaigned for gender equality. Such discrimination goes beyond gender too - the autoethnographic accounts of Barlow and Awan (2016) highlight how women and people of the Muslim faith in academia experience online abuse and attempted 'online silencing'. The online rise of the 'alt-right', a movement which

shares and promotes extreme racist, misogynistic and homophobic viewpoints is just one example of how the democratising potential of social media can produce unexpected and unwarranted effects, mobilising movements which aim to perpetrate online abuse.

The stories of abuse highlight the volatility of online spaces which is overlooked in Agora Gallery's 'advice' for artists, but anyone can be a victim of online harassment, so what is the difference for cultural workers? Women artists are shown to routinely experience online abuse and some are using their art to campaign against it (Michael, 2016). As I will show in later chapters some male famous artists have also experienced online abuse, but it does relatively little to damage their reputation. Celebrities are trolled on social media on a daily basis and so their reputation, barring a scandal, is relatively safe from the influence of online abuse. Groshek and Cutino (2016) point out how the U.S. talk show *Jimmy Kimmel Live* invites celebrities to read out examples of online abuse they have received in a segment called 'Mean Tweets'. Famous people are seen here to make light of online hostility. However, for the participants in this thesis and other cultural workers who are not so high profile, trolling, if not handled correctly, can be a threat to their reputation. This is because their networks are smaller and will consist of current and potential clients, customers and collaborators. The stakes are potentially much higher for them.

Online abuse is not the only reputational challenge for cultural workers using social media, as trolls can be dismissed as unreasonable or looking for attention. There are also risks around copyright, such as others potentially copying or amending work and passing it off as their own; or a scathing critique, or a bad review. In reference to the work of Howard Becker, judgements about art and

opinions about artists all contribute to reputation, and judgements and comments can be made almost instantly on social media, at any time regardless of whether the artist is online or not. Disparaging comments, damaging remarks or even modifications to work can proliferate in ways which the cultural worker cannot control. The risk to reputation, one could argue, is amplified when a presence is built on social media.

Risk is argued to be intrinsic to freelance, independent work (McRobbie, 2016) and for cultural workers, risk is an accepted condition of cultural labour (Menger, 2006). Menger observes that in addition to the occupational risks of cultural work, such as piecemeal work, lack of institutional structures and support, "the risk of failure is a built-in characteristic of artistic undertakings" (2006:29) where the creator must rely on the fact that other people must take an interest in their work in the first place, for it to have any chance of being successful. This resonates with the ideas by Becker and Bourdieu of the importance of recognition for creators. In order for aesthetic expertise to be recognised, it must be signalled first, and as Agora Gallery proclaim, social media seems to be one way to do it.

There is a growing body of work on reputation management on the internet and social media. In this context, Daniel Solove (2007) defines reputation as a collective perception about a person, which is "forged when people make judgements based on the mosaic of information available about us" (2007:30). Solove highlights the precarious nature of reputation when one decides to build a presence on the internet, where information about us flows and proliferates. Literature on self-branding highlights how social media users create and manage their online profiles in an attempt to manage reputation and create a coherent online 'brand' (see Hearn, 2010; Marwick, 2013a; Duffy, 2016). Alice Marwick defines self-

branding as "The strategic creation of identity to be promoted and sold to others" (2013a:166). It is thus distinct from signalling expertise in that self-branding is primarily concerned with identity construction, whereas signalling expertise, while partially concerned with identity management online, largely involves communicating skills and credentials.

Some websites attempt to quantify reputation in relation to individual credentials, such as Klout. When a user allows Klout to access their social media profiles, it provides an 'influence' score based on how often that user posts, what they post about, who they are connected with, and who shares their posts. Those with a high influence score are grouped into 'topic experts' based on a specialist area they post about most often. The designation of 'experts', purely based on social media shares and interactions, could easily be manipulated by users, for example by asking friends and family to recommend them, or buying followers, and is therefore highly problematic. It is an example of the way in which the word 'expert' can be attributed freely online without qualification, and a reason why expertise requires further scrutiny in various contexts, including how it is signalled on social media.

Gandini (2015) argues that the emergence of sites such as Klout are a part of an online 'reputation economy' where reputation is important for helping independent freelancers to secure work, potentially more so than trust, skills or accreditation (2015:150). Gandini points out that sites like Klout do not generate any meaningful data about reputation, they only work on networks and interactions between users. However, he argues that the existence of the site points to the nature of reputation in the social media age, as likes, shares, and followers are increasingly becoming the measure of one's value as a potential employee, artist, and so on. In relation to this

research, such forms of reputation measurement could potentially reduce the value of a cultural work, or an artist, to social media metrics.

So while social media provide the means for signalling expertise, and potentially enhancing reputation, there are also a number of challenges pertaining to the volatile online space and the instrumental means through which reputation, expertise and potentially cultural value, could be calculated. The unpredictability of social media contributes to the fluid character of aesthetic expertise when it is signalled online. This thesis provides an empirical insight into how this works.

Conclusion

This chapter has laid out the contextual and conceptual framework for this thesis around the four main themes or lines of argument which are pursued throughout:

1. Expertise in cultural work is taken for granted, and the aesthetic expertise of cultural creators under explored

2. An individual's ability to gain, build and signal expertise is enabled or constrained by their access to resources, or capital

3. Expertise signals on social media are mediated, which has some bearing on the character of aesthetic expertise on social media

4. Signalling expertise on social media presents both reputational risk and value for cultural workers

In this contextual discussion I have highlighted some of the ideas about expertise which tend to be treated normatively in cultural work literature. These include the notion that expertise is the reserve of powerful and elite, that cultural workers are powerless with little influence on their career. In such work aesthetic expertise in cultural work is commonly associated with aesthetic judgement or

intermediation, not creation of the primary product which is judged, and there is little

inquiry into why such assumptions have persisted in scholarship. My empirical

insights in this thesis challenge these ideas and offer new questions in relation to the

nature of expertise in the 'social media age'. In the next chapter I outline the

methods used in my approach.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Introduction

In 2016, Facebook owner Mark Zuckerberg gave a speech at a ceremony where he received an award for entrepreneurship. In part of his speech (cited in Matyszczyk, 2016), he described Facebook's mission:

> "What we really focus on giving everyone, is the power to share all of the things that they care about, what they're thinking about, what they're experiencing on a day-to-day basis."

Zuckerberg goes on to say that if people have the power to share more aspects of their lives, it can "make the world more understanding." Zuckerberg it seems did not anticipate the role his social networking site would have later that year in the US presidential elections - where the spread of 'fake news' through the site was said to have contributed to the election of Donald Trump. The criticism of Facebook was so widespread that Zuckerberg felt the need to 'share' some thoughts in an extended Facebook post on his own profile in November 2016, distancing his site from the spread of 'fake news' and stressing that above all, he wants Facebook to "give every person a voice" (Zuckerberg, 2016).

As discussed in the previous chapter, social media platforms can be volatile and potentially risky spaces. Zuckerberg's utopian vision of users sharing *everything* about their lives on social media to better understand each other does not quite match up to the reality of online abuse and harassment. The unpredictable nature of social media means it can be tricky research terrain to navigate and so requires some reflection. The purpose of this chapter is to think through some of potential issues for researchers studying social media alongside discussion of my research

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methods, which involve a combination of social media analysis and semi-structured interviews with 19 UK cultural workers.

For this research I developed Candace Jones' (2002) signalling expertise framework to qualitatively analyse social media posts, which is one of the major contributions to knowledge this thesis makes and which I have begun to utilise in other work (see Ashton and Patel, 2017; Naudin and Patel, forthcoming; Patel, 2017). In the first section of this chapter I explain this framework and my overall research approach in greater depth, before a reflection on my methods in relation to wider issues about social media and cultural work research. I then explain the process of data analysis using Nvivo before a reflection on my own position as a practitioner and researcher.

Research approach and methods

The 19 cultural workers who are the primary focus of this research come from different areas of practice including visual fine art, craft art, composition and writing. These areas are known as the 'core' arts, which involve producing cultural goods, or "'aesthetic or 'symbolic' goods and services" with a "high design input" (Banks, 2007:2). The majority of participants were contacted through online directories including *Arts Derbyshire, New Art West Midlands* and *Art in Liverpool*, and some were approached directly after recommendations from participants and contacts of my own. The role of the art directories is significant here; these too are potential sites for cultural workers to signal expertise online, because they use the sites to self-identify as cultural workers and signal their availability for projects and commissions. *Arts Derbyshire and Art in Liverpool* are designed to promote artists and events within the local area, and both contain a directory of artists to which practitioners submit their profiles. *New Art West Midlands* is slightly different in that it provides

features on art and artists from around the region, so the artists featured have not submitted a profile for the website as such, instead they have been highlighted by the site. There is a sense of gatekeeping and selection with *New Art West Midlands* in terms of the artists featured but it was a useful first port of call for finding participants. All three websites provide biographical and career information of the cultural workers, as well as links to relevant websites and social media, and so the directories helped me to locate the social media profiles of participants.

I analysed samples of their social media posts using a signalling expertise framework I will discuss shortly. Interviews were also carried out over the phone, face to face or via Skype, with interviews lasting between 30 minutes and two hours. I also scoped the participants' online presence, noting their self-presentation and self-written biographies on their websites and blogs. The social media posts of famous artists were also analysed, which was important for gaining a sense of how expert, world-renowned cultural workers signal their aesthetic expertise on social media.

The signalling expertise framework

Before outlining the methods of data collection, it is necessary to first discuss in greater detail my version of the signalling expertise framework, and the rationale for adapting it for social media analysis. My framework for analysing signals is developed from the work of Candace Jones (2002) who defines signalling as the process of communicating signals. She describes signals in cultural work as "activities that showcase one's Identity through prior projects […] competencies in skills and genres […] and relationships" (Jones, 2002:209). For the original signalling expertise framework which my research develops, Jones draws on the performance work of Erving Goffman (1959) to conceptualise how expertise is signalled in

creative industry careers, arguing that signals are important for conveying one's knowledge and expertise in the competitive creative industries job market.

According to Jones, signals can help potential employers, collaborators, commissioners and so on to predict the behaviour, value or qualities of cultural workers before they meet them or are hired. Furthermore, signals contribute to the cultural workers' reputation. Jones uses the example of cultural industries workers in TV and film to demonstrate the importance of signalling expertise for their careers, as "signals can be used repeatedly to ease communication among parties, creating codes within an industry and reputation among players" (2002:211). Reputation is a key part of signalling expertise for Jones, and as highlighted in the previous chapter, it is crucial for cultural workers looking to gain recognition for their work (Becker, 2008).

Jones' framework consists of three major elements: institutional context, signalling content and signalling strategies, which I build on in my own framework for analysing social media signals. My framework consists of similar elements, with additional consideration for social media platforms:

- **Individual context** – which considers the context of the user, their background and career trajectory
- **Signalling content** – including the aesthetic style of social media text and images, exhibiting the requisite skills in both their social media posts and presentation of their art, and career relevant connections and interactions on social media
- **Signalling strategies** – such as using retweets, shares and other social media features to enhance status, the type of relationships pursued and how

they are manifest on social media, and strategic approaches to impression management on social media.

Institutional context is described by Jones as the "rules of the game" within an "industry's macro-culture - widely shared norms and practices that guide actions and exchange relations" (2002:212). This is similar to the "collective belief in the game" described in Chapter 1 within Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the *illusio,* in that it is a shared norm or understanding of how things should operate within a group, organisation or situation. For my social media analysis framework this element was adapted to refer to 'individual context', to consider the context of the user on social media, including their personal and work background, and their career history. Individual context can be gleaned from social media profiles, but a large portion of this information was gained from the interviews, demonstrating the value of getting to know the people behind the posts on social media in research. Much of this context for each participant in this thesis will be introduced in Chapter 3.

The second element of Jones' framework is *signalling content,* which she describes as particular cues about a cultural worker's "identity, competency and relationships" (2002:213) drawing primarily on DeFillippi and Arthur's (1994) career competencies of *knowing-why, knowing-how* and *knowing-whom* which were explained in Chapter 1*.* My adaptation of this element takes into account what is actually posted *on* social media, particularly the post content, the style of text and images and the aesthetic qualities of work posted, to gauge what the posts actually say about a cultural worker's aesthetic expertise. Which artistic techniques are used? What skills are on show? How does the cultural worker describe their own work online? Signalling content helps to gauge what the

signalling strategies are, the third element of Jones' framework, also present in my own.

Signalling strategies for Jones include "tactics of status enhancement, reputation building or impression management" (2002:216) which I found relevant for analysing social media, and my amendment takes into account social media features such as retweets and replies, which are designed to facilitate interaction between users. I also consider the type of connections and associations participants made online – who do they interact with? Whose work do they share and like? Who do the cultural workers associate with online? According to Jones, signalling expertise accumulates social capital which is crucial for creative careers. The higher the status of these associations, the higher the status of the individual signalling expertise, and she describes this affiliation as one of the strategies for status enhancement; the other being winning awards and status competitions. The status of associations is an important consideration for signalling expertise on social media, as I will show in Chapter 5.

Jones' work on signalling expertise is significant in that it is an attempt to conceptualise expertise in cultural work as a practice – as something done, by cultural workers, to show they are experts in what they do. The signalling expertise framework she offers is conceptual rather than empirical, and yet the consideration of reputation management, networking, communication of skills and status enhancement lends itself, I argue, to a qualitative analysis of self-presentation on social media. It is for these reasons that I found it a useful framework to adapt for analysing expertise signals on social media. In the next section on social media data I describe in greater detail how I came to test and amend the framework for my own research.

The signalling approach of Jones is based on a combination of sociological, economic and organisational theory, to demonstrate how signalling is a form of strategic action which is "especially relevant in the creative industries where parties must solve problems, handle uncertainty, and fashion novel products during project engagements" (2002:210). Her work has previously been drawn upon to examine the mechanisms of signalling in cultural work by Potts et al, (2008) and Potts (2011). Potts (2011) uses Jones' approach to signalling expertise to show how signalling is a way for both individuals and organisations to accumulate value in cultural work. For Potts, this value is social capital, which "is then fungible over future market and non-market contexts" (2011:81). Potts approaches the study of cultural work from a market perspective, focusing on innovation within networks of agents in the 'creative industries' (using the DCMS term), an approach known as social network markets. The social network markets approach is used by Potts to conceptualise creative work as highly networked and cooperative, utilising the opportunities afforded by digital technology and the internet for user co-creation of products (Banks, 2009). Hartley (2007) describes social network markets as a process where "individual choices are determined by the choices of others within the network" (2007:21). Rather than conceptualising creative and cultural industries as an 'industry', Hartley suggests they should be seen as a network market, where creative opportunities are accessible to citizens and consumers, and "not merely among industry or artistic experts" (2007:17). What Hartley means by industry or artistic experts is unclear – does he mean critics, intermediaries, or creators?

During my initial working through of the signalling expertise framework methodologically, I also considered social network markets as a possible conceptual framework for my understanding of the cultural industries and cultural work, and my

thinking through this process is documented in my blog (Patel, 2015). This 'thinking out loud' on my blog was important for crystallising my ideas, and I found that the social network markets approach was not suitable, because its application in relation to cultural work by Potts (2008) and Hartley (2007) overlooks inequalities, not just in cultural work, but in relation to digital literacy, and also glosses over the challenges of using social media and the internet for cultural workers.

In the next section I discuss the process of data collection in this research, but first with an acknowledgement of some of the considerations for researchers using social media as an object of study.

Working with social media data

What makes social media platforms different from any other object of study? It is argued by some internet researchers that traditional sociological research models are ineffective for researching social media, for example Markham and Baym (2008) argue:

> "The sociological subject is powerful, shifting, and, in terms of qualitative research design, confusing. Our research models do not fit the multiphrenic subject very well."
>
> Markham and Baym (2008:x)

Mutliphrenic means having multiple identities constructed from multiple mediated environments, 'offline' and 'online'. Markham and Baym suggest that because of this, internet researchers should adapt their methods accordingly, rather than use traditional sociological methods for online research, because "It is hard to know how well older theoretical and methodological frameworks can be applied to understand contemporary social formations" (2008:xiii). The authors point out that the "novel

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research terrain" (ibid.) of the internet and social media offer new possibilities for creative research approaches, and I show in this thesis how the signalling expertise framework developed as a social media method for this research is an example of such an approach.

Markham and Baym's advice for researchers to be reflexive and adaptable when doing internet based research is not new. For example, Christine Hine (2000) produced a useful guide on qualitative internet research in *Virtual Ethnography*. Ethnography, according to Hine, involves the researcher:

> "Participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time. They are watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions — in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research"

> Hine (2000:41)

When *Virtual Ethnography* was written, the primary object of study for internet researchers was forums and chat rooms, which provided a 'site' ripe for the ethnographic participation and observation which Hine describes in the quote above. She argues that an ethnographic approach to studying the internet can "develop an enriched sense of the meanings of the technology and the cultures which enable it and are enabled by it" (2000:8). Here Hine acknowledges the idea of the internet as a 'culture' to which I return later in this chapter. She also highlights some of the issues around online research that are still of concern today, such as participant privacy and the ethics of covert online research. Hine emphasises the importance of adaptability for dealing with such issues during the research process.

Adaptability in internet research is also highlighted by Markham (1998) in her reflexive research about internet use. Markham usefully reflects on her own role when researching internet chat rooms. She carried out online interviews in her research, which she found were limiting because she would often receive one-word answers or no response at all. She commented that "ethnography seems to have a life of its own - a life that is intimately connected with mine, yet inseparable from the dialogues that constitute the study" (1998:61). The reflexivity required by internet researchers as discussed by Hine and Markham are important to acknowledge here, and the case of Markham is particularly illuminating for myself as a social media practitioner studying social media, as mentioned in the preface to this thesis. My negotiation of social media platforms as both a practitioner and researcher was iterative; at first I was not completely sure of my approach in both cases. As a practitioner, I learned techniques for gaining more followers, increasing engagement and different ways to post without any formal training, by experimenting with different posts and gauging the audience response. The same occurred when I began to research social media and expertise for this thesis – as Markham and Baym point out, there is little to draw from when researching qualitative subjects on social media, so some testing was necessary in the initial stages of this research.

Adapting the signalling expertise framework for a social media analysis was one such part of the iterative process; I explored the Candace Jones (2002) version as an analytical tool during a pilot study with an artist/academic whom I knew personally in March 2015. I collected one sample of her social media posts from one month, and carried out a short interview. After the initial social media analysis I adapted the framework, as I found additional elements or features of aesthetic work

when posted on social media should be considered. These included specific aesthetic and objective qualities of the post, and the art featured, where applicable.

Once the main participants for the research were recruited I collected (via screenshot) between 5-10 days' worth of posts from the social media sites they most frequently used; the most common being Twitter, Facebook (pages) and Instagram. To clarify, Twitter is a 'microblogging' service which allows users to post updates of up to 140 characters in length, as well as images, videos and animations (conventionally known as GIFs). Users can 'follow' each other on the site, however it is not necessary to follow people to interact with them. On Facebook users create a profile and connect with others (Facebook friends) who can also see their profile. Users can see updates from their friends, and Facebook pages they 'like' on their 'news feed'. Instagram is owned by Facebook, and is primarily a smartphone application. Instagram allows users to upload photos, which they can edit with 'filters' for the image. Like Twitter, users can follow each other and see recent photos from the people they follow in a news feed.

Data was collected from the sites over four months, between December 2015 and March 2016, in the middle of the month. The aim was to capture a general sense of the participants' social media use at any given time, and not timed to coincide with certain events or periods when they may be busy or not busy. The amount of posts collected varied among users, ranging from over 100 posts from one participant to ten for another. I began by gathering ten days of posts for all participants, but some posted much more frequently than others, and on Twitter, some participants primarily retweeted the posts of others, while posting relatively little about themselves. Past the point of data collection I continued to follow the participants on Twitter and Facebook, not with any intention to include subsequent

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observations in this research, but to gain further familiarity with their online presence, what Kate Crawford describes as "listening" on social media. For Crawford, listening is where "commentary and conversations continue as a backdrop throughout the day" (Crawford, 2009: 528) as one browses on social media without interacting. Even though there may not be any interaction with users or subjects, a sense of affinity can still be created for the observer, or 'listener'. It is a version of the online ethnography Christine Hine refers to, because it involves a form of participant observation. However the participants knew I was following them, and I allowed them to follow me back. The ongoing 'background listening' enabled me to observe the participants' online activities beyond the point of data collection, allowing me to familiarise myself with them outside of the interview situation, and they could do the same with me. It added to my knowledge of their 'individual context', to reference the signalling expertise framework.

To collect the posts I took screenshots which were pasted into a Word document. This was useful for getting the posts 'offline' and also to present the full context of the post at the point of capture, such as the numbers of retweets and likes for each Tweet, Facebook and Instagram likes and comments, as well as the images contained within posts. My overall approach to social media data collection and analysis is primarily qualitative, and at the time of data collection there was a lack of methodological precedent to use as a benchmark or reference, so there was a degree of iteration in the process.

The absence of a specific qualitative precedent is due to much existing social media research utilising quantitative methods. Quantitative approaches mostly involve extracting large amounts of social media data via 'data mining'. Data mining methods consist of collecting text-based data from social media posts on a large

scale. Danah boyd and Kate Crawford (2012) comment on this practice which generates what is often referred to as 'Big Data', a "cultural, technological and scholarly phenomenon" that relies on the "interplay between technology (e.g. computing power and algorithms), analysis (quantitative analysis, drawing patterns from large data sets) and mythology (belief that large data sets offer a higher form of intelligence and knowledge)" (2012:663). This interplay highlights how problematic such approaches can be, and the authors argue that 'Big Data' could be a misleading term, because it "enables the practice of apophenia: seeing patterns where none actually exist, simply because enormous quantities of data can offer connections that radiate in all directions." (2012:668). Farida Vis (2013) discusses similar issues for researchers working with 'Big Data', and argues that new methods need to be developed for qualitative analysis, particularly with social media images.

Alice Marwick (2013a) argues that qualitative approaches to social media research can "Provide a rich source of data that allow us to go beyond description" and "can help unpack user presumptions about individual technologies, distinguishing general communicative or social media behaviour from behaviour that is specific to a platform." (2013a:109). A qualitative approach, therefore, was suitable for this research, because I needed to analyse the individual practices of signalling expertise on social media, and consider what such an analysis could tell us about cultural work.

Each participant's posts were analysed in groups of 3 or 4 because a lot of posts exhibited similar forms of signalling content. Once all of the posts were analysed using the signalling content criteria, this helped to work out the user's signalling strategy and institutional context. An example of the analysis is in Figure 2, with a full version in Appendix 4.

Signalling content:	
Identity (aesthetic style)	Use of hashtags, again tapping into one relevant to animals/pets but also Twitter.
Performance (exhibiting requisite skills)	Display of her work – before and after.
Relationships (Career relevant networks)	Use of hashtags #woofwoofwednesday and #handmadehour using these to promote her own work and generate sales

Figure 2 example of a signalling expertise analysis

This process was repeated for each users' posts collected over the four months, until a point was reached when the data was not revealing anything new. The participants tended to stick to the same evinced posting habits and patterns with little deviation, which I discuss in Chapter 5 in relation to cultural workers maintaining a coherent online presence.

I also entered additional social media data for each participant into a spreadsheet. This included information such as followers, locations, self-description (or bio), and so on, and an example is included in Appendix 2. When each collection period came round, changes in followers, any changes in self-description or bio, and numbers of posts were added so activity was tracked over the period of four months. Later on when writing about their careers, I visited the artists' websites to check self-

descriptions and career biographies. The additional data collection assisted my knowledge of the wider online context of each individual cultural worker.

It was also important to gain some knowledge of the wider online context of cultural work in general, such as the social media accounts of well-known artists in comparison to those primarily featured in this thesis. The well-known artists analysed were:

- David Lachapelle
- Grayson Perry
- Damien Hirst
- Tracey Emin
- Themostfamousartist (Instagram)

I also looked at the Instagram account of Palais de Tokyo, which was recommended by a participant. They told me that Palais de Tokyo used Instagram in a rather novel way; uploading parts of a picture individually to create a larger picture on the main profile view. This was useful to give me an idea of some of the creative ways that social media can be used that I had not become aware of in my experience as a social media practitioner.

The analysis of the well-known artists and their accounts was useful for providing a benchmark for how seemingly 'expert' artists - who are well-known and whose aesthetic expertise has been legitimised - signal their expertise on social media. The analysis was particularly valuable for assessing risk, reputation and conflict on social media. As mentioned in the previous chapter, famous people receive a lot of online abuse and criticism compared to non-famous people simply because of their public visibility, and this also applies to famous artists. The case of 'themostfamousartist' which I came across via online news site Buzzfeed, provides

an illuminating case study of how social media can be used to enhance aesthetic expertise signals, and particularly how social media knowledge can be advantageous for those looking to gain exposure for their work. It is also a useful example of the reputational challenges social media can present for artists. I focus on this and the online presence of other famous artists in Chapters 4 and 5.

I also looked at art-based Instagram accounts and Twitter hashtags as part of the wider scoping. A hashtag is a word or phrase used on social media posts which is preceded by a #. The use of the hashtag # before a word or phrase aggregates it with other Tweets with that hashtag. An example of a popular hashtag on Twitter is #FollowFriday, when users can recommend other people to follow. Hashtags can also be related to breaking news stories, interest groups, popular topics, campaigns, and people also use them to express feelings and opinions. The hashtags and communities on social media analysed were mentioned or used by participants and mostly used by women, such as #Tuesdaybookblog and #handmadeuk. These are examples of the participants' activity informing my own approach, which was a feature of the interview process which I explain in greater depth later in this chapter. An open source social media analysis tool called Node XL was used to collect Tweets from those hashtags. The sample collected was over 800 for each hashtag, and 50 were selected from those. This was also used to generate a relationship map of those Tweets, which provide a visual representation of the users within that hashtag. See the example from #Tuesdaybookblog in Figure 3:
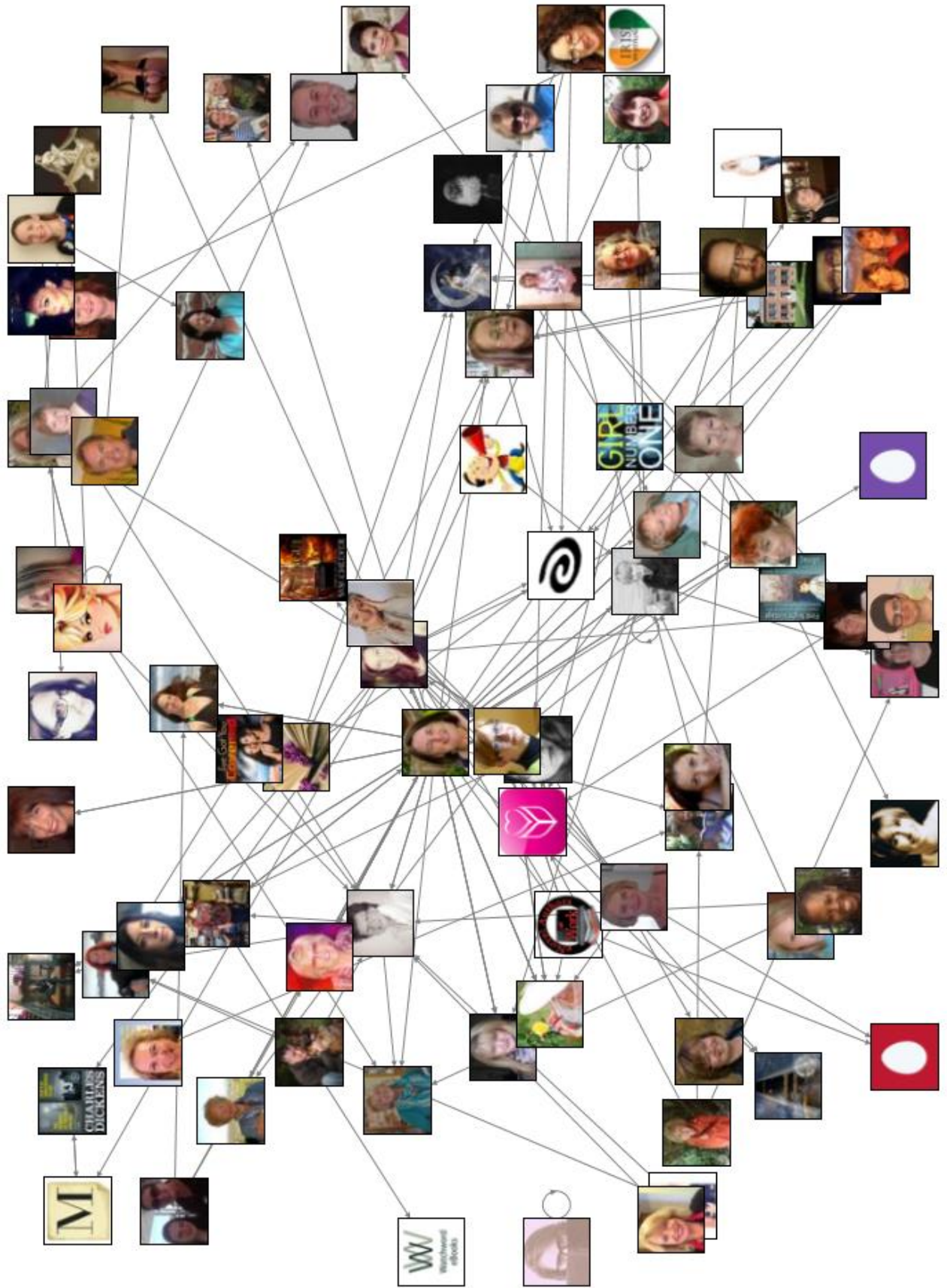
Figure 3 NodeXL network map of #Tuesdaybookblog hashtag

The maps demonstrate the Twitter connections between the most frequent users of this hashtag, and the avatars suggest that the majority of users within these networks appear to be women. However that is only from looking at the avatars (which are the profile pictures), which may not necessarily be of that person. Because Twitter data does not include gender, the profile pictures and biographies of the user profiles are the only way to gauge the possible gender of users. Maps such as these provide a useful general overview of the structure of a particular Twitter group or community. The network maps were important for getting a general sense of some of the gendered online communities, as gender emerged as an important theme in the research.

The nature of social media and its prevalence in people's everyday lives mean that the boundaries between 'offline' and 'online' life are often blurred (Orgad, 2008). According to Shani Orgad, the same consideration should apply to online and offline research methods. She argues that distinctions between online and offline have never been made in research of older communication media, and "More generally, beyond the methodological context, we do not tend to talk about the 'television world' versus the 'offline world' or about 'radio contexts' versus 'offline contexts' in the same way as we refer to 'online' and 'offline' in relation to the internet." (2008:36). Orgad notes that the tendency for researchers to separate the 'offline' from the 'online' is related to what Hine (2000) calls a distinction between a view of the internet as a 'cultural artefact' and as a 'culture' – Hine argues that the internet can be both. First, she states that the internet can be seen as a site for culture – where meanings are produced socially, through social interactions within and between spaces. Second, she argues that the internet is also a cultural artefact "which is socially shaped in production and use" (2000:14).

Considering Hine's argument, and what we know about social media, the internet and social media have different qualities to television and radio, in particular enabling widespread communication and dissemination of content between people on a global scale. However, if we focus on social media platforms we can think of them as a medium because while they facilitate such interactions, the platforms also mediate these interactions (Couldry and Hepp, 2016; Ruppert, Law and Savage, 2013). Following this, and the work of Hine, social media can be seen in terms of a culture, with its own norms, conventions and ways of working, which are informed and driven by the individuals using social media. Interactions between individuals are mediated by the platform architecture, which is an artefact that is also socially shaped, and the posts on there are also artefacts in themselves.

So while the signalling expertise analysis primarily considers the online presence of the individual cultural workers, it is also important to understand their social context to inform an account of aesthetic expertise. The interviews were important in this regard.

Interviews

In the interviews participants were able to describe their use of social media in some detail, and the situation gave me chance to prompt and ask for further explanation about their work and social media use. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that while I had some general themes in mind (such as their background, career progression, social media use on a daily basis), the interview was conversational rather than a question-and-answer format, and allowed room for some reflection from the artists on their careers and their social media use as part of daily routines and practices.

While research on social media and the internet has received much attention in the literature, some of which has been mentioned so far in this chapter, research methods on cultural work seem to warrant much less reflexivity. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) reflect on research methods in their exploration of creative labour in television, the recording industry and the magazine industry. They describe interviews as "events in which people are asked to reflect in language on processes that they may, for most of the time, take for granted" (2011:15) and given the nature of interviews, they acknowledge that there are aspects of individual practice which "people will simply be unable to account for even when prompted: the unacknowledged conditions, unconscious motivations and unintended consequences of what we do" (2011:16). The authors describe how they addressed this by ensuring they kept guidance during the interviews to a minimum, and obtained as much additional information as they could about their participants, as I did with mine.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker combined their interviews with participant observation, which they admitted was a time consuming method but valuable for tracing the experiences of workers over a period of time, and to "go beyond language and discourse – the primary product of interviews – to observe much more fully other aspects of creative workers' lives and subjectivities, such as their comportment, demeanour, behaviour and attitudes" (2011:16). My research is similar in the sense of the 'participant observation', which took place on social media platforms and over an extended period of time, beyond the interview and formal data collection period. I found the combination of both interviews and the social media analysis valuable for understanding the cultural workers in my research – the people behind the online signals of aesthetic expertise.

Interviews were either carried out in person, on the phone or via Skype between October 2015 and February 2016. In all cases the interviews were recorded on my phone, using a call recorder app for phone calls and the voice recorder app for the Skype and face-to-face interviews. All recordings were saved on my own computer hard drive and backed up on to an external hard drive, and transcribed by both myself and a transcription service. A sample transcribed interview from this research is included in Appendix 3. It was important to transcribe at least some of the interviews myself, so I could get a sense of some of the possible themes emerging from the interviews while I waited for the remainder to be transcribed by the agency. It also allowed me to closely engage with the interviews, which can be an important part of the research process as Ann Gray (2003) observes. She argues that even though transcription can be arduous, it allows the researcher to engage with the research material, and identify participant idiosyncrasies such as hesitations or voice inflections which may be significant for the researcher's interpretation of the interview. I also found that "active listening" during the interviews is equally valuable, which involves "engaging people in conversation and being responsive to what people are (or not) telling you" (Gray, 2003:86-87). Active listening helped my interpretation of interviews in that even where I did not transcribe them myself, I could remember aspects of the conversation and any participant hesitations or other nuances from the interview.

The interviews were structured around a discussion of the cultural worker's background, including where they are from, their education, how they began their practice and how their career has developed. Often I found that participants would start talking about their work and career, then immediately start talking about their social media use without any prompt. This may be because on initial approach, I

informed them that the interview would primarily be about their social media use, so this may have pre-empted the interview somewhat. Furthermore when the cultural workers were initially contacted, I did not define exactly to them what I meant by social media; I assumed they would know what it is, i.e. platform based applications such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. When it came to the interview, it was interesting to hear how the cultural workers defined social media, especially when some asked whether I was considering websites, blogs or private messaging applications such as WhatsApp in my research. I decided not to say 'no' and restrict them, especially as for some of them, websites were very important for their work, and how people defined social media themselves was interesting to find from the interview process.

Of the participants interviewed in person, some referred to their phones during the conversation, to bring up relevant social media profiles to demonstrate. Over the phone, this practice of 'showing' was manifest in how some of the cultural workers regularly referred to certain social media posts, or projects or events they had done. This suggests that the interview situation *in itself* could also be an opportunity for them to signal expertise, to me at least.

After the first five interviews, I began sharing aspects of emerging themes from the research, particularly if a participant mentioned that particular theme or trend I had identified. This often led to participants offering suggestions of other artists to approach. It made the participants integral to not only the research process, but also the development of the research design. They also had a degree of influence on different avenues taken in the research and this would not have come about if I hadn't shared aspects of emerging themes and findings. For example, an interview with an artist named Clare led to my further investigation into women and expertise.

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In interview, I mentioned that I had noticed how women artists in my research appeared to primarily share the work of others on social media, more so than the men, and how it often seemed that they were sharing the work of other women. Claire told me that she went to a talk about the history of women printmakers, which highlighted how women used print "as an alternative form of dissemination at a time when all the galleries were taking big paintings by men." This conversation led me to think about women artists and visibility, and consider seriously the gendered dynamics of expertise in cultural work as an area of attention for this thesis.

It was not planned, but I did this iterative sharing during interviews because I did not perceive myself as a scholar studying participants, and this was because of my status as a social media practitioner. I felt I could approach them as a fellow practitioner, looking to find out more about what they do, and they were interested in my situation as a practitioner/researcher too. The cultural workers in this research are embedded in their networks and are likely to have more knowledge of the sector they are operating in than I do, so it made sense to draw on their knowledge to help in the research. In return, I sometimes offered my own social media tips and help if they needed it, imparting my own knowledge and enabling me to reflect on my own expertise. For the most part however, the majority of the participants appeared to have a good knowledge of social media and how to use it most suitably for their own purposes.

While interviews can help provide a rich insight and valuable exchange of knowledge, the reality presented by participants is only their reality at that time, and whatever they can recall in that particular situation. Additionally, my own position as a social media practitioner also had some influence on the type of questions asked and the way the interviews were conducted. For the first three interviews, I asked

primarily 'leading' questions about social media, such as 'how often do you visit social media per day?' and 'what do you like/don't like about using social media?' While this was useful, I felt that the questions were too prescriptive. Remembering that participants were already pre-empted when initially approached, in the remaining interviews I asked participants more questions about their art and their practice, their aesthetic interests and ambitions. They were never asked about expertise specifically, again because I did not want to pre-empt them, but also because I wasn't sure at the time of interviews what my own understanding of expertise was. As discussed in the previous chapter, expertise is a complex term which is often used to simplistically label people who are perceived to be 'expert'. Artists themselves may not consider themselves expert because of the long standing perceptions of expertise in cultural work as involving judgement rather than creation, and so raising the subject of expertise in interview, when I did not know what it entailed myself, would not have been helpful at the time.

My own experiences with social media were often relayed during the interview too, and this was useful for building understanding with the participants, encouraging them to talk further about a particular issue, but also, rather than an academic 'researching' a participant in an imposing way, I was a fellow social media user and practitioner, sharing my own experiences, feelings and frustrations.

No matter what approach is taken to interviews or any methods, the 'whole truth' of the situation is difficult to present, but, as Gray (2003) argues: "we can, from our specific vantage point, produce a version of the truth, but one which we present modestly for others to consider" (2003:21). The methods themselves are crucial in this and are inherently a part of the world they are designed to study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In turn, as argued by Law, Ruppert and Savage (2011)

methods also help to construct reality and the social world we research. This is a particularly important consideration for this research, as the 'reality' presented online by the participants in this thesis is a reality constructed by them, which is mediated by the platform, and then my own analysis of their posts using the method I devised, all contribute to a particular construction of signalling expertise on social media. The framework was designed by myself for a systematic qualitative analysis of social media, yet fundamentally the analysis is still my interpretation, which may differ from someone else's.

In later work, Ruppert, Law and Savage (2013) highlight the challenges presented by digital devices, including social media, for methodologies. They argue that social worlds are "being done by digital devices" (2013:23), i.e., social worlds are being constructed and mediated through digital devices, an argument similar to Couldry and Hepp (2016) on the mediated construction of social reality mentioned in Chapter 1. Ruppert, Law and Savage claim that digital devices are reworking, mediating and mobilising social relations, and ask what it means for the methods we use. The authors propose that methods need to take into account the 'liveliness' of digital devices and their unique properties, because "digital devices and the data they generate are both the material of social lives and form part of many of the apparatuses for knowing those lives" (2013:24).

While Ruppert, Law and Savage make a useful argument for the methodological significance of 'the digital' in social methods, they place too much emphasis on the properties of digital technologies, for example, social media platform architectures. The authors do not consider that these platforms are created by individuals, owned by individuals within corporations with their own ideologies and capitalistic aims (Skeggs and Yuill, 2015) and are used and often shaped by

individuals who use them as part of their everyday lives. Such practices, by individuals, help to shape the 'culture' of social media to use Christine Hine's expression, and use it in ways which platform owners such as Mark Zuckerberg cannot always anticipate.

Ethical considerations

Analysing individual social media profiles presents a number of ethical considerations which throw into question some of the assumptions about information on the internet and social media being 'public' (Rosenberg, 2010). As Markham and Buchanan (2012) point out: "Individual and cultural definitions and expectations of privacy are ambiguous, contested, and changing" (2012:6). Even before the widespread popularity of social media, Ess (2002) describes the difficulty for researchers to protect participants' privacy when using data from the internet:

> "Even experienced and conscientious researchers, for example, can make a significant blunder when they write up their research: even if they seek to protect privacy by ensuring the anonymity of their research subjects – if they nonetheless include a direct quote from an archive that is publicly available and thus easily found through a search engine such as Google, they thereby make it trivially easy for anyone to determine the author's identity."
>
> Ess (2002:494)

On social media sites such as Twitter, data is freely available and open to the public, and easily searchable. Yet the same debates and concerns about privacy and anonymity remain (Henderson et al, 2013). As argued by boyd and Crawford (2012) in reference to using social media data for research: "just because it is accessible doesn't make it ethical" (2012:671). People may be aware they are using a public

forum but users sometimes do not fully understand the implications of what they post, or how far it could reach (Byron 2008; Marwick and boyd, 2010). Widespread sharing is advocated by Zuckerberg and other platform owners, and with that comes increased visibility of individuals and most aspects of their lives – for others to look at. Calvey (2017) points out that "we are typically invited, indeed expected, to 'peep' into the lives of others without their permission" (2017:13). However, people may be sharing with their friends and family in mind, and not necessarily academic researchers.

Nevertheless, if some people are signalling expertise online and fully intending for it to be public, does anonymity really matter? Buchanan and Ess (2008) argue that sometimes redacting (concealing) online identifiers such as screen names "may detract from the "reality" or "reputation" of the participant." (2008:279). On Twitter, Weller (2015) states that sometimes the methods used to protect users' privacy by amending or anonymising Tweets can affect the quality of the data. For example, if an author of a Tweet is anonymised, what about people or users mentioned in that Tweet? Should it all be anonymised too? If so, how usable will that Tweet be for research?

Highfield and Leaver (2016) propose that when researching social media, "it may be more useful to move away from the binaries of public or private, and consider whether the act of researching surfaces material that would otherwise have received little attention and whether amplifying that material through research and research reporting has the potential to do any harm." (2016:57). The potential of harm through using or revealing people's posts for research is a useful ethical benchmark and one which I bore in mind during data collection and analysis. In addition, Buchanan and Ess (2008) argue that informed consent or giving

participants the option on whether to be anonymised or not can address some ethical concerns. However, that comes with its own considerations, because "text searches can reveal more contexts than a researcher may in her reporting" which raises potential challenges. They suggest that "As part of the informed consent process, researchers could present options for participants to consider, and participants could be provided the opportunity to review the research report prior to publication." (2008:279). Williams, Burnap and Sloan (2017) suggest that informed consent should always be obtained from individual participants to use their social media posts in research, even if their profiles are 'public'. For this research I allowed participants the flexibility to choose which level of anonymity they prefer, which reduces some of the ethical concerns about the 'publicness' of their social media data. A copy of the participant consent form for this research is included in Appendix 5.

Fabian and de Rooij (2008) advise against anonymising participants in research, claiming that it "denies their contributions as well as their status as historical actors" (2008:624). Because I had also interviewed the participants, I created a connection with them and some basis of trust, and this approach meant that only two of the 19 participants chose to be fully anonymised in my final write up. In order to get the most out of the data, keeping the participants' identities public meant that none of the context or their reputation was taken away and it added richness to the told experiences of these individuals. For those participants who wanted to remain anonymous, while their screenshots were collected, their screen names were redacted when included in the analysis and pseudonyms used in reference to their interview material.

In the final write up I also redacted the online identities of any other users who commented on posts, because other users are not participants in this research and I did not ask their permission. Even though many of the cultural workers gave me permission to use their real name and online profiles in my write up, I found that other users commenting, particularly on Facebook which is essentially 'private', was a grey area and I felt it best to just redact their screen names to avoid any potential ethical issues.

Analysing the data

Once all of the social media data from the cultural workers was analysed using the signalling expertise framework, it was transferred, along with the interview transcriptions, into Nvivo for further analysis. Nvivo is a qualitative data analysis tool which can help aggregate interviews, social media data, video, audio and other data forms, and help the researcher to organise material into themes. While at the very beginning of the process the aim was to analyse the interviews separately from the social media posts, I felt the approach was too divisive because it implies an 'offline' and 'online' separation which can be detrimental to a study. As Hine argues: "Social phenomena are not uniquely confined to online or offline sites, and it would be a mistake to allow these notions automatically to provide boundaries for our studies" (2008:18). So, Nvivo was a suitable solution to bring everything together.

First a series of nodes (or themes) were set up which emerged from my initial observations of listening during the interviews and transcribing them, and the initial social media analysis. I went through the interviews and social media analysis and coded them according to the themes identified, and as the process went on further themes emerged. During the coding phase I used Nvivo tools to identify the most prominent themes, as shown in the area chart in Figure 4:

Figure 4 Nvivo chart of nodes compared by number of coding references, March 2016

In the chart it is apparent that 'Platform' was the most prominent theme at this stage, which was near the beginning of the coding process. 'Platform' referred to any mentions of platform features in interviews which were used by participants, and in the signalling expertise analysis to any posts which appeared to be created or amended specifically for the platform, for example if a special description was written for Facebook, or specific hashtag. Of course the initial themes were relatively vague, and as the process went on I was able to refine the themes and add sub-themes.

The data interpretation and analysis was a "recursive process" (Bazeley, 2013:12) where I often revisited the data to code, review and re-code. In Table 1 are the ten most prominent themes and their sub themes after three phases of coding:

Primary theme	Sub-theme(s)
1. Presencing – anything related to maintaining a presence online	Showing their work – on social media
	Associations with institutions, places & events
	Displaying endorsements from others

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	Associations with people online
	Busyness – appearing busy
	I'm not doing enough - feeling as if they should be doing more on social media
2. Business – anything related to business or entrepreneurial tasks	Promotion and marketing
	Sales
	Strategy – marketing strategy, social media strategy
	Managing people or events
	Admin
3. Social media and artistic labour	Social media as a part of artistic labour
	Direct benefits from social media
	What other artists do
	Social media as integral – to their practice
	Social media influencing art
	Social media as extra, not integral to their practice
4. Mutual aid – sharing, community, artists helping each other	
5. Locality and space – their work space, talk about working	

from home, mentions of geographical location	
6. Personal and professional – blurring between personal and professional life	Involvement of family

Working from home

No difference between personal and professional |
7. Other jobs and money – additional, non-art jobs, talk about individual financial issues	
8. Devices – using phones, tablets, computers	
9. Me sharing my findings with them	
10. Gender – any gendered issues or particularly gendered themes emerging from analysis	

Table 1 Nvivo coding themes and sub-themes

Some of the terms used as themes are worth clarifying here in advance of further discussion later in the thesis. First, 'presencing' is a term Nick Couldry (2012) uses to describe the need to keep one's online presence up to date, and this is a particularly significant theme which emerged from both the interviews and signalling expertise analysis, which is discussed in Chapter 5. I grouped any mentions of marketing, sales, or administration into 'business' which also refers to aspects of entrepreneurial expertise required by cultural workers as mentioned in Chapter 1. Any mentions or elements of the role that social media played in cultural work and

artistic practice is collated under theme 3 – 'social media and artistic labour' - and further discussed in Chapter 5. Category 4 – 'Mutual aid', which I have already mentioned in Chapter 1, is a term used by de Peuter and Cohen (2015) to refer to cultural workers' collective, activist response to poor labour conditions. I draw on this term for different circumstances, to refer to women cultural workers' evidence of collective activity on social media, to help collectively raise visibility in light of unfavourable conditions for women cultural workers, which I discuss in greater depth in Chapter 6.

'Locality and space' refers to whenever participants talked about their work environment and/or featured in on social media. Theme 6 on 'personal and professional' refers to discussions about work and leisure/personal time divisions, or absence of, which I discuss in Chapter 4. 'Devices' refers to mentions of the electronic devices the participants used to access social media, such as mobile phones and computers. 'Gender' referred to any mentions in interview by the women participants about working at home, looking after family, and anything else which resonated with the themes I was finding in the literature about women artists, such as collective efforts to raise awareness of their work, any reference to feminist issues, or working from home and juggling domestic responsibilities.

Nvivo was useful for making sense of the themes coded, particularly for generating charts such as Figure 4 which helped me get an idea of prominent themes early on in the process. The ease with which I could re-code in Nvivo was also important for when I came to analyse expertise in the artistic career in Chapter 3, as I could go back through the interviews and group responses to see when participants were referring to particular stages of their career. This was an example

of the iterative and recursive process I went through as I navigated multiple methods, adapted new methods and made sense of the research material.

My position as a researcher and practitioner

As mentioned in the preface to this thesis, I am a social media practitioner myself. I have several years of experience managing social media accounts for various companies in sectors as diverse as the hair and beauty industry, amateur dramatics, sports, employability, publishing and higher education. This experience, combined with using social media on a personal level for more than 10 years, had some influence on my position as a researcher and my interpretations of people's social media use. Ann Gray (2003:27) suggests that as researchers, our own experience should be employed and acknowledged in research. In turn, it is important to remember that any accounts of experience, whether they be from ourselves or from participants, put into play "a repertoire of knowledges, positions, discourses and codes through which the 'individual' articulates or expresses their 'own' experience." (2003:28). Therefore, Gray argues, being aware of our own subjectivity and acknowledging the experience of others, can be valuable ontologically and epistemologically.

As a practitioner, I understand what is 'good' and 'bad' practice in terms of using social media for self-promotion or marketing purposes, and I am familiar with some of the unwritten 'rules' and etiquette of social media that only regular users will know about. For example, not to bombard followers with self-promotional Tweets, not to use too many hashtags on Twitter but lots on Instagram, to post a link to something relevant or interesting whenever possible, and so on. This may have meant that I carried some assumptions about social media practice into my analysis. A similar dilemma was identified by Annette Markham (1998) in her account of online

ethnography; she found that the interview questions she asked were influenced by her own experiences online. Utilising a framework such as the signalling expertise framework in this research may not necessarily negate these assumptions but it provided a means of analysis through which I could examine how forms of aesthetic expertise are signalled online.

When analysing social media posts, it can also be difficult to interpret what is posted without knowing the person and their culture – sarcasm and humour for example, could be misinterpreted as serious in intent. This is where carrying out interviews with the individual participants helped. While one interview does not mean that I know them well and will know exactly the context of everything they say on social media, it helped me to gain some idea of their cultural background, their sense of humour, and any other factors which might add to the context of a social media post.

I also thought that my knowledge and experience of social media may have implications for my position as a researcher in relation to my participants. In other words, I would be the social media 'expert' studying how other people used it, but this was far from the case. Participants were reflexive about their social media use and well aware of potential challenges and opportunities. From using social media on a personal level, I found that I shared many of the same frustrations as the participants, and often found myself agreeing with them on certain things. For example, many of the cultural workers commented on what they found annoying about Facebook, such as privacy concerns, and I agreed with them on some of these points from a personal point of view. I also found that I experience similar pressures to them in terms of needing to maintain a coherent online presence, and how mixing personal and professional interests on social media can be difficult to

manage, and potentially exacerbated by the instant accessibility of social media on smart phones. Being able to share these concerns helped in the interview situation, making the participants feel more at ease and able to talk in more detail about their practice and their careers.

Conclusion

The unqualified emphasis on 'sharing' on social media, spearheaded by Facebook owner Mark Zuckerberg, raises questions about the relationship between the user and researcher when researching social media platforms. This research is unique in that it is an empirical study of cultural workers' use of social media, through the lens of expertise as a conceptual framework and method of qualitative analysis online. There is a relative lack of previous research for me to draw from methodologically, which led to an adaptation of Candace Jones' (2002) signalling expertise framework which can be used for a social media analysis of expertise, and is one of the key contributions of this thesis.

The existing reflective work on social media research is useful for navigating some of the tricky ethical challenges when working with participants presenting themselves online, but there is a relative lack of reflexivity on research methods in cultural work. We need to start thinking more seriously about the challenges social media present for cultural workers using platforms as part of their online presence, and how they could affect our research approach. In the next chapter I introduce the main participants in this thesis - the people behind the social media posts analysed.

Chapter 3: Expertise and the career of the cultural worker

Introduction

Night Flight - original drawing in graphik line painters on black somerset velvet paper - framed and ready to go from ink_d Gallery

Figure 5 'Colin' Facebook post of artwork

Figure 5 above is a Facebook post by Colin[1], a relatively well-established cultural worker compared to the other participants in this research. He is a visual artist who paints using a variety of materials including tea and alcohol. In this Facebook post Colin signals his aesthetic expertise by describing the materials he has used in his painting, 'Night Flight' which include 'graphik line painters' and 'black somerset velvet paper'. He is able to demonstrate his mastery of these materials in the final painting displayed, which signals both his aesthetic knowledge and skill in deploying the

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[1] 'Colin' wanted his identity to be anonymous in this thesis, hence the use of an alternative name and redaction of his social media posts.

materials he has chosen. Colin mentions on the post that the work is going to be shown at a gallery – demonstrating that his work has been recognised by a gallery as worthy of display, appearing to be a legitimation of his aesthetic expertise.

A signalling expertise analysis by itself, demonstrated here with Colin's post, can tell us what the individual cultural worker says about their work and how the online audience respond to it. The analysis can also help us to appreciate the objective qualities of the art, as well as the features of the social media platform which enable different social dynamics compared to when a piece of art is hanging in a gallery – the artwork can be commented on, appreciated, shared, liked, saved – without the audience having to leave their homes. However, a signalling expertise analysis on social media does not tell us much about the background of the individual behind the posts. What leads to the person to be able to signal aesthetic expertise online? While the majority of this thesis focuses on signalling expertise *on* social media, this chapter is primarily about the individual cultural workers behind the signals; it offers a way of introducing them and providing some background to their careers. It also gives some indication of their approach to signalling aesthetic expertise on social media, to set up the discussions in the three chapters which follow.

As discussed in Chapter 1, one of my arguments for this thesis is that an individual's ability to accumulate, mobilise and signal aesthetic expertise is enabled or constrained by their access to particular resources, or capital to use Bourdieu's terms. To illustrate this point in this chapter I draw on Bourdieu's ideas of field and capital to analyse the background and career progression of each of the participants in this research. Each participant will be introduced in turn and they are grouped by career stage, to illustrate how expertise builds over the course of an individual

career, and the factors which enable or inhibit opportunities to develop and signal expertise. Seven of them (including Colin) are relatively well established, six are either retired or worked in a previous non-art job before pursuing cultural work full-time, and the final six to be introduced in the chapter are in a relatively precarious position, working on establishing themselves in their field but needing to work in non-art jobs to supplement their income. Key information about each participant is summarised in tabular form in Appendix 1 for ease of reference.

Established in the field

The first seven participants to be introduced here are relatively established in their field, and are full-time cultural workers in their primary area of practice. The first is Colin, featured at the beginning of this chapter.

'Colin', visual artist

'Colin' is from Liverpool but lives in London with his wife and young child. He works in his own art studio which he established in 2010. Colin attended art school and graduated in the mid-1990s, after which he undertook a one-year art fellowship. After the fellowship Colin then moved to London to serve an apprenticeship at an embroidery firm, where he worked for twelve years to eventually become creative director at the company. His embroidery designs were used in many high profile films and West End theatre shows, so during his employment Colin built an impressive portfolio of designs and clients, and gained some useful connections which enabled him to take the step towards becoming an independent artist and establishing his own studio. His career highlights include solo exhibitions in galleries in Hong Kong, Milan and Hamburg and a collaboration with celebrity photographer

Rankin. During the period of this research he posted a piece of his online which was commissioned by Hollywood actress Kate Beckinsale.

One of Colin's first projects after he left the embroidery company was a large scale collaborative exhibition. The project started out on a website, and he invited artists from all over the world to contribute to the piece by paying a small fee, to add a piece of their art to a grid on the website. When he received 100 contributions, he worked with the collaborating artists to recreate the piece 'offline' which was exhibited at a small gallery in London. Colin was asked by collaborators to do the same again, and he did so five more times, and the final piece was exhibited in New Orleans. Colin said in interview that the project received positive reviews and good press coverage, and after that he had his work taken on by a well-known gallery, which he describes as the big break from which his career then "snowballed".

If we consider Colin's career progression using Bourdieu's ideas of field and capital, we could say that Colin has negotiated a relatively strong positon for himself in the field, because he receives regular and high profile commissions. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Bourdieu describes the field as a "field of forces" within which agents struggle to "defend or improve their positions" (1993a:30). Positioning within the field is determined by an agent's access to resources, or capital, and positions tend to be pre-defined; it is rare that an agent can create a position for themselves in the field.

For Colin, his art school education allowed him to build cultural capital, which involves "a process of embodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor." (Bourdieu, 2011[1986]:85). This description shares some similarities with my explication of aesthetic expertise in Chapter 1, as requiring personal investment in the development of knowledge and skills. Cultural capital can be

embodied in the form of dispositions, as can aesthetic expertise, which is the mastery of skills and knowledge in cultural creation. In this sense aesthetic expertise could be considered a form of cultural capital.

However, aesthetic expertise can only be known as such once it is recognised and legitimated, after which aesthetic expertise then functions as symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu, symbolic capital is recognition received from a group (1991:72) and can be in the form of honour, prestige, reputation, charisma or fame, for example (1991:128, 230). As mentioned in Chapter 1, symbolic capital is the form assumed by other types of capital, such as economic, social or cultural, "when they are perceived and recognised as legitimate" (1991:230). Colin's work being taken on by a well-known gallery is an example of aesthetic expertise being legitimated, because it has been appropriately recognised. His apprenticeship and employment in the embroidery firm was important for building his aesthetic expertise and social capital – which are the resources derived from connections with others. The economic, social and cultural capital gained from education and employment over many years allowed Colin to eventually take the step to becoming an independent artist.

Having been able to build his aesthetic expertise through education and experience in an organisation, and subsequently establish himself in a relatively good position in his field with a degree of symbolic capital, Colin signals it on social media primarily by posting examples of his work, either completed or in progress. As illustrated at the beginning of this chapter, Colin describes the materials and techniques he uses to evidence his aesthetic knowledge and skills in appropriating that knowledge to create a work of art. To reference the work of DeFillippi and Arthur (1994) and Candace Jones (2002) on signalling career competencies, Colin is

demonstrating *know-how* competencies – he is showing he knows what to do to create a piece of art, worthy of being shown in a gallery. On social media Colin regularly acknowledges galleries showing his work or companies he works with, enhancing his status as an artist in demand, whose aesthetic expertise is being recognised by others in his field of visual art, as well as signalling his *know-whom* competencies, or career relevant networks. The "snowball" effect of Colin's career from his first collaborative project continues, and for him it is potentially enhanced by his online presence, which he feels is crucial to maintaining his reputation.

The next relatively well-established cultural worker I introduce in this research did not evince the same level of social media engagement as Colin.

Phil, composer

Philip Guyler is a composer living in Nottingham, and I came across him via a contact I made at an academic poster conference, at which I presented during the first year of this research. The person I met who put me in touch with Phil told me he was trying to use social media to promote his composition work more. This came through in interview when Phil mentioned how he wished he had an assistant to do his social media, because he did not enjoy it, but felt it was necessary. Phil is in his 30s and has been working full time as a film and TV music composer for about eight years, and did it part time for seven years before that, during which he also had other, non-creative jobs. He is fairly successful with a number of high profile commissions, such as BBC *Masterchef.*

I will show in this chapter that for most participants in this research, higher education has been key for providing a platform to build aesthetic expertise, helping cultural workers to gain aesthetic knowledge and develop practical skills to further

their practice. Phil, however, insists that in his field of TV and film composition, "qualifications do not matter". Instead, Phil sent demos out on a regular basis to different companies over a number of years, to build his portfolio, contacts and reputation in his field. Producing regular demos would have enabled him to build aesthetic expertise, as he would have been able to learn from the feedback and experiences over the years. It would have also enabled him to develop *know-how* and *know-whom* competencies which enable him to signal aesthetic expertise. Creating the demos requires a significant investment of time and economic capital, hence why Phil needed to work part-time in non-creative jobs for so long to supplement his income. Now the status of his clients, including large media companies, is an indicator of Phil's level of aesthetic expertise in his area and relatively strong position in the field, with some degree of symbolic capital. This took many years to work towards, or to put it another way, Phil has 'paid his dues'. One wonders if someone starting out in TV and music composition now would be able to succeed in the same way that Phil has, in the current, increasingly unequal and increasingly precarious cultural work context as outlined in Chapter 1.

Phil's attitude towards social media was less positive than the others in this research, but this might be because of the nature of his cultural product – audio. Social media platforms, particularly the popular ones such as Instagram, are very visual. For visual artists it can present an opportunity to experiment and use social media to really signal their aesthetic expertise, as Colin does with his posts about his paintings and his descriptions of his techniques. Mixed media and digital art also lend themselves to presentation on social media to some extent, but for Phil it is more difficult because his work cannot be 'seen', it needs to be heard. It is an example of how social media platforms too could enable or constrain opportunities to

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signal aesthetic expertise, depending on the nature of the final cultural product. Social media timelines and streams move so quickly and because of this, online attention is increasingly valuable yet increasingly elusive (Lanham, 2006). For those who do not specialise in visual output, signalling aesthetic expertise in the crowded online space could be even more difficult.

Another established cultural worker in this research whose work does lend itself to sharing on social media platforms is digital artist Anthony.

'Anthony', digital artist/curator

Anthony[2] is from Birmingham, and has a BA in Multimedia Graphics and a Master's in Digital Arts Performance, studied in the Midlands. During his degree he experimented with illustration and graphic design, and his Master's enabled him to explore his preferred area of practice – digital art. Anthony had always enjoyed computer programming and was interested in the performative aspects of digital art. After his Master's he began running 'hackerspace' events with a friend in Birmingham, allowing him to network and share knowledge on computer coding, and it was through these events that he became interested in 'glitch art'. Anthony describes glitch art as "art made from errors" in digital technology, and is his specialist area of digital art practice. After visiting a conference on glitch art in Chicago in 2010 he offered to curate and host the same conference in Birmingham the following year, from which he began to gain recognition in the city "for being an artist", to use his words. This has led to some high-profile exhibitions at galleries in San Francisco, Rio de Janiero and Brussels. Anthony has also worked on projects with the Tate Gallery in London. Being able to participate in and attend international

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[2]Anthony asked for his real name not to be used.

exhibitions and conferences is expensive, and so Anthony does not appear to be struggling for money. His ability to attend events and raise his profile abroad has of course been advantageous for his career development, and he has been able to access opportunities that many could not afford to.

Unlike Phil and Colin who are independent cultural workers, Anthony currently holds a curator role with a publicly funded arts organisation in Birmingham. This curator role is his permanent job alongside various art projects and commissions, some of which have been publicly funded also. During the data collection period for this research Anthony shared an article on Twitter about arts funding cuts in Birmingham, accompanied with his comment "F*ck this shit I'm out". Having known Anthony for some time personally, and being familiar with what he does on social media, I knew he was not entirely serious in this Tweet about quitting his career. However, the Tweet expresses some anger at cuts in arts funding in his area. Such funding cuts could affect his future opportunities to apply for project funding and access the opportunities which have helped his career so far. His use of expletives would probably not be seen on the profile of someone such as Colin, for example, but is it a risk to his signals of expertise? The nature of the story he shared means possibly not, it received two likes and one retweet on Twitter at the time of capture, and artists following him are likely to have shared his anger at the story. Some of his audience may, however, interpret it differently.

As well as the projects and events he has been involved in, Anthony said that he owes his success to constantly talking about his practice on the internet – sharing tips and tricks, creating video tutorials, and Tweeting about his work – signalling his know-how (Jones, 2002). This sharing of knowledge is the primary way in which Anthony signals his aesthetic expertise online, and he also used the interview

situation to signal his expertise to me too. During the interview he took a photo of me on his phone, and used coding to 'glitch' it, as in Figure 6:

Figure 6 'Anthony' glitch art

I felt this was an example of fluid and embodied expertise as described by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) and Becker (2008). Anthony demonstrated in a matter of minutes his knowledge of computer codes, and skills in appropriating that knowledge to create a piece of glitch art from a simple photograph. This is a different type of aesthetic expertise compared to, say, a painter who takes years to finish a piece.

The cultural codes and classifications of glitch art are different from painting, in the same way that writing and composition are also different areas entirely. Yet it still requires knowledge and skills in a particular creative form, which take training and practice to perfect. Anthony said in interview that collaboration is important in digital art, because "it still sits on the fringes of contemporary art", and it is difficult to make the same kind of money as, say, painters can. The status of glitch art in

comparison to other forms as Anthony mentions may be a matter of taste. Glitch art is a relatively new form of art which is not held in as high regard as other art forms. However when 'pop art' emerged as a movement in the 1960s and 70s, that was considered by critics to be a form of 'low' art because of its re-appropriation of popular culture, yet it endures today as one of the most important art movements of the previous century. Again the aesthetic expertise involved in pop art may not require meticulous brush work but required other forms of aesthetic knowledge and skill, exhibited by the likes of Andy Warhol and Eduardo Paolozzi, two important proponents of pop art. Glitch art, as a form of computerised digital arts performance, is a niche form with a relatively small but collaborative community of practitioners according to Anthony, and so it is yet to be widely recognised.

I argue throughout this thesis that expertise requires recognition and legitimation by others of status. Though glitch art is not as widely known as an art form compared to painting, for example, Anthony has been recognised more generally "as an artist", as he said in interview, and this is evinced by his international exhibitions. Furthermore, in 2017 he was commissioned by a world-renowned television music channel to create a logo design. Operating within an emerging field and self-describing as an "early adopter" of new technologies and techniques, Anthony has developed and secured his particular form of aesthetic expertise and his position in the field. His expertise is evident in his sharing of video tutorials online and his 'glitching' of my picture during the interview – signalling *know-how* competencies (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994; Jones, 2002). Anthony would not necessarily have gained these skills without his university education, as it involves specialist computer knowledge combined with aesthetic knowledge gained from his undergraduate degree.

As with Colin, the case of Anthony demonstrates the role of a university education in forming a basis for developing aesthetic expertise, which when signalled effectively and thus recognised, can lead to success in the form of high profile commissions and regular work. Put another way, in his field of glitch art, Anthony has some degree of symbolic capital. The challenge when aesthetic expertise is recognised is that in signalling it online, it is also put at risk. For example, when Anthony reveals his process in online tutorials, anyone could copy his work and pass it off as their own. When I asked Anthony about this in interview, he said he hoped people would copy him. This is because even if others used exactly the same techniques as Anthony the nature of glitch art – derived from mistakes - means that the final outcome can rarely be repeated. He maintained that the uniqueness of artists in his field lies in how people talk about their work, and the 'signature move' they have developed which makes their work unique. Anthony's confidence in sharing his work and techniques online, while risky, also signals and affirms his aesthetic expertise, which includes his embodied knowledge and dispositions.

Though Anthony's area of practice, by his admission, sits "on the fringes" of contemporary art, on social media he signals his *know-how* and embodied dispositions, including an eye for the artistic in digital form, which is also a matter of taste. Dispositions and taste form a part of what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as the habitus, which is "characteristic of different classes and class fractions" (1984:6). Anthony's habitus of an artist working with the digital enables him to create and appreciate digital art as art – an appreciation shared by his peers who recognise him "as an artist". Access to relevant education to develop aesthetic expertise certainly helped Anthony in this regard, and enabled him to establish a strong position in his field.

Another established cultural worker in her field is Robyn, who like Colin and Phil works on a freelance basis, but like Anthony also applies for publicly funded arts projects.

Robyn, visual artist

Robyn Woolston is a visual artist from and living in Liverpool. She is in her 40s and has been doing visual art for about 20 years. Robyn has a degree in film and moving image, and shortly after graduating she was commissioned by ITV to produce a short film, which Robyn described in interview as a "big break". However, she did not want to restrict herself to filmmaking as a practice, so she studied a second degree in fine art, and now combines both moving image and fine art in her work. In 2012 Robyn won the Liverpool Art Prize, which provided recognition of her aesthetic expertise, and led to a solo show at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. Candace Jones (2002) identifies that for signalling expertise, winning awards is one of the status-enhancing strategies (2002:217) which helps cultural workers to build their reputation and gain further recognition. Since winning the award Robyn has exhibited in galleries across the UK and Europe, and also in Australia, and had her work featured in various publications including the National Geographic Traveller magazine. This widespread recognition legitimates Robyn's aesthetic expertise and earns her a degree of symbolic capital. Like Colin and Anthony, Robyn developed aesthetic expertise through higher education in both film and fine art, and the subsequent recognition has allowed her to establish a position in the field as a mixed media artist with the ability to utilise both moving image and fine art in her work.

Robyn spends part of her time applying for funding and looking for opportunities such as projects, installations and artist residencies, which provide

exposure and potential for further development. Robyn was on a residency during the social media data collection period, so she did not post any of her own work to signal expertise, instead posting about the residency and her experiences. In interview Robyn used the analogy of a coffee shop to describe how she operates as an artist and how she promotes herself:

> "Coffee shops are incredibly popular now, and when you go into a coffee shop coffee isn't the only thing they sell. They sell cakes, crisps, water and biscuits, they sell lots of different things and I think your Twitter feed is exactly the same, meaning that I don't talk about just my work because that would be really boring for people. I do know people that do that and that is fine, but I think you lose a certain number of people so I am kind of aware."

> (Robyn)

In this quote Robyn is demonstrating some evidence of her social media and entrepreneurial expertise – she is aware of how best to relate to her audience and engage them on social media. She is also aware of what she is offering as an artist, which is more than just her art. This resonates with the suggestion by Gerber and Childress (2017) that artists are increasingly valuing their labour based on "service provision across contexts" (2017:235) rather than the final cultural product alone.

Robyn appears to be the type of artist Gerber and Childress refer to, positioning herself as someone who gets involved with projects and commissions. Her involvement with such projects forms a part of her expertise signalling on social media. She ensures projects are somehow related to her practice so she can continue building and mobilising her aesthetic expertise, for which she primarily wants to gain recognition from potential funders and commissioners.

Another mixed media artist who to some degree also relies on funded opportunities is Katriona.

Katriona, mixed media artist/researcher

Katriona Beales was born in Liverpool and is based in London. She specialises in sculpture, video and installation for her art practice. Katriona studied an undergraduate degree at the Liverpool School of Art, and after she graduated in 2005 she became part of some artist-led spaces in the city. Then in 2010 she and her husband decided to move to London, where she studied a postgraduate diploma and Master's at Chelsea College of Arts. Since then she has been running artist-led projects with children, young people and galleries, to earn a regular income alongside her practice. A few weeks before the interview with me Katriona had won funding from the Wellcome Trust to work on her practice. Winning funding for individual projects is extremely competitive in any sector, so as with Robyn winning the Liverpool Art Prize, for Katriona securing this funding serves as a legitimation of her expertise. This is because others in a relatively powerful position - funding bodies who decide who should be allocated money for research/art - have deemed her work worthy of further funding. The funding will help Katriona to engage in research about her own practice; she says she is interested in the aesthetics of internet addiction, to which her work responds.

As with Anthony and Robyn mentioned so far, it is unlikely that Katriona would have been able to develop her aesthetic expertise, reflexivity in her practice, or have the knowledge to put together a successful funding bid if she had not gone to university. Katriona's aesthetic and academic knowledge which was developed throughout higher education informed her successful funding bid, and is an important

next step in the securing and signalling of aesthetic expertise. Figure 7 features an example of Katriona's work on her Twitter cover page:

Figure 7 Katriona Twitter profile

Katriona utilises a variety of digital techniques in her work, which require knowledge of and skills in computer software. These technical skills are combined with her aesthetic 'eye' and knowledge, developed through arts education.

During the data collection period Katriona signalled expertise on social media by posting a combination of her own work, the work of others and arts funding news. She demonstrated that she was producing work and in demand, but also that she is 'in the know' – demonstrating *know-whom* competencies. She posted a link to a new video she had created, saying that she had been 'playing around' with a particular type of software, shown in the Tweet in Figure 8:
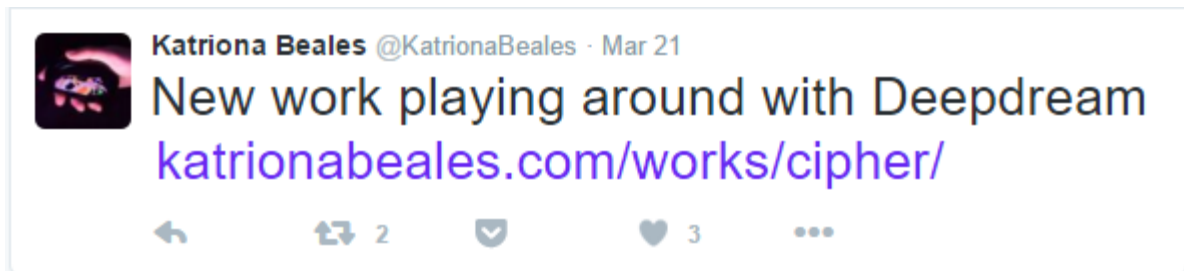
Figure 8 Katriona playing around Tweet

The idea of 'playing around' provides a sense of Katriona 'being an artist' because she is not working necessarily to a procedure or guidelines, she is experimenting and 'playing' with her practice, learning new things. 'Playing around' in this sense is not procrastinating or being distracted, but it involves trying something new and working on expertise, and this is what Katriona signals. Expertise for artists is not fixed or possessed like a property. It is worked on, played around with, and importantly, it requires legitimation, and Katriona's was legitimated in the form of the prestigious funding award.

The next cultural worker to introduce is, like Robyn and Katriona, also based in Liverpool.

Cherie, visual artist

Cherie Grist is a visual artist and co-owner of an artist studio, 104 Duke Street, with Colette Lilley who is also a participant in this research. Cherie studied a degree in fashion style and photography at the London College of Fashion, before becoming a photographer's assistant for two years in commercial and fashion editorial. During that time as a photographer's assistant Cherie began painting, and decided she wanted to become an independent artist and get a studio. She could not afford to live and rent a studio in London, so she moved back to Liverpool. Cherie told me in interview she needed a studio because the large scale of her paintings meant she

had little space at home to work on them, and also because she wanted "somewhere to go" to work. Alison Bain (2004) notes how an external studio space is important for women artists to self-identify, because the studio space serves as a marker of one's professional status as an artist, rather than a 'dabbling lady painter' as Bain describes. The studio was important for Cherie in this regard, to affirm her shift from working for someone else, to working for herself and making a career out of painting. Alison Bain also highlights that an external studio space is expensive and mostly unattainable for many women, as it was at one point for Cherie, who needed to move from London to Liverpool to find an affordable space. She initially used Wolstenholme Creative Space in Liverpool which hosted 36 artists, but it closed down because it became unsustainable for the owners.

Cherie met Collette at Wolstenholme, and they decided to find a space of their own to rent out to other artists. They found an old print shop in Liverpool and converted it into artist studios, which at the time of interview was used by six other artists, in addition to Cherie and Colette. The rent they charge helps to run the studio, and Cherie works full-time as an artist, able to sustain an income from sales of her paintings. She said in interview that a few sales came from Instagram followers, who saw her paintings online and wanted to buy them. Selling paintings, she said, was not her initial intent when posting work on Instagram. She did not think people would want to buy relatively expensive, large scale paintings they have only seen on social media and not in person.

In terms of signalling expertise on social media, Cherie posted some examples of her work, either in progress or finished and hanging in her art studio. On Instagram she mainly reposted fashion photography, demonstrating where she gains inspiration for her practice. For example, the Instagram post in Figure 9:

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Figure 9 Cherie Instagram inspiration

Here Cherie has posted an image from a designer fashion shoot, advertising Gucci.

Her reposting of this image is a part of Cherie's signalling of aesthetic expertise,

because it demonstrates which elements of the fashion and the photograph she

takes inspiration from through her use of the hashtags #pattern #clashing and

knowledge of fashion using the hashtags #prefall #2016. Her undergraduate degree

in fashion photography would have contributed to her knowledge about fashion and

her aesthetic 'eye' as mentioned with Anthony and Katriona, which can only really be

developed through an aesthetic education and/or a repeated exposure to aesthetic

forms in one's upbringing, leading to an inculcation of aesthetic dispositions or

habitus (Bourdieu, 1984).

On a related point, on Instagram Cherie is demonstrating a particular taste –

of high fashion and artistic photography, which informs her work. This 'designer

taste' she demonstrates is unattainable and inaccessible to most, yet aspirational for

some. In interview Cherie mentioned that her paintings are expensive. By signalling

her aspirational/expensive 'inspiration' and taste online, she is on some level

communicating something about the value of her paintings, or at least how she values them, in order to appeal to a certain type of customer who can afford (or aspire to afford) Gucci, and thus might think the same of her paintings. Cherie's use of Instagram as a space to post work and inspiration, and also as a 'soft' marketing tool for potential buyers, is an example of her social media and entrepreneurial expertise. She is able to use social media to enhance aesthetic expertise signalling for the benefit of her career, and as a result she can work full-time on her painting, arguably the primary goal for aspiring artists.

Though moving away from London may not have been Cherie's ideal scenario initially, being located in Liverpool does not matter when she can sell her expensive paintings online, potentially to anyone around the world. Cherie would not have been able to achieve this without her degree and subsequent work experience, which helped her gain the knowledge of fashion and art needed to communicate the aspirational, designer tastes she exhibits on Instagram, and are fundamentally the inspiration for her art.

The final cultural worker to introduce from the 'established' group has the longest career of all the participants in this research.

John, photographer

John Davies, 67, describes himself as a professional photographer. He specialises in documentary photography, particularly of urban and rural landscapes. John studied photography in Nottingham and graduated in 1974, after which he began taking pictures of landscapes in England, Scotland and Ireland. In 1981 he won a research fellowship at the Sheffield School of Art, during which he began documenting urban landscapes. This work was eventually published in his first major photography book

titled *A Green and Pleasant Land,* published in 1987. Selected work from his monograph was exhibited at the Photographer's Gallery in London and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, a particular highlight of his career.

Since then John has worked on commissions around the world, including in Spain, Holland, Belgium, Portugal, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, where his work has been published in monographs in those countries. His work has been published in 19 photography monographs in total. John has exhibited in galleries worldwide and has some of his work permanently on show in galleries in London, Los Angeles and Paris. His aesthetic expertise in photography, developed through his degree and subsequent work and commissions, has been recognised and legitimated in his field, given that his work is on display around the world, and he continues to receive high profile commissions.

John's relatively impressive portfolio and expertise was not immediately apparent from the social media analysis alone, because John uses Twitter mainly for his more recent passion, which is environmental activism. Because John is relatively well established compared to most participants in this thesis, he felt less of a need to use social media to signal his aesthetic expertise. During the data collection period John mainly posted his photography to help causes which are important to him. This is typified in this Twitter post in Figure 10:

Figure 10 John photo

In this Tweet John has tagged galleries, the Parks Alliance UK and the Telegraph magazine, in an attempt to gain exposure for his photographs online. John told me in interview that social media platforms are an "advertising tool" for him; "to show people that I'm still alive and kicking and doing stuff." He said he did not like to post too much of his photography on social media because of potential copyright issues; he said: "you sign away your copyright when you put pictures on Facebook or Twitter. They have the right to exploit your pictures in whatever way they like." This is an important point for cultural workers using social media – because anything that is posted on the platforms is owned by the platform, and content can be stored and used in ways that users cannot anticipate.

A cultural product, when posted on social media as part of signalling expertise, becomes something else. It becomes a part of the platform and the property of platform owners. Not only that, but the mediation of the cultural product on social media - its distribution, how people interact with it, where it is shared –

occurs from the moment it is posted, and continues when the creator is offline (Gillespie, 2014). John is concerned about the risk social media platforms present to the integrity of his work, because he does not know how it could be used by platform owners. Such issues require further exploration and would be a useful avenue of research in cultural work.

The first seven participants introduced in this section are all relatively well-established in their field. Almost all of them have at least an arts-related degree. For Phil's work in composition, he insisted that it was more about the contacts you could make in the industry – or what I refer to as *know-whom* competencies – than about qualifications. I have shown how the established cultural workers have a certain 'eye' for the aesthetic, a habitus of an artist which enables them to create and appreciate the aesthetic using a variety of media. Their higher education qualifications enabled them to build cultural capital and aesthetic expertise. In all seven cases, they have dedicated their entire life of work and study to their practice, and are now full-time cultural workers whose aesthetic expertise has been legitimated as such, and they have all established strong positions in their fields. The next group of six participants to be introduced are either retired or have worked in other non-art jobs in a previous career before attempting to forge full-time careers in cultural work.

Retired or career change

Patrick, photographer

Patrick Higgins, based in Liverpool, is a former head teacher who began his career in commercial and fine art photography after retirement. He told me that he had done photography all his life "but always in a more amateur way" compared to what he does now. He specialises in architecture, landscape and abstract photography, and

his work has been exhibited in galleries around the world, including at the Louvre in Paris as part of a digital exhibit. He has also had images published in several books and magazines.

Patrick described how his work has benefitted from displaying it on social media – when he began his photography more seriously he tried to get space in local galleries in Liverpool. He said that the footfall at the gallery was very low, and he sold nothing but it cost him £600 in framing and mounting. Yet in a day on Twitter he said that he can get his work seen by thousands for free, and receive feedback directly.

However, as I have shown so far this chapter, exhibiting physically is an indication that work has been recognised, and those who have been able to exhibit around the world can show that their aesthetic expertise is legitimate. Those participants, including Anthony, Colin, John, Robyn and Cherie, are working on their practice full time, built on the exposure and validation of exhibitions. Though posting on social media could play a role in legitimation of expertise and/or and generate an income, exhibiting in physical locations globally which is more difficult to do, remains important for validation of aesthetic expertise and earning symbolic capital.

Patrick told me in interview about his systematic social media strategy, which involves posting his photographs on Twitter three times each day using scheduling software, tagging and mentioning relevant photo accounts which could retweet his work, as shown in Figure 11:
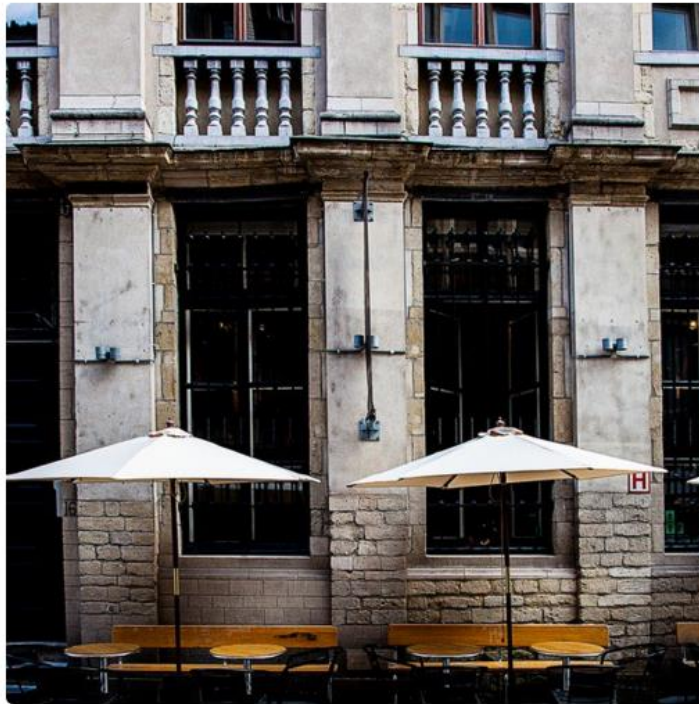
Figure 11 Patrick Twitter photo

Here Patrick uses the mention feature on Twitter, tagging Twitter accounts associated with Brussels and photography, to maximise exposure of his work online. He is consciously targeting those related to Brussels, where this picture was taken, in the hope they will share it and give Patrick greater exposure. According to Patrick, this strategy works because it has resulted in his work being exhibited digitally at the Louvre, and it has also led to several commissions and sales of his prints. So there is a possibility that social media exposure could result in physical gallery showings. This targeted tagging is different to how Colin and Phil mention companies they have already worked with on social media posts, for example, as they are signalling *know-whom* competencies. The accounts Patrick tags are not necessarily known to him or companies he works with, they are tagged to maximise exposure, rather than signal competencies.

Patrick told me that he has a "cold-blooded" approach to social media; he tends not to interact with other photographers or artists, he only uses it to advertise his work and tag other accounts which could retweet his photography. This is a strategy which does not necessarily work for everyone as I will show throughout this thesis, but it seems to work for Patrick.

Another retiree who decided to pursue cultural work as more than a hobby was Maria.

Maria, textile artist

Maria Walker is in her mid-50s and lives in Cheshire. She was an accountant for most of her working life, and then took early retirement to concentrate on textile art. Maria did a foundation course in art and then a degree in creative practice at Manchester Metropolitan University. She did this part-time but quit after four years because she grew bored with the course, and felt that her practice was evolving as she was starting to exhibit work. She then reached a point where she was "getting stuck" with her practice, so she took a Master's in Fine Art at the University of Chester.

Maria is interested in memories and old letters, and she told me in interview that before her Master's her practice consisted of textile responses to letters using photographs and words, which Maria felt was "obvious for the viewer… when the viewer goes to see that exhibition it's quite easy for them to see what I'm trying to say, it's all there in black and white." She instead wanted to develop her practice to create nuanced work. Her Master's helped to widen her practice in this way and she describes her current work as "more abstract and more contemporary, so I don't always like to tell the viewer what it's about in the big installations and you get a

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bodily reaction to it rather than looking at it." In this sense, the Master's was important for Maria to build aesthetic expertise, help her to create nuanced work which challenges the viewer, rather than creating what she felt were 'obvious' responses to work. The qualifications helped her to build cultural capital and develop her aesthetic eye, and such reflexivity is important in order to develop as an artist and work on aesthetic expertise.

Maria has been exhibiting work for around 12 years, and she said in interview that when she started exhibiting, she felt she was creating "professionally and not just as a hobby". So for Maria, the recognition which comes from participating in exhibitions helped her self-identify as a 'professional' artist, as did the Master's qualification. She initially joined a textile group and participated in exhibitions with it, and when she had produced enough work of her own she began to be accepted for solo shows. She has exhibited in galleries around the UK, mainly in the North West of England and in North Wales.

On social media Maria posted some examples of her work, such as the Twitter post in Figure 12:

Figure 12 Maria Twitter post

Here Maria is using the hashtags #embroidery and #textilearts to not only describe what she has done but also to include her work within those particular categories within Twitter, so her work would appear if anyone searched for those hashtags at the time. Maria also posted regularly about Cross Street Arts, the studio and collective where she works on her practice, and also about various events and the art of others, to demonstrate her involvement with her local arts scene. A lot of Maria's posts were of her either working or making things at home, using the #handmade hashtag. The #handmade posts in particular demonstrate a 'domestic taste' possibly intended to resonate with other women as a strategy for signalling expertise, which I examine in Chapter 6.

Another woman cultural worker in this research who had a different career before working in the arts was Clare Smith.

Clare, artist/craft maker

Clare Smith self-describes as an 'artist and occasional craft maker' according to her Twitter profile. Based in Dover, she is also co-owner of Dover Arts Development with a fellow artist from the area. She studied a degree in Oriental Studies at Cambridge, after which she began a career as a translator whilst volunteering for arts organisations in her spare time. Clare moved to Luxembourg to do this, before moving back to the UK in 2000 to pursue her ambition of becoming a full-time artist. When she came back she studied another degree, this time a BA in fine art at the University for the Creative Arts, and then gained a Master's in fine art from Central Saint Martins in London. In interview she said that when she was applying to universities the first time round, before Cambridge, her family told her that she needed to choose between academia and art for a career, and she chose the former, a decision she told me she regretted. Her career as a translator abroad paid well however, and meant she could afford to go back in to higher education in London. She continues to do some translation work from home to supplement her income. Clare met the co-owner of Dover Arts Development at a networking meeting in London, and after a few meetings they decided to start the company in 2006. Like many of the participants in this thesis, collaboration was key for Claire to make the next step in her art career, and Dover Arts Development enabled her to become a recognised figure in the local arts scene.

Clare appears to come from a relatively comfortable, middle-class background and so she was able to retrain and gain an aesthetic education, in addition to her prestigious degree from Cambridge. Furthermore, the income she gains from continuing translation work takes the pressure off needing to make money from her artistic work.

Clare signalled expertise on social media by posting examples of her work, and Tweeting about general artist news and news from Dover Arts Development. A sample of her social media posts are in Figure 13:

Figure 13 Clare art work

In the above Tweet Clare displays one of her paintings, describing the materials used, such as Chinese paper. She also uses the hashtag #studio to suggest she is working in a studio. The #studio hashtag may be a marker of 'professionalism', of someone working towards being recognised as a 'serious' artist. In the Tweet above

the artwork she links to an article she has written for A-N The Artists Information Company, about a piece she has sold. She says in the article: "I am feeling very chuffed – my installation piece, Inherited, is sold. It will be reconfigured slightly to live happily in a frame and in a new home. So now I have to think of a new piece of work as I was about to submit it for an open call!" It is unclear how she managed to sell the work or who it was sold to, but the sale appeared to be unintended. The blog post about selling work is a status enhancement strategy (Jones, 2002), to show that Clare's work is in demand, and also to demonstrate her association with A-N, which is the largest artists' membership organisation in the UK, according to their website.

Clare's sharing of information from A-N and Dover Arts Development positions her as someone 'in the know' and with *know-whom* competencies (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994; Jones, 2002). In my work with Annette Naudin (forthcoming) we highlight how sharing news and articles on social media can make someone appear knowledgeable, potentially signalling their expertise in a different way to the outright communication of competencies and credentials. In her sharing of news online Clare is demonstrating that she is 'in the know' - heavily involved with local arts and potentially in an authoritative position in relation to key arts news and events in the area. In this way Clare's involvement with Dover Arts Development may also contribute to her symbolic capital, as the position is key to her visibility in the local arts scene.

Like Patrick and Clare, the next participant to introduce, Abi, also changed from a non-art career to pursuing a creative practice seriously.

Abi, visual artist

Abi Burlingham is a writer-turned-visual artist living in Derbyshire. She is in her 50s

and has one daughter. She has a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and History, and worked in administration for many years before retraining to be a teacher, teaching adults English. Abi then started creative writing around 2004 and was a professional writer for ten years, having six children's books published during that time. She then decided to concentrate her efforts on visual art. On her website, she describes herself as a "self-taught artist dabbling in acrylics, oil pastels, oils, pen and pencil, and am also a published author." Abi's choice of words to describe herself are interesting – particularly the use of the word 'dabbling' which implies what she does is not 'serious'. The word dabbling has been used disparagingly in the past in reference to women artists (Nochlin, 1988). Alison Bain describes the pervasive myth of the "Sunday afternoon dabbling lady painter" with "the luxury of financial support from her husband" (2005:33). The notion of 'dabbling' then, suggests Abi is not necessarily intent on forging a full time cultural work career, and has the privilege not to. This is not essentially afforded by any income from 'her husband' in the grossly reductive and sexist myth highlighted by Bain, but because Abi continues to teach English to adults so still maintains an income from her 'other career'.

Abi's description as 'self-taught' has connotations of someone who is 'not expert' in a conventional sense because they have not studied in college or university, and received formal training in the "aesthetic codes and classifications" Bourdieu speaks of which he argues are required for artistic competence. Abi is a member of ABNA, or the Association for British Naïve Artists which aims to "Bring Naïve Art more credibility in the art world, and to strive to have a museum for British Naïve Art somewhere in the British Isles" (ABNA, 2017). In this, Abi has aligned herself with naïve art and artists, defined as "any form of visual art that is created by a person who lacks the formal education and training that a professional artist

undergoes" (ibid.). So while, in a way, she seems to acknowledge her lack of aesthetic expertise in her self-description, she is also part of an association which aims to raise its credibility in the art world. In this way, she is attempting to reconcile her lack of formal aesthetic training by aligning herself with ABNA, as well as having a profile on *Arts Derbyshire*, which is a directory for finding artists and a space for people to self-identify as an artist.

Though she is not completely reliant on income from her art, Abi uses social media to promote her prints, which she sells on Etsy. Etsy is an online "creative marketplace" specialising in "handmade and vintage items" (Etsy, 2017) where anyone who can create such products can sell them. Anyone on Etsy can self-identify as an artist or craftsperson, but in order to sell work effectively they need to have some knowledge and skills in marketing and selling, including some social media knowledge. With this in mind, a cultural worker with a high level of aesthetic expertise may be lost among those who can sell their work effectively and use all of the promotional channels available to them. This is an example of my suggestion in Chapter 1 that part of entrepreneurial and social media expertise involves being able to manage and develop these increasingly crucial skills alongside the primary creative activity, which helps to produce the product to sell.

Even though Abi began her career in cultural work as a writer, her presence on social media was part of the transition from writer to artist. She said in interview that she had always created art as a hobby, but without showing or selling it, and then her work started receiving some attention on Facebook which encouraged her to take it further. However, she needed to change profile descriptions, initially to 'writer/artist' but she was conscious that people might be confused about what she offers, so she decided to describe herself only as an artist. In this sense Abi is

reflexive about how she self-identifies; she thought that describing herself as an artist and writer is potentially confusing for customers. By identifying only as an artist, Abi aligns herself with a clear position in the field, and it is an example of her marketing and entrepreneurial expertise because she has realised the importance of a coherent product offering for potential customers.

On social media I found that Abi often shared finished versions of her own work, linking to the item on Etsy for people to potentially buy, as in Figure 14:

Figure 14 Abi work on Twitter

Abi tended not to describe the techniques used in her creative work. Instead she offered a simple description, often naming her paintings, such as 'Bird Call' in the above post. In interview Abi said that she only ever posted finished paintings on social media "because for me it's very much about the end product." She did not

share work in progress and preferred not to post updates on paintings, because "the job I have is to create the art, that's first and foremost and if I'm not on social media I'm not doing that." This suggests that Abi sees social media as serving primarily a marketing and promotional purpose, an 'add-on' to her creative practice, whereas for others such as Colin the use of social media is integral to the practice, used for sharing knowledge, discussing techniques and providing nuanced signals of expertise.

Abi's alignment with 'naïve' art may have some bearing on her confidence to signal aesthetic expertise in the way Colin does, but it does not mean she has not developed any. It is entirely possible for those with no formal training to be expert. Individuals can self-teach artistic principles, work on their expertise and be legitimated too, if they have the means to buy art materials and the time to devote to it of course. Nevertheless in her social media presence Abi tends not to signal her expertise as explicitly as others in this research. I have suggested in work elsewhere on women entrepreneurs (Naudin and Patel, forthcoming) that women tend to downplay their expertise and achievements on social media. In the particular case I focus on with Naudin on women entrepreneurs, we argue that "in performing expertise, women's status both as entrepreneurs and as cultural workers are entangled" (p.3) as they negotiate requirements for self-promotion, maintaining a professional identity and engaging in affective strategies to relate to others online. In a similar vein, Duffy and Pruchinewska (2017) suggest a similar negotiation for women entrepreneurs online in what they term the 'digital double bind', where women tend to engage in soft self-promotion, or "branding the self in ways deemed 'organic' or 'subtle'" (2017:845) as an antithesis to the masculinised idea of aggressive self-promotion.

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In this research Abi is not alone in her reticence to explicitly signal her aesthetic expertise in the way Colin, Patrick and others in this research do, instead opting for what Duffy and Pruchinewska term "interactive intimacy" or "relation-building practices" (ibid.). This was particularly common among the women in this research, and I explore this in greater depth in Chapter 6. Abi is an interesting participant in this research because of her alignment with naïve art, managed alongside her 'professional' online presence which consists of only posting finished work and retaining a sales focus, yet also exercising some relational strategies to connect with other artists, mainly women. Professionalism is distinct from expertise because it is associated with appearing professional and exercising professional traits (Barbour, 2016), such as competence and reliability. If we consider DeFillippi and Arthur's (1994) career competencies of *know-why, know-how and know-whom* already mentioned and drawn upon by Candace Jones (2002), being able to signal expertise, then, does involve a degree of competence and professionalism.

Even though she has self-identified as a professional writer in the past, Abi refuses to identify as a professional artist, because of her lack of formal training. But are qualifications essential for a cultural work career, and to be considered an expert? They were not for Phil, mentioned earlier, who instead sent demos out to companies over a long period of time, and learned through experience. Abi is possibly compensating for her lack of formal training with a 'professional' looking online presence, which is also important in order to be successful at sales, as customers will want to purchase from someone who seems reliable and able to deliver goods in a timely manner.

Another cultural worker who did not receive any formal arts training, but now creates cultural goods to sell to customers online, is portrait artist Gillian.

Gillian, portrait artist

Gillian Ussher is from Ireland and lives in Derbyshire. She specialises in pet and animal portraits, often based on photographs sent to her by customers. Gillian runs her portrait business from home, where she has a studio. Her husband looks after their young son, as Gillian is able to earn enough from the pet and animal portraits to support the whole family. She worked in administration for years before deciding to work on becoming an independent portrait artist full-time. Her story was featured in *The Guardian* in May 2016 (Jenkin, 2016) as part of a feature about managing cash flow for freelancers. The article describes Gillian's initial struggles to manage her money, after "quitting a job she hated" to "living on loans for two years" to try and start a pet portrait career. The article suggests that Gillian has endured the financial struggles and sacrifice which is common in biographies of entrepreneurs (Richard Branson, for example) and so it seems she 'paid her dues' first before she reached success. Gillian self-identifies as an artist, but also as an entrepreneur, evident in her published tips on managing cash flow, and operating through the company title 'Perpetual Portraits' rather than using her own name.

She told me in interview that her success is owed to social media; when she first started out with the pet portrait business she did trade shows, which did not work well for her. She decided to start using social media, which she did not like to use personally, but noticed other people sharing artwork on Facebook and Twitter and felt that her own work was as good, if not better. She read marketing blogs and watched social media marketing tutorials to learn what to do. Unlike most of the participants in this thesis, Gillian does not have an arts-related degree. She has, however, always maintained a strong passion for it, and often drew and visited art

galleries whenever she could. In Figure 15 is an example of her work posted on Facebook:

Figure 15 Gillian Facebook work

On social media Gillian often posts the initial images sent to her by the pet owners, and her recreation of the picture, evident in this post. This serves as an indication of her aesthetic expertise: her ability to recreate images in great detail, which is key to her success. This type of post is evidence of her skills and also 'advertises' her services to potential customers on social media. Because she has not received an aesthetic education in the way most participants in this thesis have, Gillian's aesthetic expertise lies primarily in traditional, realist art as opposed to the contemporary art of other participants such as Anthony and Cherie. Her work does not get shown in galleries and therefore has not been legitimated in the way, say, Colin's expertise has, because Gillian is providing a consumer service rather than art

to be sold for thousands at a gallery. Yet, Gillian is an example of how signalling on social media can pay off, and how social media brings about opportunities for aesthetic expertise to be signalled and enhanced. She has also developed social media and entrepreneurial expertise to gain online visibility and attract clients from all over the world. She told me in interview that half of her customers are from the United States.

The wider media coverage of Gillian also helped her gain some recognition. In an interview with the *Talented Ladies Club* Gillian is described as a "mum" who has "turned her passion for art into a thriving business" (Martin, 2015). This is a common type of discourse surrounding the creative, 'stay at home mum' cultural workers, or 'mumpreneurs' capable of turning their passion into a living, yet this can also serve to reinforce patriarchy because women remain in the home, where their 'place' is (Taylor, 2015). These discourses around working from home, managing families, and turning hobbies or passions into businesses, also have connotations of amateurism (Luckman, 2015) which could make it difficult for women to secure and signal aesthetic expertise. Such stories risk undermining the hard work and skill which women put into developing their aesthetic expertise, instead foregrounding their status as 'mothers', and I explore this theme in greater detail in Chapter 6. Though women such as Gillian receive deserved recognition in these media stories and could potentially inspire other women to do the same, the stories place so much emphasis on women's domestic lives that their expertise is overshadowed. One participant in this thesis who self-identifies with her domestic status is Lisa.

Lisa, writer

Lisa Shambrook describes herself as a "stay at home mum" and a writer. She lives in Wales and is originally from Brighton. Lisa has been a "stay at home mum" for most of her life, since she got married 25 years ago. She told me in interview how 15 years ago she was inspired by the *Harry Potter* book series to start writing seriously. Lisa self-published her first novel in 2011 and at the time of interview she had three books self-published in total, and has worked collaboratively with other authors on anthologies. Though she was inspired by JK Rowling and *Harry Potter,* Lisa has always held a passion for writing and books, as she says on her website: "I began weaving intricate stories inside my imagination from a young age, but these days my words find themselves bursting forth in the forms of flash fiction, short stories and novels".

During my online scoping of Twitter hashtags such as #Tuesdaybookblog, which Lisa is involved in, I found a large majority of users of the hashtag were women, who described themselves primarily as 'mothers' and 'wives'. From this, and what Lisa told me in interview, motherhood and family appear to be central to these women authors' self-identification online. I suggest this is because it helps them to form affiliations and bonds with other women which could help with a collective raising of visibility online. JK Rowling was a "stay at home mum" when she started writing, and so it is not surprising that she may have inspired many other women to do the same. But is the "stay at home mum" status detrimental to signals of expertise? Potentially, because of how expertise is generally considered to be a masculine quality, as argued by Lorraine Code (1991) whose book *What can she know?* highlights how women's expertise has been denigrated and denied throughout history. I discuss this in more depth in Chapter 6.

Lisa also runs an Etsy shop with her daughter, who is in her twenties, called *Amarinth Alchemy.* In their online shop they sell gifts made from repurposed old books. Lisa's daughter taught her how to use Facebook and Twitter, and she has found it very helpful for connecting with fellow writers, as well as promoting her own work. She said in interview that she is an introverted person, so communicating with other writers and joining Facebook groups has been very helpful for gaining some visibility and sales for her books. The networking and communities online are an important part of how Lisa signals expertise, because her involvement with other writers in anthologies is helpful for collective, reciprocal modes of promotion, what I refer to as 'mutual aid' (De Peuter and Cohen, 2015).

Lisa also writes a weekly blog post, which she uses to signal her writing ability and engage followers, and as she said in interview, potentially drive sales of her books. Because she is not affiliated to a publisher, Lisa finds it difficult to gain widespread visibility for her work and so social media is her primary means of promotion. Relying on social media completely for networking and sales, however, is potentially problematic because of how posts and artistic work are owned and mediated by the platforms (Gillespie, 2014).

The six participants I have just introduced are all able to concentrate primarily on their creative career. While some still work part-time in non-art jobs, such as Abi and Clare, they are in a relatively comfortable position financially and do not necessarily aspire to becoming established, full time cultural workers like the first seven participants introduced in this chapter. While those in this particular group are not all recognised or legitimated as aesthetic experts, they have economic security either from retirement, family or a previous career, and are comfortable in their position. The final group of participants to introduce are earlier in their careers and in

a less certain position. They are by and large still needing to work in non-art jobs to pay bills and are thus struggling to establish a strong position in their field.

Establishing or uncertain in the field

Colette, visual artist

Colette Lilley is a visual artist born in Yorkshire and based in Liverpool, and co-owns the 104 Duke Street studio with Cherie Grist, introduced in the first section of this chapter. Colette has an undergraduate degree in visual communications in art and design, gained at Loughborough University. After the degree she worked for a dyslexic consultancy, and this led to Colette researching creative aspects of dyslexia for her Master's. Colette herself was diagnosed with dyslexia when she was 21. This provides creative inspiration for her work, as she describes on her website, colettelilley.com: "I draw out my thoughts, the compulsive repetitive chatter of my mind, using automatic writing and the scribbles of a dyslexic artist." She has exhibited her work throughout the UK, including at London's Independent Artist Fair and Liverpool Bienniale, and has worked on a project for the Tate Modern in London. She currently holds two part-time jobs, one at the University of Liverpool library, and the other at the Tate in Liverpool as an invigilator, which involves guiding visitors. Colette said in interview she enjoys her part-time jobs even though they are not directly related to her practice, because they are still in the cultural sector. She finds her job at the Tate particularly useful because it allows her to network with other artists, and get herself known in the Liverpool art scene. It was through this job that she got into her first studio in Liverpool.

Colette worked in three more studios before meeting Cherie at Wolstenholme, and together they started 104 Duke Street. Colette told me in interview that even

though running the studio can be stressful, their hard work is paying off; they are getting artists in to the studio and they are becoming well known within the Liverpool arts community. As with Clare, there are potential kudos to be earned when one is able to self-start an organisation or studio which helps other artists, because it can help to build symbolic capital within the local art community, which can enhance the recognition and legitimation of aesthetic expertise on a wider scale.

Colette built networks and forged collaborations through her involvement in the arts community in Liverpool – working in several studios and the part time job at the Tate. This built Colette's social capital and has contributed to the success of the studio. Furthermore, Colette's education and qualifications at university enabled her to develop aesthetic expertise and embodied cultural capital, in order to participate in the Liverpool arts scene in the first place.

During the period of data collection Colette rarely posted examples of her own work on social media, however the Twitter cover photo and profile picture feature her sketches, as shown in Figure 16:

Figure 16 Colette Twitter profile

Colette's artistic inspiration comes from language, such as written words and quotes, and she likes to incorporate words into sketches, as is evident in her Twitter profile images. Her Instagram profile consisted mostly of images from her home and personal life, whereas on Twitter she often shared the art of others, a key feature of women's signalling expertise strategies outlined in Chapter 6. She also shared status updates, such as the below in Figure 17:
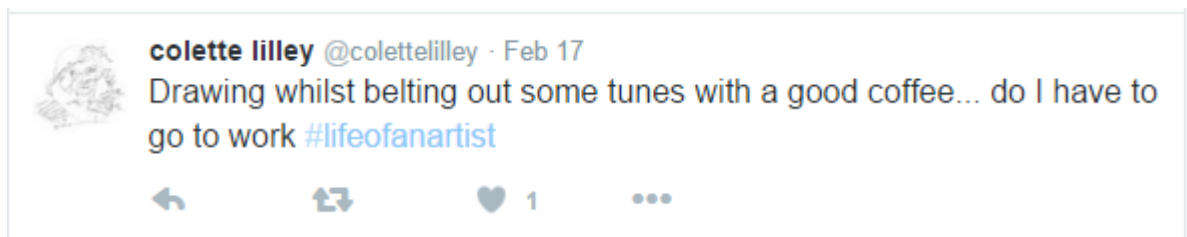
Figure 17 Colette #lifeofanartist Tweet

Here Colette is affirming her status as an artist using the hashtag #lifeofanartist, used to describe her need to go off to work to another, possibly non-art job, which will disrupt her drawing. A seemingly inane update forms a part of Colette's online construction of 'being an artist'. In this case, being an artist involves doing something you love, but may also involve other necessities such as non-art work which potentially risks Colette's ability to develop aesthetic expertise. Colette sees her drawing as distinct from non-art jobs – which she told me in interview, pay the bills. The hashtag #lifeofanartist encapsulates Colette's negotiation between creating art and 'paying the bills' and she is yet to reach the stage where the former can take care of the latter. Her job at the Tate, while useful for her career, is distinct from artistic labour. This is because Colette's art work enables her to express and develop aesthetic expertise, and she is working towards being dedicated to her art work full-time like Cherie, and securing an authoritative position in her field.

Another participant also needing to work part time in a cultural institution, but not necessarily related to his creative work is Jason.

Jason, painter

Jason is in his mid-40s, and is from and based in Liverpool. He said in interview that he decided to become a painter when he was 15, and once he completed school he went to a local art college to do a foundation course. Jason tried for over a year to get into art school because he struggled to get accepted with his foundation qualification, however he finally got accepted into the Chelsea College of Art, where he gained a degree and Master's. Jason told me in interview that after he graduated he did not show any work for 10 years, because he "felt like I wasn't good enough at that time to show my work. I thought the best thing at the time for my work was to just concentrate on it in private and to not have any outside influences and stuff, and not to force it in any way, let it grow naturally."

While Jason did not show any work for a decade as stated above, he started a record label and did other non-art jobs and commercial work. When he did eventually exhibit in a gallery, he decided he should consider "painting seriously again." He then entered the John Moores exhibition in Liverpool in 2010 which provided him with some exposure in the local arts scene, and decided to try to push his practice further.

An example of his work is below; Jason told me he did not like to post whole paintings on social media because he felt uncomfortable with the idea of them being completed. He liked to revisit work and add to it when he felt like it. So instead, Jason preferred to post details of paintings, as shown in Figure 18:

Figure 18 Jason Instagram

Jason does not like to reveal his process or show work in progress, until the work is what he deems as finished. While posting work in progress can be an effective signal of aesthetic expertise - as I will show in the next chapter - Jason preferred to withhold. He instead kept his posting on social media to a minimum, just to keep his presence up to date and not reveal too much about his work. This is because Jason is uncertain about his potential audience on social media, and this makes him feel like he is 'exposing' his work to an audience over which he has no control. So he tries to determine, as best as he can, what to reveal about his art. The uncertainty about the 'imagined audience' (Marwick and boyd, 2010) on social media presents some challenges to signalling aesthetic expertise. There is little point signalling online unless it can be adequately recognised by people or organisations which could benefit the cultural worker and potentially help their career. I unpack the cultural workers' relationship with their audience in the next chapter.

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Jason was featured in the *Art in Liverpool* blog (Nunes, 2014b) where I discovered his work. In the interview feature he describes his artistic process as unplanned: "I try not to have ideas as such, I like to embrace accidents and contingencies and work with them. There's a lot of trial and error but there is a general pattern to what I do." The way Jason describes his art, using an 'artistic' discourse which describes pattern, accidents and contingencies as key to creativity, suggests an organic process, but it is grounded in the techniques and aesthetic knowledge gained at the Chelsea College of Arts.

At the time of interview Jason still worked at the museums in Liverpool, and was hoping to pursue his art practice full-time at some point in the future. Like many of the other participants in this thesis who work in part-time jobs unrelated to art, Jason felt that his other job takes important time away from him being able to work on his own practice.

The evidence presented so far in the cases of Colette and Jason suggest that non-art jobs present a risk to cultural workers' ability to work on and signal their expertise, and could potentially dilute their status in their field. Similarly, the next participant to introduce often felt that non-art jobs were sometimes disruptive to her creative process.

Eimear, mixed media artist

Eimear Kavanagh is a mixed media artist from Ireland and living in Liverpool. She did a course in textiles and surface pattern design at Bretton Hall Sculpture Park in Yorkshire in 1998, and upon completion travelled for a few years before moving to London to try and pursue a career in art seriously. Like Jason, Eimear was featured in *Art in Liverpool* (Nunes, 2014a)*,* and in the interview she describes how she

learned different craft techniques using a variety of materials during her time at Bretton Hall, which enabled her to experiment with creative work.

On her artistic process, she said that she has an idea of what a painting will look like initially, but "during the design process the outcome changes. At some point the painting starts to have a life of its own and then it begins to dictate to me what to do next – rather than the other way round." This sounds like a free and unguided process, but it is in fact grounded in Eimear's aesthetic knowledge which she has gained through education and practice. Anyone could, in theory, do what Eimear does, but her craft skills and aesthetic knowledge, her artistic 'eye', contribute to her being able to demonstrate a certain level of aesthetic expertise which was developed through practice. Her aesthetic expertise has been legitimated to some extent, as she has had a few solo shows and according to her website, commissions have taken her to India and Australia.

While Eimear is mostly able to work on art full-time, she sometimes goes to temporary, non-art jobs to supplement her income. She mentioned in the interview for this research how her non-art part-time jobs "Can feel a bit meaningless or a bit boring because they are not driving me as much as how I feel when I am in my art studio." Like with Colette and Jason, working in non-art jobs to maintain an income can risk a cultural worker's ability to develop aesthetic expertise. Eimear describes how "If I'm going through a stage where I'm feeling very creative and I'm buzzing with my work, I start to feel a little resentful towards spending my time in other jobs. […] but I'm grateful for the income, so it's swings and roundabouts." For Eimear, continuing to work part-time in non-art jobs is sometimes necessary to maintain the #lifeofanartist, as Colette put it.

Eimear told me that her work and background is textiles-influenced, but she likes to experiment with craft, jewellery making and large scale sculpture. The nature of her work does not lend itself so easily to posting on social media as, say, sketches and paintings do. Possibly because of this, and possibly because of the potential disruption from jobs outside of art, during the social media data collection Eimear did not post her work in any form. The only example present was a painting in her Twitter cover photo shown in Figure 19:

Figure 19 Eimear Twitter profile

Candace Jones (2002) argues that evidence of one's work is the most concrete expertise signal, because it demonstrates competencies. However on Twitter, the platform she used most regularly, Eimear primarily retweeted the work of others, which as I've mentioned previously in reference to Katriona, gives the impression that she is 'in the know' and engaged with her field, exhibiting *know-whom* competencies (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994; Jones, 2002). Also, as I show in Chapter 6, sharing the work of others can potentially contribute to wider visibility online through mutual aid practices.

In interview Eimear spoke of social media platforms as primarily serving an "advertising" function. However, she was also aware that only posting her own work does not encourage much online engagement, she said "the numbers stay very low.

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[…] it works best for me when I'm sharing other people's work as well." Eimear said she shares the work of other people and artists which inspire her, so she can refer back to it if needed. As with Cherie, posting inspiration on social media is integral to Eimear's creative process.

Though she may not explicitly post examples of her work, or concrete evidence of her aesthetic expertise, Eimear is sharing her inspiration, and also taste, by retweeting the work of others on Twitter. It contributes to her online construction of being an artist, because by retweeting other artists and their work she is demonstrating purposefulness in looking for inspiration, and her knowledge of and engagement with art. Furthermore, retweeting maintains her online presence when she does not necessarily have work to post on social media, either because of the format of the work (mixed media) or because non-art jobs get in the way. The same could be said of Jamila, another mixed media artist who works in a variety of arts jobs alongside her practice.

Jamila, mixed media artist

Jamila Walker is in her 30s, is from Birmingham and lives in Shropshire. She has a degree in fine art photography which was studied at the University of Derby, after which she worked in art galleries and did an internship at Staffordshire Arts and Museum Service. Though she enjoyed working in galleries, she did not have much time to work on her own art, and decided to revisit her practice a year after she finished her degree. Then a friend who worked for the NHS as a community development worker asked Jamila if she wanted to work on some arts projects for the health service, and from then she gained further commissions from the NHS. This is what Jamila described as 'arts for health' work. At the same time she

continued to work on her own practice, gaining some recognition through exhibitions. Her work has mostly been exhibited in galleries in the Midlands area. At the time of interview Jamila was continuing her arts for health work alongside her own practice, as well as running a craft collective with a friend, which involves running craft parties and workshops around the UK.

In interview Jamila described herself as a "jack of all trades" and most of her time is dedicated to what she describes as "admin… writing proposals and sending invoices, chasing up invoices and looking for new opportunities". Though her arts for health work is creative and a job she enjoys, it involves a lot of administrative work which potentially takes time away from Jamila being able to concentrate on her own art work and exhibitions. As she has only been able to exhibit around the Midlands area thus far, it is reasonable to suggest that Jamila's arts for health work, though it brings in a regular income, is potentially a risk to her ability to work on her own aesthetic expertise and get her work into bigger and better exhibitions further afield.

Jamila's own art practice involves using photo editing software to manipulate images with satirical intent. In Figure 20 is an example of this work which is from her website:

Cinema New Wives Tale - 2015

Figure 20 Jamila art

This image was taken from Jamila's website because during the time of data collection she did not post her own work on social media, only about museums she visited and some posts about the craft collective. As with Eimear, Jamila's other commitments potentially affect her ability to create regularly and have something concrete to post on social media as part of signalling aesthetic expertise. The above is an example of what she described in interview as a modernised version of "old wives tales" – superstitious myths about daily life. Like Jason, she describes most of her work as 'in progress' because she likes to revisit it when she has the chance; also potentially a factor in the lack of her own work posted on social media during the research period.

Jamila's art practice requires a level of technical expertise in terms of the photo editing software she uses, as well as the aesthetic knowledge to work with different types of imagery and create her own style. While she has acquired a level of aesthetic knowledge and skills in appropriating that knowledge, her arts for health

job and craft collective, as well as looking after a young child, mean that Jamila has a lot to juggle. The risk of being a 'jack of all trades' is potentially that it results in being a master of none, and thus affecting one's ability to establish a position in the field. The same could be said for some of the other women in this research in particular, which raises questions about the relationship between gender and expertise, and women actually having the time, as well as the means, to work on their expertise and attempt to secure or improve their position in the field. This applies to Jazamin, who works across several areas of creative practice.

Jazamin, painter/musician/photographer

Based in Liverpool, Jazamin describes herself on her website as "a professional multidisciplinary artist, photographer, musician, film-maker & designer." The use of the word 'professional' suggests that she feels she has the competence and experience to be hired or commissioned. Yet being professional does not equate to being expert, because even though she self-identifies as a professional Jazamin is still struggling to secure and signal her expertise, as with Eimear and Jamila already mentioned.

After completing A-Levels Jazamin did a foundation course in art and design at a college in Wrexham in 1998, before doing an undergraduate degree in fine art at Cardiff Metropolitan University. Following the degree she took a photography course. After her studies Jazamin went into a business partnership in the arts with her partner at the time. When their relationship ended the business partnership broke down, and so for a while Jazamin needed to work in various non-art jobs, such as cleaning, to earn an income. She then registered as a sole trader for the purpose of creative work and began doing wedding photography, which at the time of interview

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was the primary source of income for Jazamin. She also plays in a band, and works part-time in an art shop which sells prints and cards, which allows the opportunity to sell her own art work. She has organised exhibitions in her local area and also runs photography workshops.

Like Jamila, Jazamin could also be described as a 'jack of all trades' as it was difficult to gauge from the signalling analysis what her area of expertise actually was. On Instagram, she posted some of her photography, as shown in Figure 21:

Figure 21 Jazamin Instagram photo

She uses hashtags to describe the photograph in terms of its content and location, and the photo receives some positive feedback in the form of comments and likes. There is no watermark on the picture to prevent others from copying it, unlike the other photographers in this thesis such as Patrick and John, suggesting she is not as protective of copyright as the professional photographers in this research are, but also that the photographs she puts on Instagram are not necessarily for commercial sale, but possibly to signal her photography skills.

Other social media posts by Jazamin depict her playing at gigs or attending workshops. She has not exhibited on a national or worldwide scale as some of the other participants in this thesis have, and this might be due to her multiple commitments, and some of the financial struggles in the past potentially derailing her ability to work on expertise and access international opportunities. Though Jazamin has an aesthetic education, she has found it difficult to establish herself in a position in the field and enhance her status, because of low economic capital and potential dilution of aesthetic expertise by focusing on several different areas of practice.

The final participant to introduce from this group, Stacey Anne, is in a similar situation in terms of her uncertain position in the field.

Stacey Anne, artist/academic/curator

Stacey Anne Bagdi is in her mid-twenties and from Birmingham. In 2013 she completed her Master's in Egyptology which she studied at the University of Leiden in The Netherlands. She chose to go there for the experience of living and studying abroad, and the tuition fees were relatively accessible compared to UK universities at the time. Stacey-Anne's undergraduate degree is in Archaeology and Ancient History, completed at the University of Birmingham in 2012. She self-identifies as an artist, academic and curator, specialising in Egyptology. She told me in interview that her ideal job would be an Egyptology curator, and at the time she was thinking about applying for a PhD in Egyptology. She works part-time as a retail assistant and visitor assistant at the Thinktank science museum in Birmingham, and also volunteers as a Curatorial Assistant at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, as well as running a henna art gift shop on Etsy, where she creates and sells henna-inspired gifts. Stacey Anne told me that she enjoyed volunteering as a curatorial assistant; it

is allied to her future ambitions and she felt it was a 'way in' to her ideal career. Though she is working in several jobs they are all culture related, and she enjoys them. Also, given she is still living with her parents, Stacey Anne is in a relatively comfortable position financially compared to say, Jazamin and Eimear, who need to work in non-art jobs sometimes just to pay the bills.

Stacey Anne's social media posts varied by platform: Instagram was mostly dedicated to her henna business, offering images of the gifts with a link to her online shop. Her Twitter posts were a mixture of an Egyptology theme with some links to her henna gift shop. It was unclear from the social media presence alone where Stacey Anne's expertise lies. In interview she told me that she manages social media platforms for her various jobs as well as her own, and sometimes feels like social media posting takes up most of her time, which is an issue I revisit in Chapter 5. The multiple commitments Stacey Anne has, and managing the online presence for those various commitments too, leaves little, if any time for her to work towards the career she really wants. I asked what would happen if her henna business became very successful, and she joked that she would either get her mum to help or hire someone, but she could not foresee it becoming unmanageable. She enjoyed doing henna as a hobby and was not looking to make a career out of it. Yet, she self-identifies as a 'henna artist' online.

On her blog, Stacey Anne wrote in the 'About' section: "Even though I have a BA and MA, I don't claim to be an expert in anything." It is an interesting admission, and points to her uncertain position in the field. Like with Jazamin, Stacey Anne maintains multiple jobs and commitments, and even if they are related to cultural work in one way or another, they could ultimately be detrimental to her ability to work on expertise and establish herself in a defined position in the field.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to demonstrate how aesthetic expertise is developed by cultural workers, by way of introducing the participants in this research. To recap, aesthetic expertise is understood here as involving of knowledge of aesthetic codes and classifications, and skill in mastering the tools and techniques to produce a work of aesthetic value, which is then recognised and legitimated as such. I have demonstrated how aesthetic expertise could be considered a form of embodied cultural capital, which when adequately recognised by others of a higher status, can operate as symbolic capital in the field.

It is clear from the participant profiles in this chapter that even though the majority of them self-identify either as artists or by their area of practice (e.g. composer, writer) and I found most of them through online art directories, the nature of their work and levels of aesthetic expertise developed varies. The first seven participants introduced have established positions in the field, worked on their practice for an entire career and exhibited around the world. The next six introduced were generally in a comfortable position financially, with some selling prints, paintings or craft products online after careers in other sectors and/or retirement. The final six introduced were in a less secure position financially and in the field; struggling to secure their aesthetic expertise because of various circumstances, often pertaining to holding multiple jobs or operating as a 'jack of all trades'.

Most of those able to access an aesthetic education are in a position to develop aesthetic expertise, or embodied cultural capital, and have the social capital to build contacts and get their work into exhibitions around the world. The global exposure, I suggest, is a useful marker of where someone is at in their career, and the extent to which their aesthetic expertise has been recognised as legitimate. Not

everyone with such an education has been able to branch out in this way, however. I suggest here that those who are unable to dedicate themselves to their practice full-time risk their ability to work on and develop their expertise. The primary reason for this is lack of economic capital, but not the only reason. In particular, some of the women in this research appear to be struggling to make the shift into full-time work that is dedicated to their practice – arguably the goal for cultural workers and the ultimate validation of their aesthetic expertise. Stacey Anne, Jazamin and Jamila in particular have multiple areas of practice and additional jobs which are mostly cultural related, but, I argue, are potentially detrimental to them securing their specialist area of expertise and position in the field. Their energy and focus is usually directed elsewhere. Furthermore, the gendered connotations of expertise as a masculine quality could also be a factor not only in how women's art is seen, but also how women prefer to signal aesthetic expertise, as I will show in Chapter 6.

The cultural workers in this research are mostly relatively privileged and have been able to access the appropriate education to build aesthetic expertise. Those who have not gained such an education such as Gillian, have instead developed entrepreneurial and social media skills to build a career in cultural work for themselves, with clients from around the world. Pre-social media, Gillian's pet portrait business would possibly have taken a lot longer than two years to get off the ground and may not have attracted customers from the United States. There seems to be little doubt that social media platforms could play a major role in cultural labour practice, which raises questions about the nature of aesthetic expertise in contemporary cultural production, as I have suggested in this chapter.

However, the challenges and opportunities of social media use in the cultural labour context are underexplored in academic literature. When someone chooses to

build a presence on social media they could be putting their reputation at risk. The mediation of their expertise signals by the platform mean that work and posts could be circulated, used and reused in ways which could be either positive or negative, and which the cultural worker cannot anticipate. How the cultural workers in this research negotiate the challenges and opportunities of signalling on social media will be investigated in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Staging expertise on social media

Introduction

Figure 22 Screen-grab from video about 'the most famous artist' (Buzzfeed)

> Interviewer: So what are you doing?
>
> Themostfamousartist: I just found out that I have to paint something. And
> being that I don't actually know how to make any art, this is going to be
> interesting.

The above is an excerpt from a video created by news website Buzzfeed (Goldman, 2016) about a man who calls himself 'themostfamousartist' on Instagram. In the video, Matty ('themostfamousartist') admits that he does not know how to make art. Instead he buys art from flea markets, modifies the paintings, and takes pictures of them to upload to his Instagram account, on which at the time this video was made Matty had nearly 95,000 followers. The video reveals his whole production process, from choosing pictures at flea markets, to modifying them by dipping them in paint or

overlaying them with other images, to taking them to galleries and posting them on Instagram. Matty uses his social media follower numbers as a bargaining tool to get into galleries and shows. He said in the video how he was helping a friend deliver some art, and asked the curator if he could put some of his own art in the gallery, a request that the curator initially refused. He then said to her: "what if I promote the show to my 90,000 Instagram followers?" According to Matty the curator suddenly seemed interested and asked him to bring in his work. Matty's strategy, then, appears to be successful. His work is praised by one art collector who said she would rather "pay 750 dollars for an interesting painting rather than 750,000 dollars for something ridiculous". Matty takes aspects of popular culture, particularly internet culture, and appropriates these in his flea market modifications. He said he creates pieces that he thinks will "photograph well and spread online".

The video is narrated by a member of staff at Buzzfeed who is quite cynical about Matty's approach. The narrator is filmed in conversation with an art critic, who turns out to be complimentary:

Narrator: when I look at the most famous artist, I almost feel like some of his work…like the main critique I have of it, is it's too easy.

Critic: I wouldn't say it's too easy or too difficult. There's a lot of Mark Rochon's work, who is the most successful painter in America since Jasper Johns, is easy work. It's really easy work, it's great. It's not that it's too easy, the work. […] Instead of me analysing whether he's (Matty) a good artist or a bad artist, I think what's interesting is here's a guy who has been able to build himself an audience and that's an amazing thing. And to do that using the devices that are available to him in today's sort of, 21st

century economy, it's an extraordinarily democratic process and

something that I think the fine art world can learn a lot from.

The opinions of collectors and critics shown in the video are positive. This is to the surprise of the video narrator, who appears to be primarily concerned with the aesthetic quality of Matty's work and how it should be judged. The critic appears to be impressed more with Matty's use of social media to enhance his paintings and gain a large audience for them, rather than his perceived level of aesthetic expertise and how that should be judged.

In his admission that he does not know how to make art, Matty appears to dismiss his own aesthetic skills and knowledge; possibly in anticipation of revealing his process. He knows it does not involve as much aesthetic knowledge or skill as other well-known artists, but he does know the final product will appeal to his online audience. Social media platforms allow someone like Matty, who has some social media and entrepreneurial expertise, to make a living out of cultural work and potentially compensate for his (by his own admission) lack of aesthetic expertise. He was able to build some social media and entrepreneurial expertise after college when he established a small technology company. He describes in the video how at one point, he had raised a million dollars from investors to fund his technology business. However, his business failed when a video of him drunk and naked was leaked online, much to the dismay of his investors, who withdrew their support and Matty did not recover from the damage the video had done to his reputation and by extension, his business. He knows how risky it can be to have a presence online and the reputational damage one post can do. Matty has since been able to recover from this, albeit in a different sector as 'themostfamousartist'.

The case of 'themostfamousartist' is a useful one for illustrating both the opportunities and drawbacks of having a presence online for creatives. In this chapter I focus on how the cultural workers introduced in the previous chapter deal with the challenges and opportunities of social media, in terms of what they decide to reveal online. I focus on how the negotiation of reputational risk relates to their ability to signal their aesthetic expertise, and how the possession or potential lack of social media expertise may help or compromise that.

I use Erving Goffman's (1959) ideas of 'staging' and Hogan's (2010) extension of staging to 'exhibitions' to conceptualise this, which I introduce in the next section. I then illustrate how the concepts of staging and exhibitions applies to the social media output of the participants in this research. First I explore how cultural workers stage their own identity on social media – how they negotiate what to reveal, and what not to reveal, about themselves. This is followed by an examination of how the cultural workers stage their work online, i.e. how they signal their expertise by revealing, or withholding, aspects of the creative process and their work. The final section deals with how cultural workers stage their work space on social media, and how an external or home studio could play a part in their signalling of expertise.

Staging, exhibitions and the imagined audience

Erving Goffman uses the metaphor of a stage performance to illustrate how people present themselves in everyday life. According to Goffman, a performance is an "activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers" (1959:22). His main argument is that individuals are actively aware of others when performing in social situations, and are always looking to present an

idealised version of themselves. Within a social situation, there is a definition of the situation given by the performer, which the audience complies with. This creates a consensus, which helps to maintain moral and behavioural codes within society. Goffman takes into account the important role of the audience in a performance of self. For 'themostfamousartist', his knowledge of his audience and what they will share and like online is key to him gaining attention, and the same applies to the cultural workers in this thesis. If they are to deal with the challenges and harness the opportunities of self-presentation online, then they too need to know their audience well.

On social media knowing your audience can be complex, as highlighted by Marwick and boyd (2010). They argue that on social media, platforms collapse multiple, distinct audiences into a singular context, making it difficult for people to handle the multiplicity of online interaction in the same way that they might do in 'offline' or 'face to face' interaction. Drawing from Goffman, the authors state that because of our limited knowledge of the audience when we are presenting online, we "take cues" from social media spaces and imagine the community we are presenting to, which they term the 'imagined audience'. This imagined audience might be entirely different from the actual readers or people interacting with us online (Marwick and boyd, 2010:2), therefore strategies are required to negotiate our relationship with this imagined audience, because it is virtually impossible to account for exactly who our online audience is.

If we return to Goffman, one of the strategies for managing self-presentation to the audience can be characterised using the metaphor of 'front stage' and 'back stage'. The front stage is where the performance is given, and the back stage is where the performance is prepared, and is relative to the former. In Goffman's

formulation, there is a clear division between front stage and back stage, in which the audience are not meant to see the back stage, unless the performer intends it.

As I will show, the metaphor of staging is useful for thinking about how aesthetic expertise is signalled by cultural workers online, however, following Hogan (2010) it is necessary to extend this idea to include the concept of 'exhibitions', which accounts for the temporal qualities of social media and the recording of performances which can be viewed by the audience when the cultural worker is not online. Hogan importantly highlights that social media platforms are not only a stage but a "participatory exhibit" (2010:377) where posts, videos and images endure. Hogan's concept of online exhibitions builds on Goffman's ideas of performance, which are bound in a specific time and space with an audience which is also bound by that time and space. For Goffman, the audience watches the performance and continuously assesses it. On social media platforms, the performance ends when the user goes offline and their post, video, tweet or photo turns into an exhibit for their audience to view, and furthermore, this is mediated by the platform. Hogan claims that these exhibits are curated by the platforms and their algorithms. However I show in this chapter and the next how cultural workers themselves can also curate online, using social media platforms as a medium through which to enhance the signalling of aesthetic expertise.

So for the cultural workers in this thesis, the front stage is, for example, a finished artwork, which becomes an online exhibit. The back stage for example can be a set of images or video of them creating the work in their studio space or at home, working in other jobs or being with their family. 'Themostmfamousartist' appears to complicate this separation between front stage and back stage, as do many of the cultural workers in this research. They negotiate the presentation of the

front stage of their finished product and exhibition with the back stage of their artistic process and work and/or home space, which could also become a part of the front stage, and the exhibition. The interplay between the staging of aesthetic expertise, the exhibition which remains online in the form of a post, and the mediation of this by platforms and the audience who can interact with the post, all contribute to the mediated construction of the cultural worker on social media. The online construction of 'being' a cultural worker as referenced in Chapter 3 also includes aspects of personal life, personality and working space. I suggest this can also contribute to the signalling of expertise on social media, for example by communicating tastes and an artistic habitus.

It is not lost on me that the language of stage, performance, exhibition and curation used conceptually for online presentation in this chapter is homologous with cultural work itself, and yet very little work has been done to date on what cultural workers actually post 'on' social media. The discussion in this chapter and later chapters attempts to address this.

Staging the cultural worker

Mark Banks notes that "the total integration of the creative person and the creative work has long been standard". In other words, in cultural work there is little separation between the personal and professional. In fact, "Investing one's person into the act of creative production is merely the asking price and guarantee of authentic art." (Banks, 2014: 241).

On social media, where audiences are visibly multiple, performances could turn into recorded exhibitions, where there are opportunities to share all aspects of personal and professional life, how do cultural workers negotiate the front and back stage of *themselves* online? How is this incorporated, or not, into signalling aesthetic

expertise and negotiated across multiple social media platforms and potentially

multiple audiences? Papacharissi (2011) points out that social media platforms could

allow users a greater control of the distance between front and back stage areas of

the self (2011:307) however as I will show, there are a number of potential

challenges for cultural workers. The participants in this research must negotiate their

imagined audience across different platforms on social media, and the temporal and

structural aspects of platforms play a particular role in their ability to do this.

Van Dijck (2013) draws upon Goffman to discuss strategic presentation of self

across multiple platforms – namely Facebook and LinkedIn. She argues that: "Ever

since Goffman, people put on their daily lives as staged performances where they

deliberately use the differentiation between private and public discursive acts to

shape their identity. Each construction of self entails a strategy aimed at performing

a social act or achieving a particular social goal" (2013:212). She argues that this

negotiation of public and private performance is carried out online and is shaped and

determined by platform structures. Each platform may call for a slightly different

presentation of self. In the case of the cultural workers in this research, this also has

implications for signalling aesthetic expertise. For example, Abi told me that she likes

to "personalise things a little bit so what I put on my artist page will be very slightly

different to what I put on my personal page." When she posts about her personal

life, such as when she appears to be relaxing, she shares it on Twitter, and uses

Facebook and Instagram primarily to share work and link to her Etsy shop. She said

that on Instagram, "I might put more details…I use a lot of hashtags because I want

lots of different people to look at it." The strategic posting across platforms described

by Abi is an attempt to gain as much online exposure as possible for her art work.

The other participants also discussed their posting strategies in interview; Colin told me how he personalises his posts for each platform, especially when he wants to tag appropriate people or events to maximise exposure; he said: "If you want to tag in people, or tag in events, or try to thank sponsors and things, you can't really post from one across the three different medias. Unfortunately, the platforms aren't intelligent enough to change the names." Colin is aware of the shortcomings of using multiple platforms for the same purpose, and adapts his approach to make sure his messages are clear to his imagined audience.

Anthony says he does not want to reach "everyone" when he posts, but he wants to reach "the right people" for him. Reaching the 'right people' – or what he imagines as such - is important for Anthony, because he knows the 'right people' will foster collaborations, help him to attract more work, and potentially enable his aesthetic expertise to be recognised and legitimised on a wide scale. Strategically targeting the 'right people' requires an awareness of the audience. However, as already mentioned, across platforms there can be several different audiences which comprise the 'imagined audience' (Marwick and boyd, 2010) and it is virtually impossible to fully know one's audience when posting on social media. The cultural worker needs to ensure that what they do post is a reflection of how they want to appear online. Maria describes how she negotiates this:

"You have to be careful. Like on Twitter, it's not all about my art. I do put other things on it but it is difficult because you've got to be careful what you do put. And I know a lot of artists who just put their art on there and I wanted to appear…like I just wanted to share other things like I like to go out for afternoon tea, that kind of thing."

(Maria)

Here Maria is describing how she negotiates the platform, her imagined audience (in relation to her art) and her personal life. For example on her Twitter profile, there are a mix of posts about what she has drawn or created, retweets of events and art news, and some photos of food. She still manages to make the food post relate to her work by mentioning the 'colour palette' as shown in Figure 23 below:

Figure 23 Maria rhubarb

Maria as a person is also a part of what she is trying to promote. This could be perceived as revealing the back stage because Maria reveals elements of her home life. Yet, these images are staged to signal her aesthetic expertise – in how she is able to appreciate colour palettes in the everyday. It is also signalled in her drawing skills and use of materials displayed by the spoon picture in Figure 24:

Figure 24 Maria spoon Tweet

These images by Maria are also a display of taste - she is appearing to find beauty in the seemingly banal, i.e. a bowl of rhubarb or a spoon. The comment about the 'colour palette' and the ownership and using of a spoon collection in her art exhibits a relatively privileged, domestic taste which underpins her display of aesthetic knowledge and skill. It says something about Maria's status as a cultural worker not necessarily struggling by but instead having the freedom to experiment with her work and try new techniques or materials. The domestic taste exhibited could also resonate with others online who share similar tastes, and potentially help Maria to attract additional engagement.

Maria's posts demonstrate that signalling expertise on social media is not only about showing that one is engaged in creative practice – it is also about knowing what audiences want to see and interact with on social media. Many of the cultural workers in this research demonstrated reflexivity in how they balance what they reveal and do not reveal on social media in order to keep their (imagined) audience

interested. For example, Anthony described how he wants people to know "there is a personality behind the artwork" to appear a "more rounded person" because "when people wanna hire me, they're not hiring, a sort of…graphic designer, they're hiring me." Anthony is conscious about appearing as a 'rounded' person on social media, and he appears to want to show that his personality is a part of the package on offer. He expressed a desire to 'keep it real', which is linked to notions of authenticity.

Genz (2014) notes how authenticity acts as an "affective commodity" (2014:547) in contemporary culture where in online spaces, appearing authentic can be a valuable promotional tool. Pooley (2010) describes this as "calculated authenticity" which he characterises as "a glad hand; it's what David Foster Wallace called 'the professional smile'" whereby "the shifting, audience-dependent performances that we enact dozens of times a week-force us all, arguably, into the role of bit-part glad-handers" (2010:79). In other words, calculated authenticity is a performance of appearing authentic which is geared towards achieving a certain goal or appearing a certain way. For Anthony, for example, even though he says he likes to 'keep it real' online this is driven by a consideration of his imagined audience – which includes "the right people" who may want to hire him. Therefore he engages in some front staging, which includes a performance of calculated authenticity.

For others in this research, withholding from posting about personal life was related to appearing 'professional'. Being known as a professional can be achieved through having a particular 'profession' (Barbour, 2015) but more broadly the idea of professionalism is related to specialised work, and reaching a certain standard of reliable conduct (Croidieu and Kim, 2017). In cultural work, appearing 'professional' can be important because companies and potential clients want to hire or commission someone capable and reliable who can deliver. As I mentioned in

Chapter 3, appearing professional is a priority for many of the cultural workers in this research, because they want to make a living from what they do, and they are more likely to do that if they can demonstrate their professionalism. How they appear on social media and how they relate to their audience, therefore, requires some consideration for them. For example Colette said that if she used Instagram more, she would open a separate Instagram account from her personal account, and use it for work-related posts only, "to be seen professionally". Stacey-Anne described how over time, her audiences and therefore approach to social media has changed. She said she had "got rid of all the people I don't want to talk to and kept my Facebook really quite professional now, and kept Twitter quite professional, Instagram professional now. That's probably the one thing I don't like, when it's portrayed as not being professional."

For Colette and Stacey Anne, there appears to be a hesitancy in revealing too much about their personal life or even personality, in order to appear 'professional'. Because of the ambiguity of the imagined audience on social media, they do not want to post anything other than their work, which appears to be a presentation of the front stage. However, with that comes a risk that they may lose the interest of their audience, a concern expressed by Abi and others who feel the need to post about their other interests. In this sense, a balance needs to be negotiated between what to reveal, and what not to, on social media to benefit the signalling of aesthetic expertise. Indeed, social media platforms can provide an opportunity for cultural workers to express their creativity, and use the platforms to present their work in ways which enhance that signalling, which is demonstrated in the next section of this chapter.

Some of the cultural workers drew the line at the back stage of family life when posting on social media. For example, Katriona describes how she does not post photos of her young daughter on social media. Instead, she has created a private Instagram account to share pictures of her daughter with friends and family. Katriona was nervous about sharing pictures of family life on her own account because she was unsure about the audience:

> "I ended up with 800 or something friends on it, a lot of them are people that I really didn't know that well. That was partly because I started off using it for personal reasons, then I ended up using it professionally and it became this quite complicated, blurred ground between professional and private."

> (Katriona)

Katriona told me that because of her mixed audience on Instagram she felt "overexposed" because "there is stuff that I didn't particularly want everyone, all those 800 people, half of whom I didn't know that well to know, but there was stuff that I wanted closer friends to know." Like Stacey Anne did, Katriona needed to negotiate how her social media use has changed over time. For Katriona this results in a blur between professional contacts and friends and family. Because she is unclear about the composition of her audience, she places strict boundaries on what she shares.

Jamila also told me about sometimes feeling 'exposed' when she posts on social media, and that in order to preserve some privacy with regards to her home life, she avoids posting anything about her daughter online. So while for some, having such clear boundaries between personal and professional life when posting online is related to conveying a sense of 'professionalism', for others it is simply related to privacy, and an uncertainty over who is viewing profiles and posts. Colin

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admits that "you have people that you don't really know attached to your social media, and peeking at your kind of lifestyle, what you're doing. I don't know whether that's always a good thing." John is careful about who he adds as a friend on Facebook, because his "family and friends sometimes post embarrassing pictures of me on my timeline, which I don't want to be in the public arena."

There is a sense in those quotes that the cultural workers do not feel in control of who sees their social media posts, and in the case of John, what he gets tagged in. On social media no matter how strategic a user can be, it is difficult for them to be completely in control of their online presence and the meanings and interpretations of audiences. This can complicate how cultural workers negotiate front stage and back stage for their online presence, because the audience is difficult to determine. Marwick and boyd (2010) argue that users can never ascertain who actually sees their posts, and even privacy settings cannot address concerns completely. They mention how some users negotiate this by opening pseudonym or fake accounts, as did Eimear in this research. She said she left Facebook because she found it too "invasive and annoying", but needed to re-join it to interact with an artist group, so she "opened up a private, incognito account with my cat's name so that nobody could find me on there". Eimear felt she needed to re-join because: "There are 25 artists and I've only just joined that group a couple of months ago. Everyone is using this chat thing on Facebook so I found that I was going in to the studio and somebody would just start talking about something and I would think, 'I didn't know anything about that.' And it was like the conversations were going on in the background on this chat." Eimear tried to withdraw from a particular platform, but because she was missing out on important information from her new group, she found a more discreet way of signing back up so she felt comfortable.

Eimear's story demonstrates how social media is a site for social interaction that people are finding increasingly difficult to avoid (Couldry and Van Dijck, 2015), and this is largely because of other people and contacts one may have on certain platforms. Papacharissi (2012) argues that in negotiating how the self is presented on social media, "self-awareness and self-monitoring are heightened as individuals advance into a constant state of redaction, or editing and remixing the self" (2012:1994). This is an important consideration because the acts of editing and redaction can have implications for cultural labour, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The front stage and back stage strategies employed by the cultural workers are to make sure their aesthetic expertise is recognised by, those that Anthony describes as "the right people", who can recognise and legitimise their expertise and help them progress in the field. The managing of multiple audiences, both personal and professional, can make this process a complex one. For some of the cultural workers, the disclosure of aspects of personal life is a part of 'the package' for sale to potential commissioners and clients, but they employ strategies of withholding and setting personal boundaries with what they post to manage this. What may appear to be back stage to their audience (an aspect of their personal life) is still front stage, because the post has been constructed for an audience. Others choose not to post at all, or restrict their posting to work-related only, as they negotiate appearing to be a cultural worker and a professional at the same time.

Even so, as suggested, what appears on social media and on search engines can never be fully in the cultural worker's control, not only because of the actions of others but also the actions of platform owners. As Gillespie (2014) notes, algorithms created by websites and social media platforms can aggregate and re-appropriate

user information to create 'shadow bodies' (Gillespie, citing Balka, 2011) which "persist and proliferate through information systems, and the slippage between the anticipated user and the user themselves that they represent can be either politically problematic, or politically productive." (Gillespie, 2014:175). The movement of the 'shadow bodies' could be problematic for cultural workers, because expertise signals on social media can also proliferate and persist, and act either for or against the person signalling. No matter how much social media knowledge cultural workers may have, they cannot control where their posts and online presence may end up, how it is interacted with and how it is used by platform owners (Couldry and Van Dijck, 2015).

I experienced this myself recently when I found out that my Instagram images were appearing as advertisements in my Facebook friends' newsfeeds, used to promote the Instagram app. I did not realise my Instagram images were being stored and re-used by Facebook for promotional purposes, and furthermore, that I could not control who would see my Instagram profile, which was set to private. Since then I have left Instagram and erased all of its data from my Facebook profile. If this happens to a cultural worker posting their art on Instagram, there could be serious implications for them in terms of copyright and where their art work is being used without their knowledge. Such platform functionality and its potential impacts on the integrity of cultural work, and cultural workers, poses some important questions for further research.

Goffman (1959) points out that one of the basic problems for performers in his concept is information control, and that the release of "destructive information" (Goffman, 1959:141) or secrets to an audience can seriously affect a performance. For the cultural workers in this research, if something emerges online which is

beyond their control and not what they wanted it could seriously damage their reputation and potentially their livelihood, as happened with 'themostfamousartist' and his controversial video leak in a previous career. This is a risk anyone takes when they construct a presence online, however it does help to not get into situations where one is naked, drunk and potentially being filmed, in the first place. Despite that, he has been able to recover and launch a new career as an artist, maybe because he has embraced his indiscretion rather than tried to conceal it. If a woman had done the same, however, I suspect the online reaction would be much more hostile, given how women are more frequently subject to online abuse compared to men (Mantilla, 2013; Michael, 2016).

In this section I have focused mainly on how the participants in this research negotiated the presentation of themselves in relation to their work on social media. In the next section I discuss the front stage and back stage of artistic work. This includes not only the finished product, but the process of creation, which can be an effective way to signal aesthetic expertise.

Staging the work

As mentioned in Chapter 1, risk is bound up in the creative process, as highlighted by Pierre Michel-Menger. In *The Economics of Creativity* (2014) Menger describes the 'uncertainty' of the creative process, that "an artist's activity follows an uncertain course, and its end point is neither defined nor guaranteed." This uncertainty in the creative process is a challenge for artists, but also a "precondition for originality and invention, and for more long-range innovation. It is both necessary to the satisfaction taken in creating, and a trial to be endured." (2014:3). Why would anyone want to share the risk and uncertainty of creation, or the 'back stage' of cultural production, with an online audience? Why would they potentially add to the risk of creativity by

opening work up to scrutiny before it is even completed? For some of the cultural workers in this research, sharing aspects of the creative process is a strong signal of aesthetic expertise. It signals a confidence with one's own work and its aesthetic quality. However, like staging the self, staging the work and the process behind it requires careful management and negotiation between what the cultural workers do and do not want to reveal.

Colin likes to share all aspects of his work on social media; he said in interview that "pretty much everything I do connects to social media" and "If I've got something to say and something to share, I'll share it." During the time of data collection, when Colin posted work he often received affirmative comments, which he responded to positively. Sometimes he also discussed the techniques and materials he used, for example, on Facebook in Figure 25:
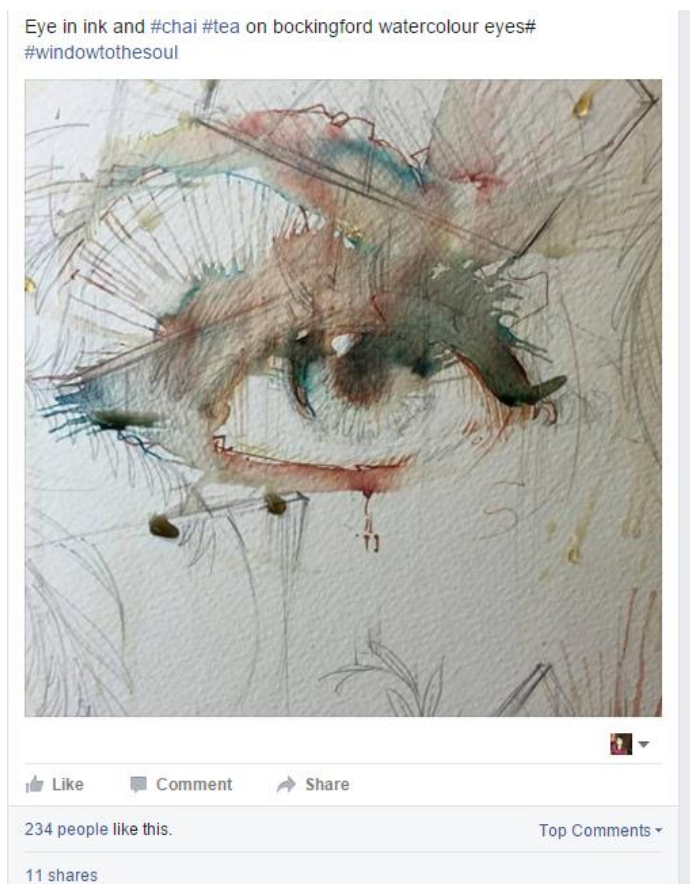

Figure 25 Colin Facebook

Here, as with Colin's post featured at the beginning Chapter 3, he uses hashtags to describe the painting and the materials used, as well as the hashtag #windowtothesoul, a poetic description of the art and not necessarily for the purposes of discoverability on social media. This is a work in progress and what could be perceived as a back stage display, but for Colin it builds anticipation among his followers for the finished product.

Goffman (1959) points out that a 'back stage' performance occurs when an audience comes across a performance that is not meant for them to see, and there are two ways in which this intrusion, or discovery, can be managed. Either the audience accepts the back stage status and cooperates with the performer to manage impressions, or the performer welcomes the audience in and makes them feel like they have been involved all along (1959:139). Demonstrated here with Colin's work is another example of expertise signalling on social media conflating the distinction between front stage and back stage, because rather than the audience intruding, Colin has invited the audience to see the back stage of the work in progress. Nonetheless, this could be seen as another form of front stage performance because Colin has chosen to share and 'exhibit' it online. Talking about the work and the materials he used demonstrates Colin's aesthetic expertise because he is talking through the creation of the artwork, sharing his knowledge and techniques, and signalling his artistic competence.

Colin also posted some paintings which he admitted he was 'struggling with' on Instagram, prompting encouragement from his followers assuring him that his work is great. For example, the following comment thread on Instagram alongside one of his paintings:

Colin: Thanks for all the help, now I'm moving forward, lovely to have such positive support. Thank you #getbywithalittlehelpfrommyfriends

Artist1: Eyes look better now, more intense and interesting ☺

Steph: Your art always makes me think and feel creative, I love it!

Colin: @Artist1 cheers, seems balanced now.

The interaction Colin facilitates actively informs his creative process, an example of a back stage performance, where the audience is invited in and made to feel like they are involved. It also gives him a chance to gauge what his audience may want, and by taking the time to reply, he is able to build a relationship and some loyalty so that they would potentially buy his work, particularly if they felt involved in the process of creation. So as well as being an effective signal of expertise, sharing work in progress could also act as a marketing tool.

The marketing function of revealing the creative process also applies to Gillian. Because most of her work is commissioned by individual pet owners, the use of social media in this way served as a progress update for her clients, as a way of managing their expectations. Also, like Colin, she invited the audience in to the back stage process as demonstrated in positive Facebook comments in Figure 26 below:

Figure 26 Gillian Facebook posts

Sharing a version of the back stage process in this way demonstrates Gillian's aesthetic expertise as her work visibly moves through stages of creation. This adds nuance to her expertise signalling rather than simply posting a finished product. The accompanying positive comments also contribute towards a positive reputation for Gillian, and appears attractive to prospective clients who can see that she is reliable and competent, because she is able to apply her aesthetic skills and knowledge to suit various client needs.

Anthony, the digital artist, creates video tutorials and writes blog posts to explain exactly what he does in his practice to allow others to create their own digital art. He enjoys sharing the process and hopes others will learn from it, for the benefit of his field:

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"That's what I attribute a lot of my success to, just constantly talking about my practice on the internet and talking about it other ways, so especially with digital art…it is a very new thing. A lot of people don't really know about it that much, like the ins and the outs, so just like with art in general, especially contemporary art, people spend a lot of time explaining it, and through writing tutorials, writing about my artwork, whether it's through 140 characters on Twitter or in long form blog posts"

(Anthony)

Anthony explained that this was common practice in digital art, which, as I discussed in Chapter 3, does not receive as much recognition or widespread legitimation as other art forms. So sharing practice online with the community it fosters has the potential to provide "a good for the whole community who participate [..], leading to (say) a general standard of technical improvement or a collective raising of consciousness regarding the creative possibilities of future practice" (Banks, 2007:110). This appears to be altruistic, yet Anthony creating tutorials positions him as the expert, imparting his knowledge so that others can learn the skills and techniques he uses. This is a significant display of his expertise because tutorials demonstrate that one has a high level of knowledge and skill, and the capacity to pass that knowledge on to benefit others. Like Colin and Gillian, Anthony is inviting the audience in to what could be considered a back stage process, which in itself operates as a form of front stage display. By creating tutorials, Anthony is demonstrating confidence and belief in his own expertise, something which some of the other cultural workers are still working on.

For example, Jason, spent ten years away from showing his work because he did not feel it was good enough. Now that he is starting to show his paintings again,

he is trying to build his confidence by displaying his work online, however he maintains some reservations about this. Jason described how once, he tried to take photos of his work in progress and upload them in stages to Twitter, but he stopped because he: "felt really uncomfortable doing it. I know I don't have a lot of followers, and a couple of people have liked or commented or something but it was the thing of…I felt like I was being watched, so I stopped doing it. I didn't like the feeling of exposing the process to the world." Social media opens up possibilities for being watched without one's knowledge, and the 'work of being watched' (Andrejevic, 2002) is in itself something for cultural workers to consider if they choose to share their art, and this takes conscious effort to manage. Here Jason voices his concern about his imagined audience - 'the world'. He is not entirely sure who views his posts and so he assumes that anyone and everyone could, which contributes to his cautious approach.

The cultural workers in this research had very different perspectives on how much they were willing to share. While some were comfortable with disclosing their entire creative process, others did not want to feel exposed, especially to people they do not know. This is related to the confidence one has in what they are showing, whereas other cultural workers simply felt that their work would not look good on social media, such as Colette, who said: "I don't really put my artwork on social media. I put some, but the majority of it, you can't see the detail in the images, and it doesn't make my images look good." For some, social media can be an opportunity to express creativity and enhance the reception and experience of the work through sharing, interaction and work in progress on the platforms. However, not all art forms are suitable for that, or in other cases cultural workers do not feel comfortable sharing their work in such a way. As mentioned in the previous chapter,

Jason and Jamila both said that some of their work can take years, because for them it is never complete. Jason voiced a concern with "the imagined expectation from people" of wanting to see finished art, he said he did not mind posting unfinished art "as long as people know it is not finished". Most of the artists who posted work in progress emphasised that. Colette did post a series of old sketches she had found:
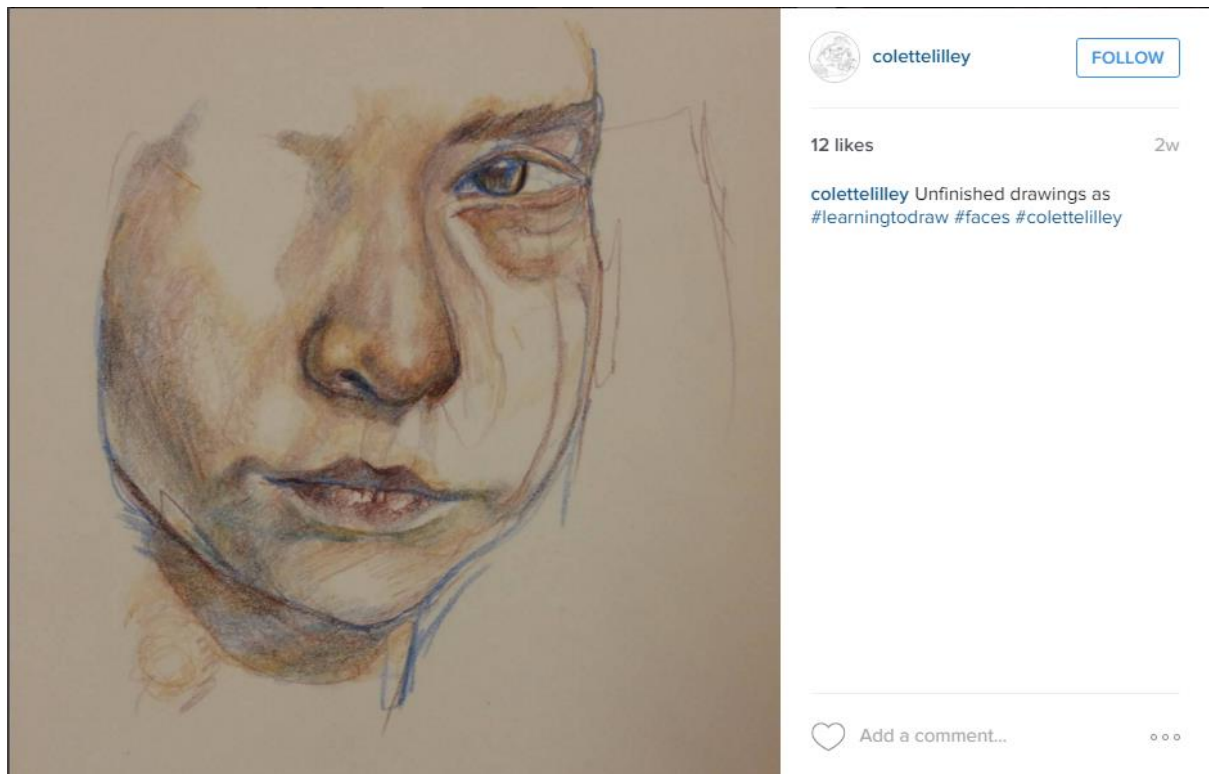
Figure 27 Colette sketches

In Figure 27, she mentions that it is unfinished, and the post received 12 likes. Over the period of analysis, these sketches received the largest number of likes compared to Colette's other posts, which tended to be about her interests and gifts she has received. In Figure 28, she comments that she is 'learning to draw':

Figure 28 Colette learning to draw Instagram

These examples are another conflation of front stage and back stage. Colette is

sharing evidence of her artistic development. In sharing what appears to be back

stage because it is unfinished and old, it becomes a form of front stage because it

enables her audience to see how she has progressed over time, and may also help

Colette reflect on her own artistic practice. Signalling aesthetic expertise does not

only consist of finished work or displays of recognition, it can also involve revealing

the process, whether that be over one piece of work or over many years. Colette

uses hashtags such as #learningtodraw and #drawing to not only describe the

picture, but potentially enhance its discoverability on Instagram.

In sharing the process, I argue that the degree of risk which is already bound

up in the creative process (Menger, 2014) is amplified when that process is exposed

on social media, because it is opened up for scrutiny from audiences at a point they

are not routinely involved in, and that scrutiny could sometimes be unmoderated and

public. A negative comment on a piece of work could damage reputation and discourage potential clients and commissioners, so when a cultural worker decides to reveal their process in this way, they must make sure they manage feedback and moderate potentially damaging comments. The moderation of negative comments also, of course, contributes to this online construction of the cultural worker. Unless negative comments are left, or left for too long so they can be captured elsewhere (via screenshot) what we see is staged by the cultural worker, and filtered to maintain a good reputation. The participants in this research told me they had not received negative comments or posts, but there are examples from the famous artists which I explore in greater depth in the next chapter.

Effectively managing one's online presence and the audience interacting with it requires some social media knowledge. The time and resources to develop skills in social media is not available to everyone, which is in some evidence among the cultural workers in this research. Most of them feel that social media is helpful for them to promote themselves and their work, but they have embraced it to varying degrees. The established artists such as Colin seem confident in sharing aspects of their process, and this is not only because they have developed aesthetic expertise, but also a confidence with using social media and a confidence in how their imagined audience will receive their work. Not everyone has the time or ability to embrace social media in that way however, especially if they have part-time non-creative jobs or other commitments. This suggests that having sufficient economic capital in the first place is helpful for having the time to learn and develop one's aesthetic expertise, and then having or building the social capital to enable that expertise to be recognised.

Capital can also play a significant part in obtaining working space for cultural workers. Studios can be expensive for cultural workers, yet they are still perceived as an important part of how they self-identify (Bain, 2004). The cultural workers in this research negotiated the complexities of what to share on social media about their work space, which can also play a significant part in signalling aesthetic expertise.

Staging the 'studio' space

"The stage of the studio is necessary, though, to enjoy the tortures of procrastination, for the enactment of the melodrama of solitude, for the playing out of visual monologues."

von Heyl (in Jacob and Grabner, 2010:125)

In the above quote, artist Charline von Heyl describes the studio as a stage where the 'drama' of artistic creation is carried out. Though described as a stage, Charline's description quoted here refers to it as a space in the private life of the artist. It is the setting for the personal struggles they go through which are not meant to be observed by the public – the back stage in Goffman's terms.

The studio however can also be a public stage; for the exhibition of work, meeting with the public and for collaboration, as Andy Warhol did in his New York loft, 'The Factory'. Alexander Liberman (1960) photographed the studios of artists such as Joan Miro and Picasso, revealing what seems like the back stage to the public, yet presented in a front stage manner within the book *The Lives of the Artists.* For cultural workers, the studio is a space which complicates ideas of public and private, work and home life, as Katy Siegel (2010) describes:

"To succeed in a world of flexibility and impermanence, where one must constantly sell oneself to the next employer, appear poised for the next opportunity, we feel compelled to use our spare moments to think of new strategies and ways to 'shine.' This means erasing the line between work and life, not just temporally and spatially but psychologically."

Siegel, K (2010:313).

This quote by Siegel points to the significance of opening up the studio space in cultural workers' expertise signalling, through the spatial, temporal and psychological erasure of boundaries between work and life.

Michelle Grabner (2010) argues that the romantic notions of the artist studio, such as Picasso's studio or Jackson Pollock's barn, are a gendered "room of privilege […] a domain of male authorship that is determinedly undomestic" (2010:2). Daniel Buren (2010 [1971]) in his account of *The Function of the Studio* described it as a private space, "presided over by the artist-resident, since only that work which he desires and allows to leave his studio will do so." (2010:157). Such accounts by Grabner and Buren suggest the traditional notions of the studio are that of a masculine, mostly private space where the lone artistic 'genius' works.

As well as spaces for artistic creation, studios are also spaces for collaboration, instruction and display. Grabner points out that though many models of the studio which invited the public in, such as the French Salons or Andy Warhol's Factory, appeared to reject "creative solitude", the venues "did not fully disperse authorship and the notion of a privileged site of production." (2010:4). She argues that the contemporary studio is much more fragmented and complex; and "unless it is a practiced place, no physical room or demiurgic attitude can qualify as a studio." (2010:5).

Grabner argues that the contemporary studio space can be defined by the practices which take place within it. This is much more than artistic creation, it can be learning, looking for inspiration, collaboration, discussion and contemplation. Sjöholm (2013) argues that the studio is a place for "continuous professional learning; learning based on repetition and generic skills but also explorative trial and error. There are many ways to be an artist but essential to artistic practice are knowledge and skills." (2013:5). In other words, the studio is one of the spaces for the development and display of aesthetic expertise. Sjöholm also emphasises the role of the studio in exhibition of professionalism, and the professional learning of artists. It is not just a space for artists to think and experiment, there is a sense of a place to go, a professional workspace. It is also gendered; as mentioned in Chapter 3 Alison Bain (2004) highlights this in her discussion of art studios in relation to the construction of an artistic identity for women artists. She argues that having a studio is crucial for women to self-identify as artists, and highlights some of the difficulties women face when they need to work from home, including the distraction they receive from families and domestic responsibilities when trying to work on their art.

Financial constraints and family responsibilities are the main barriers for women to having a studio of their own. For many of the women in this research, having a studio is just not possible for them for those reasons, however that did not prevent them from self-identifying as artists. Other accounts of creative work in the domestic space, such as Susan Luckman's research on craft sellers on Etsy (2015), show how the domestic space can be idealised in online self-presentation, where "work-life relationships, which were once seen as complex and problematic, are presented as now reconciled in the world of women's micro-enterprise" (2015:103). In this Luckman refers to Etsy's 'featured blogs' segment which showcases a

particular seller, with an interview and pictures of their home. We could say these are front stage performances mediated by Etsy, but how is the front stage and back stage performance of the studio space managed by the cultural workers themselves when signalling on social media? For those in this research, some had a physical, external studio to go to for work, and most worked from home.

Jason, who tends to work on his pieces over a long period of time, posted an Instagram photo of his work on his studio wall shown in Figure 29:

Figure 29 Jason studio

He captions this with 'everything is becoming something', emphasising that the work is not yet finished. Sjöholm (2013) observes that the act of hanging unfinished work in the studio allows artists to contemplate and absorb their work, enabling them to think about how they will proceed. This could be considered a back stage process, and the purposefulness of hanging the art and the space for contemplation is an important part of being an artist. The setting of the studio wall can be part of an

online staging of this. The light shining in and the remnants of paint on the wall mirror the romantic descriptions of artist studios (Grabner, 2010). The studio wall communicated on social media in this way, also signals one's status as a 'serious' artist (Bain, 2004, Luckman, 2015).

Using Instagram, Cherie has been able to showcase her work situated within her studio, without people needing to visit the studio to see it. The post shown in Figure 30 allows followers to see the scale of her paintings:

Figure 30 Cherie studio

Like Jason, Cherie is showing her work in progress and the positioning of paintings for contemplation, as well as a front stage display of her aesthetic expertise, mediated on Instagram with the affirmative comments which Cherie responds to. Posting her art on Instagram has led to some success for Cherie, as she described in her interview: "I've sold two paintings on Instagram. They're big paintings, and they cost a lot of money." In the interview she expressed some disbelief that

someone would pay so much money for a painting after only seeing it on Instagram, rather than the customer visiting her studio to experience the art first hand. As with Colin, her engagement with her audience in the comments, building a relationship, may help to encourage sales as it makes users feel involved and potentially invested in the artist. The Instagram picture of Cherie's studio creates a sense of authenticity in terms of the artist 'at work', creating the pieces. This is depicted by the paint splashes on the floor, materials and paintings visible, giving the impression of the back stage of Cherie's practice. Yet this is constructed for a front stage performance on social media – the construction of 'being' a cultural worker, creating art.

Sjöholm (2013) argues that the artist and art studios are mutually producing: "Through setting up a workspace they are able to produce art and through producing art they also produce the interior of their work environment" (2013:24). This is evident in the spaces depicted by Jason and Cherie – work in progress, marks on the walls, paint splashes on the floor. What happens when the studio is the home and not an old loft or factory? I found that for one cultural worker the presentation of back stage may not have had the traditional qualities of an artist studio, but still served purpose in the staging of their process. Jamila, who works from home because she has a young daughter, shares a picture on Twitter (Figure 31) of what seems a random collection of ornaments on shelves in her garden:

Jamila @Jamila_Artist · Mar 22
My #kitsch crap outside #beautiful

Figure 31 Jamila shelf Tweet

In interview, Jamila described her inspiration and aesthetic interests as 'random', so for anyone visiting her profile, they would get an idea of what she likes and finds inspirational. Even though she calls it 'kitsch crap' in what could be perceived as self-deprecating, she uses the hashtag #beautiful to depict that she appreciates the beauty in the objects. Here Jamila is also communicating her taste which in turn says something about her work. Jamila's work is satirical in intent and in interview she described her work as "ridiculous" in subject matter. She told me that a lot of her work is unusual and inspired by "kitschy things" so by communicating her taste in this way the audience would get an idea of what Jamila does without her needing to post work. This is a way for Jamila to keep her profile up to date when she is struggling to produce.

In interview Jamila mentioned how she tries to do work when her daughter is asleep, because "otherwise I feel guilty that I'm not focusing on her, so I feel

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like…and I don't feel particularly creative, but at the moment I would say I'm not really fitting it in and I am missing it a little bit." The young age of her child means that the home space is not ideal for Jamila to work in at the moment. She says that: "normally if I was working on something I would leave it in the middle of the room and keep coming back to look at it, or leave the computer on and write notes and stuff but because she's into everything, everything has to be kept away from her which means it's out of my eye line, so it's not on my radar anymore". Jamila's husband also works, so at the time of interview she was trying to negotiate childcare arrangements to enable her to continue her practice. There are similar experiences described in Bain's account of female artists working from home, struggling for space to really concentrate on their art, because "a woman artist is never completely insulated in her studio when it is part of her home, for she is repeatedly interrupted by the many and varied demands of domesticity" (Bain, 2004:186). The compromised space of the home for working means that Jamila has little physical or mental room for contemplation or to complete work. What she can share of her back stage process at least is some of her inspiration and art habitus situated in the home, as part of her front stage performance.

Abi was able to convert a room in her house to a dedicated studio, which allowed her to keep all of her equipment together, whereas in the past it had been dispersed around various work spaces. Photographer Patrick also works from home; his house is empty during the day and his wife works so he has the space and time to concentrate on his photography. Both Abi and Patrick mostly share their finished work on social media, rather than any work in progress or elements of their back stage process. Patrick is a photographer who edits his pictures on his computer, so he has not got a studio with paints and materials strewn everywhere and unfinished

paintings on the wall. If he were to share his back stage process he could probably share unedited photos or photos of him on location. Patrick's 'studio' is not confined within a specific physical space, it is on location with him, or within photo editing software on his computer. For Abi, "it's all about the end product" when she posts her work on social media or sells on Etsy. When she was a writer however, she tended to write blog posts about her process, so she could gain feedback and support from other writers.

Susan Luckman describes the art studio as a: "cherished marker of one's professional status as a visual artist; the physical presence of a dedicated studio space that people can visit is a powerful signifier of one's status as a 'serious' artist" (Luckman, 2015:94-95). However, I found that in order to self-identify as an artist/cultural worker, one does not need to work in a studio, because a lot of the cultural workers featured in this chapter do and they still call themselves artists. In terms of self-identification, physical space is less important than the practice one carries out, and the aesthetic expertise developed. Social media platforms provide an online space for sharing, collaboration, feedback and the communication of art work; the authenticity of which the studio setting could enhance when presented online, as with Cherie's Instagram post.

Physical space, then, can play some part in the staging of being a cultural worker and to some extent the signalling of aesthetic expertise. The back stage process situated within a physical, 'professional' space can inform a front stage performance for social media. Those who work from home do not have this 'professional' space to share because they do not have sufficient economic capital to rent a studio, and during the time I analysed their social media, tended not to share

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their home work spaces. Even where domestic tastes are sometimes shared, as with Jamila, the domestic space remains, by and large, a private one.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated how the cultural workers in this research negotiate what they do, and do not, reveal on social media, through the lens of Goffman's conception of staging and Hogan's extension of this to exhibitions. The analysis reveals how participants negotiated the online staging of their personal identity, their work and their working space. For some, such as Stacey Anne, Eimear and Abi, not knowing who can see social media posts contributes to a reticence in sharing aspects of personality or personal interests. Others, such as Anthony, use such strategies to construct an 'authentic' online impression of the cultural worker. The staging of aesthetic expertise through revealing the creative process is linked to the cultural workers' confidence in using social media, in their own aesthetic knowledge and abilities, and in their relationship with their imagined audience, and this is exhibited by Colin and Gillian.

Distinctions between cultural worker and their work, their personal and professional life are regarded by some to be blurred (Gregg, 2011) and to some extent this is evident in how some of the cultural workers conflated distinctions between the 'back stage' preparation and the 'front stage' performance, by revealing creative processes, aspects of their personal life and studio spaces online. The blurring between personal and professional life for some is performed as a part of signalling expertise on social media, and an analysis of such provides insight into the nature of contemporary cultural labour.

As with any online activity, there are risks associated with revealing back stage processes in an attempt to signal aesthetic expertise, as one can be opened

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up to scrutiny, which can cause potential reputational damage. While none of my participants had experienced this during the research, they could, and the video of 'themostfamousartist' created by Buzzfeed is a case in point. In revealing his creative process in the video, Matty opened himself up to scrutiny from the Buzzfeed staff, in fact he was mocked by the narrators. They even used an embarrassing incident in Matty's past (the drunk video) to mock him further. This was counterbalanced in the video by the positive comments from the critic and collector, just so it did not seem like an all-out attack. Yet the Buzzfeed video demonstrates how one's 'back stage' process can be interpreted in ways which cannot be predicted, and potentially re-used in ways to cause further scrutiny and potential reputational damage. For Matty in particular his past has also come back to haunt him through the revealing of his previous indiscretions to the very large Buzzfeed audience. However, it is worth noting that at the time of writing in 2017, Matty has over 163,000 Instagram followers. He appears to have deleted most of his images from Instagram, including all of his pieces which were featured and mocked in the original Buzzfeed article (Goldman, 2016). This demonstrates the impermanence of creative work when it is posted online, and how posts can be deleted or amended by users in an attempt to protect their reputation. The case of 'themostfamousartist' is an extreme one in terms of the scale of risks and opportunities social media can present to cultural workers, and serves as both an optimistic and cautionary tale.

The staging of aspects of the self, work and space, the interactions with (and actions of) the audience, the deletion or amendment of posts, and the aggregation and mediation of it all by social media platforms contribute to a mediated construction of 'being a cultural worker' online and for some of my participants, appearing 'professional'. The appearance of being a cultural worker or appearing

professional is not to be conflated with signalling aesthetic expertise which is evident in the posts of Colin and Anthony, who reveal their creative processes and are comfortable describing them. Signalling and staging are only parts of these online constructions – and that is not to say that all of the cultural workers in this research have aesthetic expertise to signal.

The analysis in this chapter tells us that cultural workers require some degree of social media expertise in order to successfully negotiate the risks and opportunities of online self-presentation. For those in this research, social media can be both a help and a hindrance, but above all it is unavoidable, and even for those who do not like using it, such as Phil, there is a necessity to create and maintain an online presence. In the next chapter I explore these issues further by focusing on the act of signalling expertise on social media *as* cultural labour.

Chapter 5: Signalling expertise as cultural labour

Introduction

When Patrick the photographer gets up in the morning, he makes himself a cup of coffee, sits down and goes through his messages and responses on Twitter and Facebook – either on his phone or his laptop. He then goes out to take photographs, usually of landscapes, buildings, and architecture. When he is finished, he comes back to process the photos on his laptop using editing software. Once he has finished editing, he plans how he is going to promote the new images. He schedules posts to go out on Twitter three times a day, targeted to specific audiences, with certain other Twitter accounts in mind with which he would like to engage.

Patrick's daily routine carries a weight of expectation that he has imposed on himself, and has become so habitual that it is like "taking tablets in the morning" – to use his words. And like taking tablets in the morning, there can be an effect if they are missed. For Patrick, missing his tablets – posting on social media – makes him feel disappointed with himself and he fears that he has missed out on potential opportunities to increase his following and gain more recognition for his photography. He enjoys receiving recognition online via retweets and likes, but if he does post and does not receive any response, he feels even more disappointment. The feedback encourages Patrick to produce more work, post more, to receive more engagement. Patrick's creative practice and daily routine are punctuated by moments of checking, uploading and scheduling on social media. This takes place at home, in any room of his house, on his phone or laptop. It is constant.

This description of the role of social media use in a photographer's daily routine provides some insight into an area which is underexplored in accounts of

cultural work. From this snapshot we have learned that social media use can introduce different kinds of pressures into an everyday routine; it is something that I have felt myself as both a social media practitioner and researcher. The pressures of cultural work are well documented and much of this important literature has already been discussed in previous chapters (i.e. Banks, 2017; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2016). What requires further interrogation in cultural labour literature is a development which has had an effect on the way many people communicate, present themselves online and consume other forms of media – social media.

The snapshot of Patrick's day encapsulates the issues which will be explored in this chapter. So far this thesis has demonstrated the importance of signalling expertise on social media for cultural workers, how they negotiate this signalling in relation to their online construction of 'being' a cultural worker, and the value of aesthetic expertise as a potential form of symbolic capital. In this chapter the focus shifts to the *act* of signalling *as* cultural labour, with reference to how these acts relate to the online construction. To reiterate, cultural labour is the specific act of aesthetic creation and making a living out of it.

First I introduce digital labour critiques from literature which can help us to understand the act of signalling expertise on social media *as* cultural labour. I then explore the possible implications of using social media in cultural labour, which include: the pressure to maintain an online presence, displaying and fostering recognition, and working on one's social media expertise, or signalling *as* expertise (Jones, 2002). The themes emerged provide important insight into the implications of signalling expertise for cultural labour.

Digital labour and cultural work

The act of labour is distinct from work, because labour is hard to quantify and sets its own pace, whereas the act of 'work' begins and ends at specific times and tends to have a schedule (Hyde, 1979:68). The Marxist conception of labour implies that the work which goes into something gets exchanged for some form of value. In Marxist terms, this value is economic capital. Marx was concerned with how workers' labour was exploited through the extraction of surplus value by capitalists to generate profit. Workers' labour, specifically waged labour, "which, exchanged against the variable part of capital (the part of the capital that is spent on wages), reproduces not only this part of the capital (or the value of its own labour-power), but in addition produces surplus-value for the capitalist" (Marx, 1969:300). This is what Marx termed 'productive labour', because it is productive for capitalist exploitation.

According to Marx, 'unproductive labour' cannot be exchanged directly with capital, but instead the revenue is directly consumed; the unproductive labour produces a 'use value' rather than surplus value in capitalist society. Artistic labour is one such example. The idea of unproductive labour demonstrates Marx's acknowledgement of the social relations of production, which are central to the definition of labour "which is derived not from its content or its result, but from its particular social form" (Marx, 1969:304). In this sense Marx acknowledges the forms of labour most associated with creative and cultural work; labour which may not always produce surplus or even waged value, but could produce some form of use value within a particular social context. It is this idea that cultural labour produces products or outputs with an 'intrinsic' or 'intangible' value which makes defining cultural value so difficult (O'Brien, 2010). Banks (2015) argues that cultural labour is essential to notions of cultural value, because "it is the labour of cultural work that

locates both these objects and the individual workers whose skills, ideas and values shape culture's material and immaterial forms" (2015b:2). In the contemporary neoliberal context, cultural value is increasingly being measured by commercial value. When cultural products are displayed and distributed through social media platforms, where numerous value exchanges and accretions take place, further questioning is invited into how cultural labour and cultural value could possibly be measured. Digital labour critiques can help us understand some of the mechanisms of labour exchange on social media platforms, and I suggest how such critiques might be considered in accounts of cultural labour.

I understand digital labour as any labour which involves digital technology, mostly taking place on the internet and social media platforms. This understanding is derived from the existing literature on digital labour to be discussed in this section, but important to acknowledge from the outset is the role of the factories in the production of the very devices through which we access social media, and the labour experiences of workers in those (see Sandoval, 2013; Qui, Gregg and Crawford, 2014 for their work on Foxconn, the iPhone manufacturer in China). This is also a form of digital labour, and highlights the need to not generalise or totalise when we discuss digital labour as exploitative (Hesmondhalgh, 2015). The experiences of the cultural workers in this research, for example, will be very different from the workers at Foxconn, where highly regimented and exploitative working conditions have led to employee suicides, and they should not be conflated. In this section therefore, I will specifically be referring to the forms of digital labour which take place *in use* of social media platforms and the internet.

Any discussion of digital labour calls for some acknowledgement of Tiziana Terranova's (2000) influential essay on 'free labour'. Terranova describes free labour

as "the moment where this knowledgeable consumption of culture is translated into productive activities that are pleasurably embraced and at the same time often shamelessly exploited." (2000:41). Some identify this as characteristic of labour concerns in contemporary digital and social media use (see Fuchs, 2014, 2015; Hearn, 2008, 2010; Huws, 2014; Sandoval et al, 2014). Terranova critiqued scholarship which heralded the democratic and egalitarian possibilities of digital technology, instead demonstrating how cultural production on the internet actually works in "full, mutually constituting interaction with late capitalism" (2000:43). She uses the term 'free labor' to conceptualise the type of labour prevalent in what she calls late capitalism, which is "the field that both sustains free labor and exhausts it. It exhausts it by subtracting selectively but widely the means through which that labor can reproduce itself" (2000:51). In other words, the internet is not a free floating utopian community. It is structured by capitalism, extracting surplus value from people's online activity, which contributes content to websites for no wage. This free labour maintains and sustains the very platforms which exploit it. Terranova's work on free labour informs much of the recent digital labour critique.

For example, Christian Fuchs (2014) builds on the idea of free labour to argue that people's use of the internet and social media is "alienated digital work; it is alienated from itself, from the instruments and objects of labour and from the products of labour" (2014:351-352). The concepts of alienation and exploitation are complex and often carelessly used in digital labour literature (Hesmondhalgh, 2015) and both terms need to be used with caution. Fuchs draws on Marx's concept of alienation outlined in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.* In this work, Marx described how capitalist labour is "*external* to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to

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his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself," (1844:XXIII).

Because the worker is detached from their labour in this way, the labour is only a means to satisfy external needs (i.e. make money to live), the labour does not fulfil their existence or life activity, what Marx calls the 'essential being'. Fuchs (2015) claims that users engaged in digital labour on social media platforms are alienated in four ways, drawing on Marx's four forms of alienation: they are 'coerced' by isolation and social disadvantage if they leave social media sites; their human experiences come under the control of capital; the users do not own the platforms, and the platform individually controls profit (2015:229). Platform owners' extraction of value from user activity online, according to Fuchs, has a direct relation to users' time spent online. This relationship forms the basis of his labour theory of value.

Fuchs' concept, which directly maps Marx's elements of alienation in capitalism on to social media, is problematic. Such an approach obscures people's motivations for using social media sites, implies they are coerced into using them and denies them any agency with regard to how they use social media, how often they use it, what they choose to disclose (or not disclose) on there, and the opportunities for creative expression and human connection on those sites. The creative agency offered by social media can be particularly important for cultural work, which makes the use of alienation as a concept in digital labour questionable. As Kylie Jarrett argues:

"It is the creative agency available within digital media that overtly speaks against the kinds of alienation described in the exploitation thesis. To participate in the production of culture and meaning as is enabled and fostered by interactive technologies is arguably to be involved in the self-

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production that facilitates full human and social flourishing in Marx's

reckoning"

(Jarrett, 2015:96).

Here Jarrett acknowledges the creative and positive possibilities of social media use which I have demonstrated to some extent already in this thesis. Recent research into amateur cultural production online demonstrates how opportunities for creative practice which take place within arenas of capitalist exchange, such as social media platforms, can also enable forms of creative sociality (Knott, 2015). The exploitation thesis as applied by Fuchs is also problematic because it bundles all social media uses into one, 'exploitable' function, with little regard for the different types of activity people carry out and the meanings they generate from them. Someone absent-mindedly scanning their Twitter timeline while watching TV is quite a different activity from a cultural worker staging a work in progress of their art for posting on their Facebook page. More nuance is needed in such discussions of individual social media use.

Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012) offer a direct critique of Fuchs' conceptions of value creation on social media. They point out that value creation online is poorly directly related to time spent online, which was the basis of Fuchs' labour theory of value. They argue that value accumulated by platform owners usually occurs in financial markets, rather than in the direct and commodified exchange of the activities of platform users. The authors highlight that value exchange online is much more complex than a labour-time approach, and people's time online cannot be commodified as easily as Fuchs suggests. They argue that instead, value creation on the internet is based primarily on affective relations and a reputation-based economy. They describe this as the "affective law of value" where value is not

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conceptualised in terms of objective measurement, but in companies' ability to "attract and aggregate various kinds of affective investments, like intersubjective judgments of their overall value or utility in terms of mediated forms of reputation" (2012:142). The networks of affective investments are then sold on to other companies, by platform owners, for advertising.

Arvidsson and Colleoni note that affective networks based on reputation are pertinent to individual self-presentation online, and Alessandro Gandini (2016) picks up this thread in relation to creative freelance work. He discusses how social media profiles are increasingly crucial for freelance workers because they contribute to reputation. He notes that: "Reputation links into value as an investment in social relations with the expectation of an economic return, being the source for trust to be established among participants in hybrid contexts of interaction made of digital and non-digital exchanges that do not necessarily imply face-to-face or physical proximity" (2016:27). This shares parallels with Becker's (2008) thoughts on the importance of reputation in art worlds, in terms of how reputations can be forged about an artist by others, through a process of social consensus (2008:353).

So following the work of Arvdisson and Colleoni, and Gandini, I consider the forms of value which are exchanged specifically on social media to be based in affective networks of sociality and personal investment within a reputation-based economy. If we think about cultural workers signalling aesthetic expertise, the mediated presentation of their cultural products on social media, including all the comments and interactions around those products, may lead to some value for them in the future. This could take the form of a direct sale or commission, involvement in a project, invitation to show in a gallery – there are countless possible opportunities. Such activities in turn may not always generate any direct economic value but could,

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for example, contribute to the accumulation of social capital through affective investment from audiences, which could lead to economic benefits later. Signalling aesthetic expertise and having that recognised by people or companies of a high status in turn enhances the reputation and status of that cultural worker, possibly leading to more sales, commissions and exposure in the future, and the building of symbolic capital. The value exchange points for cultural workers signalling expertise on social media are complex and not easily traceable, and so it is difficult to gauge the exact benefits of signalling expertise, not immediately at least. For many of the participants in this thesis, there is some evidence to suggest that signalling expertise online has paid off. For example, with Gillian and the growth of her pet portrait business, or Cherie with sales of her paintings through Instagram. While the temporal properties of social media make value exchanges very difficult to pin down, most of the cultural workers featured in this thesis know there are potential benefits, otherwise they would not use social media. However, using social media also presents additional risks and pressures to cultural labour. One example is the pressure to 'presence'.

The pressure to 'presence'

Many of the cultural workers in this research described how important it is for their practice and career to make sure social media profiles are up to date and that they post regularly. To conceptualise this, I use the idea of 'presencing', which is what Nick Couldry describes as an "emerging requirement in everyday life to have a public presence beyond one's own bodily presence" (2012:12). This is tied with signalling expertise because even when the cultural workers aren't online and posting, they have profiles, portfolios and a visible record of previous posts which anyone can view at any time - the 'exhibition' (Hogan, 2010) of their online presence,

discussed in the previous chapter. The act of 'presencing' involves keeping these exhibitions up to date, and maintaining that presence in order to stand a good chance of gaining further exposure online.

For some of the cultural workers, there was a degree of anxiety expressed about the regularity (or irregularity) in which they post, for example, Cherie said in interview:

"I haven't Instagrammed for a couple of days, so I'm like, 'Oh God, I should definitely put something up.' I don't know what it's going to be, but I should put something up."

(Cherie)

The pressure to maintain an up-to-date online presence was a concern shared by most of the cultural workers in this research. Part of this included being "seen to be doing something" as described by Anthony. Anthony wondered whether "if it's like the cult of being busy, like if you're busy you're productive. And everyone only really cares about what you've just done, if you did something 6 months ago that's like so long ago. So it's more about what you're doing now and what you're doing next."

What Anthony says resonates with Helen Blair's (2001) assertion that 'You're only as good as your last job' and increasingly, appearing 'busy' and 'productive' in work is imperative (Gregg, 2015), particularly now that online profiles are often the first port of call for potential employers, clients or commissioners (Gandini, 2016). For cultural workers, if your latest piece of work or exhibition is not visible online, you could be mistaken for being out of work or not creating anything. Anthony described how he is increasingly: "Creating artwork to put on social media, which adds to the pressure of 'I need to keep making artwork' which sometimes

results in really crap art, because I'm pressuring myself." Anthony's admission of creating potentially "crap art" just to maintain his online presence is telling. Though the presence is up to date, posting work which is not up to usual standard just to maintain it risks damaging his reputation and signalling of aesthetic expertise.

The pressure cultural workers feel to presence is an example of the 'affective fabric' of using social media, which according to Kuntsman (2012) is "the lived and deeply felt everyday sociality of connections, ruptures, emotions, words, politics and sensory energies, some of which can be pinned down to words or structures; others are intense yet ephemeral" (2012:3). Kuntsman usefully acknowledges not only the affect of sociality online, but also the affect produced by platforms and digital technologies themselves. The temporal and structural properties of social media, where timelines and news feeds move so quickly and algorithms increasingly shape and determine what we see online (Bucher & Helmond, 2017), I suggest can also contribute to the pressure to presence.

Another affect mentioned by some of the artists in this research was guilt. For some of them, setting a precedent or expectation by posting regularly can lead to guilt when even one day goes by without posting:

> "If I miss a day I get really upset with myself, it's really stupid. I am under
>
> no pressure whatsoever to do it, it's only self-imposed. But because I've
>
> been doing it for so long and so regularly, it's kind of like taking tablets in
>
> the morning, if you miss one you'd wish you had taken it."
>
> (Patrick)

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Patrick compares posting on social media with taking tablets in the morning, and the guilt he feels is self-imposed by the

precedent he set by posting regularly. Keeping his social media presence up to date is now vital for his practice. Similarly, Graefer (2016) identifies how celebrity gossip bloggers feel a pressure to keep their blogs up to date, describing how "the body and mind of the blogger are geared towards efficiency and diligence" (2016:149). She argues that bloggers perform affective labour in compiling their blogs, and the affect they both invest in their blogs and generate from users through humour (to encourage sharing, commenting, etc) is key for what she describes as "affective capitalism" (2016:142) where capital is profiting from affective relations. Here Graefer identifies the important link between labour and affect which pervades cultural workers' use of social media as evidenced in this chapter.

Patrick has a large bank of photographs he can use to maintain his online presence. What about the painters, sculptors and writers, and furthermore, the cultural workers who still need to work part time in non-art jobs to maintain their income? While evidence of finished work is important for signalling aesthetic expertise, many of the other cultural workers in this research cannot post their work as regularly as Patrick. This is an example of how for many cultural workers, having sufficient economic capital is also necessary in order to have the time to create, and therefore maintain one's presence online. Abi negotiates this by posting about her interests, and as she describes:

> "It might be nothing to do with art at all, because I've got an interest in conservation and wildlife, so it could be something that Greenpeace have put out that I might retweet or somebody else's artwork. So I try to do that as well because that's…things that I'm interested in that I'd like other people to see, and it just keeps me there as a presence even if it's only a small one!" (Abi)

Here Abi mentions 'presence' when talking about posting things other than her art, instead trying to communicate more about herself as a person, as part of her online construction as not only a cultural worker, but a human being. Maria does the same, while she does sometimes post her art, she does not want to appear like other artists she sees on social media, pushing their work and asking for sales. Instead she also shares other things that she does as mentioned in the previous chapter, such as going hiking or going for afternoon tea. This also communicates her taste and thus potentially says something not only about Maria as a person, but about her work. Posting these activities maintains a presence without risking aesthetic expertise signals by posting 'crap art', to use Anthony's expression.

Jazamin told me how she tends to post on social media when she has sold a piece of work, "because that helps to keep the interest in my work, and trying to get more people to buy things". Similar to Anthony, Jazamin wants to appear in demand. By sharing when she has sold work, she is also displaying recognition of that work in order to gain more recognition and potentially enhance her status. Composer Phil knows that he needs to post regularly but often he can't be bothered to or he does not know what to post. This is possibly because of the nature of his work – audio - which does not lend itself to the primarily imaged-based nature of popular social media platforms. He said that in an ideal world, he would hire an assistant to post for him, "whether it was specifically relevant or not, just to keep the profile high."

Retired photographer John said that posting his latest work on social media "keeps people interested." John was the only cultural worker who had a Wikipedia page, and when I asked him about it, he said that he does not update it himself but "thought it would be useful to have a presence there, because Wikipedia is quite a powerful tool that people use."

Many of the cultural workers mentioned the word 'presence' when talking about posting on social media. Colin specifically mentions the pressure he feels to maintain his "presence". He described how during one summer he decided to step back from posting on social media, and he noticed a drop in his followers and engagement online. This made him realise that "If you disappear from social media or people don't think you're doing anything, they [the audience] forget about you quite quickly." This resonates with the idea of the "attention economy" (Marwick 2013b) which is described as "a marketing perspective assigning value according to something's capacity to attract "eyeballs" in a media-saturated, information-rich world" (2013b:138). Alice Marwick argues that "Attention-getting techniques employed by consumer brands have trickled down to individual users, who have increasingly, and occasionally improbably, used them to increase their online popularity." (ibid.)

In interview Colin also mentioned the role of the platforms in mediating his ability to gain attention online. He described how the drop in followers and interaction was so significant that it was possibly related to Facebook's algorithms, which can make less frequent users less visible to others online, and reward paid advertisers or frequent users with more visibility. I have experienced myself as a social media practitioner, particularly when I have maintained Facebook pages for commercial companies. So while the pressure to presence can be self-imposed to some extent, it can be facilitated and exacerbated by the functionality of social media platforms.

The pressure to presence is one crucial implication of social media use in cultural labour. A way in which cultural workers can maintain their online presence and signal expertise at the same time, is through the display of recognition, which also carries various benefits and challenges.

Displaying recognition

The display of recognition is showing that one's work has been recognised by others, and I show in this section how social media platforms can facilitate this. The cultural workers in this research displayed recognition in three ways: the sharing of associations with high profile clients/companies, the sharing of endorsements and social media metrics. All are ways for them to show that their work has been recognised, albeit to varying degrees of effectiveness.

Sharing associations

The use of social media platform features such as @ replies in Twitter and tagging on Facebook and Instagram were used frequently by the cultural workers in this research to show their association with a particular company, client or fellow artist, which is one way to display recognition. Colin explains his rationale behind this activity:

> "If I'm doing an exhibition and the exhibition has a sponsor, I'll always tag in the event sponsor, so that they get, sort of, recognition, and tagged in. I think it helps as well, if people see you've got, like, a social media following and they want to involve you in an event as well, you can help them create a buzz about what's going on."

> (Colin)

Below is an example of the type of activity Colin describes, which is not related to an exhibition but a commission he has carried out, as shown in Figure 32:

Figure 32 Colin guitar on Facebook

Here Colin is signalling a particular facet of his aesthetic expertise – his ability to apply his aesthetic skills different situations or settings. A part of expertise is the ability to call upon one's knowledge and skills whenever required, in a variety of situations (Becker, 2008; Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986). The responsiveness is enabled by the mastery of skills and knowledge, and this is evident in Colin's application of his art to a guitar body. He has tagged the companies involved in the project in his Facebook post – West London Art Factory and Marlow Guitars – to show his association with them (displaying recognition) and potentially encourage those companies sharing his work with their followers, expanding the reach of Colin's work and potentially facilitating even greater recognition.

The display of recognition can be related to Bourdieu's idea of the *illusio,* introduced in Chapter 1, whereby artists gain recognition through a consensus about their ability, leading to their consecration. He says the: "artist who makes the work is himself made, at the core of the field of production, by the whole ensemble of those who help to 'discover' him and to consecrate him as an artist who is 'known' and

recognised" (1996:230). Bourdieu uses the *illusio* to argue that the 'creator' is created by others, because it is others who are able to discover and promote that artist, who adheres to the *illusio* – the "collective belief in the game" (ibid.). Cultural workers using social media have a platform to potentially make themselves more 'discoverable' by others who could enhance their status, and while there is a small element of chance, the likelihood of their work being 'discovered' by a person or company of a high status is down to the cultural worker's individual labour in cultivating their online presence and making the connections necessary to help further their career. Candace Jones (2002) suggests that associating with others of a high status contributes to status enhancement, and is a strategy for signalling expertise.

Jazamin the musician/artist/photographer takes a similar approach to Colin by tagging the event sponsor in a Tweet (using the @ sign) in Figure 33, for a concert she performed at:

Figure 33 Jazamin concert Tweet

As a musician and artist, Jazamin regularly performs at different venues, and calling this particular venue an 'office' suggests this is a performance-related event she is involved in; and the venue is a professional place of work for her, not for leisure. Tagging the radio station and charity increases Jazamin's chances of gaining some online exposure if those companies retweet her. The display of recognition in this case is her association with the concert that she has been hired to perform at.

Phil the composer displays recognition by sharing his work for some high profile clients including the BBC show *Masterchef* in the UK and the South African lottery. As well as mentioning the client in his Tweets, he also mentions the distributor, Zone Music in Figure 34:

Figure 34 Phil association Tweets

Showing that Phil has worked for these high-profile clients enhances his status and potentially his reputation, because he has associated himself with those companies and provided the evidence to substantiate it by linking to his compositions created for them.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the mention function on Twitter was used in a very strategic way by Patrick, who uses this function specifically to target Twitter accounts which will retweet him and provide him with more exposure. During the research period he posted his photographs of Liverpool, Brussels and New York, and mentioned relevant Twitter photo accounts as demonstrated in Figure 35:
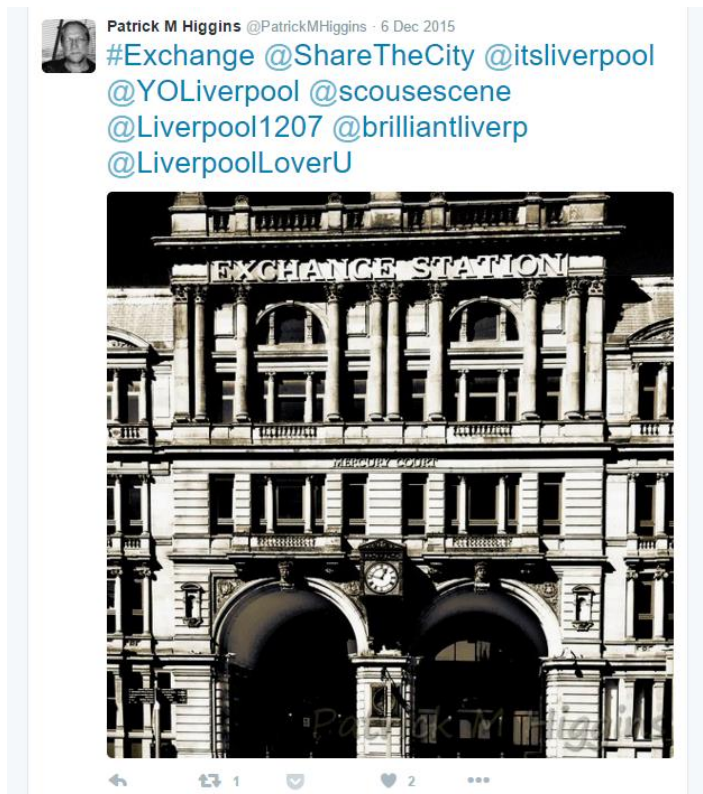

Figure 35 Patrick photo Tweet

Here Patrick appears to be targeting relevant Liverpool and photography related accounts which may share his work. When he gains more followers and more commissions as a result of this strategic approach - which he said in interview has happened – it suggests that his aesthetic expertise is beginning to be legitimised by others through social media. If he captures the attention of even higher profile clients, he will gain even more exposure. The approach Patrick has taken has led to his work featured in high-profile exhibitions, such as one at the Louvre in Paris. He said he would not be able to gain so much exposure without social media. However

as I've shown in the previous section and in the beginning of this chapter, such a reliance adds pressure to daily work routines and could have implications for cultural labour. In this sense, the digital labour of finding and sharing associations online *is also* cultural labour for those in this research. The same can be said of another form of displaying recognition–sharing endorsements.

Sharing endorsements

Some of the cultural workers displayed recognition by sharing endorsements by clients or other companies they are associated with. For example, Abi retweeted her publisher as shown in Figure 36:

Figure 36 Abi publisher Tweet

This is not an outright endorsement from the publisher, but Abi uses the 'quote' function to associate herself with that publisher for her followers to see. The fact that this is an international publisher is important for Abi's status enhancement.

Gillian gained a commission from the USA to produce portraits of two dogs relatively well known among dog lovers, and she posted a picture of them (Figure 37) with her portrait, sent to her by their owner:

By sharing this image, Gillian is showing her association with relatively high profile international clients, enhancing her status. She is also showing that she has happy customers who are pleased with the quality of her work; the subjects she painted are next to the finished product. Gillian also mentions a few companies in her Tweets, mostly *Arts Derbyshire* and *Talented Ladies Club*, which also published an article about her success:

Figure 38 Gillian Talented Ladies Club retweet

Gillian has fostered a relationship with these companies (I found her through *Arts Derbyshire*) and they are now providing her with additional exposure. She also asked

her followers on Facebook to provide testimonials for her website, which were

posted on her Facebook page, there for the public to see. In Figure 39 is her original

post requesting testimonials, with a thank you comment at the end:

Figure 39 Gillian testimonial post

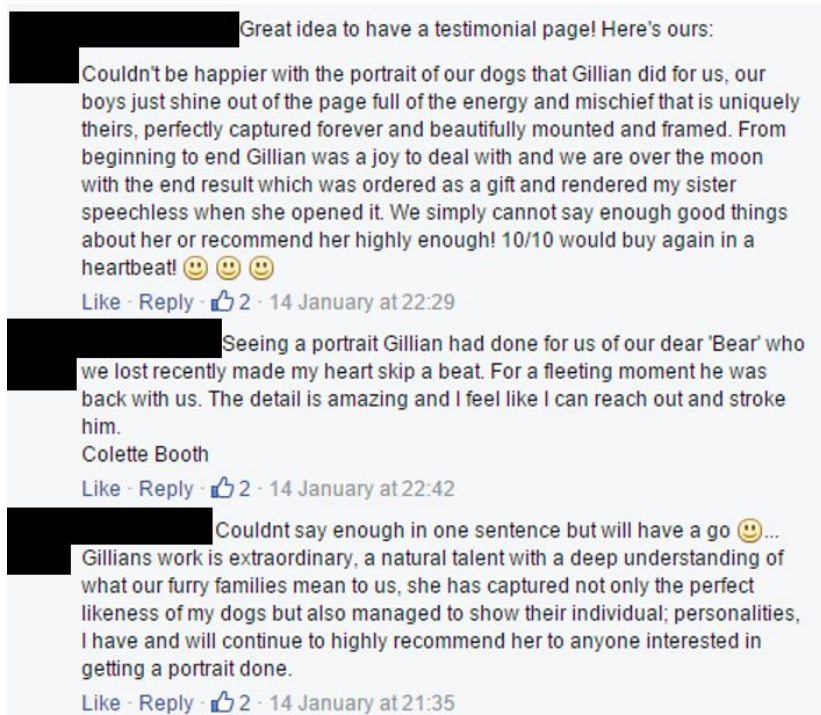Figure 40 is sample of the testimonials which appeared below the post:

Figure 40 Gillian testimonials

The affective language used by Gillian's clients – describing their 'joy', her work making their 'heart skip a beat' demonstrates how they have been affected by Gillian's work through the pet portraits she has produced for them, which hold some sentimental value. Some of them comment on her ability to capture the likeness of the subject, the detail, capturing the 'energy' and 'mischief' of pets. These are endorsements of both Gillian's service as an entrepreneur, delivering work which clients are happy with, and as an artist possessing a level of aesthetic expertise in her form of realist art, which is targeted at pet owners. She has generated some affective investment from customers online, and their affirmative comments enhance Gillian's reputation and could lead to further value generation in the future in the form of sales.

Gillian's level of aesthetic and arguably social media and entrepreneurial expertise in her area means that she is able to ask for feedback on social media and

is confident it will be positive. These positive reviews add to Gillian's display of recognition, albeit by satisfied customers. Unsatisfied customers were not visible, however negative comments on Facebook could have been moderated. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the stakes are high for the cultural workers in this research with regards to managing negative comments and online abuse. A bad comment could have implications for their reputation and could potentially be damaging to signals of aesthetic expertise.

For famous artists I suggest that the stakes are not as high, as they have built a reputation based on the critical reception and judgement of their art, and have attained a high status within the art field through work which has received widespread exposure. Negative comments for them would not be as damaging as they would be for Gillian, for example. In the case of Damien Hirst, I found that negative comments on Facebook were not even moderated, as shown in Figure 41:
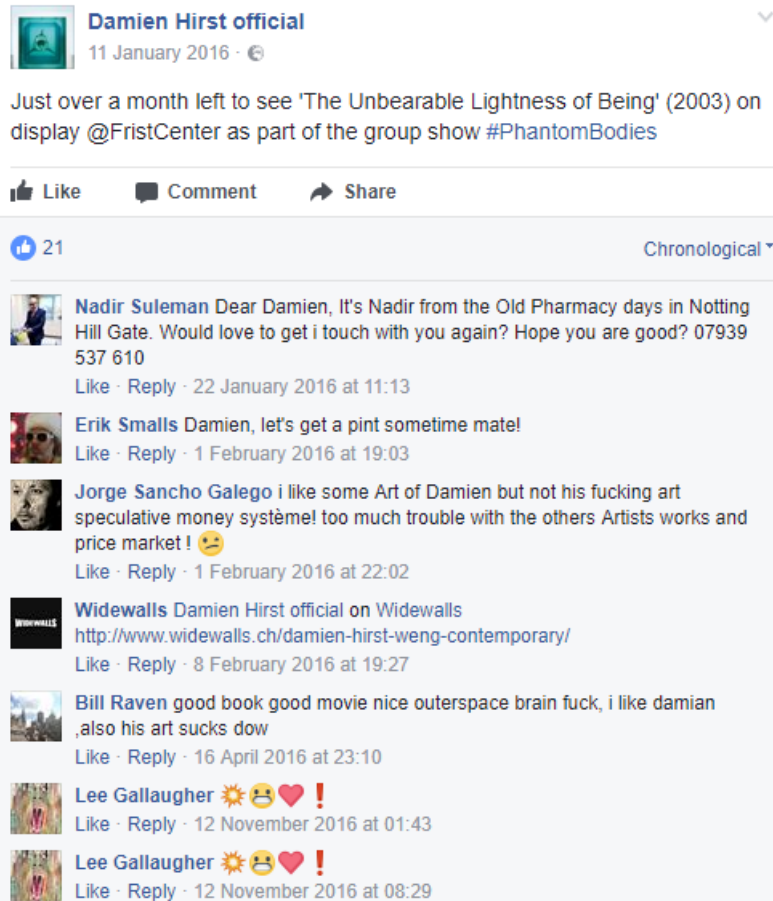
Figure 41 Damien Hirst Facebook

Here, comments such as "his art sucks" have not been moderated. Damien Hirst is no stranger to controversy. He has been heavily criticised in the past for preserving dead animals in formaldehyde for an exhibit, and for exploiting the labour of his assistants who create the majority of his work (Willett, 2013). Hirst is said to believe that art is more about conception than the execution, which goes against the idea of aesthetic expertise I have described in this thesis as requiring mastery and practical skill. Hirst does have knowledge of aesthetic codes and classifications; he has an arts education and started out as a curator, putting on shows in London and sometimes showing his own work. Businessman and collector Charles Saatchi was an advocate of Hirst's work (Mayer, 2015), which helped him to gain widespread recognition and begin to build a career as an independent artist. We could say that

Saatchi assisted Hirst's consecration as an artist in his own right, and this was because Hirst was able to get his work noticed by Saatchi. It is worth noting that Hirst must have known or have come to know Saatchi - a successful and rich businessman moving in rather privileged circles – somehow, in order to get his work noticed. Not everyone is able to get their work noticed in the way Hirst did, because not everyone can access such privileged circles.

The Facebook comments on Hirst's page pale in comparison to the criticism he has received in the past from the media and critics for his art. Thus, a few online comments will not do much damage to his reputation. Despite - or maybe because of - his controversy, and no doubt his connections, he remains one of the richest and most well-known British artists in the world.

What are the implications for cultural workers who are building their reputation, and therefore do need to monitor social media? For the cultural workers in this research who are dealing with interactions and comments, there is a degree of relational labour (Baym, 2015) required to interact with customers, collect and moderate comments. Baym defines relational labour as "regular, ongoing communication with audiences over time to build social relationships that foster paid work" (2015:16). She argues that "relationships built through relational labor can entail all the complex rewards and costs of personal relationships independent of any money that comes from them. At the same time, the connections built through relational labor are always tied to earning money, differentiating it from affective labor" (2015:16). So for Gillian, for example, her relational labour is often linked to being able to make money – interacting with customers and clients online and providing them with updates. For all of the cultural workers in this research, the relational labour of interaction, sharing associations and endorsements may not

directly result in any financial reward but contributes to their presence, and can potentially enhance their status and reputation. It is therefore an essential part of cultural labour.

The display of recognition may not immediately seem as burdensome as presencing for the cultural workers, indeed the sharing of endorsements and associations will most likely generate a positive affect for them, as expressed by Gillian in her 'thank you' comment underneath her testimonial post. Patrick said that he enjoys positive feedback, however he then gets disappointed when he doesn't receive any interaction or feedback. He talked a lot about social media metrics in his interview, which forms another part of the display of recognition.

Social media metrics

The level of engagement a post receives on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter is often visible, and such metrics can be concrete evidence of online recognition. However, the quality of that recognition is more difficult to ascertain. Interactions of this nature could be from friends and family, for example, and not from prominent galleries or clients which are more beneficial to the display of recognition.

The cultural workers in this research who did talk about social media statistics also described how it affects them. For example, Anthony talks about how he experiences "a hit of adrenaline" when he gets new likes on Facebook: "Like 'I got another like! Woo!' And when I make a post I'm like, how many likes did I get? Then I'm like 'woo! Look at this! It's growing!' and then I think, it's just a number!" It may be 'just a number' but as Gandini (2015) highlights, follower and engagement numbers are increasingly important for client and employer decisions when hiring someone, and this applies to cultural work too – for example, 'themostfamousartist' who uses his Instagram follower numbers as leverage to be shown in galleries. While signalling

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aesthetic expertise, I argue, is significant for cultural workers' online presence, gaining followers and recognition online is also important.

The preoccupation with numbers of course predates social media; cultural workers are also concerned with paintings sold, gallery footfall, books sold and so on, however these numbers often have a direct economic value. Social media *could* lead to economic value being generated at some point in the future, but it is not guaranteed. Where social media metrics also differ from other metrics (such as sales, footfall, etc) is the instantaneity of interaction, the easy accessibility of gauging recognition and perceived success of a piece of work. I suggest that the instantaneous nature of social media metrics and their influence on online visibility and reputation management has implications for cultural labour.

For example, Anthony described to me how social media statistics can be distracting for him, and also evoke an affective response when he receives new likes and followers. This resonates with Kuntsman's (2012) argument that social media and digital technologies in general can be "mediators and repositories of affect" (2012:6). This is evident when Cherie talked about the process of gaining followers as "a little project. You're like, 'Come on.' When I got a follower, I'm like, 'Yes,' because I've only got 300-odd followers". She said that follower numbers on Instagram is important to her, because "it would be better having more followers, obviously, because more opportunities will arise. Also, if you've got more followers, then it clearly means that your Instagram profile is popular." For Cherie, increased 'numbers' are important for her to increase exposure and 'popularity'. Like 'themostfamousartist' if Cherie becomes popular on Instagram, it could help her gain even more exposure, and enable her to sell more paintings. However, also like 'themostfamousartist' being 'popular' opens oneself up to wider criticism, particularly

if the cultural worker is perceived by critics (or if they admit themselves) to lack aesthetic expertise. This was also a criticism of Damien Hirst (Mayer, 2015) whose success is suggested, in the article by Mayer, to primarily be down to his entrepreneurial skill. The contemporary, neoliberal imperative for cultural workers to be entrepreneurial and 'always on' (Gregg, 2014) means that they must maintain the balance between creating work of high aesthetic quality and making money from their art (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2009) which could involve being 'popular'. Furthermore, they must compete for online attention with a plethora of online creators across the spectrum of 'beginner' to 'expert'.

Similar to presencing, many of the cultural workers in this research felt pressure to gain followers and interactions, to increase their changes of receiving recognition. Those who experience a buzz from increased numbers also experience disappointment when their posts receive no recognition. Colin talked about how his Facebook page has suffered a drop in hits (visits to his page) and also a decrease in page likes (people who like and therefore follow his Facebook page). On Facebook pages, the number of likes a page has is visible to the public and can be an important way for cultural workers to demonstrate the recognition of their work. In turn, the higher the number of likes, the more people that artist can reach and the higher their chances of their expertise being recognised on a large scale. Colin was suspicious of Facebook's algorithms, he noted "If you get an increase in likes, there seems to be an increase in dislikes from the page as well. […] I find it a little bit alarming that there's a correlation - that it almost seems to keep your numbers at a certain level." As mentioned before, Colin feels that Facebook's algorithms are mediating his presence online, and in turn, putting pressure on him to keep using the

platform, and pay to advertise on there to gain more engagement. Such concerns go beyond the scope of this research and require further investigation.

Most of the cultural workers interviewed felt that they shouldn't have to pay to advertise on Facebook because they do not make enough money, and also because Facebook itself is mostly free to access and use. Gillian does pay for sponsored posts on Facebook; she says it is a relatively small price to pay to reach potentially a lot more people and get her work recognised. Cultural workers with more economic capital, who are able to pay for advertising on Facebook, may be at an advantage over those who don't. Furthermore, those like 'themostfamousartist' who know how to use social media to gain popularity could also be at an advantage over cultural workers who are on social media, but have less knowledge and skill in using it. This is an example of the importance of signalling *as* expertise.

Signalling as expertise

Candace Jones (2002) discusses the idea of signalling as expertise, which is being able to signal expertise well. According to Jones, signalling as expertise involves a combination of analysis and intuition, which one develops through repeated signalling. Analysis involves tracking signals to gauge what works and what doesn't. This can apply to signalling expertise on social media, as I know from my own experience that working through certain posting strategies is important for finding out what works online and what the audience respond to. Signalling as expertise in the context of this research is synonymous with having social media expertise. To recap from Chapter 1, social media expertise is using social media platforms in ways which best display and promote aesthetic expertise. The cultural workers in this research worked towards this in three ways: curating, listening and planning, and all play a part in cultural labour routines.

Curating

Some of the participants, such as Anthony, self-identify as 'curators' in the traditional sense. However, some of them see themselves as curators of their own social media profiles. This is an important part of how they signal aesthetic expertise because they are managing the overall appearance of their profiles and what the audience will see, as well as expressing some of their creative abilities. For example, Cherie describes Instagram as a "stream of images" and she is "quite conscious of what I put up; I want it to stay in my kind of style, really, so it flows really nicely. I always feel like the pattern and the way it looks represents me. You'd be able to look at a painting that I was doing now, and you'd be able to look at all of those images, and see what my inspiration has been. So it's kind of like a big, ongoing mood board."

A mood board is a collection or arrangement of images, materials, text, colours and so on which are intended to help conceptualise the style of a project or artwork and to provide inspiration. Rather than creating a mood board privately, Cherie's inspiration and ideas are shared on Instagram to encapsulate her 'style' and what inspires her practice on social media for her followers to see, as shown in Figure 42:
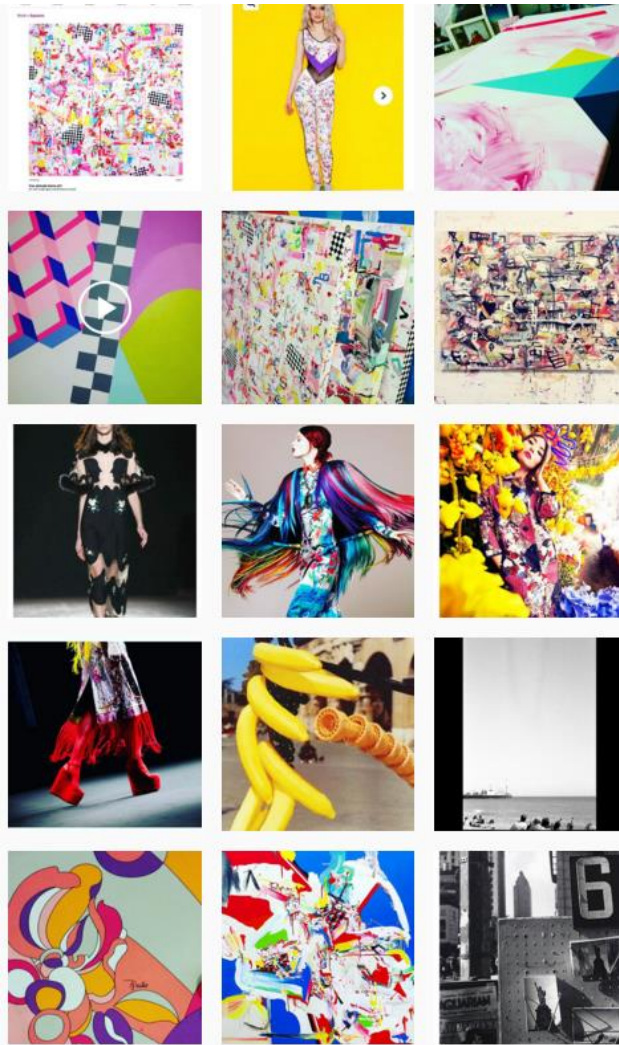
Figure 42 Cherie Instagram

Cherie often captions these images saying how much she loves them, and particularly with the fashion images, how much they inspire her. Her choice of inspiration is alongside her own paintings, so where her inspiration stems from is clear. She also said in interview that she feels it represents her as a person, so not only is she trying to communicate something about her art, but also herself as a human being. This all forms her online construction of 'being' a cultural worker, because not only is she a creator of work, she is showing herself to be collecting inspiration, working towards her next piece. In communicating her inspiration, Cherie is also communicating something about her taste, an aspirational, high fashion, 'designer' taste which as mentioned in Chapter 3, says something about Cherie's

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work in terms of not only its inspiration but its potential value, or at least how Cherie values it. Her Instagram posting has led to sales of her paintings, and demonstrates how signalling expertise can pay off in terms of its labour leading to a direct exchange for economic value.

Lisa also uses Instagram to collect images which inspire her. Her profile is a mixture of images collected elsewhere and photographs she has taken when out for walks:
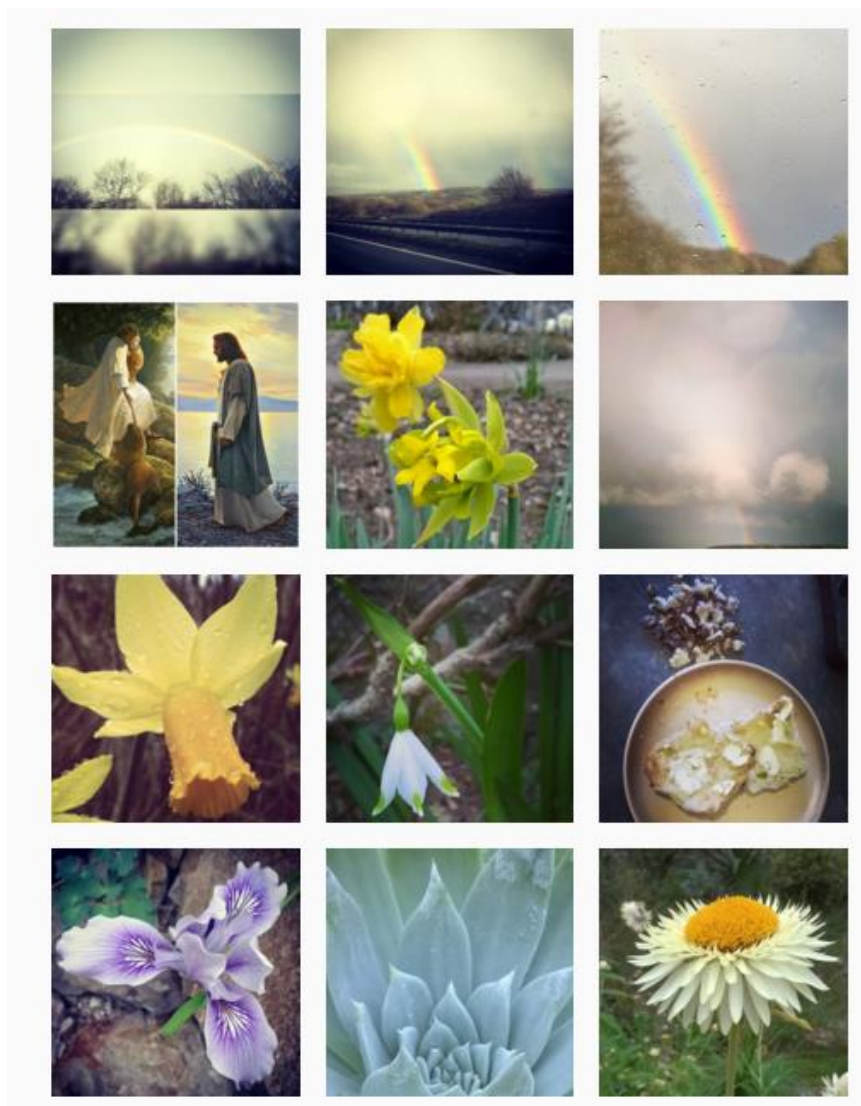

Figure 43 Lisa Instagram

This also communicates Lisa's taste – she has the time to go out and take pictures of nature in a rural area. In showing her inspiration, which she gets from nature, Lisa also exhibits a relatively privileged taste, as not everyone has the time to walk around fields taking pictures, searching for inspiration.

The structure of the Instagram platform encourages careful curation of images, due to the grid layout of profiles. The curation of Instagram by Cherie and Lisa hints at an awareness of who will see their profiles, or 'imagined audience' (Marwick and boyd, 2010), which will influence what they post on there. Being able to effectively curate images on social media and being able to use it creatively, are examples of how social media can facilitate the expression of aesthetic expertise. Katriona mentioned 'curating' Instagram in her interview:

> "I think I'm aware of what a treacherous place Instagram is, in a sense. Everything that is put on there is very carefully curated, and I curate my own account as well. It's not a secret, but it's very different to the actual thing and the experience of the actual thing."
>
> (Katriona)

From this quote it seems that Katriona does not trust Instagram as space for experiencing art authentically. Katriona is also researching social media herself, which could explain the reflexivity she exhibits in the interview, but she raises an interesting point about the aesthetic qualities of work on social media and how it is experienced. This has much to do with the medium of the art itself and how it appears on social media. As mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4, some forms of art, such as digital art, lend themselves to social media, whereas other forms such as

installation are more difficult to share online, for example Robyn felt that social

media does not do her work justice.

Scolere and Humphreys (2016) examine how design professionals curate

their Pinterest profiles. Pinterest works more conventionally in a 'mood board'

manner, where users can save their favourite images to customised 'boards', and

this action of saving is known on the site as 'pinning'. The authors described

designers' use of the site as "online curatorial labour" (2016:5) which involves three

aspects: performance, process, and product. For performance, they drew from the

work of Erving Goffman to show how the designers used Pinterest in identity

formation and also to display their expertise, though expertise as a term is not

defined. In terms of process, the authors claimed that the designers' 'pinning

practices' on Pinterest was informed by their 'offline' design practices. In relation to

product, the designers felt that their Pinterest boards were a reflection of their

design expertise, and therefore spent a large amount of time making the boards

look beautiful. I would suggest this also has some relation to communicating taste,

which the authors could have paid some attention to. That aside, Scolere and

Humphreys provide a useful insight into the relationship between digital and cultural

labour. The idea of curatorial labour is a pertinent one for the cultural workers in this

research, but it is not a sufficient term to capture the variety of activities which span

both digital and cultural labour, such as working on aesthetic expertise, and working

on the skills to signal that expertise.

Being able to share one's inspiration and taste, and use platforms to curate it

in an appealing way as Cherie and Lisa do could be linked to the confidence to use

social media. It may be no coincidence that the artists who are comfortable doing

this are those who are relatively successful, such as Colin and Cherie. They have

gained a certain level of aesthetic expertise in their areas and by the same token, symbolic capital, and are confident not only in their ability to talk about their work and what inspires them, but how it will be received by others. Lisa told me how she did not want to "alienate" her audience online, and described her caution about what she posts on social media. As a writer, Lisa was very conscious about posting anything with spelling or grammar mistakes, because what she writes on social media is a direct reflection on the quality of her writing, and therefore her aesthetic expertise.

For Jamila, Pinterest is a useful site to collect images which inspire her. Pinterest boards can be public or private, and Jamila utilises the secret boards, because she feels that social media can sometimes make her feel "exposed and I think 'oh, I don't know if I wanna use this'". Rather than communicating her inspiration like Cherie, Jamila prefers to keep most of it secret. As mentioned before however, Jamila's personal situation, which includes having a young daughter and several other jobs and commitments, may mean she is unable to spend as much time purposefully looking for inspiration and posting it on Instagram, or at least curating it in a way which is suitable for Jamila's imagined audience.

The act of looking or inspiration, ideas and opportunities online for cultural workers in this research is what I refer to as 'listening', another way in which they work towards signalling as expertise.

Listening

Every time an individual accesses social media, they won't always post an update, or even engage in platform-based interactions such as retweeting and liking. They might simply browse what other people are posting and discussing. In the pre-social media era this type of activity, which mostly took place on forums, used to be

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pejoratively known as 'lurking', which can have negative connotations. I prefer to use Kate Crawford's term of 'listening', mentioned in Chapter 2, to describe this process of browsing social media. Crawford argues that the term 'listening' "Invokes the more dynamic process of online attention, and suggests that it is an embedded part of networked engagement – a necessary corollary to having a 'voice'" (Crawford 2009:527).

From the interviews, I found that listening in itself can be a productive element of social media use for the cultural workers. It is a way of both gaining aesthetic knowledge or inspiration and building social media expertise, and forms a part of daily cultural labour routines. As Jason describes, "Seeing other people's work on social media has been helpful. Because it's like perusing a book of modern and contemporary paintings." He describes how it is useful to see what other people are doing and what is going on, and he gets encouraged by other people who have similar likes to him, so he does not feel like he is on his own. Maria felt similar to Jason when she was trying to take a new direction in her practice. When she started experimenting with printmaking she joined printmaking groups on Facebook, which provided useful ideas and techniques. She was not actively involved with the group, but instead she listened for tips and inspiration to inform her practice.

While listening is a way for cultural workers to collect inspiration without needing to interact, the move to communicating that inspiration as part of their online presence requires much more careful consideration for some. While 'listening' for inspiration is not a signal of aesthetic expertise, that aesthetic expertise can become visible by curating inspiration on platforms such as Instagram. The medium of the art and whether it suits the social media platform, as well as the potential audience, also needs consideration in this process. To do this successfully the cultural workers

require a degree of social media knowledge to effectively negotiate their profile and imagined audience, and some, as shown in the previous chapter, may not feel they are able to do so. There is the option for them to use private Pinterest boards or other means to collect inspiration privately. On the other hand, some cultural workers prefer to share their process freely, which I suggest is linked to their established position in the field – those who are established and deemed 'expert' at what they do appear to be inclined to use social media to signal their aesthetic expertise in a variety of ways.

Cultural workers may not post their own work all of the time, but their other activities on social media platforms are geared towards an online construction of 'being' an engaged cultural worker, as well as nurturing both aesthetic and social media expertise. The purposefulness of listening and collecting inspiration is part of cultural labour, and while others do not always make this process visible on their social media profiles, they do it and this may be what separates them from people who are less serious about pursuing a career in cultural work. The intention to collect inspiration for their work is part of the creative process and the building of their cultural capital and thus aesthetic expertise. It is a form of what Marx would call 'unproductive labour' because it generates no economic value for the cultural worker, but has a use value for them. Listening contributes towards their ability to signal expertise effectively, because they learn what is effective and what isn't on social media, as well as inform their creative practice.

Planning

Part of being able to use social media to signal aesthetic expertise involves a degree of planning for some. I found that the cultural workers in this research who do plan what they post are relatively comfortable with sharing different aspects of their

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practice, such as work in progress, previous work and the finished article. Gillian described how she gets up at 7am every morning to plan out her social media posts for the day. From interview, it is clear she puts a great deal of thought into her social media planning:

> "So, I put them into different categories. Like, I have: funny posts, serious posts, posts of my pictures, update posts. I have two blogs as well. So, when I should post things from the different blogs. Or, when I should post someone else's content. Just different things. And then maybe once every three months I'll post a competition or an offer or a giveaway, I'll promote that as well. So, I don't really ever, apart from giveaways or an offer, I never post like a sales post. If you know what I mean because people seem, kind of, spammy and cheap and they never work anyway."
>
> (Gillian)

Here Gillian is well aware of what she thinks her imagined audience will like, and not like, on social media. She has been working on signalling *as* expertise by planning and executing a social media strategy, and analysing the outcomes. For example, she found that her audience did not respond to 'sales-like' posts. This was in fact a common feeling among those interviewed.

Lisa told me that she created a marketing strategy to promote her books. Lisa self-publishes and does not have the marketing and financial support of a publisher, so social media is crucial for getting her work noticed. Anthony and Patrick use social media scheduling applications such as Hootsuite to schedule their posts so they are posted at different times during the day, enabling them to get on with their practice. Both spoke of how scheduling was useful for maintaining their online presence, however with that comes the concerns about presencing, such as feeling

pressure to keep posting regularly, and the risk of posting work that the cultural worker is not really happy with.

Interlinked with planning is taking the time to learn how to use social media effectively, because one cannot really plan what they are going to do without knowing how to do it. Jamila learned how to use social media by reading advice blogs and through regular usage of the platforms. She once taught a social media course for artists in which she offered tips and advice based on her own experiences and mistakes. Jamila described how she became aware that her posts for the craft collective she is involved in were not working, and how she learned from the experience:

> "We'd put only our own things on, we weren't working with other people, weren't promoting their things…it was all just a one way conversation and it was a bit…not only was it boring but it was a bit…you know, it had a vague idea of looking a bit arrogant really…it wasn't really social and it definitely wasn't working."

> (Jamila)

Jamila said that she has never claimed to be a "social media expert" but felt she could share some of her knowledge when the opportunity to teach a social media course came up. Though it is not directly related to her practice, what Jamila did is similar to how the other cultural workers in this research create tutorials to share with others, as imparting knowledge is a significant signal of expertise. Many of the cultural workers interviewed said that they learned how to use social media simply through using it. Others took a more systematic approach, such as Gillian, who told me how she watches social media marketing videos "constantly and make notes in folders and everything. Some of them are useless or not applicable to me but some

are really, really, really good." As well as planning, Gillian is constantly learning how to signal effectively, alongside her practice. Like the purposefulness of listening, the purposefulness of planning and learning how to effectively use social media is a part of being cultural worker for some, and a feature of them working on their expertise, albeit their social media expertise.

For signalling *as* expertise in the context of this research, social media platforms mediate the signals and are the object through which cultural workers learn, plan, listen and curate. These activities are an important part of their cultural labour. Digital labour critiques help us understand that social media platforms are designed to encourage engagement, sharing and prolonged interaction, sometimes to the detriment of the cultural worker's online presence, and in turn adding pressure to the routines and experiences of cultural labour.

Conclusion

This chapter began with an insight into the daily routine of a cultural worker who relies on social media for their work. It highlights the pressures and anxieties it can present, and how posting on social media becomes as routine and important as "taking tablets in the morning." Like any new technology, it is easy to be deterministic and say that social media has completely changed working practices, and that the pressures and demands cultural workers now face are completely different from before, but it would be misleading to do so. Cultural work has always been pressurised; cultural workers have always needed to get their work recognised, sell paintings and signal their aesthetic expertise. The way they do it, how it is mediated, and the temporality of these acts are what is different, and has an impact on cultural labour. Indeed the evidence in this chapter suggests that the act of signalling aesthetic expertise on social media platforms *is* cultural labour. With this in mind,

existing critiques of digital labour should be considered in any accounts of cultural labour.

I have demonstrated how the labour of signalling expertise on social media could lead to various forms of value exchange at various points, and not always online, and certainly not always to the detriment of the cultural worker. To reduce such activity to an exploitative labour theory of value as Fuchs (2015) does is not helpful, I argue. Furthermore, as Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012) point out, the labour theory of value obscures so much about the specificities of online activity, and following Jarrett (2015) the potential for creative expression online.

The pressure to presence, displaying recognition and signalling as expertise all have implications for cultural labour, both positive and negative. Having an online presence and constructing an online sense of being a cultural worker can help get a career off the ground if done properly. This mostly needs to be substantiated with evidence of aesthetic expertise, unless they are like 'themostfamousartist' who can instead use social media expertise to gain popularity and make a living as a cultural worker. The level of online popularity he has reached is greater than any of the participants in this research, but some of them have experienced some benefits. For example Cherie, whose social media presence has led directly to sales. For others such as Jason, listening for inspiration enables him to build his artistic knowledge and cultural capital, which may benefit him in the future.

There are some areas of concern, however. The analysis in this chapter reveals the growing influence of social media metrics in reputation management, and the potential effects of that on creative output. If social media platforms are able to effectively 'punish' people for not using their platforms by pushing their posts down people's timelines and newsfeeds, cultural workers must keep posting, whatever it is,

in order to maintain that presence, or risk "disappearing" from people's timelines, to use Colin's words. If such pressures mean that cultural workers end up producing work which is not up to standard just to post on social media, as Anthony said he did, what implications could this have for cultural value? Could we get to a point where cultural value is primarily measured by likes and shares?

While I agree with Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012) that we are not forced or coerced into using social media, there is a sense that people's ability to create an online profile, gain exposure and reap the potential benefits, appears to be happening "as Marx would say, not in conditions of their own choosing." (Couldry and van Dijck, 2015:2) and we need to be mindful of what this could mean for cultural work – both its experiences and outputs. Much of this thesis has evinced the potential benefits of signalling expertise on social media, but we also need to be aware of the drawbacks.

In the next chapter I focus on the women artists in this research, in particular the gendered strategies they undertook to signal their aesthetic expertise on social media and manage its various opportunities and challenges.
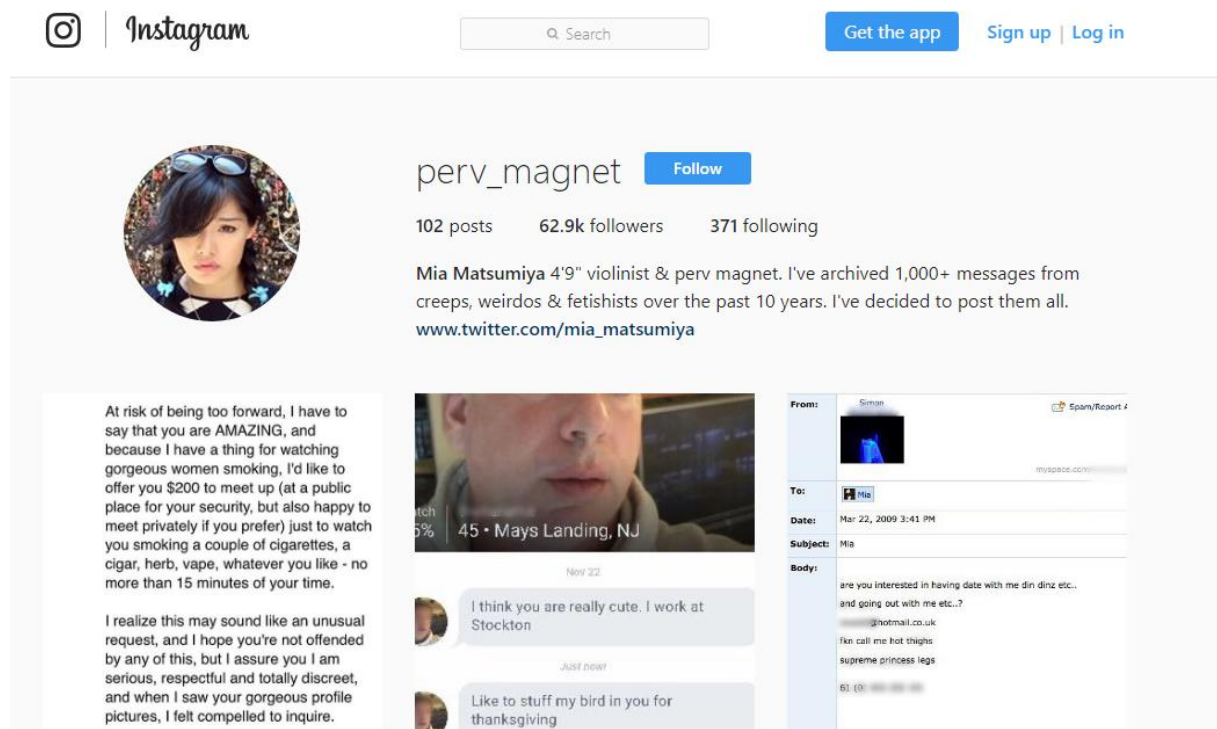
Chapter 6: Expertise and gendered strategies online

Introduction

> "The Internet allows female artists to upend the male-dominated structure
> of the art world, giving them the power to be in charge of their own
> visibility. But it also serves as a breeding ground for misogynistic abuse"
>
> (Michael, 2016)

In the article *Creating While Female: How Women Artists Deal with Online Abuse*, part of which is quoted above, there are many cases described of women artists who have experienced trolling and abuse online. The majority of which is misogynistic, threatening and aggressive, and women's responses featured in the article vary from blocking, to 'naming and shaming'. For example, violinist Mia Matsumiya runs an Instagram account dedicated to the misogyny she experiences online:

The account, called 'perv_magnet' allows Mia to highlight the level of online misogyny she receives. In one way, this could be seen as empowering for Mia and could potentially put people off from messaging her again. On the other hand, it could encourage more of the same messages. One thing which is certain is that it detracts from her primary creative activity – as a violinist. Mia is likely to be well known on Instagram not for her mastery of the violin, but for calling out the 'creeps, weirdos & fetishists' who message her, to quote her Instagram bio. What might seem like an empowering move by Mia is potentially undermining her ability to signal aesthetic expertise.

These are the problems women artists face when they create an online presence; this article by Bunny Michael highlights that women are more likely than men to be trolled online for 'creating while female'. While the response by Mia Mastumiya is admirable it will do little to "upend the male dominated structure of the art world" as quoted in the article. Another artist featured in that article is illustrator Carly Jean Andrews, who says she blocks "about five to 15 people a day" on Instagram. Her art features mostly nude illustrations of women, and she says that she deletes comments and blocks people because they can "ruin the experience" of the art on Instagram, and she does not want "disgusting comments" to be associated with her art (Michael, 2016). Here Carly draws attention to the mediation of expertise signalling on social media, in terms of how comments and captions can add to the "experience" of the art online for the viewer. The comments can affect how her art is perceived and thus potentially change or even damage signals of aesthetic expertise. Furthermore her case points to the additional relational labour she must undertake to manage comments and block people, to preserve the experience of that art online and to ensure signals are not damaged.

So while social media presents opportunities for women to gain visibility for their art, signal aesthetic expertise and reach new audiences, it also presents a variety of challenges. These challenges relate to the potential volatility and hostility of social media for women, which could affect expertise signalling and how their art is received online. During this research the women participants did not appear to experience online hostility or abuse, but it is the environment they are operating in. What strategies do they employ to make online spaces relatively safe? How do women cultural workers signal expertise online and what possibilities could it bring for raising the visibility of women's art? These are the questions directing my inquiry in this chapter. In the sections which follow I discuss three themes emerging from my analysis that were specific to the women in this research. They are gendered strategies which the women used to connect with others online, create 'safe' online spaces and potentially raise the visibility of their work: emotions and self-disclosure, mutual aid, and forming bonds through icons.

Existing literature about women's self-presentation online often refers to the perceived need to portray a rounded, seemingly balanced self, a woman who 'has it all' (Duffy and Hund, 2015). Some of the women in this research challenge and resist such online norms, to form bonds with others, and also as part of their online construction of 'being' a cultural worker.

Self-disclosure and resisting the 'perfect': women's self-presentation online

Social media platforms are spaces where looks and presentation can be important, particularly for women. This is argued by Angela McRobbie (2015) who considers the contemporary expectation of 'perfection', whereby the feminist issues which have appeared to re-enter mainstream culture, mainly through social media, have at the

same time amplified control of women through corporeal means (through their bodies). She notes how, for women on social media:

> "To be 'liked' supposes the potential to be 'disliked', just as approval runs the risk of disapproval. The seemingly fun, globally popular and friend-oriented nature of Facebook disguises its capacity for gender re-traditionalisation in the form of women being 'looked at'"
>
> McRobbie (2015:5).

This quote resonates with the introduction to this chapter and the case of Mia Matsumiya, whose Instagram profile appears to be a response to her being 'looked at' and either liked or disliked. Using the example of the HBO television show *Girls,* McRobbie argues that mainstream culture which seemingly celebrates 'imperfection' actually reinforces gender and class divisions. So even though it seems fine to be 'imperfect', the pressure always remains for women to strive to be 'perfect' in their imperfection. This serves to reinforce gender hierarchies and competitiveness between women, and as a result "we find all ideas of gender justice and collective solidarity thrown overboard in favour of 'excellence' and with the aim of creating new forms (and restoring old forms) of gender hierarchies through competition and elitism." (2015:16).

For some areas of cultural work, there is evidence to suggest that the 'perfect' is almost an imperative in women's online presentation. For example, Duffy and Hund (2015) examined women fashion bloggers and their "depiction of the ideal of 'having it all' through the destiny of passionate work, staging the glam life and carefully curated social sharing" (2015:1). The authors importantly draw attention to the labour which goes into curating online profiles, which is obscured through elaborate staging of the 'glam life' of fashion blogging. They identify that bloggers

constantly negotiate between presenting a version of heteronormative femininity which would appeal to marketers and fashion brands, with the masculine practices of entrepreneurialism, to which I return later in this chapter. For fashion bloggers this is crucial, and "since commercial brands are unlikely to partner with bloggers lacking a commodifiable ("glam") social media image, the codes, aesthetics, and subjectivities of mainstream fashion culture get reaffirmed" (2015:7).

It seems that in some areas of cultural work, appearing 'perfect' online in the way McRobbie, Duffy and Hund describe is an expectation for women, particularly in fashion, for example. Some of the women in this research, however, were not afraid to use social media to express when their work or home life were less than perfect, and not in the 'imperfect but still perfect' manner critiqued by McRobbie. This is typified in Jazamin's Tweet in Figure 44 about needing a job:

Jazamin Sinclair @jazaminsinclair · Jan 14
Someone please buy some art off me or book a photoshoot. I need work & I need to pay the rent/bills! xxx
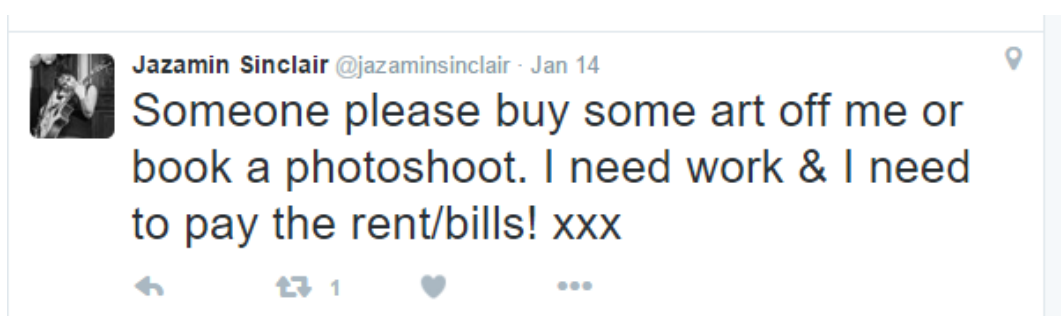
Figure 44 Jazamin money Tweet

Here Jazamin is admitting she is struggling for work and thus struggling to pay the rent and bills. It is a reminder of the harsh reality of being cultural worker, which most of the other participants in this research either preferred not to disclose on social media, or do not experience. However for Jazamin, the disclosure of more difficult times, which could be a presentation of 'imperfection' could actually be a relational strategy because it contributes to an image of authenticity (Duffy, 2016). This is distinct from the 'calculated authenticity' (Pooley, 2010) mentioned in the previous

chapter, which implies sometimes putting on a 'friendly smile' to appear authentic even when one does not feel like it. In the case of Jazamin her problems are there to see on Twitter, and as a result she potentially comes off as a relatable person going through the same struggles other cultural workers might be going through, rather than the 'perfect' artist who seems to have it all. By appearing authentic and relatable to other artists, Jazmin could form beneficial online bonds, for example if some of her followers try to help, or contact her in the future about opportunities. Duffy and Hund (2015) highlight the gendered nature of intimate social sharing, linking it to a wider "sentimentilization of the public sphere" (2015:7) where confessional cultures and self-disclosure are central to authentic self-presentation online.

Though the Twitter post makes Jazamin appear authentic and may encourage others to rally around her, the admission of struggling could be of detriment to expertise signalling because it appears that her work is not in demand. As Anthony told me in interview, on social media it is helpful to appear 'busy' and productive because it makes the cultural worker seem like their work is in demand and worthy of commission. I mentioned in Chapter 3 how Jazamin self-identifies as a musician, artist and photographer. This is risky not only for how she divides her time to working on her expertise in a particular area, but also in terms of how she 'sells' herself to potential clients and commissioners. Self-identifying in several areas could undermine signals of aesthetic expertise, because it is unclear to the audience where the expertise actually lies. Jazamin has had some difficulties in the past which also contribute to her precarious position compared to most of the other cultural workers in this research, who are relatively comfortable and did not appear to need to ask for work. This is an example of where access to capital resources, in this case

economic capital, can affect expertise signalling too. I checked Jazamin's Tweet again over a year after it was posted and it seems like it did not receive any further replies, so it is unclear whether she gained any work as a result of her online plea.

Some of the other women in this research also disclosed when times were difficult. For example, Katriona (Figure 45) and Robyn (Figure 46):

Figure 45 Katriona sad Tweet

Figure 46 Robyn sad Tweets

In these Tweets Robyn and Katriona respond to recent challenges to their personal and professional lives. Thelwall et al (2010) argue that women are more likely to express negative emotions online than men, and this is designed to gain support from others, and those offering the support are likely to be women. According to Herring (1994, 1996) women online tend to exhibit a supportive/attenuated style of communication, so they are more likely to respond with sympathy to negative

emotions expressed online. Kuntsman (2012) points out that "Online performative acts of naming an emotion can create communities of feelings" (2012:6). Kuntsman's work is useful for thinking about affect online, and it is worth acknowledging the notion of affect here, which has been mentioned in previous chapters. Brian Massumi defines affect as "those sensory experiences of movement and feeling that are part of the social, cultural and psychological experience of individuals, but which lie beyond the directly signifying properties of discourse" (2002:121). In other words, affect is felt, not seen. Sarah Ahmed (2004) describes how affect is relational; it is relational not only in terms of our relationships with others, but the history of relationships and interactions with people and objects. She argues that affect circulates through people, objects and signs.

Jarrett (2015) and Duffy (2016) argue that affect is one of the key drivers which motivate people to use websites and social media platforms, and keep returning to them, in what Ahmed calls an 'affective stickiness' (2004). Susanna Paasonen (2016) draws on Ahmed in looking at distraction and attention online, paying particular attention to Facebook. Conceptualised within the idea of the 'attention economy' (Marwick, 2013b), Paasonen argues that both attention and distraction are not opposing, but actually two sides of the same coin, which are "rhythmic patterns in the affective fabric" (2016) of online spaces. Social media sites are spaces in which attention and distraction co-exist and compete; and the generation of affect plays a major part in this. For some of the women in this research, generating affect could be seen as a way to not only relate to other women, but attract attention and affective investment in otherwise saturated online environments. It also contributes to a sense of authenticity (Duffy, 2016; Marwick, 2013b) which could help facilitate bonds and create safe spaces and networks

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online, as the women appear relatable and personable to their followers. For cultural workers who choose to express themselves emotionally online, there is the consideration that these expressions remain on their online profile in the form of exhibitions, and are mediated by the platforms and their algorithms (Hogan, 2010). As Arvidsson and Colleoni (2012) highlight, affect is also a driver of value on social media platforms. People expressing affect online generates affect from others, resulting in the sense of authenticity and affective stickiness which drives clicks, traffic, comments and sharing on platforms.

While disclosing negative emotions and feelings online might not seem to benefit the signalling of aesthetic expertise, for Robyn, some of her art is autobiographical, so when she self-discloses on social media platforms it is a part of her, and therefore her art. She also said it was important because if she only posted her work on social media, she knows it would be "really boring" for other people. Self-disclosure adds to her overall presentation of an authentic person to whom others could relate, and can help her to form important bonds and connections.

The online presentation of a rounded, authentic person online is in some ways related to the 'always on' (Gregg, 2014) nature of contemporary working life. This is because the blurring between personal and professional life, which is an accepted part of being a cultural worker (Banks, 2014) but also increasingly the condition for most workers in neoliberal times (McRobbie, 2016), is exacerbated by and encapsulated in the mobile smartphone. This means that online self-presentation and expertise signalling can be managed anytime, anywhere. The blurring of personal and professional life which occurs offline can be reflected 'online' as shown in Chapter 4, and it requires additional labour and negotiation for the cultural workers in this research. Rosalind Gill (2014) argues that ubiquitous connectivity through the

internet and mobile technology mean that "we are in an era of 'everything everywhere', and the demands of work colonise each and every space" (2014:516). Gill argues that this colonisation of work into all areas of life means that the individual must be: "Flexible, adaptable, sociable, self-directing, able to work for days or nights at time without sleep, and must be mobile, agile, and without encumbrances or needs." (Gill, 2014:517). In cultural work, Morgan and Nelligan (2015) argue that in order to succeed, one needs to "exhibit an entrepreneurial savviness and a readiness to endure the vagaries of precarious work and the scrutiny of creative gatekeepers" (2015:66). Diana Miller (2016) notes that irregular work arrangements require cultural workers to do "significant entrepreneurial labor to advance their careers and find exhibition, publication, and performance opportunities" (2016:126), which I highlighted in Chapter 5 in the discussion of 'listening' on social media.

The entrepreneurial 'savviness' ostensibly required in contemporary cultural work is argued to demand a masculine selfishness which conflicts with women's natural tendencies to focus on other people (Taylor, 2011). Furthermore, women could also be inhibited by a fear of 'backlash' for appearing too pushy in self-promotion (Moss-Racusin and Rudman, 2010). For the women in this research, the disclosure of emotions and aspects of their personal life online allowed them to appear authentic and personable, potentially as a counter to appearing too 'sales-like'. Jamila discusses how she negotiates this:

"It's a difficult one really because it's a balance between self-promotion and showing a bit of personality without making it too personal and posting pictures of what you had for lunch and things…but being engaging and interesting at the same time, so…it is a bit of a balancing act. […] It does

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allow you to be a bit more…gregarious? And a bit more showy-offy without having to look anyone in the eye."

(Jamila)

Jamila was more conscious of sharing too much about her feelings and personal life than some of the other cultural workers. She instead prefers to maintain a balance between showing aspects of her personality and her work online, which is an example of 'calculated authenticity' (Pooley, 2010) which differs from Jazamin's confessional Tweet.

Women's reluctance to self-promote is also highlighted in Christina Scharff's (2015) account of women classical musicians' self-promotion practices. She found that the women did not want to self-promote because it is associated with pushy behaviour, and because they considered it a commercial endeavour which was unartistic. Even though much of the self-promotion discussed in Scharff's account seems to take place online - there are mentions by her participants of Tweeting, uploading videos and using Facebook - the 'onlineness' of the self-promotion in Scharff's account could have been explored in greater depth. Luckman (2015) does comment on this 'onlineness'. She demonstrates how sellers on Etsy curate a feminised, idealised online self to portray a "blissful picture of normative but tasteful domestic bliss" (2015:118).

Luckman rightly questions the underlying labour of craft sellers which go into these presentations, and how they reinforce the heteronormative, middle class and white image of the craft world. Requiring further exploration are the positive possibilities for these women who are able to use Etsy to create successful businesses and more importantly, forge potentially valuable connections with other sellers on the site and on social media. In fact, while much of the scholarship

mentioned in this section highlights how aspects of feminine subjectivity are manifest in various forms and contexts, little attention is paid to the role of women's relationships and connections with others, and how online spaces can facilitate (or indeed inhibit) this.

Furthermore, in most of the existing accounts of women's self-presentation online the adoption of an entrepreneurial ethos is accepted as the requirement in order to be successful, but is it? While the men in this research often posted their own work on social media, the women did less so and instead they disclosed aspects of their personal life or shared the work of others. In their social media posts there appeared to be more evidence of relational and affective strategies to connect with others than the pushing of work, regarded as the most concrete signal of expertise (Jones, 2002). I suggest however that relational strategies are also important for signalling expertise because they help women to expand their online networks and potentially gain more visibility for their work. For example, as I mentioned in Chapter 3, Lisa's social media use has enabled her to make important connections online with other writers, and they support each other by buying and promoting each other's books. In the next section I demonstrate how some of this activity is manifest online for Lisa as part of her expertise signalling.

While the likes of Robyn and Jazamin were confessional on social media at times, most of the other women preferred to keep it 'light'. For example, some tended to share when they were feeling happy, often in reference to either their art, the art of others, or gifts:
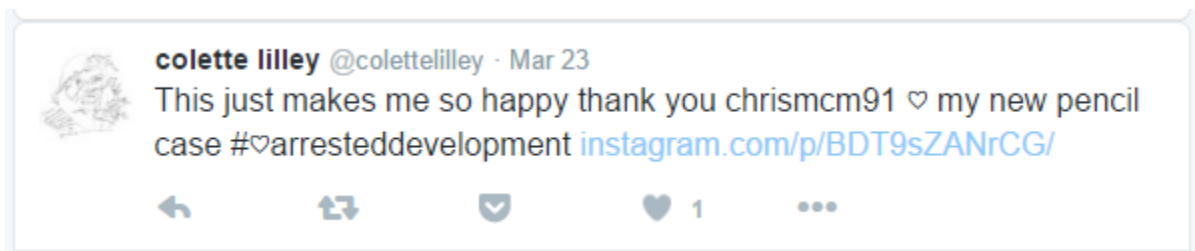
Figure 47 Colette happy Tweet

Figure 48 Cherie clean Tweet
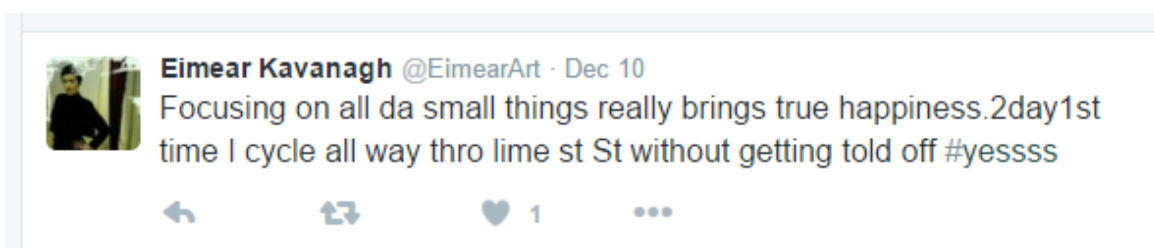
Figure 49 Eimear cycling Tweet

Here are a mix of Tweets about aspects of personal life as well as professional, and situations which appear banal seem to bring a lot of happiness; a happiness that could be shared by others following their posts. For example, Colette in Figure 47 Tweets her happiness about a gift she received from a friend. Cherie in Figure 48 posts about the studio and how she loves it when it has been spring cleaned, thinking that will help her creativity. Eimear in Figure 49 posts about the 'small thing' of being able to cycle through Liverpool Lime Street Train Station without being told off. In communicating their happiness in this way, they are also telling followers a little bit more about themselves and what makes them happy, which could be things

that followers and other artists can relate to, and what Luckman (2015) refers to as part of a "rounded performance of a seemingly successful balanced self" (2015:113).

The use of emotive language and self-disclosure is argued in other research to be a particularly common way for women to affiliate with others online (Zappavigna, 2014; Herring and Stoerger, 2013; Thelwall et al, 2010 and Herring, 1994; 1996). For the women in this research, expressing emotions and talking about the negative, while in other occupations could be seen as detrimental, could actually be beneficial, not only because their art is entangled with aspects of themselves (as described by Robyn) but also for forming the affiliations and bonds, through authenticity and affective stickiness, as part of their self-presentation online. It challenges McRobbie's (2015) perspective on the contemporary expectation of the 'perfect' for women, which is centred on "a heightened form of self-regulation based on an aspiration to some idea of the 'good life'" (2015:9) and is said to reinforce individualisation and division among women. McRobbie points to the popularity of 'selfies' as an example of how the 'perfect' and its effects are intensified on social media platforms. However, if we consider the expressions of emotion and self-disclosure in this section, some cultural workers do not appear to play to the expectations of the 'perfect'. Instead, such forms of self-disclosure could work to facilitate bonds, as argued by Michele Zappavigna (2014) who highlights that confessions online serve to create affiliations between women. Rather than striving for the 'perfect' which could individualise and divide, the presentation of imperfection, and not the polished kinds of 'imperfection' McRobbie talks about in TV shows such as *Girls* and *Sex and the City*, could have the reverse effect.

In this section I have shown how some of the women in this research appear to resist the norms of feminine online self-presentation highlighted in the literature,

such as appearing 'perfect' and 'polished', whilst avoiding the masculinised entrepreneurial ethos of appearing self-promotional or 'sales-like'. Instead, expressing emotions, both happy and sad, or confessing when times are difficult, contributes to the sense of an authentic online self-presentation designed to resonate with others online.

In the next section I highlight another relational strategy which is utilised by the women in this research to connect with others online, resist the masculine selfishness of self-promotion whilst creating opportunities to raise the online visibility of their work. This is sharing the work of others, which I characterise as 'mutual aid' (de Peuter and Cohen, 2015; Patel, 2017). My conception of mutual aid is situated within gender inequality in the art world and cultural work, which is where the discussion begins.

Women cultural workers, visibility and inequality

In 1971, Linda Nochlin asked '*Why have there been no great women artists?*' and she had good reason to. Nochlin (1988[1971]) was one of the first scholars to draw attention to gender inequality in art history - how women artists were not mentioned in the same breath as Michaelangelo and Picasso, and how opportunities for women artists were limited by entrenched institutional discrimination. At around the time of Nochlin's article, women's art cooperatives were being established (Bickley-Green and Wolcott, 1996). These cooperatives were collaborative efforts between women artists who were struggling to get their art bought and seen. Bickley-Green and Wolcott highlight how women were comparably limited in their capacity to create environments that encourage creative work, and to produce work that might reach a large audience. Opportunities for women to produce large bodies of art work, compared to male artists, were restricted, and for them the cooperatives were a

route in to the art market. Authors such as Nochlin and Bickley-Green and Wolcott highlight the difficulties for women artists to get their work to prominence in the 1970s, and more than thirty years later, gender inequality in art still prevails. According to A-*N the artists' network*: "while women fine-art graduates outnumber male, only six women have won the Turner Prize in 30 years (four in the last ten), with male nominees vastly outnumbering women" (A-N, 2016).

Nochlin (1988 [1971]) drew attention to the way art created by women was perceived in comparison to art by men. She describes how the question of 'why have there been no great women artists?' is a false one, because it applies its own answer: "that women are incapable of greatness" (1988 [1971]:147). She highlights how making art is dependent on favourable social and cultural conditions, and for women, such conditions are historically unfavourable. The biographies of the male genius artists were mythical stories which celebrated the:

"Apparently miraculous, nondetermined, and asocial nature of artistic achievement […] The artist, in the nineteenth-century Saints' Legend, struggles against the most determined parental and social opposition […] and ultimately succeeds against all odds"

Nochlin, L (1988 [1971]:155).

Nochlin's quote reaffirms my observations about the myth of the 'genius' artist in Chapter 1, and Nochlin argues that the perpetuation of such a myth helped to form an unconscious bias towards the 'genius' male artist, who possessed the special qualities and talent to eventually be 'discovered' in some way. These stories suggest that any genius or talent within women artists never revealed itself, despite unfavourable conditions, therefore "women do not have the nugget of artistic genius" (1988 [1971]:156). Battersby (1989) has detailed the history of the concept of genius

in art, showing that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, metaphors such as 'labour' and 'birth' were used in descriptions of the 'genius' male artist and his creative process. As she describes: "The artist conceived, was pregnant, laboured (in sweat and pain), was delivered, and (in an uncontrolled ecstasy of agonized-male-control) brought forth. These were the images of 'natural' childbirth that the male creators elaborated" (Battersby 1989: 73). Yet according to Battersby, these descriptions only served to exacerbate rather than alleviate the gulf between how art by men and women was perceived.

Institutional constraints also contributed to how women artists were perceived in relation to male artists. Nochlin (1988 [1971]) describes how, from the Renaissance to near the end of the nineteenth century, women artists were excluded from life drawing classes, despite the nude model being essential to the training of young artists, and any work involving the human form was considered to be among the most highly regarded categories of art. Still life, portrait and landscape art, which women were allowed to do, was regarded as inferior and not requiring the same level of skill or intellect. According to Nochlin, the skill of the male artists who did practice art in these forms was never questioned.

The reasons for such gender inequality in art could be linked to long-standing perceptions of great artists in art history, particularly in how male artists were often perceived as the 'geniuses'. And despite more accounts since Nochlin's which dispel such myths (see Becker, 2008; Garfunkel 1984; Pollock 1999) an artist's 'brand name' is still a significant factor for success (Bourdieu, 1996). However, according to Bourdieu, it is achieved through consensus and social processes of the *illusio*, rather than mythical discovery. Nevertheless, that revered 'brand name' is usually occupied by a male creator.

Griselda Pollock (2003) argues that discrimination alone is too simplistic a way of explaining gender inequality in art, and instead she claims there was an active construction of difference between male artists and women artists - a social construction which placed women artists in separate and distinct spheres from male artists, and so "the category woman artist was established and the sexual discourse in art constructed around the growing hegemony of men in institutional practices and in the language of art itself" (2003:64). An example of this construction of difference is the denigrating of crafts to 'women's work' carried out in the domestic sphere, rather than any form of art to be taken seriously (Becker, 2008; Eaton, 2008). Pollock's (1999) main argument in her critique of feminist art history is that scholars need to think beyond the gender binary; women artists should not aspire to be spoken about in the same ways as male artists are, the aim should be more transformative than that. The criteria by which art is to be judged was reinforced and reproduced by white, privileged men, so it may not be relevant to women's art.

Feminist art which aims to address or critique the gender gap has been collaborative in nature. For example, Judy Chicago's 'The Table' was a collaborative, large scale table featuring pottery which paid tribute to great women artists (Rabinovitz, 1980). The Guerilla Girls are a collective who produce work which openly questions and critiques gender inequality in the art world (Haynes and Pedersen, 2016). An example is the piece in Figure 50, which I encountered on a visit to the Tate Modern in London:
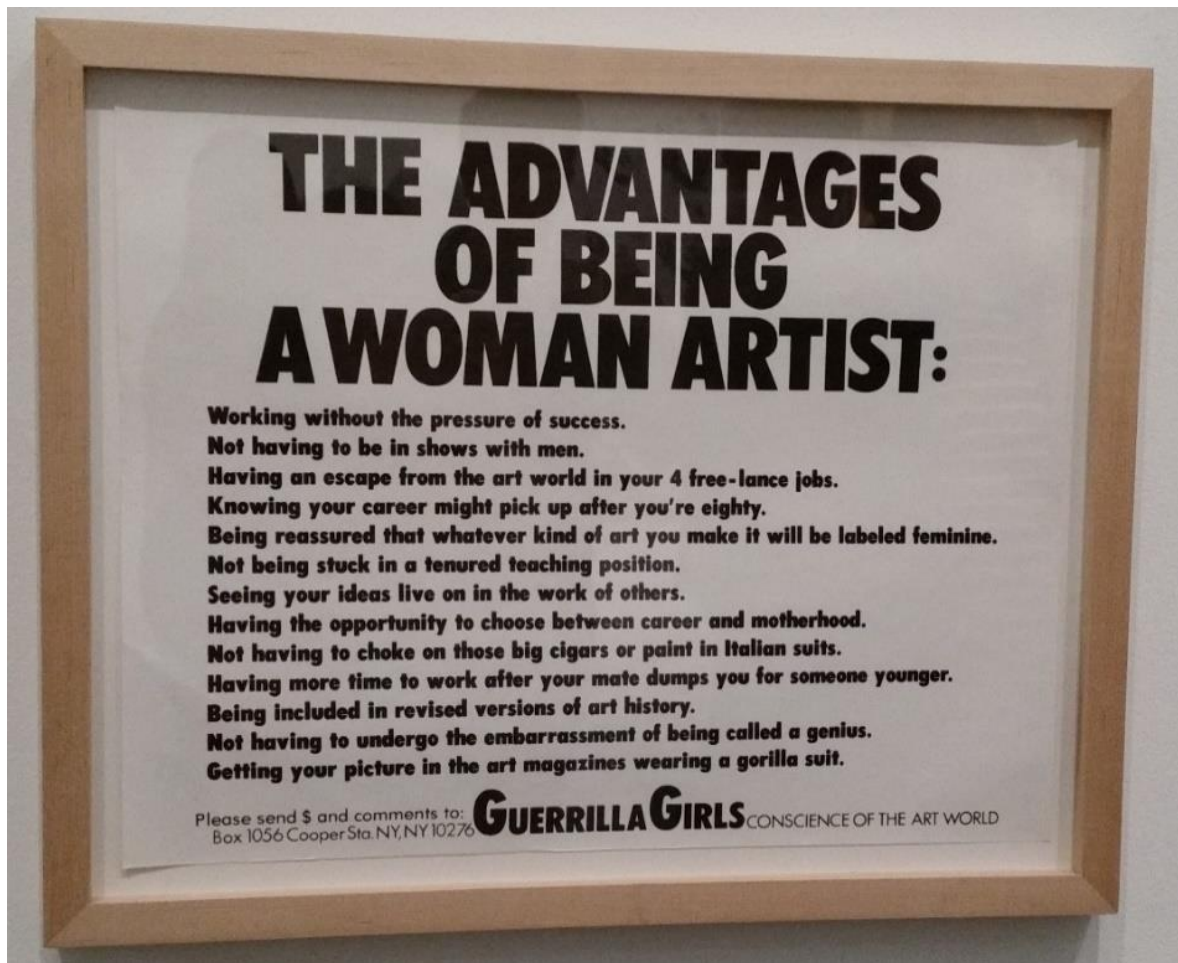
Figure 50 Guerilla Girls at the Tate Modern, London

The above is a satirical take on inequality in the art world and how women artists are treated by society in comparison to men. It features the 'advantages of being a woman artist' which include 'Not being stuck in a tenured teaching position' and 'Not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a genius' in reference to the historical favourable treatment of male artists in comparison to women artists.

Collaboration and collective activity is evinced throughout the history of women's art, such as the 1970s art collectives mentioned already. In this research there are examples of collective activity taking place online, particularly among the women cultural workers. I suggest that the sociality and conviviality in evidence in this research are a potential way for the women to facilitate wider exposure and

possible wider recognition of their aesthetic expertise, in a cultural sector which remains unequal.

The cultural industries are often characterised as egalitarian and meritocratic (Gill, 2002; 2014) however much empirical research shows that women are systematically excluded from opportunities and discriminated against across various areas of cultural work, such as new media (Banks and Milestone, 2011; Gill, 2002), jewellery (Duberley et al, 2017) screenwriting (Wreyford, 2015; Conor, 2014) and classical music (Scharff, 2015). Gill (2014) notes that gender inequality is circulated in subtle ways in the cultural industries. She suggests that due to the dominance of the postfeminist sensibility that feminism's job is 'done', gender inequality is becoming 'unspeakable' – difficult to voice. The women in this research are mostly independent cultural workers, and Gill argues that independent modes of working could also be contributing to inequalities in the field. The contemporary entrepreneurial imperative discussed in the previous section, which is characterised by the colonisation of work into all areas of life, means that even though more women have entered the workplace they are still disadvantaged. This is because the entrepreneurial imperative is imbued with the expectation that women should still be able to raise a family (if they have one and if they retain the lion's share of responsibility), maintain a social life, take care of their body and looks - essentially 'have it all' (Duffy and Hund, 2015). In this sense, "power is working not from "above" in the traditional sense, but in and through the subject, who must be vigilant, attentive, and self-governing" (Gill, 2014:517).

So while independent working and the internet open up opportunities of flexible working for women who want to pursue a cultural work career, it is also problematic, and makes the task of achieving gender equity in the arts potentially

even more difficult. Rosalind Gill points out that more exploration is required into how women experience the new labouring subjectivity. This research presents some insight in terms of how women cultural workers use social media to try and signal their aesthetic expertise and increase their online visibility, in order to make a living. Such activity should be conceptualised within the historical struggle for gender equality and visibility outlined in this section, and to do this I use the idea of mutual aid.

Mutual aid

Mutual aid is a concept applied to the cultural industries by De Peuter and Cohen (2015) to describe the development of "bottom-up infrastructures to support independent work" (2015:306) in the context of worker resistance in the cultural industries, "where workers, often through new labour organizations that exist outside the bounds of traditional trade unions, are lobbying for social protections and higher pay and exerting collective pressure to reclaim autonomy over their crafts and their lives" (2015:305). The authors show how by working together, cultural workers have increased powers for collective bargaining. This idea is useful for conceptualising the activities of the women cultural workers I observed, which contribute towards gendered strategies for signalling aesthetic expertise. De Peuter and Cohen's use of mutual aid is specifically related to worker labour struggles; it is used here in relation to women's struggle for recognition in cultural work.

In interviews, the women participants exhibited a reflexivity in relation to how they post on social media; as mentioned by participants such as Jamila they knew it was off-putting to be too 'sales-like' or 'attention seeking', because of their own experience of using social media and seeing what other people post. For example, Eimear was aware of what put her off on Twitter:

"Where they just purely post only their own work and they don't share other

people's tweets and the followers, the numbers stay very low, you know,

unless they are famous band, or whatever. But I guess my build up

happens by me being quite in touch on there. Not that I just do it for that

reason. I actually enjoy it. I feel quite inspired by what I find on there and I

feel like attracts like."

(Eimear)

Here Eimear demonstrates her knowledge of what people respond to on social

media, based on what her friends do. She has learned good practice from 'listening'

on social media. When Eimear mentions 'numbers' she is talking about Twitter

metrics such as numbers of followers, numbers of likes on a Tweet or retweets, also

discussed in Chapter 5 as becoming increasingly influential for reputation online. So

even though Eimear shares a lot of other people's work, she is also conscious of the

reciprocal benefits to her online profile and exposure.

This rejection of an overly 'sales' like approach in favour of interaction and

sharing of others' work was common among most of the women cultural workers in

this research. Some of them even shared the work of those who appeared to be in

direct competition with them, but why? The concept of mutual aid helps us

understand that collective practices bring benefits to all involved, and on social

media these benefits include more exposure for their work and the formation of

mutually beneficial associations. In Figures 51 and 52 are some examples of women

artists sharing the work of others, including some positive comments:

Figure 51 Abi quote Twitter quote
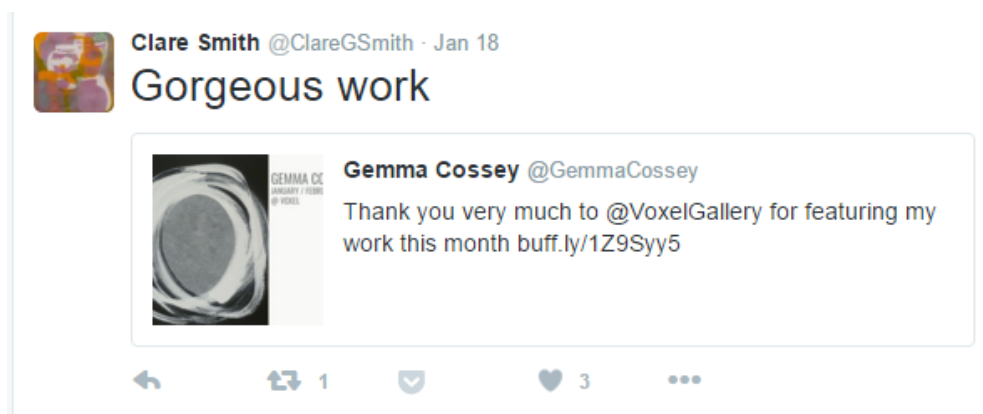
Figure 52 Clare quote Twitter

Both Abi and Claire share the work of other women cultural workers and use affirmative language such as 'lovely' and 'gorgeous' to describe them. Rather than a simple retweet which takes one click, the use of the 'quote' function to say something about the work takes a little more time and thought. In Figure 53 Maria engages with the artist by addressing them directly and tagging them in her post:

Figure 53 Maria quote Twitter

In all of these cases, in sharing the work of others the women are also communicating something about what they like – their tastes. Maria and Clare are demonstrating their engagement with art by sharing it and providing commentary. Abi in Figure 51 is sharing a picture of toiletries from an independent craft maker which uses the hashtag #handmadeuk, demonstrating her engagement with handmade and craft and also communicating her taste. I discuss the significance of the #handmade in relation to taste in the final section of this chapter.

Thelwall et al (2010) argue that women tend to exhibit more 'prosocial behaviour' online than men: "expressing joy for another but not expressing self-pride", and this is demonstrated in the use of the quote function by the women to express their appreciation for others' work. In Figure 54, Gillian shared the Facebook page of an artist doing the same type of work as her, pet portraits. As the page she shared only had 30 likes at the time, it appears that Gillian may have been helping another artist out:

Figure 54 Gillian Facebook share

The affirmative sharing of work was evinced by most of the women cultural workers in this research. I asked Abi why she so often shared the work of others,

and she said that she retweets what she likes. She said: "it tells other people a little bit about my tastes I guess, and I want to share so that others get to see these things too." Abi also felt it was "important to support other creative people." So even though the people and companies Abi is retweeting might be in competition with her, she retweets their work as part of her online profile to show what she likes, as well as to support other artists. This sharing contributes to her online construction of being a cultural worker – demonstrating that she is engaged with others in her area. She also acknowledges her communication of taste – which as I will discuss later could play a role in the very nature of online associations and networks forged by the women artists in this research.

Lisa the writer used Twitter to share an anthology she had contributed to, but instead of sharing her own work, she shared the work of others in the collection:

Figure 55 Lisa anthology Tweets

The Tweets in Figure 55 feature the anthology, called *A Winter's Romance*. Lisa Tweets about this anthology through the contribution of another writer by posting a mini positive review: "if you want an authentic and beautifully written #YA this is it!" This is an example of reciprocity, which is a common practice on social media as a form of mutually beneficial online social relation (Chia, 2012) with the idea that people will be rewarded for their own engagement eventually. Being involved in the anthology is potentially mutually beneficial for all of the authors involved, because if they all share each other's work from the anthology. It increases their potential audience and reach on Twitter much more effectively than if they had written a book on their own, because all writers have something to gain from the sharing.

How does this relate to signalling expertise? I have highlighted in previous chapters the importance of associations and relationships in cultural workers' signalling of aesthetic expertise; in those instances I was referring to the status of who the cultural workers associated themselves with online and how this can in turn enhance the status and reputation of the cultural worker. In the case of mutual aid practices, they are a means to increase visibility of cultural workers through mutual sharing and collective activity; this can only happen if they recognise and appreciate each other's aesthetic expertise. The mutual recognition of expertise leads to sharing, and the potential of increased online visibility and recognition of aesthetic expertise from those with a higher status. The intrinsic motivations to help each other challenge Bourdieu's (1993a) ideas within his field theory of strategizing, and agents looking to better their own position in relation to others in the field. The signalling expertise analysis reveals the practices of mutual aid among the women cultural workers which are more akin to Howard Becker's (2008) idea of 'Art Worlds' which conceptualises cultural production as a collaborative and cooperative activity.

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Considering the volatility of online spaces for women and women artists, the mutual aid practices evident in this research are examples of the creation of a 'safe' online space for the women involved, such as Lisa's anthology collaborators. Such safe spaces are underpinned by ideas of solidarity and community which some of the women talked about in the interviews. For example, Jamila spoke of her surprise at the online support within her artistic community:

"I always thought that because you're competing for the same work people would be really precious about things, but I've had people that are really qualified for the same things and they tell me 'oh have you applied for this yet?' It's a very…as far as I can tell…it's really inclusive, people are really helpful, people are really supportive of each other."

(Jamila)

The examples of mutual aid online here suggest that the women in this research work not only to make social media spaces "inclusive", to use Jamila's words, and safe, but also to raise the visibility of their work online. Women's art cooperatives in the 1970s were established to raise the visibility of women in the art world, and social media platforms have the potential to facilitate a similar kind of awareness raising online. These platforms are used by billions of people, and generating any kind of significant exposure through social media activity alone is extremely difficult. However, within their own specialist areas at least, these women can create new possibilities by forming important affiliations online to gain some exposure.

In the next section I discuss the third gendered relational strategy for signalling expertise which emerged from this research – forming bonds through the sharing of icons. Women sharing icons (Zappavigna, 2014) such as wine, cake and cats online are a far cry from the masculinised ideas of the 'genius' artist, the self-

promoting entrepreneur and indeed, the masculinised ideas of the expert and expertise.

The masculine figure of the expert

The figure of the expert has long been associated with masculinity, as demonstrated in this quote by Lorraine Code:

 "A man can be marginalised in consequence of his class, ethnicity, or race, his character, economic circumstances, […] but it is rare, in male-dominated societies, for him to be marginalised primarily because of his maleness. A woman, by contrast, is disempowered in the face of authority and expertise because she is female, in ways that cut across and inform all of the other socially disadvantaged positions she occupies"

Code, (1991:175-176)

In the book *What can she know?* Lorraine Code offers a useful perspective on women's expertise and gender inequality. In the quote above, the idea of the expert as masculine is clear. Because women are "disempowered in the face of expertise", the idea of a woman being an expert is therefore not possible. Like the women's art collectives mentioned in the previous section, Code describes how feminist collective initiatives such as self-help groups enable women to mobilise the collective development of skills and expertise.

The historical denigration of women's expertise is also demonstrated in Cynthia Cockburn's (1983) account of the early 19th century printmaking industry. Printing before the 1970s involved manual typesetting and producing printing matrices from molten metal. These jobs were considered highly skilled and were protected by trade unions. The introduction of the keyboard in the 1970s led to a

surge of women's employment as typists, and the skill of typing was considered to be cheap and feminine. At the same time, working class men were alienated from this new labour process and needed to retrain in other areas. In this example Cockburn highlights the complex interplay between gender, class and expertise. A consideration of class (as well as race) is missed in Code's account of women's collectives – she does not consider the possible divisions between women. In the contemporary context this is highlighted by Luckman (2015) in her work on craft. She highlights how Etsy's 'featured blogs' segment, which features certain makers on its site, presents a predominantly white, North American, female, middle-class and heterosexual picture. Luckman relates the homogeneity of the profiles to Adkins and Dever's (2014) argument that relations of subordination and privilege between women are being reinforced and reconfigured in contemporary neoliberal society. Etsy's promotion of the white, female, middle-class image serves to alienate anyone who does not fit into that category, and as I will show in this section, similar tastes are exhibited online by some of the women in this research.

McNeil (1998) argues that existing conceptualisations of expertise, some of which are outlined in Chapter 1, do not account for class and gender relations. She argues that the social processes of attaining expertise are also social processes of exclusion. This affirms one of my main arguments in this thesis that individuals' ability to acquire and signal aesthetic expertise is constrained and enabled by their access to resources, despite the supposed accessibility of social media. I would also add that it is particularly difficult for women, because of pervasive gender inequality in cultural work, the fact that social media is generally a more hostile space for women than for men (Michael, 2016) and the masculinised notion of the expert. McNeil describes how gender inequalities are ingrained in the history of scientific

expertise, she argues that "The female body as both an object of knowledge and, as an object of danger (and hence male fear), haunts much of the history of science and medicine" (1998:61). She uses examples of witch hunts to show how the "knowing woman" was seen as a threat to be destroyed. Ehrenreich and English (1973) charted the tradition of female lay healers which predated the medical profession, and how they were replaced by 'medical men' from the 14th to the 20th century. Ehrenreich and English were feminist activists themselves who questioned the medical men's expertise on women's health.

These feminist struggles with experts and expertise are also evidenced in cultural work. Melanie Bell (2011) notes how during the 1940s and 50s, film criticism was a viable and accessible career option for women, however when the status of film began to increase during the 1960s, "the high visibility of women raised anxieties for some who seemed to be uncomfortable with the opportunity criticism afforded women to play a role as cultural commentators" (2011:198) and so, the cultural expertise of the women critics was denied as men came to dominate film criticism. Bell and Vicky Ball (2013) highlight how women's specialist roles in film and television production have also been denied in historical accounts. In art, Braden (2015) claims for art collectors, individual characteristics such as the art collector's gender affect perceptions of competence and the consequent perceived value of the owned objects. Braden mentions that this extends to perceptions of women art and artists too, in comparison to their male 'genius' counterparts. Diana Miller (2016) claims that the ideal-typical artist builds on a masculine model in three ways: the masculine idea of the creative genius, the claim that aesthetic evaluations about art are biased towards men, and that the self-promotion needed in entrepreneurial labour requires artists to behave in ways which are traditionally more socially

acceptable in men than women. The final point was highlighted earlier in this chapter with reference to Taylor (2011) and her comments on the 'masculine selfishness' of self-promotion that the women in this research tended to reject.

While these accounts also imply that women cultural workers are disadvantaged by masculine ideas of the expert, I would argue there are possibilities for new conceptions of expertise which consider the gendered forms of its social process. Online displays of expertise, gendered or not, are under-scrutinised. In this thesis I have shown that expertise requires recognition and legitimation from others, and the women cultural workers in this research seek to gain this through relationship building. As well as mutual aid and self-disclosure, the women participants also developed relational bonds online through the deployment of familiar bonding icons.

Wine, cake and cats: forming bonds through icons

The use of specific objects, or 'icons' on social media can symbolise a shared experience particularly among women. Michele Zappavigna (2014) describes three key bonds which, in her investigation of affiliation practices on Twitter, are particularly common in women's online interaction. They are the 'addiction bond', 'frazzle bond' and 'self-deprecation bond', all of which are in some evidence among the social media output of the women in this research. Zappavigna argues that these different types of bonds help to form a "communion of feeling" (2014:212) which fosters interaction and communicates values to signify the type of person we are. For the women cultural workers in this research, the use of icons are part of a feminised online construction of a cultural worker, for others (mainly women) to rally around, so that "rather than simply informing other users that the microblogger has consumed a cup of coffee or a glass of wine […], the main function of the post is to propose a

bond positively valuing the bonding icon." (Zappavigna, 2014:221). The formation of these initial bonds is important for these women, because they can help increase the chances of mutual recognition of aesthetic expertise, and the subsequent exposure of their work facilitated through mutual aid.

For example, Abi posted about having wine, as a reward for finishing a painting:

Figure 56 Abi Twitter

She posted a similar Tweet (Figure 57) a few days later, again involving self-reward:

Figure 57 Abi whisky Tweet

If we use Zappavigna's ideas of the key bonds, here are examples of both the 'frazzle' and 'addiction' bonds – Abi has worked hard all week and her reward is alcohol. The 'frazzle' bond depicts a "shared experience of fatigue or exasperation" (Zappavigna, 2014:221) experienced by mothers in her study. While she mentions wine in Figure 56, Abi is also sharing an example of her work – the result of her 'labour of love' and a way of showing how she has earned her reward. Describing it as a 'labour of love' implies that the painting is more than something she has produced to make money, though that is essentially what it is. It is something she has put 'love' into – an experience of cultural labour to which other women cultural workers could relate. The sharing of work is a display of this 'labour of love' and the mention of wine, or whisky, may be a way for other women in particular to rally around Abi. At the time of capture both of Abi's posts received some likes and retweets. Gillian in Figure 58 does similar but utilises the #wineoclock hashtag alongside others, notably #womeninbiz:

Figure 58 Gillian Twitter

Gillian's post, with the use of feminine hashtags such as #womeninbiz, and arguably, #wineoclock, appears to be aimed at women, possibly fellow cultural workers or entrepreneurs. Like Abi, Gillian is showing the end result of her hard work, and the use of hashtags with familiar bonding icons such as #wineoclock increase the chances of that work being recognised by others. In the cases of both Abi and Gillian, this relational work helps in gaining recognition and endorsement, as demonstrated in the previous chapter with Abi being recognised by her publisher, and Gillian receiving endorsement from international customers.

Sometimes wine was posted in a context seemingly unrelated to work, such as by Colette:

Figure 59 Colette wine Instagram

The post in Figure 59 appears in a personal context compared to the others; the wine seems to be a gift from some friends. Yet the effort was made to compose the picture, take it and upload it to Instagram. What is seemingly banal and personal has formed a part of Colette's online profile and construction of being a cultural worker, in

the way she has staged the picture. She also posted a picture of cakes in a similar

way in Figure 60:

Figure 60 Colette cake Instagram

Cakes and chocolate could also be seen as part of the 'addiction' bond, indulgent,

rewarding and relatable for other women. The bonding icons communicated by Abi,

Gillian and Colette also communicate their tastes – relaxing with wine or chocolate

after a day of painting or drawing exhibits a relatively middle-class taste. Susan

Luckman identifies this too in her analysis of Etsy blogs and profiles. She notes the

presentation of "hipster domesticity" by women in their presentation of their home

life, reconciled with their craft enterprises. She argues that the middle-class Western

home is "the site of the public performance of both making and selling" (2015:97).

The rewards of wine and whisky for a day of creative work, demonstrated by Abi and

Gillian, are examples of this.

Pets were another popular icon among the women artists in this research. For example, Lisa's picture of her cat after an operation, with the caption 'sad kitty' in Figure 61:

Figure 61 Lisa cat Instagram

The posting of the 'sad kitty' generated an affective response in the form of sympathy from one commenter ('Poor kitty'). The poorly cat is an icon for Lisa's followers to rally around.

Gillian also posted pictures of her dogs and cats at home. This is likely to be related somewhat to her business as an animal portrait artist, because her love for her pets and being a pet owner is an important part of her overall online construction as a pet portrait artist. It demonstrates passion and enthusiasm for her subject which others (her current and potential clients in particular) can relate to and recognise:

Figure 62 Gillian cat Facebook

The icon of a cat in the sink in Figure 62 is a way for Gillian to encourage interaction from others and recognition of her work, if people decide to look at other parts of her profile. It also communicates a domestic taste which in the case of Gillian reinforces the idea of the 'always on' (Gregg, 2014) cultural worker, where home life and pets are a continuous inspiration for creative work, to be communicated on social media as part of the presentation of the diligent cultural worker. It is an example of how social media use presents new opportunities, but also new pressures for cultural labour.

The posting of personal life and the home is important for some of the women in this research to present a relatable and sociable cultural worker – a person behind

the cultural product. As Eimear and Jamila have said in interview, this is important for avoiding the formal, professionalised, 'sales-like' approach associated with masculinised ideas of experts and entrepreneurs, which do not necessarily appeal to followers, potential clients, or other women. Luckman (2015) describes such a strategy as 'self-making': "a required strategy of presenting a particular integrated sense of self as both maker (the professional craft worker) and the broader person, as part of a rounded performance of a seemingly successfully balanced self" (2015:113). As discussed in Chapter 4 on back stage and front stage performance, cultural workers must negotiate the balance between sharing authentic aspects of themselves and their life outside of cultural work, to contribute to their online construction of being a cultural worker but also to signal aesthetic expertise. Some who were less confident in managing this online because of their lack of knowledge of the audience, were primarily concerned with appearing 'professional', such as Stacey Anne.

Luckman's (2015) comments about self-making relate to the homemade and craft economy, and there was some emphasis on the homemade by the cultural workers in this research. Lisa's Etsy shop with her daughter sells handmade gifts from old books, and Lisa also made her own Christmas decorations, using the hashtag #homemade in her post in Figure 63:

Figure 63 Lisa decorations handmade

Lisa later shares a link to her blog, detailing how she made the decorations. While these are not items she is selling in her Etsy shop, in a way, this is still signalling her aesthetic expertise because she is revealing her craft process and passing her knowledge on to others.

Maria sometimes shared her baking, using the hashtag #handmade in Figure 64:

Figure 64 Maria bread Twitter

Once again in their use of the #handmade and #homemade hashtags Lisa and Maria are communicating a relatively privileged and domestic taste, which involves making decorations and bread from scratch, which are much cheaper to buy. Luckman (2015) identifies the relatively recent 'trend' in homemade and handmade products and food, as a lingering interest in the austerity of Britain in the 1950s-1970s. But rather than necessity, the handmade is now fashionable, as part of the gendered image of 'good lives' as she describes it. Luckman, and McRobbie (2016) are critical of this, with McRobbie arguing that the craft revival reinforces masculine hegemony by putting women back into the domestic space. Luckman argues the handmade craft trend is an "enabler of old gender inequalities in an individualised, entrepreneurial model of the rational heteronormative family" (2016:126). Jessica

Bain (2016) argues that rather than simply conceptualising the revival of handmade cultures as further examples of post-feminist culture, such practices should be reconsidered in the context of contemporary cultural and social life. Bain, looking at contemporary home dressmaking, provides a nuanced insight into one of the aspects of the contemporary craft revival, uncovering the meanings and pleasures women gain from the activity.

On social media, the various icons used by the women artists in this research could be perceived as reinforcing heteronormative positions. There are parallels between the frazzled mums in Zappavigna's study with the busy cultural workers here, rewarding themselves with cakes and wine, or making decorations and bread. At the same time, these women are running relatively successful businesses and while there are elements of the idyllic, carefully curated online persona critiqued by Luckman (2015) there is also a consideration of the social media conventions which help to form affiliations with and gain a response from others, particularly women. The use of these conventions and icons to form online bonds require a certain level of social media expertise (signalling as expertise) which may vary among cultural workers and may not always be recognised. At the same time, the use of such icons is problematic in that they communicate a relatively privileged middle-class taste which is potentially exclusionary, as not everyone can afford to make their own bread or even indulge in wine and cakes.

While it appears that this type of online performance may be conforming to the 'post-feminist masquerade', I suggest that it can also be considered part of a feminine strategy for signalling aesthetic expertise on social media which utilises the prosocial behaviour of women online (Thelwall, 2010) and runs counter to masculinised ideas of expertise. The use of familiar icons is a strategy to form

relationships (as in the signalling expertise framework) to facilitate greater online exposure for work and in some cases, expertise. In some instances in this research the sharing of icons is indirectly related to work through craft and handmade examples, or in Gillian's case, the inclusion of pets.

For the women in this research, signalling expertise is much more than promoting work. Associations and relationships are also crucial and I have revealed some of the strategies utilised to facilitate these relationships. These relationships are important for their social capital and could turn out to be beneficial in the future as some of the women develop their careers. At the very least, the more connections and bonds they form, the more exposure their work could get. These strategies may not necessarily be how the women want to communicate on social media, but it is how others in their network are doing it and are important for forming associations – they are becoming conventions. The conventions are, to reference the signalling expertise framework, the "rules of the game" (Jones, 2002:212) and therefore form the context within which expertise can be effectively signalled.

Adhering to these conventions requires a level of social media knowledge, or signalling as expertise, which, like the women's own aesthetic skill and expertise, can only be accumulated over time and with practice. Learning these conventions requires time and effort in addition to the endeavour they put into their own practice, as well as other commitments such as other jobs and family. It is therefore possible that using social media platforms to try and signal expertise could also add to struggles for women artists in ways which go beyond gender inequality. While the use of feminine icons online may appear to counter masculinised ideas of expertise, the same politics of expertise prevail in terms of the tastes and privilege associated

with experts. Not everyone can participate or engage in relational strategies, and thus the seemingly 'safe' spaces for women online could in turn exclude.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter I used the article *Creating While Female: How Women Artists Deal with Online Abuse* to illustrate how hostile social media and online spaces can be for women artists. The online environment is challenging for women who want to signal aesthetic expertise online, as they are more likely to be subject to online abuse than male artists and must work to preserve their expertise signalling, which could be damaged by comments and negativity. The women participants in this research operate within this context, and my analysis revealed some of the strategies they used to both create relatively safe and supportive spaces online, and to form potentially beneficial connections with others. These strategies are self-disclosure, the use of icons and mutual aid, and all are ways for women to connect with others online and foster a conviviality which could benefit expertise signalling. The strategies contribute to a feminine and relational online subjectivity, which can potentially increase the online visibility of women cultural workers through the mutual recognition and promotion of aesthetic expertise. Furthermore, the recognition of bonding icons and the disclosure of emotions to generate an 'affective stickiness' is increasingly valuable for gaining and holding the attention of audiences online (Paasonen, 2016).

Further work could explore the long-term outcomes of these relational strategies for expertise signalling; within this research I could only go on what participants told me in interview and the social media data collected over a relatively short period of four months. Further work would expand our understanding of these

relational strategies and their potential benefits for signalling expertise over an extended period of time, and relate this to the progression of a cultural work career.

The relational strategies explored in this chapter could potentially facilitate wider online exposure for women cultural workers in a cultural sector which remains unequal, and within which women's art is still under-represented. Other social media campaigns which I personally follow, such as the Advancing Women Artists' Foundation group on Facebook (Advancing Women Artists, 2017), which is concerned with increasing recognition of women artists from the Renaissance; and the Women in Art Twitter account (Women's Art, 2017) which posts art made by women every day, are also making some steps towards increasing the visibility of women's art, online and 'offline'.

Caution must be exercised however with the possibilities of social media platforms for women cultural workers. The relational strategies identified in this chapter require cultural workers to learn how to negotiate social media platforms and adhere to certain conventions in order to engage with other artists in potentially beneficial ways – develop social media expertise. In addition, the bonding icons such as wine and homemade bread require access to those icons in the first place, which are not available to everyone. Indeed, the analysis also reveals how social media platforms could potentially reproduce some social inequalities for cultural workers. As much as social media platforms and the affirmative sociability they can facilitate can hold some new and positive possibilities for women cultural workers, the politics of expertise as a mostly masculinised quality of the privileged seems to prevail.

The politics of expertise in cultural labour: Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to bring expertise into focus, both as a concept worthy of attention generally and within the specific context of cultural work. As highlighted in the Introduction the term expertise, when used in cultural work scholarship, can be treated as normative with little interrogation of what an expert actually is, and what expertise entails. The experts in this domain are often framed as the critics, dealers (Bourdieu, 1996) and cultural intermediaries (Taylor, 2015), with little attention paid to the processes and politics of expertise. This can include its meaning, how it is accrued, the conditions within which expertise is developed, and the nature of the aesthetic expertise of those who are judged by intermediaries and critics. This research has attempted to address these oversights through an exploration of aesthetic expertise in cultural production. It has revealed in particular how expertise is signalled and mediated on social media platforms, and the ways in which it is bound up in the politics of contemporary cultural work in terms of inequalities in access and participation.

Four major themes run through the thesis which form its unique contribution to knowledge:

1. A sustained focus on the aesthetic expertise of cultural *producers* – rather than the judges of cultural work such as critics, intermediaries or dealers

2. The way in which aesthetic expertise is enabled or constrained by access to resources

3. The *mediation* of aesthetic expertise as signalled and performed on social media platforms

4. The reputational value and risks of signalling expertise on social media

These themes will be discussed in terms of their contribution here, and potential scope for further research.

First is the insight into the meanings and manifestations of the aesthetic expertise of cultural *producers,* and what they do to develop their expertise in establishing and furthering their career. Aesthetic expertise, I have suggested, involves a knowledge of aesthetic codes and classifications, and skill in mastering the tools and techniques to produce a work of aesthetic value that is received and legitimated as such. Most of the participants encountered in this research developed their aesthetic expertise through training in further and higher education, and working on their practice either in their own time outside of other non-creative jobs, or in full-time creative employment, which we could say is the ultimate aim for cultural workers, as it serves as a legitimation of aesthetic expertise. Others, who changed career from non-creative employment or pursued creative work after retirement, were able to devote time to pursuing a passion and desire to work in creative sector that they had held for a long time, such as Patrick with his photography or Claire with her textile art. Others have worked for many years to build their skills and networks in the pursuit of an independent creative career, such as Colin and Phil. In all cases social media platforms play some role in the building of an online presence, and for some it has enabled them to sell work, gain exposure and network.

I argue and show how these online activities offer a means of signalling expertise. By focusing on how cultural workers signal expertise online, we are able to bring into focus and problematise existing ideas about the 'expert' in cultural work, whilst at the same time paying due attention to the 'onlineness' of cultural labour processes, which are integral to the daily practices of these workers and cannot be taken for granted. This research reveals what cultural workers do to try and get

themselves and their work noticed, rather than focusing primarily on the 'already great' creators as Bourdieu (1996) did. The cases in this thesis evidence the affective investment required by cultural workers to maintain and manage an online presence, which is crucial for reputation management and an integral aspect of cultural labour. Digital labour critiques helps us understand how cultural workers' use of social media can be both productive and problematic, in terms of the potential payoff from signalling expertise online, and the risks to reputation and cultural labour processes which come with having an online presence.

The research also evidences the fluid and dynamic nature of expertise as it is accrued and signalled by cultural workers, and mediated in online spaces. Further research might ask questions of the expertise of producers in other areas of cultural work, investigating how creative processes constitute forms of aesthetic expertise, or how it is signalled on social media by workers in specific sectors, such as film, TV and publishing in its various forms. Such insights would help our understanding of expertise in production more broadly, and enrich the study of creative production processes and indeed the demands of contemporary labour given its connections to precariousness, as I highlighted in Chapter 1 (see Gill and Pratt, 2008; McRobbie, 2016). Further studies *about* expertise should also continue to challenge normative understandings of expertise in cultural work and beyond. This is because expertise matters. I have shown how expertise is a power relation which underpins the unequal nature of contemporary cultural work, and we need to better understand how it operates at all levels – from access to creative education, to policy making. As mentioned in the Introduction, cultural and digital work are increasingly central to policy and the economy, and opportunities to develop creative and digital expertise should be equal and accessible to everyone.

The mechanisms of inequality in cultural work relate to the second theme in this research, which is how aesthetic expertise is enabled or constrained by access to resources. Bourdieu's concepts of capital are particularly helpful in this respect for demonstrating how one's ability to develop, mobilise and signal aesthetic expertise can be determined by access to economic, social and cultural capital. The availability of such resources remains important for expertise even where social media provide increasing opportunities to create and co-create online. Aesthetic expertise in itself, I suggest, is a form of embodied cultural capital which can only be acquired through access to the relevant training and opportunities to develop that expertise. Social media does not make it as easy, as I have argued elsewhere, to forge a creative career as is claimed in popular discourse (Ashton and Patel, 2017). In fact in my research with Dan Ashton we found that access to resources, including money and specialist equipment, is a major factor in the success of online vloggers, resonating with findings in this thesis. For example, I have shown how some of the women cultural workers, such as Jamila, must work several jobs and look after her young child because childcare is too expensive. Those in this research who are retired and/or have financial security from previous jobs or family seem to be in a less precarious position. Having the time to develop expertise is important too, as is being able to access technology and develop the digital literacy to use social media.

As Bourdieu argues in *The Forms of Capital* (2011 [1986]), access to resources, or capital, is related to class structures. Bourdieu points out that capital takes time to accumulate, and that access to capital is not distributed evenly or left to chance, it works to favour the privileged. Thus, its distribution "represents the immanent structure of the social world; i.e. the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world" (2011 [1986]:83). To some degree, this plays out on social

media. While social media platforms are potentially spaces for connection with others and seemingly free creative expression, divisions around class, as well as gender and race, are also reproduced online. For example in Chapter 6, the analysis reveals the gendered strategies by women cultural workers to connect with each other and potentially raise online visibility of art by women, particularly through sharing each other's work and engaging in collaboration. This is potentially an important benefit of social media in this respect, given the pervasive gender inequality in cultural work and masculinised connotations of expertise. While these forms of online sociality could help by potentially increase the online exposure of women's cultural work, they could also exclude some women who do not share the predominantly white, middle-class tastes displayed by some of the participants in this research.

Such activity raises questions about the potentially exclusive nature of online creative networks, and research in other areas suggests it is as much about class as it is about gender. For example, Tracey Jensen's (2013) work on Mumsnet demonstrates how users can be excluded from online discussions by social distinction, depending on the nature of their engagement with what the author terms 'mumsnetiquette'. Jensen shows how users who are not from a white, middle class background tend to be alienated from discussion on the parenting forum because they do not adhere to the online etiquette, which is reproduced by certain users and reinforced through the architecture of the site itself. This suggests that online 'etiquette' could also be linked to displays of taste in the Bourdieusian sense. As discussed in Chapter 1, where I highlight Bourdieu's argument that taste is a form of social distinction, I suggest that online manifestations of this could potentially exclude even within apparently supportive online spaces for women.

Related to questions about taste and social distinction is the issue of digital literacy and the ability to use the internet and social media to participate, as the 'digital divide' remains a concern globally. In relation to this, Ragnedda (2017) demonstrates how inequalities in digital literacy are intertwined with societal inequalities, and related to dynamics of social status, class and power. He argues that a lack of digital literacy could have implications for individuals' life chances, as they are restricted in their access to the opportunities offered by the internet and digital technology. I have shown in this thesis that in order to effectively signal aesthetic expertise online a degree of social media expertise is also required, and how people such as 'themostfamousartist' have used their skills and knowledge to successfully take advantage of social media's potential. However in order to make a career out of it and be distinctive among the plethora of creators and makers with their own presence online, aesthetic skills and knowledge are required too, and such training is not freely available – it is in fact diminishing. In the UK, creative subjects at GCSE and A-Level are being cut (Pells, 2016) and in higher education, creative courses are becoming increasingly expensive and out of reach for those from working class backgrounds (Banks and Oakley, 2015). Policy makers need to focus on how access to creative skills training could be widened, so that opportunities for people who wish to develop creative skills are accessible and affordable.

Skills development is not enough of course; existing research demonstrates how the cultural industries are notoriously difficult to forge a career in and increasingly, available primarily to those from privileged backgrounds (Banks, 2017; O'Brien, Allen, Friedman and Saha, 2017). For many the ability to pursue independent, full time creative work is only really possible for those with incomes from other jobs, or support from family and partners, as evinced in this thesis.

Furthermore, as Banks (2017) has shown, employment conditions and recruitment processes in cultural work, and admission processes for arts education programmes, continue to discriminate on the grounds of class, race and gender. These wider inequalities in the creative industries as a whole stem from ingrained, structural inequalities in society which are extraordinarily difficult to address. Broulliette (2016) asserts that the capacity to engage in creative activity and leisure should be "a part of life for everyone" but that "right now basic survival is such a pressing concern for most people that any kind of artistic practice becomes impossible." (ibid.)

So while such priorities may lie outside of cultural policy reform as Brouillette suggests, small steps are required in terms of what cultural policy can do. One recommendation here is to provide everyone with the means to develop creative skills, in the same manner that digital literacy training is becoming accessible through initiatives such as Google Digital Garage, which provides free digital skills tutorials and support. While I have shown how social media platforms can be problematic in terms of reputational risks and adding pressure to cultural labour routines, there are positive possibilities too for people who would not normally be able to distribute their work to a large audience and sell it. The next step is to ensure that anyone who wants to develop their aesthetic expertise and potentially take advantage of it can. This applies to whether they want to make a living like those featured in this thesis, or to simply flourish and be "able to expand or develop one's human faculties and capacities" (Banks, 2017:156) using the positive possibilities of cultural work and social media for creative expression. Current UK cultural policies are geared towards widening arts participation, and more resource might be devoted to empowering people to become creators themselves.

The third theme of this research relates to how social media platforms *mediate* aesthetic expertise signals in a dynamic and sometimes unpredictable manner. Social media provide a means through which cultural workers can signal expertise, demonstrating their skills, knowledge and tastes, as well as potentially bringing their work to new audiences and accessing new opportunities and networks. For the relatively established cultural workers in this research, social media is a useful platform for showcasing aesthetic knowledge and skills. For some, their mastery of techniques and materials is demonstrated in 'work in progress' posts, and confidence in their own work is displayed by exposing what other cultural workers in this research (such as Jason) considered to be a private process. In this sense, their aesthetic expertise is enhanced by their social media expertise, because they are able to use social media affordances to enrich the experience of their art online for their audience to see. The consideration of aesthetic expertise in creation of the primary product and how it can be mediated adds to our understanding of the art object, following Georgina Born, as an "assemblage of mediations" (2010:183). In this sense the cultural object, when presented on social media, becomes something else which works for or against the cultural worker, and plays a significant role in contemporary cultural labour. Using Erving Goffman's (1959) useful concepts on strategic self-presentation, I have suggested the audience can see, interact, with, and be a part of what feels like a 'back stage' production of cultural work, which becomes the 'front stage' of the cultural worker's expertise signals on social media, recorded as an exhibition (Hogan, 2010) which endures online.

For some cultural workers who create installations or audio work, as Robyn and Phil do respectively, social media carries a marketing and entrepreneurial function for them, because the very visual nature of social media platforms do not

lend themselves to larger scale work or audio, necessarily. For them social media is not a primary medium to signal expertise. However by sharing their associations and endorsements online such as Robyn with her artist residency, reputation and status can potentially be enhanced, signalling to the audience that aesthetic expertise has been recognised by prominent actors in their field.

In the frame of social media, Bourdieu's (1996) concepts of the *illusio* and 'naming' help us to understand the significance of recognition for getting an artist's name 'known' and their work legitimised through a social process of consecration. This is evidenced by Phil, who tagged *Masterchef* in his work to show his association with a high-profile client, enhancing his reputation online and potentially leading to more commissions. However, on social media, it is difficult to gauge the success of recognition. A tag or association with a large company may enhance reputation in terms of the cultural worker's portfolio, but on social media, the chance of recognition is difficult to predict, and there are no guarantees that being associated with or endorsed by certain companies or individuals will pay off. A large company may Tweet 30 times per day, but there are no guarantees of engagement as attention fluctuates online and posts are promoted or obscured by algorithms. These algorithms manipulate the placement of posts on social media timelines according to what users are calculated to prefer to see. As a result the likelihood of endorsements or associations generating any benefit, such as wider exposure, might be relatively small. Cultural workers need to have built sufficient online networks and audiences in the first place, in order for any achievements or work to be adequately recognised. There is of course an element of chance on social media; if a cultural worker gets retweeted by the Tate Gallery, for instance, and it gets noticed and shared by other high-profile artists, a large amount of recognition could be gained in ways which

could not have been predicted by the cultural worker. The dynamic nature of expertise signalling on social media means that there are many potential ways in which labour could pay off and generate some form of value, whether it be in the form of economic, social, cultural or even symbolic capital.

Further work could explore the wider judgement of aesthetic work, both 'online' and 'offline', as completing the 'loop' of expertise signalling. There is some evidence in this thesis of online feedback, but among participants in this research the comments present were generally positive, and it is possible comments were moderated by them, adding to the various issues around online profile management discussed in Chapter 5, such as the pressure to presence. Interviews with online audiences of cultural workers, as well as those who critique and buy the work, would provide a useful perspective on the judgement *of* the aesthetic expertise once it has been signalled online. There is some evidence of this from the case of 'themostfamousartist' who in the Buzzfeed video received positive feedback not only on his art work (from a collector), but on his use of social media to create and disseminate art to reach audiences (from an art critic).

The fourth theme of this thesis, and interlinked with the mediating role of social media, is reputational value and risk. Risk is bound up in the process of aesthetic creation, as argued by Menger (2006) who points out how "the risk of failure is a built-in characteristic of artistic undertakings" (2006:29). However, alongside advantages, the process of signalling expertise online presents some reputational risk. As demonstrated here, cultural workers need to mitigate this by managing their relationship with their imagined audience, maintaining an online presence and staging work effectively. Once a painting or other creative output is posted online it can become a dynamic cultural product working for or against the

creator by appearing and reappearing on people's timelines, being liked, shared and commented on in ways the artist cannot control. This online mediation contributes to the fluid character of aesthetic expertise – which itself is worked on, harnessed, sometimes fading, sometimes at risk. The risk already bound up in artistic creation is a "precondition for originality and invention, and for more long-range innovation" (Menger, 2014:3). Could the need to manage reputation and audience management online compromise the experimentation and abandon of the artistic process too? Further research might explore the intricacies of signalling on social media and its relationship with the creative process, building on initial observations in this thesis.

Maintaining an online presence, creating work and posts just to maintain that presence, negotiating what to reveal, and what not to, on social media are a necessary part of cultural labour for the cultural workers featured which has impacted their working routines, to varying degrees, and requires some level of expertise too. While some, such as Patrick, have become so accustomed to posting that it is like 'taking tablets in the morning' others, such as Phil, see the necessity of posting on social media but wish they could hire an assistant to do it. To some extent, social media for them has become a medium of necessary sociability from which it is increasingly difficult to withdraw (Couldry and van Dijck, 2015). Constant usage is encouraged by platforms, via algorithms and notifications which remind users and give them reason to post. The potential power of algorithms was voiced as a concern by some participants, who noted how platforms 'punish' those who don't post regularly enough by pushing them down, or off, audience timelines – reinforcing the 'pressure to presence' which for some, such as Anthony, can result in creating work just for the sake of maintaining that presence. In this sense, Anthony is risking his reputation by potentially posting work which is not up to standard, just to remain

visible in online spaces where he cannot be certain who will see his work and where it could end up. What are the implications of the 'pressure to presence' for valuing cultural work? What impact does this have on the aesthetic qualities of cultural work, and potentially future opportunities for that cultural worker? Further research might explore such implications over an extended period of time. A longitudinal study of expertise signalling, tracing what happens after signals on a long term basis, would be a useful avenue for exploration and expand our understanding of what constitutes effective signalling, and how it is managed by cultural workers on a long-term basis.

This research is of value to anyone interested in cultural labour, expertise and social media. It provides valuable insight into what cultural workers actually *do* on social media *as* cultural workers, providing new insights into the experience of contemporary cultural labour, and above all an important interrogation of expertise in this area. We have seen that expertise is dynamic, not available to everyone to develop, sometimes at risk, but important for careers and potentially gaining a position of authority in one's field. It involves putting in time and personal investment to master something, and is more than the knowledge in people's heads (Shadbolt, 1998). Social media platforms offer possibilities for creative expression and a means by which aesthetic expertise can be signalled, whether it be through the staging of the creative process, the creative use of platform affordances to curate profiles, and the visible relationship with the audience to cultivate positive feedback and possible co-creation. Social media also enables cultural workers to carry out the entrepreneurial functions of selling work online and managing client expectations, possibly reaffirming the perceived individualism of feminised, entrepreneurial, neoliberal work modes critiqued by Gill (2014) and McRobbie (2016).

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The utility of social media has contributed to significant developments in the very nature of cultural labour which require more interrogation in accounts of cultural work. To this end I have provided a critical perspective by demonstrating how the daily routines and practices of a group of cultural workers are shaped by social media use and the act of signalling aesthetic expertise online, introducing challenges and pressures into their practice that were simply not there in a pre-digital age. There is some valuable work emerging on what cultural workers do with social media and what this means for cultural labour (see Ashton and Patel, 2017; Duffy, 2016; Duffy and Hund, 2015; Scharff, 2015) but I suggest such investigations should also be supplemented with what workers are actually doing online, because as I have demonstrated in this thesis, it can tell us a lot about what it is like to be a cultural worker, and how they wish to be seen as such, 'on' social media.

This thesis provides a much-needed account of expertise in cultural work, questioning assumptions about expertise which pervade both everyday understandings and academic scholarship. It brings to the fore the importance of expertise as a as a lens through which to interrogate the mechanisms of inequality in cultural work, as well as the nature of cultural labour and the work which goes into the creation and dissemination of the art object. Furthermore, it provides important qualitative insights to supplement the growing body of quantitative work on cultural labour and issues of inequality and meritocracy (see O'Brien, Allen, Friedman and Saha, 2017; O'Brien, Laurison, Miles and Friedman, 2016; Taylor and O'Brien, 2017).

I hope this research serves to prompt wider questioning and reflection on expertise as a concept, because the process has certainly encouraged me to reflect on my own expertise, as both a social media practitioner and researcher.

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Appendix 1: Summary of participants

Name	Occupation	Age	Gender	Location	Relevant qualifications
Abi Burlingham	Visual artist	Mid-50s	Female	Derbyshire	BA English Literature & History
'Anthony'	Digital artist	Early-30s	Male	Birmingham	BA Multimedia Graphics, MA Digital Art Performance
Cherie Grist	Visual artist	Late-20s	Female	Liverpool	BA Fashion Style & Photography
'Colin'	Visual artist	Early-40s	Male	London	BA Fine Art
Clare Smith	Artist/craft maker	50s	Female	Dover	BA Fine Art, MA Fine Art
Colette Lilley	Visual artist	Late-20s	Female	Liverpool	BA Visual Communications
Eimear Kavanagh	Mixed media artist	Early-40s	Female	Liverpool	Course in Textile and Surface Design at Bretton Hall College
Gillian Ussher	Portrait artist	40s	Female	Derbyshire	-
Jamila Walker	Mixed media artist	30s	Female	Shropshire	BA Fine art photography
Jason Thompson	Painter	Mid-40s	Male	Liverpool	BA and MA in Fine art
Jazamin Sinclair	Painter/ musician/ photographer	40s	Female	Liverpool	BA Fine Art
John Davies	Photographer	Late-60s	Male	Liverpool	BA Photography
Katriona Beales	Mixed media artist	30s	Female	Liverpool	BA and MA Fine Art
Lisa Shambrook	Writer	40s	Female	Wales	-
Maria Walker	Textile artist	Mid-50s	Female	Cheshire	BA Creative Practice
Patrick Higgins	Photographer	60s	Male	Liverpool	-
Philip Guyler	Composer	30s	Male	Nottingham	-
Robyn Woolston	Visual artist	40s	Female	Liverpool	BA Film & moving image, BA Fine art
Stacey Anne Bagdi	Artist/ academic/ curator	20s	Female	Birmingham	BA Archaeology, MA Egyptology

Appendix 2: Participant social media data sample

		Dec-15	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16
Twitter					
Number of followers		1191	1228	1375	1445
Number following		1309	1356	1511	1638
Location	Glossop, UK				
Joined					
Bio		Artist based in Glossop, Derbyshire. Join my mailing list http://perpetual-portraits-gillian-ussher-art.myshopify.com/pages/sign-up-for-my-newsletter … for details of how to win a gift voucher worth £45.		Artist based in Derbyshire, UK. Sign up for my monthly newsletter http://perpetual-portraits-gillian-ussher-art.myshopify.com/pages/sign-up-for-my-newsletter …	
Facebook					
Number of likes		5054	5275	5628	5701
Description		Pet portraits and art by Gillian Ussher.	Pet portraits and art by Glossop based artist Gillian Ussher.	Pet portraits by artist Gillian Ussher	

Appendix 3: Transcribed interview sample

START AUDIO

[Background noise 0:00:00 - 0:00:14]

Cherie:	Hello.

Karen:	Hello. Is that Cherie?

Cherie:	Hiya.

Karen:	Hi, it's [Karen], the PhD researcher.

Cherie:	Hiya. Nice to speak to you. Are you alright?

Karen:	Yes, I'm good, thanks. How are you?

Cherie:	I'm fine, thank you.

Karen:	Oh good. Thanks for getting back to me.

Cherie:	It's okay. Sorry it took me so long. I've been up the absolute wall here.

Karen:	Oh, have you?

Cherie:	All on top of Christmas, like a lunatic.

Karen:	Yes, it tends to be busy up to Christmas, doesn't it?

Cherie:	Yes.

Karen:	I spoke to Colette a few weeks ago as well.

Cherie:	Did you?

Karen:	I did. Yes, I find it really interesting, your studio, and how it's been set up there.

Cherie:	We'll probably have similar answers then, I think.

Karen:	Oh, I don't know. I think everyone, so far, has had different opinions on social media. I am finding that everyone wants to talk about it, which is good for me.

Cherie:	Yes.

Karen:	Are you okay to talk now?

Cherie:	Yes, I'm fine.

Karen: Great. I thought, to start off with, could you just tell me a bit more about yourself and your background and your career, up until now?

Cherie: Yes, sure. I studied fashion style and anthropography at London College of Fashion, down in London. I left Liverpool to go there. I did that for three years, and then assisted for two years to a photographer, who was commercial and fashion editorial. Whilst I was doing that, I started painting, myself, in my room. I realised that I didn't want to work for anybody and I wanted to do my own thing, so I thought, "I'm best getting a studio."

I couldn't afford to pay rent and have a studio in London, so I moved back to Liverpool and got a studio. While I was there, I was just messing about with a bit of paint, because I'd never painted before, really, apart from in school and stuff. I entered the painting that I'd just done into the John Moores Contemporary Painting Prize, and it got shortlisted. So I took that as a little bit of a sign, because it's the most prestigious painting award for an artist. So everyone was like, "Oh my God."

So I just started painting a bit more, and I just really felt it quite natural. I'd always taken photographs, so I was like, "This is a quicker way to express my emotions, really, instead of the big, long process with photographs." So I started painting. I'd been in a couple of studios in Liverpool and then I met Colette, and we ended up moving to a bigger studio, called Wolstenholme Creative Space. There were 36 artists in there. Then that closed down, just before Christmas, 3 years ago.

My paintings are really big, because I just find it nicer to paint large, so we had to rush to find somewhere to go. We were quite adamant that we didn't want to run our own place, because we wanted to concentrate on our own work. Then we came across this building. It was quite big, and we would need quite a few people to fill it, to pay the rent. So in the end, we ended taking it over, me, Collette, and another friend of ours, called [Laura 0:03:46].

We were like, "Okay, we need at least 10 artists to fill all the spaces in this building." It was an old print shop, over two floors. So we took over that, and then Laura stepped down a little bit, and both me and Colette run that space, and it's just filled with other artists. There are 8 of us at the minute, because I've got quite a big space, because of my paintings.

I work full-time, self-employed, painting. I've had quite a lot of shows and sold quite a few paintings this year. Yes, that's it, really.

Karen: Great. So you don't have to do any other job; you just do the painting.

Cherie: Yes.

Karen: Great. When did you get the John Moores prize? How long ago was that?

Cherie: I didn't get it; I was just shortlisted. Hang on. It's every two years. Let me think. It must have been about five years ago, so I've been painting, solidly, for about five or six years.

Karen: Five years. Great. As you were working your way up, did you do any other jobs as well?

Cherie: Not really. When I went to college, I trained to sew. I did a fashion course, a BTEC, so I learnt how to pattern, [cut 0:05:13] and sew. I worked in my friend's shop, which is a dressmaker's. Before I moved to London, I used to work there. She's like my family, really, so if I ever really needed a lot of money – so, say, I needed [to have cameras] and stuff, she'd let me do a couple of days. I was never really an official employee, if you like; it was more just, "Oh God, I need to buy something," so she'd be like, "Come and do a day sewing."

Because I make all my own clothes, just for myself, so it would more help her out and help me out. So not really, but I had some things to get a bit of money, if I needed it.

Karen: Yes. When did you start using social media?

Cherie: I discovered Instagram this year, but I think when we were at university, they made us get Facebook, but it was more of a social thing. Then, about three years ago, I got my website and Twitter round about the same time. But I would say, probably, Instagram, this year, has made the most impact on my work. I see Facebook as family, Twitter as finding information, and then Instagram as promoting yourself.

Karen: Right. Do you sell stuff directly online? [Do you sell 0:06:42] paintings?

Cherie: Well, I have, this year, sold two paintings because of Instagram, so I've sold two paintings on Instagram. They're big paintings, and they cost a lot of money. I find it just absolutely insane that people would want to buy something at that level off an Instagram. It's just nuts. The same girl contacted me again a few days ago on Instagram, wanting another painting.

But I don't sell stuff from my website either; it's more like if they see something you like, or in any of the shows, they can email me, personally, and then I'll speak to them about it. Then I arrange a studio visit. They can come and view the painting, and then we go from there, really.

Karen: Yes. That's really interesting that you sold paintings from Instagram.

Cherie: I know. I still can't believe it, because I feel like I was quite like to Instagram, compared to all my other friends, because I was like, "Not a bloody other thing to do." But it's really good; it's brilliant for it.

Karen: Yes. Do you have a plan with Instagram? How does that fit in with what you're doing?

Cherie: The way it comes up on Instagram, it's like a stream of images, isn't it? I'm quite conscious of what I put up; I want it to stay in my kind of style, really, so it flows really nicely. I always feel like the pattern and the way it looks represents me. You'd be able to look at a painting that I was doing now, and you'd be able to look at all of those images, and see what my inspiration has been. So it's kind of like a big,

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ongoing mood board.

That benefits me a lot, and I would like to think that other people, maybe, find it interesting, if they like my work.

Karen: Yes, great. As you're painting, do you put images up as you go along, or do you wait until they're finished? Or is it just [Crosstalk 0:08:57]?

Cherie: Images of my paintings, do you mean?

Karen: Yes.

Cherie: If I'm painting in the studio, I always take a working picture. It's more like slacking from painting. I'll go on Instagram for a little bit [of a break 0:09:10]. No, I always do that, because the last person who bought – [Nicky]; she bought two – she requested- Because I write, as well as paint, so when I'm doing a painting, I see my paintings as diaries. So I also write, and then that painting will be – say, two months, it'll take, on average, to do one painting – everything that I've felt and I've gone through.

She asked for my notes whilst painting that, so when people would come round to her house, they could ask about the painting, and she could say, "Well, it's about this, blah, blah, blah." I also gave her the shots that I'd put on Instagram or Facebook or whatever, of the painting, as it progressed. Because I don't have a plan of what the painting is going to look like; it just turns into whatever it's going to become, really.

She also found that really interesting. She'd be like, "Look what it looked like after three weeks," or, "Look what it looked like after a day." Yes, I always put them up; I think it's really good.

Karen: Yes, to sort of just illustrate the process.

Cherie: Yes.

Karen: Great. Do you put your writing up anywhere?

Cherie: Not really. I feel like that's even more a little bit personal. I've got a solo show in 2017, and it's going to be, probably, the biggest show that I've done. That was an idea, that I did want to display one piece of writing to go with a painting, so people could get- Everyone has their own feelings when they look at my work, but I was thinking, maybe, it might be quite nice to show that as well. But I haven't so far, not yet.

Karen: Great. You said you show the creative process as you go along; you post that on social media. What made you do that? What led to you doing that?

Cherie: It was like, I think, maybe a record for myself, really. Because my paintings take so long, I didn't just want a social media that's full of other people's images, maybe. That's, maybe, what I thought of. Then, as I did it, people liked to see it, and people would comment, like, "Oh my God, it's changed," or, "Is that the

same painting?" and things like that. So I think it was more for me, but now I know that it is quite nice and useful for other people to see it as well.

Karen: Yes. On Twitter, what was the aim? Why did you join Twitter?

Cherie: I don't really know why I joined Twitter. I never really use it that much, to be honest. Someone said to me, "You should get a Twitter, because you can…" With Facebook, it's more people you know or you've met. On Twitter, you can follow people that you wouldn't add as a friend on Facebook, I suppose. So I followed galleries, and I could know what was going on in different cities. You get followers from around the world, and things like that, and you could see what was going on everywhere else.

The big art competitions and stuff, they would come up on there. Whereas on Facebook, you wouldn't see them. So more to get information, really, than to put my information out there, I think. I always end up forgetting about Twitter, really. Whereas my partner, he's a chef and owns a restaurant, so he finds it so useful. He is constantly on Twitter. Maybe it's because it's less visual, I don't know, but yes, I'm not really a massive Twitter fan. Too much writing.

Karen: Yes. I suppose if you're working with a visual medium, then Instagram lends itself to that, doesn't it?

Cherie: Yes, completely.

Karen: Yes. In a typical day in the studio, how would social media fit in there? Do you have set times for using it, or is it as and when?

Cherie: Just when I want to distract myself, I'd probably say; when I need a little painting break. If something even catches my eye in my own studio, then I'll be like, "Oh, that'll look good on my wall." Or if I'm reading something in one of the books, or I'm having a little break and I want to put a little quote in, or anything like that. So I think just when something pops in my head, or when I see something, or when I want to have a rest or distract myself.

Karen: Yes. How long do you think you spend on social media per day?

Cherie: I don't think anyone wants to admit to that, do they?
(Laughter)
One minute.

Karen: One minute ___[0:14:20] ten minutes.

Cherie: Yes. Oh God, I don't know. I would say I definitely go on it quite a bit. Instagram and Pinterest, they're just my… Oh God, I think I probably check Facebook maybe once or twice, but Instagram, I'll probably go on it about 5 times, and Pinterest probably about 100. It's my favourite.

Karen: Oh, it's Pinterest.

Cherie: I can't get enough of Pinterest, yes.

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Karen: What do you use that for, mainly?

Cherie: Inspiration and lushing after Chanel bags and things. I love fashion. I love the colours and prints and architecture, and everything. I just think Pinterest's stuff is phenomenal. It's the best invention in the world. I almost wish we'd had all this when I was at college and university. Because Facebook had only just come out when I was at college, and that was in the last years, and we were like, "Oh…" So we didn't have any of it. I can't even imagine how easy it must be for all the students now, with all that inspiration at their fingertips.

Karen: Yes, that's true, isn't it? Definitely.

Cherie: Yes.

Karen: Pinterest, it's just endless, isn't it, the amount of [Crosstalk 0:15:38] images?

Cherie: Oh God, I'm telling you… My favourite is the collections, because I'm a massive fashion fan. I remember, at college, we used to have to wait until the following month to see this season's collections, because you'd have to wait for it to come on this website called firstVIEW. Whereas now, you can stream them live, and they're up on Pinterest straight away, and on the Vogue websites and stuff.

People are also reporting from the shows. They're sitting at the side of the shows with their phones and Instagramming it, just like (makes camera noise) through all the images coming up live from the show. So it's like you're actually at the fashion shows. It's just amazing.

Karen: Yes. It's really useful if you're looking for inspiration, isn't it?

Cherie: Yes, instant. You can be on your couch, and you could also be watching the Chanel collection, because some it girl or something is there, taking pictures of it. It's like access all areas, I suppose.

Karen: Yes.

Cherie: Basically, you don't need to leave the house.

Karen: No, you never have to leave the house with social media.
(Laughter)
Do you put any of your own work on Pinterest?

Cherie: I didn't know how to do it, and then someone put it up, so my painting was up on there. I went, "Oh my God, that's amazing. I've got a Pin of my painting." But I haven't done it myself. I think I just get too carried away looking at everything else. So no, I haven't, actually. I probably should. It would be a good idea.

Karen: Yes, because you can sell directly through Pinterest, I think. You can definitely do it in America.

Cherie: Oh wow. I didn't know that.

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Karen: Yes, you can sell stuff through Pinterest. It works a bit like Etsy, I suppose.

Cherie: Oh wow. Okay. That can go on my list of computer research, today, of things to do.

Karen: Yes. I don't want to give you any more work though.

Cherie: I know. It is nearly Christmas, for God's sake.

(Laughter)

Karen: Yes. Apart from selling directly through Instagram, has there been anything else that's happened through social media that has directly benefitted yourself or your career?

Cherie: And Facebook as well. I've had a few people inbox me on Facebook, wanting to buy my paintings. There have been quite a few of them, and what I find is, they will then ask about the price, and I will tell them the price, and then that puts them off. The other day, I had a girl message me again, and was like, "I really want one of your paintings for my living room, down in London." I was like, "Well, they're quite big, you know."

So what I've started doing, literally, this week – I think it might be because it's Christmas, and people are wanting gift ideas or something – I'm going to start doing a range of prints of the smaller things. I think that will probably go well on Facebook, because it's more people I know. Because someone knows someone who knows all about my work, but then wouldn't really have a spare few thousand pounds to buy a painting for a wall. They'd be paying for more important things, like family holidays and stuff.

I think that's where Facebook will probably come into its own, selling prints. Whereas Instagram is a bit more people who like that kind of art, and would be in the market to spend a bit more money, maybe.

Karen: Yes. I suppose, in that way, Facebook helps you to work out the demand.

Cherie: Yes, completely. You know what it's like: on Facebook, you've got hundreds of friends, from friends of friends that you may have met once, but they still can keep up to date with what you're doing, and will like your things, and would like one. But not, obviously, a big painting; they might just like a little…

I'm sitting here, looking at my wall in my dining room, and I've got little frames all over the wall, full of little art postcards that I've collected from any exhibition that I've been to. I don't know why I hadn't thought of it before, because I'm a proper bad collector of stuff like that, and maybe other people are like that too.

Karen: Yes. There was someone I spoke to, and she's started doing Christmas cards of her paintings as well. Yes, I think in that way, social media can open up some avenues that you might not have thought of.

Cherie: Yes. Well, when I do my paintings, I don't think, "Oh, I'm going to turn this into a print to sell for £30." You're doing your painting because you have to paint. Then, at the end of it, you put a price on it, and you hope it sells. But really, me, personally, I'm like, "Well, if it doesn't, it doesn't. I've done it." So maybe it would be a really good thing if this happens.

Karen: Yes. In terms of using social media and putting stuff on Instagram and Pinterest and all of that, do you see it as a sort of additional thing to your creative practice?

Cherie: Yes, definitely. It's like a visual storage of your brain inspiration. So completely. It's really nice, I think, to then look back. In university, we would have sketchbooks, and we would have to print stuff out and put it in, and photocopy, and all this. Whereas you can literally, again, sit on your couch and print stuff, and you've got all your inspiration for months and months and years and years, just all in front of you, nicely.

Karen: Yes. I suppose that makes it quite important for your practice, doesn't it, to have that-?

Cherie: Oh yes, completely.

Karen: Yes. How much do you think about putting personal things on social media? Do you have quite a clear line between personal and professional? [Do you think about it 0:22:16]?

Cherie: Yes, pretty much. Well, I keep Facebook a bit of a mixture. I'll put some art stuff on there, but I would be like, "I'm out with the family," and put a family picture on, or, "I'm with my fiancé," and I'd put that on there. Whereas Instagram, I would very rarely put anything like that on there; I keep it more art.

Every now and again, I'll put a little something; maybe not close family, like my mum and my nan, or anything like that. But if me and [Martin 0:22:49] have done something, like if we went to an amazing exhibition and we got a nice picture of us by a painting, then I probably would. But not really; I keep Instagram more artwork, and then Facebook more personal.

Karen: Yes. Why do you keep Instagram more artwork?

Cherie: I just think it's a bit more intere- Like I wouldn't follow someone's Instagram that was just pictures of them out having a meal, or them at a family dinner or anything. I just find that quite boring. Maybe I'm conscious of my work looking boring. Not that I've got a boring life, but I would want to see people who've been to an exhibition, or people at a fashion show, or anything like that. I would find that more interesting. So maybe I consciously keep it interesting, or what I think is interesting, I should say.

Karen: Yes. Is there anything you don't like about using social media?

Cherie: I feel like I balance it quite well, but that's only because I'm quite conscious of it. But then, if I see, especially on Facebook, people just saying a bit too

much, I think it's like, "Oh, don't." Also, I find it really weird- well, my partner does, because he only has Twitter for business; he doesn't have any Instagram or Facebook or anything like that. He's been to places and they've gone, "Oh, you're Cherie's fiancé. I've seen you." People will know stuff about him – so he finds that really weird – who he's never met. I find that quite weird, because people kind of have a vision of you in their heads. It's obviously because of the online persona you put across.

Because you don't put, "I'm crying in the living room today, because I'm feeling down," do you? You only put happy stuff. I think it annoys people, because they're like, "Oh, she's just swanning about, having a fabulous time, while my life is crap," or whatever. So I think it's quite dangerous, because I think people can judge you from it, and just make opinion and think they know stuff. I don't know.

It's just a fake world, isn't it? If you know that and you're aware of it, then I think it's great. But I think if you think that that's all real life, then I think it's going to cause a lot of problems for younger people, I suppose.

Karen:	Yes, nearly everyone else that I've spoken to has said that Facebook is a bit annoying at times.

Cherie:	Yes. My friend, [Sarah 0:25:46], who I spoke about before – I know I'm going off on a tangent – her dressmaking business has completely been overhauled with Instagram. Her business is pretty much about 80% online now, because of Instagram.

Karen:	Oh wow.

Cherie:	She'll show me stuff, and it's just young girls. She would normally design dresses and then sell them in her shop, or people will come in and say, "I want this making." Whereas now, they come in with a picture off Instagram of a girl who's had loads of likes, and they're like, "I just want to look like her." I just find it so bizarre that people just want to look like other young people on Instagram.

This Instafamous, I know she's had a few customers who were just famous because of their Instagram profiles, because they've put raunchy pictures up and had thousands of likes and stuff. We laugh all the time, because I'm like, "Why have I only got a few followers, and these girls who've done nothing, and just got their booty out and pouted their lips have got all kinds of followers?"

We always laugh, because a couple of us are artists, and then a couple of them make dresses, so we're quite close-knit, and we always go mad, like, "We work dead hard. They've only taken a nice picture of themselves." I still find Instagram insane [because of that 0:27:21].

Karen:	Yes. A lot of that stuff is sponsored, isn't it?

Cherie:	Yes.

Karen:	Which is interesting. Because there was a girl who came out and exposed the story behind each of her Instagram pictures. I don't know if you heard about that.

Cherie:	No.

Karen:	I'll try to tweet it to you, because I tweeted it myself six weeks ago or something.

Cherie:	Oh wow.

Karen:	Yes, that's a really interesting story. It exposes what goes on behind those pictures.

Cherie:	Well, this – Sarah Alexander, her shop is – she got thousands and thousands of likes. She would send someone a dress. She sent this one girl called [Chanelle 0:28:14] a dress, and from that one dress, she must have had about 300-plus orders, because that girl had it on.

Karen:	Oh wow.

Cherie:	They would come in and be like, "I want to look like Chanelle in that dress." She would never have given anything away for free, but now, literally, if they've got loads of followers, she'll send them a dress for free, they'll wear it, and then she'll get loads of orders off that dress.

Karen:	That's really interesting.

Cherie:	I know, yes. Crazy.

Karen:	Wow. Do you think she'd like to speak to me, possibly?

Cherie:	Yes, I'm sure she probably would. I could give her a little WhatsApp.

Karen:	Oh yes, if you could, that would be great. I haven't actually heard of that before, getting business in that way.

Cherie:	Yes, she would have so much to say. I'll go in and have my lunch with them, and it's a completely different environment now, especially leading up to Christmas, and the fashion in Liverpool. I don't know if you know Scouse girls and their clothes. They get, like, six brand-new outfits for Christmas that they've all designed, and stuck those on, and sequined this, that and the other, and it's just not like that at all anymore.

It's quite a lot online, and just all Instagram, because they want to look like the girl who's got all the followers. Because they want followers, and that's pretty much it.

Karen:	Wow, that's really interesting. It makes you wonder why they want all of the followers.

Cherie:	I think they just think that's popularity, like that's the most important thing, having followers. Not friends in real life; just… I know I'm going off on a tangent again. I've got a younger friend, [Beth 0:30:07], and she just, literally, two weeks ago, went to a hot tub party. It was the beginning of November, and it was

absolutely freezing, and off she goes, to a hot tub party. I was like, "What the hell? You've just been sick. What are you doing?"

They're all only 21 and 22, and it's because she wants pictures for her Instagram. You when you're like, "Is it just me? Am I just too old now? What? You want to get in a hot tub in November, in a garden, for pictures for your Instagram?" Apparently, that was exactly what it was. It wasn't about having a nice time at a party, or enjoying a party; she just wanted that.

Because apparently, at the moment, there's a trend going on that having a hot tub party is the thing. So to be seen having a hot tub party on your Instagram was really great.

Karen: Oh my God.

Cherie: I'm sitting in my fleece pyjamas, thinking, "You're all bloody daft."

(Laughter)

Karen: Wow, that's crazy.

Cherie: I know.

Karen: I've never heard of that before. I'm clearly too old as well, because I don't hear of anything like that. Personally, I don't spend that much time on Instagram; I just see what my [Crosstalk 0:31:31]-

Cherie: It's really sad.

Karen: Yes, it is, isn't it? Wow. Start throwing parties just for Instagram [kind of thing].

Cherie: Yes. It doesn't matter if you have a nice time, literally, as long as you look like you're having a nice time. That's the most important thing for these young ones. They're all crazy.

Karen: I know. Wow, that's really interesting. Anyway, back to you. I think there's just one final question. Do you ever feel a pressure to keep things up to date with your social media?

Cherie: Yes, definitely. Like I haven't Instagrammed for a couple of days, so I'm like, "Oh God, I should definitely put something up." I don't know what it's going to be, but I should put something up. So yes, it's like a subconscious thing. I don't feel that with Facebook or Twitter. I'll go weeks without tweeting anything, and then I'll be like, "Oh, I should put something on." I don't feel like that for Facebook or Twitter, but definitely Instagram, because it's quite an on the ball thing, I suppose.

Also, you want to get some followers as well. It's like a little project. You're like, "Come on." When I got a follower, I'm like, "Yes," because I've only got 300-odd followers. I've got mates who don't do anything who have got thousands of followers, so I just find it… I've not really got into the hashtag, and I don't think I do it, really, that well.

You know what it is: they always tell me it's the timing. So you have to put your images up at a specific time, because that's when you get the most likes and the most interest. But I literally haven't paid any attention to that. I put it up all at the wrong times, I think. But they're really good for that. They're like, "No, you have to put it up at-" I think it's Sunday at 11:00, or around 5:30, when people are getting on the bus.

Karen: Is that your friends who tell you to do that?

Cherie: Yes.

Karen: Do you have any boundaries with the times you go on social media?

Cherie: No, just when I feel like distracting myself, really.

Karen: Great. I think that's pretty much everything I wanted to ask you.

Cherie: Yes. Have I waffled on enough for you?

Karen: Your Instagram insight, that was really interesting. I think, because I don't know many younger people, I don't hear much about what- I suppose because it moves so fast as well; all of these trends and…

Cherie: Yes. I've known so many people whose businesses have changed from Instagram, so I think it makes me want to do well on there, because I know that there is potential. I've got another friend, [Siobhan 0:35:05], and her fashion business has just gone amazing, as well, from Instagram, again. It's mental.

Karen: Yes. Are followers quite important to you?

Cherie: Yes. I don't really know why, because it doesn't really matter. They're just virtual people, I suppose. But I think, for me, it would be better having more followers, obviously, because more opportunities will arise. Also, if you've got more followers, then it clearly means that your Instagram profile is popular.

Karen: Yes. Have you ever looked at who follows you, and the types of followers you have?

Cherie: Yes, when I get a new follower, I'll go through them. They're mostly similar artists and stuff, or a gallery, or things like that.

Karen: Yes. Just one final thing: do you promote your work in any other ways, apart from social media?

Cherie: Only through exhibitions, really, and then the exhibitions will have flyers, and then my website. I would tweet, probably, about my website, so that would be [intertwined 0:36:45].

Karen: Yes.

Cherie: Just answering that question, that just shows you how important it is, really, doesn't it?

Karen: Yes. That's what I'm finding, speaking to people: it's becoming so intertwined with people's work and life as well. That's been one of the things that interested me in the first place, that blurring between personal and professional, which, as artists, you have anyway.

Cherie: Yes.

Karen: You throw social media in there, and it could, potentially, be a lot more public, couldn't it?

Cherie: Yes.

Karen: Yes, well-

Cherie: But re-

Karen: Oh, no, carry on.

Cherie: I was going to say, it's a really interesting project. You must have your mind blown, especially if you're not in 20s, which I'm not. I just find it mind-blowing, the whole thing. It's just like, "Wow." What on earth is it going to be like in another 10 years or 20 years? It's just going to be even more crazy.
Karen: Yes it will be. Thank you. It's been really nice chatting to you about what you do, and your insights into it as well. It's been really useful.

Cherie: Thank you. I can email you over about two friends, Siobhan and Sarah, and you can give them a little contact. I'll let them know that I've sent you their details. You might want to speak to them, because they're both fashion designers, and they sell and make a lot of money from their online [Crosstalk 0:39:12].

Karen: Yes, if you could, that would be absolutely brilliant. That would be great.

Cherie: Okay.

Karen: Did you get the consent form?

Cherie: I haven't been on my emails, no. I haven't got Word on my laptop, so I'm just thinking how I might be able to do it.

Karen: What I could do instead, I could copy and paste the form into an email, and then you can just reply. Because you can choose whether or not you want to be anonymous in my write-up. That's the main thing.

Cherie: Oh, it doesn't really bother me. I'm not fussy.

Karen: Yes, I'll work it out and send you an email. [That was brilliant 0:40:06].

Cherie: Alright, yes. Maybe Martin might have it on his. If you ___, I'll have a look, maybe, on Martin's laptop. He might have Word; I'm not too sure. I could have a little look on there. Yes, I'll have a go.

Karen: Or I might do it as online Word document, so you can just go in and do it.

Cherie: Oh yes, I've done something like that before.

Karen: Yes, I'll probably do it that way.

Cherie: Okay.

Karen: Brilliant. Well, have a great day. It's been lovely speaking to you.

Cherie: Yes, you too. Lovely talking to you too, and good luck with it all.

Karen: Thank you. I'll keep in touch anyway.

Cherie: Yes, brilliant. Alright, I'll speak to you soon.

Karen: Speak to you soon.

Cherie: Bye.

Karen: Bye.

Appendix 4: Sample of signalling expertise analysis

Abi Burlingham

Twitter 19-29 March 2016

Abi Burlingham Retweeted

The Hawthorn Gallery @HawthornGallery · Mar 23
'Run of the Mill' #Bob Barker, £413 goo.gl/gZa6wD #design
#elevatorpitch

2   5

Abi Burlingham @AbiBurlingham · Mar 26
Have a cute dog. In fact, have 6 of them!

CuteDogDay @cutedogday
The Crew #puppy #puppiesofinstagram #puppies #dognation #dogoftheday #bestdogever #cutedogsofinstagram #cutedogs

Abi Burlingham @AbiBurlingham · Mar 25
Just introduced my daughter to the film of The Book Thief. Both sobbed our socks off! Wonderful book, wonderful film.

2

Abi Burlingham @AbiBurlingham · Mar 25
Have a lovely Easter all.

4

331

Signalling content:	
Identity (aesthetic style)	Combination of retweets and references to popular culture, and an example of her own work for Easter.
Performance (exhibiting requisite skills)	Display of her own work which is relevant to Easter.
Relationships (Career relevant networks)	Sharing of painting for sale by fellow artist

Abi Burlingham @AbiBurlingham · Mar 27
Fabulous!

Street Art Magic @streetartmagic
Wonderful #Kiev outdoor art.

Abi Burlingham @AbiBurlingham · Mar 27
A day of #words and #drawing (punctuated by the odd Malteaster bunny!)

15   63

333

Abi Burlingham @AbiBurlingham · 14h

What a great idea: They Transform Kid's Drawings Into Beautiful Pieces Of Jewelry!

They Transform Kid's Drawings In Beautiful Pieces...
They are absolutely gorgeous.
soulspottv.com

Abi Burlingham @AbiBurlingham · Mar 27

A field of #marsviolet for this week's #colour_collective

27 2   8

Signalling content:	
Identity (aesthetic style)	Showing her art, and also her interest in writing-variety.
Performance (exhibiting requisite skills)	Sharing of her work and work in progress. Involvement in colour collective challenge to display her variety.
Relationships (Career relevant networks)	Involvement in #colour_collective, which may be an interesting hashtag to look at. Also sharing of others' work.

Abi Burlingham Artist
27 March at 08:31 · 🌐

Happy Easter everyone. Have a lovely break doing what you love 💙

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ➤ Share

👍❤️ 14   Chronological ▾

View 6 more comments

Yvonne Smedley I love it, and the colours you've used x
Like · Reply · 👍 1 · 27 March at 18:42

Abi Burlingham Artist Thanks muchly 😊 xx
Like · Reply · 27 March at 18:54

Write a comment...   📷 ☺

Signalling content:	
Identity (aesthetic style)	Showing her work, while one piece is her usual style the other appears more experimental
Performance (exhibiting requisite skills)	These are similar to her Twitter posts but she has tailored them to Facebook. Starting conversation.
Relationships (Career relevant networks)	Responding to positive comments, sharing her process.

Signalling content:	
Identity (aesthetic style)	This work is slightly different from what she usually publishes, more work in progress than finished pieces.

Performance (exhibiting requisite skills)	Use of hashtags tailored for the platform. Also showing her old work-continuity.
Relationships (Career relevant networks)	Use of hashtags, also first post shows she is working with a writer.

Institutional context (formal & informal structures and enforcement mechanisms):	Parent, stay at home mum and artist, and writer. Says Facebook algorithms give her some concern.
Signalling strategies:	
Status enhancement (amplifying)	**Dec 2015:** Regularly posting 'finished' pieces of her work on Twitter and Instagram with links to her shop. **Jan 2016:** Liberal use of hashtags in Instagram, retweeting the work of others, sharing a variety of work, balancing 'selling' posts with humour, finished pieces, and opinion/fun. **Feb 2016:** Much more sales focus this time, and sharing of new work. **Mar 2016:** Less sales focus, more revisiting of old work, and work in progress.
Reputation building (type and pattern of relationships pursued)	**Dec 2015:** Tweeting the endorsement of others, in this case a tweet by her publisher about her book **Jan 2016:** Retweeting a lot of the work of others **Feb 2016:** Again retweeting the work of others **Mar 2016:** Retweeting and sharing work of others, also showing her old work.
Impression management (strategically amplifying, reducing or deflecting signals)	**Dec 2015:** Slightly different type of post for facebook – work in progress. **Jan 2016:** Showing more of the work in progress and the process behind. Using slightly different approaches to the 3 social media channels-Facebook for process, Instagram for finished work, Twitter for networking and sharing the work of others **Feb 2016:** Less process, more products and selling, also retweeted a positive endorsement of her children's book. **Mar 2016:** back to work in progress. Tailoring each post for each medium-posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram all different.

Appendix 5: Participant consent form

Project title: The social media use of cultural workers

Researcher: Karen Patel

Supervisors: Prof Paul Long (Birmingham City University), Prof Mark Banks (University of Leicester)

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.

- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

- I understand that information gained during the study may be published, and my identity will be anonymised or made public in accordance with the anonymity option I choose below.

- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview.

- I understand that data will be stored securely on the researcher's personal computer and password protected and also backed up onto an encrypted drive.

- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the Faculty of Arts, Design and Media, if I have a complaint about the research.

Anonymity
Please tick **one** of the following:

☐ I am happy for my online names and identity to be used in the final write up. I am also happy for my real name (or screen name) to be used for the interview.

☐ I am happy for my online names and identity to be used in the final write up, but I would like my identity to be anonymised for the interview.

☐ I would like to be anonymised for both my social media posts and the interview.

Signed ………………………………………………………………………… (research participant)

Print name …………………………………………………………… **Date** …………………………………

Contact details
Researcher: karen.patel@bcu.ac.uk

Supervisor: paul.long@bcu.ac.uk

Appendix 6: Publication Patel (2017) - Expertise and Collaboration: Cultural workers' performance on social media (pre-published version)

Abstract

In cultural work, how important is expertise for securing work and ensuring career progression? Working in the cultural industries is argued to be precarious (Gill and Pratt, 2008) and very competitive. Social media offers opportunities for public displays of expertise for artists that can potentially reach a global audience, and I argue that this has implications for how we conceptualise contemporary cultural work, and in particular, collaboration.

Conceptions of cultural work such as Pierre Bourdieu's *illusio* demonstrate the importance of social consensus in the process of artists' elevation above others, or consecration. In this chapter I explore the *illusio* in relation to artistic expertise in the social media age. The questions I consider are: how does expertise manifest on social media? What could social media use tell us about the *illusio*? I analyse the social media posts of a sample of artists, considering the context of the individual and their situation, the nature of the connections and relationships they pursue on social media and the strategies they employ to perform expertise.

The analysis reveals that associations and consensus are crucial for performing expertise. Social media ultimately allows for public endorsement from other people and institutions, which contribute to artists' performance of expertise. Within that, artists also engage in supportive acts of 'mutual aid' manifest on social media through their retweeting of fellow artists. I argue that on social media, artists negotiate these platforms in a dichotomy between competition and collaboration which contributes to their overall performance of expertise.

Keywords*: Cultural work, expertise, collaboration, social media, artists*

Introduction

The idea of the 'expert' is often associated with people who are called upon to provide comment, analysis and critique. In science in particular, experts are the 'voice' in news media about issues of interest to the public (Wynne, 1992). In the arts, the experts are often critics (Bourdieu, 1996; Bennett, 2010) or cultural intermediaries (Taylor, 2013) for example, those working in advertising (Nixon, 2014) or consultancy (Prince, 2014). What about experts who aren't critics or intermediaries, i.e. the creators and artists themselves?

I find that expertise is often taken for granted in accounts of cultural work; experts are just experts – they are considered to be more knowledgeable than non-experts, but how? Why? The following quote by Leila Jancovic, in her work on participatory arts programmes, is an example of this:

> 'While some professionals defined their backgrounds as providing invaluable arts expertise, many of the public participants questioned the knowledge of the professionals, referring to them as self-appointed experts. This was supported by the fact that many of the 'experts' interviewed, acknowledged that they knew little about arts practice outside their specialism'

> Jancovic (2015:7)

What exactly makes someone an expert in the arts? Just because someone is less familiar with subjects outside of their field, how does that mean they're not an expert in their specialism, as Jancovic is suggesting?

My analysis of artists' performance of expertise on social media suggests that expertise is a social process, and it is performed on social media in a platform-mediated way among artists, who negotiate between competition and collaboration. Pierre Bourdieu's *illusio* and Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* are respectively accounts of competition and collaboration in the art world, and both position art-making as a social process, which I argue also helps to conceptualise expertise too, as a social process.

Social media platforms allow opportunities for cultural workers to find work and build a reputation (Suhr, 2015) but they are also sites for people to perform expertise, and drawing from the empirical work I have carried out on a group of artists I suggest that expertise tends to be performed on social media through the input and endorsement of other people, which contributes to a consensus about someone's expertise, helping to define whether they can be deemed an 'expert'. Ultimately, expertise is important in cultural work because the ability to communicate and demonstrate your expertise is essential in order to secure work (Andres and Round, 2015; Jones, 2002) in a competitive cultural industries job market where there is an 'oversupply of labour' (Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009:420).

My empirical work consisted of an analysis of samples of social media posts from 19 independent UK artists working in fine art, digital art, writing, music and crafts. I drew from Candace Jones's signalling expertise framework for the analysis, to identify particular expertise signalling strategies by the artists. Jones describes signalling as activities which showcase someone's identity through prior projects, competencies and relationships, which 'convey information to others as a form of strategic action' (Jones, 2002:209). I adapted the framework for the analysis of social media, incorporating elements such as retweets, mentions and imagery used on social media to account for its various affordances which shape how expertise is performed on platforms.

Artists were looked at specifically to explore Bourdieu's idea of the *illusio* in relation to arts workers and their performance of expertise on social media, and what this can tell us about contemporary cultural work. The *illusio* is a 'collective belief in the game' which is 'fundamental to the power of consecration, permitting consecrated artists to constitute certain products, by the miracle of their signature (or brand name) as sacred objects' (Bourdieu, 1996:230). This consecration is a process involving those in power. What about the *illusio* in the social media age, where any artist can have a public profile, call themselves an expert, and display cultural products which could potentially reach millions of people? From my analysis, there are suggestions that on social media, the status and power of artists' online associations are crucial in their performance of expertise.

While Bourdieu's conception of the art world suggests a competitiveness among artists, Howard Becker's (2008) *Art Worlds* paints a more collaborative, congenial picture. In my analysis of artists' social media posts I find evidence of this too, where artists would often 'retweet' and help promote the work of fellow artists and craftspeople, who are essentially their competitors. This suggests that expertise is a social process, and artists perform their expertise on social media through a

negotiation between competition and collaboration. This builds on current accounts of cultural work, as well as accounts of expertise.

In the following section I'll outline the scholarly work done on expertise, to help us understand how expertise could be most usefully conceptualised.

What is expertise?

There is no universal definition for what expertise or an expert is, and the notion of the 'expert' is increasingly problematic 'in a world where socially distributed expertise and knowledge production (e.g. peer to peer 'lay thinking' as facilitated by the internet) is widespread' (Wilson 2010:372). Arnoldi (2007) defines expertise as 'the product of a symbolic attribution of status and authority, changing over time' (p.50). Schudson (2006) describes an expert as 'someone in possession of specialized knowledge that is accepted by the wider society as legitimate' (p.499). This echoes Stephen Turner's (2001) view that experts not only need the skills and knowledge, but also recognition from audiences, to be considered expert.

This idea of expertise as socially constituted is apparent in the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) from which much of the original literature around the philosophy of expertise stems. Scholars in STS sought to investigate the sociology of science, for example Brian Wynne (1992) who highlighted the erosion of public trust in scientific experts and questioned the legitimacy of these experts after the Chernobyl fallout, where the expertise of the 'lay' sheep farmers proved valuable yet was largely ignored by scientists. This questioning of the legitimacy of expertise is discussed by Ulrich Beck (1992) in *Risk Society,* where public trust in experts was undermined during the 1980s and early 1990s by not only mistakes and inaccuracies, but also the incorrect perception of the public by experts as 'engineering students in their first semester' (p.59). This led to less public trust in experts, and increased mass media exposure by experts has been argued to contribute a de-legitimisation of expertise overall (Beck, 1998; Luhmann, 2000; Arnoldi, 2007). What about the legitimacy of expertise performed in more contemporary contexts on social media? What form does it take? And how does it link to the context of 'social' interaction where highly collaborative dynamics are at stake? My work in this chapter provides some insights here in relation to artists.

Scholars in STS have tried to unpack exactly what an expert is, with no agreed consensus. Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus (1986) described expertise as an everyday competence and an effective ability to use expert skills and knowledge to improvise in difficult situations – an embodied human performance. Collins and Evans (2006) propose a SEE (Studies of Expertise and Experience) approach, which classifies three types of expertise: no expertise, interactional (experience or practice based) expertise and contributory (knowledge based) expertise. However, the authors admit there are boundary problems with these categorisations, and their conception of experience-based expertise has been criticised by Addis (2013) for placing too much emphasis on the embodied ability of the individual rather than the input and role of others in expertise, using peer review and examination as examples where other people are crucial for expertise.

Following this, expertise is best understood as a social relation, 'where a particular actor has authority over another actor through their possession of a particular form of knowledge: the way a doctor has authority over the patient' (Prince, 2010:6). According to Prince, this results from the expert's situation within a community's knowledge culture. There are parallels here with Pierre Bourdieu's ideas of the *illusio.*

Expertise in cultural work

The *illusio* is applied by Bourdieu in the *Rules of Art* (1996), where he describes the *illusio* as a consensus about artists, which is fundamental to the elevation of those artists over others. The Bourgeoisie in the 19th Century art world were influential in this 'elevation' and consecration of artists. Even though such artists would eventually be able to live from just their signature or brand name on their work because they had come to be known as the 'experts' through these power relations, Bourdieu highlights the importance of consensus in the consecration of artists, arguing that the individual, artistic 'genius' is socially constituted and not solely arising from individual talent or special gifts.

Another conceptualisation of the art world comes from Howard Becker (2008) in *Art Worlds.* Whilst not particularly referring to expertise, Becker highlights the importance of reputation in the art world and how this too is socially constituted. The term 'Art World' is used by Becker:

> 'To denote the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that the art world is noted for.'

> Becker (2008:xxiv).

Art Worlds demonstrates how the influence of others, particularly distributors, critics and consumers, are integral to reputation building. Like Bourdieu, he critiques the myth of the individual, artistic genius and acknowledges the role of people who appear more entitled to speak on behalf of the art world than others. Becker argues that such roles, and subsequent values about how art is to be judged- are formed through a social process where consensus is crucial. In turn, these people are important in the building of an artist's reputation. In a departure from Bourdieu's emphasis on power and power relations, Becker's conception of the production of art places much more emphasis on the division of labour in the process and the amount of collaboration and co-operation involved.

More recent accounts cultural work describe it as precarious (Gill and Pratt, 2008) extremely competitive (Bilton, 2007) and highly individualised (McGuigan, 2010), but these types of conditions were synonymous with the experiences of artists anyway (Forkert, 2013). What about the experiences of artists in the social media age? The increased popularity of social media platforms in recent years has opened up cultural production to almost everyone who can access it, resulting in a proliferation of 'amateur' cultural production, collaborative co-creative production (Banks, 2009) with subsequent concerns about the inferior quality of cultural products (Keen, 2007) and undermining of professional ethics and values (Kennedy, 2015). Social media too is a competitive space which is increasingly profitable for people who know how to use it for their benefit, whether it be through blogging (Duffy, 2016), selfies on Instagram (Marwick, 2013) or generating Facebook 'likes' (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013). What about the experiences of artists in this space? What is the role of collaboration here, specifically among artists? This chapter provides insights into how artists utilise social media for the benefit of their career.

There is relatively little work about expertise in contemporary cultural work. Russell Prince (2010) identifies an 'emerging expert system' in the UK creative industries where a small community of people have realigned their practices to situate themselves within government in order to influence cultural policy. However, these

people are not cultural workers involved directly in production, but cultural intermediaries (such as critics and consultants) and CEOs of media companies. Candace Jones (2002) draws on the work of Erving Goffman (1959) to conceptualise how expertise is signalled in creative industry careers, arguing that signals are important for conveying one's knowledge and expertise in the competitive creative industries job market. Jones devises a framework for analysing expertise signals, which I adapted for my social media analysis and will discuss in the next section.

Approach

To analyse the social media posts of the 19 UK artists, I used an adapted version of Jones' signalling expertise framework (see Patel, 2015) to take into account the specific features of social media, such as platform structures, interactions and affordances. The framework consists of three primary elements, (with my adaptations in brackets): institutional context (i.e. the context of the user, their background and career trajectory), signalling content (the aesthetic style of social media text and images, exhibiting the requisite skills in both their social media posts and presentation of their art, and career relevant connections and interactions on social media) and signalling strategies (using social media affordances such as retweets to enhance status, the type of relationships pursued and how they are manifest on social media, and strategic approaches to impression management on social media). This framework is useful for such an analysis because it specifically focuses on expertise among creative industries workers, however Jones did not test the framework empirically. After amending the framework for social media analysis, the signalling expertise framework becomes a useful tool not only conceptually, but also methodologically.

The 19 artists were found mostly by looking through online artist directories, specifically Arts Derbyshire, Art in Liverpool and New Art West Midlands. I selected artists who appeared to use social media regularly for professional purposes, so for each artist I visited their individual social media profiles and looked at the last time they posted and how frequently they posted. If they had posted at least twice in the past week, I approached them. I also approached artists that I had met at events, or were suggested to me by my own contacts. For each participant, I collected (via screenshot) ten days' worth of posts from the social media sites they most frequently used; the most common being Twitter, Facebook (pages) and Instagram. The amount of posts collected varied among users, ranging from over 100 posts from one participant to ten for another so I made some adjustments to the amounts I collected for each participant during the data collection process. Rather than analysing each post individually, I analysed each users' posts in groups of 3 or 4 because I found a lot of posts exhibited similar forms of signalling content. Once all posts were analysed using the signalling content criteria, this helped me work out the user's signalling strategy and institutional context.

Ethical considerations

In the screenshots that follow in this chapter, you will see that I don't conceal the identity of my participants. All participants mentioned here have given consent for their online identities and social media posts, which includes retweets, to be featured in this discussion.

The 'publicness' of people's information on the internet is a primary ethical concern. Even though social media profiles are freely available and people choose to make them public, it doesn't necessarily mean they are 'there for the taking' to be used for

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research (Henderson et al, 2013). As argued by Boyd and Crawford: 'just because it is accessible doesn't make it ethical' (2012:671). Users may be aware they are using a public forum but some may not fully understand the implications of what they post, or how far it could reach (Marwick and boyd, 2011).

For my approach, I decided that being transparent with my participants and asking their permission to use their social media posts was the best option. Allowing them the flexibility to choose which level of anonymity they prefer reduces some of the ethical concerns about the 'publicness' of social media.

Using screenshots is also an unusual practice in social media research, as posts are often extracted through data mining methods (boyd and Crawford, 2012). However that was not suitable for this study, which relies on the close analysis of each individual's posts. In addition, taking screenshots is an effective way of presenting the full context of the post that the platform allows, such as the numbers of retweets and likes for each Tweet, Facebook and Instagram likes and comments, and most importantly for artists in particular, the images posted.

Displaying endorsements and positive reviews

From the analysis, the most prominent theme was the crucial role of other people and institutions in artists' performance of expertise online. This is partly demonstrated in how artists shared endorsements made about them, and also through mutual aid and collaboration within the artistic community, which I will discuss later.

A practice which was most evident on Twitter, most of the artists in my sample used the retweet and 'quote' functions of Twitter to share posts they were mentioned or featured in by others. This particularly centred on their participation in events, but also in direct association to their work.

Eimear, a mixed media artist, Tweeted first about an exhibition she was participating in:
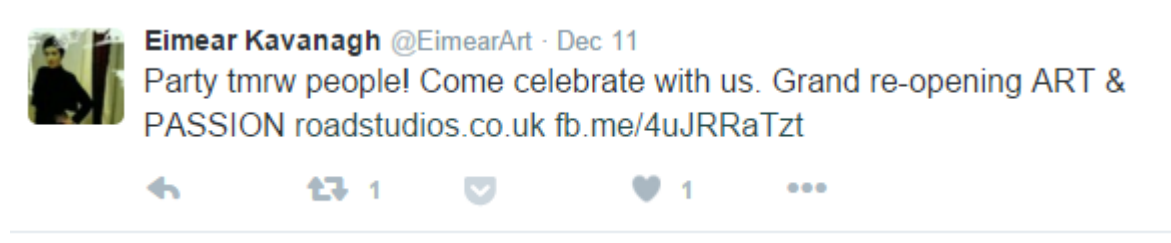
Figure 65 Eimear Exhibition Tweet

Then after the show, she retweeted positive comments:

Figure 66 Eimear retweets

Robyn, a fine artist, also retweeted mentions about her residency in Wales:
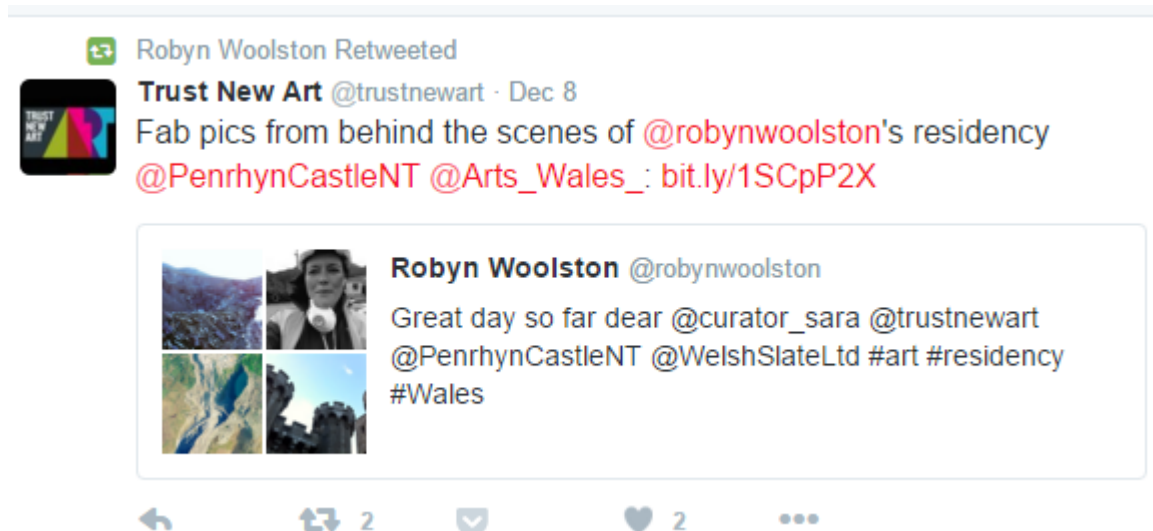
Figure 67 Robyn residency Tweet

Robyn also covered this residency extensively by herself on Twitter. These retweets focused on events and exhibitions, and by retweeting the comments and tweets of others, they are adding to coverage of the event on their own Twitter profile, an example of the 'reputation building' signalling strategy in Candace Jones' (2002) signalling expertise framework.

Another form of public endorsement sharing came in the form of 'positive reviews'. For example the below retweet by Colette, an artist in Liverpool:
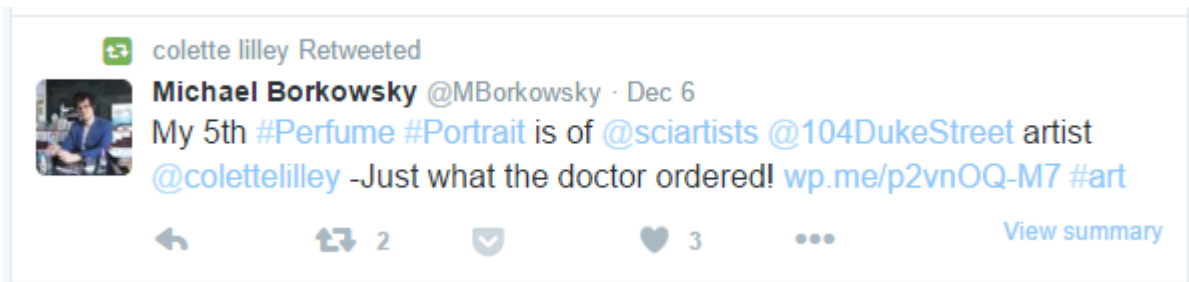
Figure 68 Colette retweet

Not only is this a public endorsement of Colette but also of the art gallery she co-founded. Tweets such as this are a form of 'positive review' which are crucial for people who use social media and other online environments to make a living (Suhr, 2015). Positive reviews were also evident in the Facebook and Instagram comments of Cherie, another artist in Liverpool:

Figure 69 Cherie Instagram picture of gallery

For Cherie, her interaction with customers helped to amplify the positive review, as the user she was speaking to replied with even more positive comments. This is part of what Jones (2002) calls an 'impression management' signalling strategy.

The most important form of public endorsement for an artist would come from a high profile individual or institution, and there were a couple of examples among the artists of this endorsement being amplified by them. Being associated with or acknowledged by higher profile individuals and companies is important for one's career, and this is illustrated by Bourdieu's idea of the *illusio.* Bourdieu talks about how powerful individuals were able to elevate and consecrate some artists over others, through a social process of consensus. That, to some extent is still the case because the more renowned an endorser is, the more power they have to elevate an artist over others on social media.

A high profile individual or institution can show endorsement simply by Tweeting about that artist and their work, and this is what I understand as a public endorsement. In the case of the artists within my sample, two in particular, Abi and Phil, displayed the endorsement of high profile companies. Abi, an artist and author, was mentioned by her publisher, which she retweeted and added a comment:
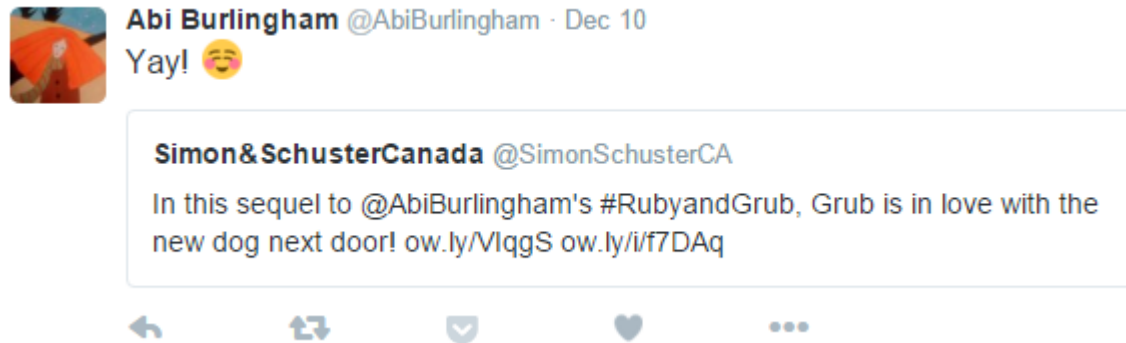
Figure 70 Abi quote of publisher

Phil, a music composer, often Tweeted about his work and where it is featured:

Figure 71 Phil's Tweets about his work

While Phil didn't retweet, he mentioned those organisations in his Tweets to associate himself with them. Using mentions in tweets about higher profile work is an example of the 'amplification' of signals as part of the 'status enhancement' element of signalling expertise. The specific functions of Twitter such as mentions and retweets allow this amplification to occur in a public way with just a click.

Not everyone within the sample associated with others in the ways described here, for example Colin, who rarely retweeted others and posted only his own work on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, sometimes with an offer to buy prints or a discount

code. Compared to the other participants, he appeared to have the highest profile, with thousands of followers across all platforms and hundreds of likes for each post. He appeared to have less of a need to share the endorsements of others.

These acts of retweeting and sharing are most common with Twitter, because the platform structure allows it. Only when posts are created by the user, such as in the case of Cherie who took her photo and put it on Instagram, can the associations occur through other means such as likes and comments. This demonstrates how the functions of the platform can be fundamental to how expertise is performed on social media.

So, while the *illusio* can help us to understand the importance of influential people and institutions in artists' performance of expertise, the analysis revealed an activity which problematises Bourdieu's conception of the competitive, individualistic art world, and this was expressed through mutual aid and collaboration within the artistic community.

'Mutual aid' and collaboration among the artistic community

'Mutual aid' is a concept applied to the cultural industries by de Peuter and Cohen (2015) to describe the development of 'bottom-up infrastructures to support independent work' (2015:306) in the context of worker resistance in the cultural industries, 'where workers, often through new labour organizations that exist outside the bounds of traditional trade unions, are lobbying for social protections and higher pay and exerting collective pressure to reclaim autonomy over their crafts and their lives' (2015:305). While their specific example doesn't relate directly to this work, the idea of mutual aid is useful to describe the displays of mutual support among the artistic community, visible on social media, in contemporary cultural work where discourses of individualism and enterprise prevail in a precarious labour market.

Mutual aid is used by de Peuter and Cohen to describe the collaboration between cultural workers to improve labour conditions. By working together, cultural workers have increased powers for collective bargaining. For this research, the idea of artists collaborating and working towards a common goal is a useful way of conceptualising the activities of the artists I observed. In my analysis, I found numerous examples of artists sharing the work of other artists, even those who appeared to be in direct competition with them. Why would they do this? The concept of mutual aid helps us understand that such collaboration brings benefits to all artists involved, and as I'll demonstrate in this section, on social media these benefits include more exposure for their work and the formation of mutually beneficial associations, which both contribute to the artists' performance of expertise.

This type of activity among artists is evident in Howard Becker's (2008) account of the art world, which describes artists as supportive and collaborative rather than competitive. Becker, importantly, also describes the role of 'everyday' of 'folk' art – done by 'ordinary people in the course of their ordinary lives, work seldom thought of by those who make or use it as art at all, even though, as often happens, others from outside the community it is produced in find artistic value in it' (2008:246). He illustrates this with the example of women quilt makers, who make them as family members and neighbours, not as artists.

These types of activities can now be monetised through social media and websites such as Etsy, where a particular 'handmade' community has formed which has

contributed to the revival of craft work (Luckman, 2015). Some of the participants I observed make and sell their work through Etsy, and it was within this group that I found many examples of retweeting and sharing other artists' work-artists they are also in competition with. Below, Abi sells her own art through Etsy and yet she regularly retweets the work of other makers, often with a positive comment:
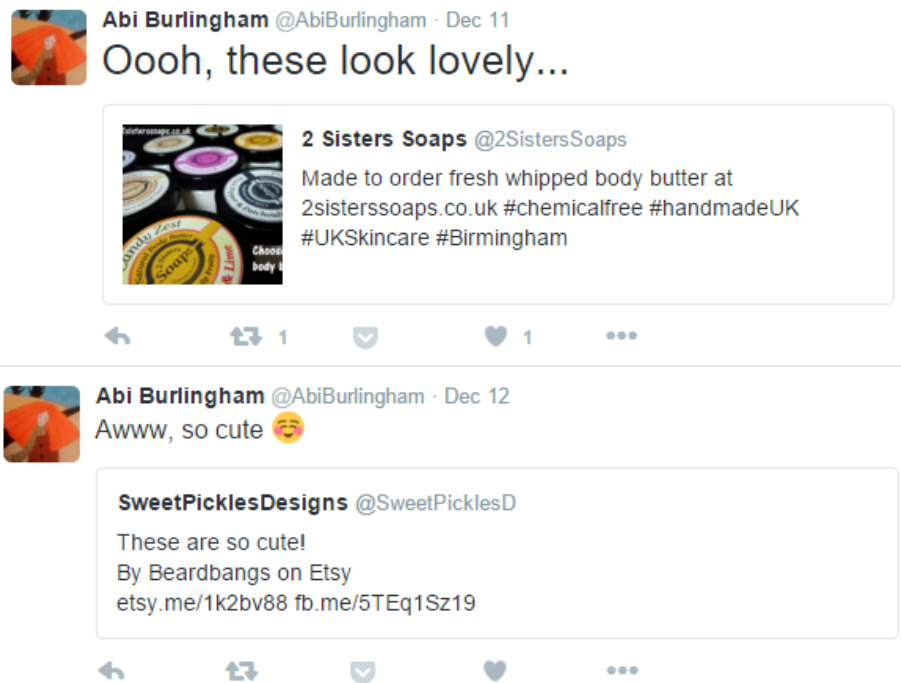

Figure 72 Abi retweets of crafts

Lisa, a writer, often praised work of other writers:

Figure 73 Lisa supportive Tweets

The second Tweet features an anthology called *A Winter's Romance*, which includes a story by Lisa. Yet, she is Tweeting about this anthology not by mentioning her own work, but the contribution of another writer in the anthology by posting a mini positive review.

Lisa and Abi appear to be retweeting the work of people who are essentially their competitors; they are helping to promote their competitors' work by sharing it on their own Twitter profile. This is an example of reciprocity, which is a common practice on social media as a form of mutually beneficial online social relation (Chia, 2012) driven by the idea that people will eventually be rewarded for their own engagement. In Abi's case, her reward for retweeting others' work is an enhancement of her own profile by telling her followers a little more about herself, through the work of others. Lisa in particular was involved in a collaboration with other writers which seemed mutually beneficial for all, because by mentioning fellow writers in the anthology, it increases the chances of them returning the favour either immediately or at another point in the future. This reciprocity is a collaborative mechanism that reinforces the artists' performance of expertise on social media, and would be more effective for reaching more people than an artist simply posting their own work, without interacting with others. While these artists are sharing the work of their competitors, the benefits of collaboration outweigh the potential threat from competition.

There were other forms of mutual aid and collaboration also in evidence on social media. Maria, a textiles artist, tweeted an open call and publicly mentioned it to two other artists who she felt may be interested; an altruistic act and an example of artists supporting each other.

Figure 74 Maria sharing opportunity retweet

These acts of endorsement and 'mutual aid' on social media potentially problematise the notions of individualistic, competitive artistic work described by Bourdieu (1996) and repeated in subsequent accounts of cultural work in neoliberal times, for example by Jen Harvie (2013), who describes the 'artpreneur', working 'privately for her own advantage, she models neoliberalism' (p.63). Such discourses of individualism, competitiveness, workaholism and blurring between personal and professional life are well documented in cultural work (see Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011) with Melissa Gregg (2014) highlighting how this is exacerbated by new technologies. Alice Marwick (2013) argued that social media applications foster an

individualistic subjectivity and encourage competition, but my findings suggest this isn't necessarily the case for these artists.

For them, social media platforms allow new opportunities for work, collaboration and mutual aid among both 'professional' and 'amateur' artists. The platform-specific features within Twitter allow these artists to instantly share each other's work, with positive comments through the 'quote' function (as Abi did) or by including other artists in posts through @ mentions. Where there is collaboration between artists, as with Lisa and the anthology, she posted and commented on the work of others within that anthology as a way of simultaneously promoting her work and that of the other writers, reinforcing the possibility of reciprocal re-posting and retweeting to further amplify and increase the potential audience for the work. This mutual aid on social media is also a part of the collaboration.

Within my sample, these acts of mutual aid and support were displayed most frequently among the female participants, and between them and fellow female artists. Susan Luckman (2015) notes the resurgence in the 'craft economy' particularly among middle class women, who choose to work from home and set up craft businesses on Etsy which fit around the demands of parental and domestic responsibilities. While Luckman usefully highlights the isolation and stress these women face, who juggle managing their businesses, their identities (particularly online) and their families, she does not pay much attention to the possibilities offered by running these online businesses, and the potentially positive social connections formed between female makers and artists which can be facilitated through social media and sites such as Etsy. Further research could examine this in more depth, by interviewing female artists in relation to how they use social media, particularly in terms of collaboration and mutual aid.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to find out how expertise is performed on social media by artists, and what this means for collaboration in cultural work. I tested out ideas of Pierre Bourdieu's *illusio,* a concept which suggests that in the art world, positive consensus about an artists' expertise is crucial for that artist to be consecrated, or elevated, among others. I aimed to work through this concept on social media interactions and posts by artists, as part of their performance of expertise, because the idea of the *illusio* is a competitive, individualistic conception of the art world, compared to more collaborative accounts such as Howard Becker's *Art Worlds*.

Through my analysis, I found evidence of both competition and collaboration in artists' performance of expertise on social media. The *illusio* highlights the role of powerful people and organisations in elevating artists to prominence. If artists are associated with well-known people or companies on social media, that potentially increases their exposure, elevates their status and significantly enhances their performance of expertise. Also important for these artists are positive reviews from customers, clients and peers, which are regularly retweeted and shared. This builds on work about online evaluation (Reagle, 2015; Gandini, 2015) and I suggest this is a more specific type of evaluation, because on sites such as Twitter and Facebook such positive or negative reviews can be carefully curated by the artist, who can choose whether or not to share it to their own profile.

I conceptualised evidence of collaboration using the idea of mutual aid (de Peuter and Cohen, 2015). On social media, this was apparent through artists' retweeting and sharing of each other's work on social media, even though they are potential competitors for work. This appears to be a more congenial, altruistic display, what Howard Becker described in *Art Worlds* – where collaboration is essential for artists to create and sell their work. Mutual aid is a useful concept to describe cultural workers helping each other in this way. What also needs to be considered on social media are some of the particular norms of social relation, such as reciprocity, where users participate with some expectation of receiving some form of return or reward for their engagement.

An effective performance of expertise is what enables artists to gain work and make a living, and social media platforms are a relatively free and potentially wide-reaching way to do this. From my analysis, I argue that the artists using social media for the performance of expertise negotiate between promoting their own work, and forming potentially beneficial online associations with other artists in their area. While associating with high-profile companies and people is important for artists' performance of expertise, collaboration is equally crucial too, because the associations formed with other artists can lead to increased exposure of each other's work on social media through reciprocal sharing and mutual aid. I also found evidence of mutually beneficial collaborative production in the anthology Lisa was involved in. This collaboration enabled Lisa to promote her anthology by posting and commenting on the contributions of others.

The evidence of collaboration and mutual aid in my analysis also offers a departure from more individualistic conceptions of social media activity, particularly self-branding (Hearn, 2008; Page, 2012; Marwick, 2013) and self-promotion (Scharff, 2015). Such ideas imply an inward-looking and self-centred approach to social media performance, and while of course the artists in my sample are performing expertise for their own benefit, they are often raising the profile of other artists at the same time.

A final consideration is the role of social media *platforms* in these practices of performing expertise. It is important to remember that social media platforms have particular temporal and structural qualities which affect the way people use them, and how information is received from them. Ultimately, these platforms are designed to harvest people's information to make money (Andrejevic, 2011; Arvidsson and Colleoni, 2012). Skeggs and Yuill (2015) argue that platforms and the algorithms which run them are ideological; they are structured in certain ways and can be changed by developers at any time to continue to serve the interests of owners and corporations.

These corporations and their platforms shape the way that expertise is performed on social media, and the way it is received by users. Artists in my study negotiate this as part of their work, and I argue that platforms are crucial to consider in contemporary accounts of cultural work. Artists need to get their work noticed in order to sell their work, get commissions and make a living. Social media is a relatively cheap way for artists to perform their expertise and get their work noticed, and platforms for some of them are central to this. Sometimes, this is done through collaborations, and these collaborations can be facilitated through the internet and particularly social media, a relatively cheap way to network and connect with fellow artists all around the world and participate in collaborative projects often from the comfort of their own home. Corporation-owned platforms, then, are central to this,

and the algorithms and platform structures mediate collaborations and performances of expertise, ultimately, to benefit the corporations. User data is sold to marketing companies, platforms are designed to hold advertisements, and the users themselves need to agree to terms and conditions in order to continue benefitting from the 'free' platforms. How do artists negotiate these trade-offs? The corporations ultimately benefit, but most of the artists in my sample also benefit from platforms, so does that make it okay? Any future research which involves social media should be more critical of platforms and platform owners.

While this chapter provides some important insights into contemporary cultural work, collaboration, expertise and social media methods, further work can be done to explore the experiences of female artists in relation to collaboration and performance of expertise, and how expertise is performed on social media by people working in other competitive sectors, drawing from the methods utilised in this chapter.

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Appendix 7: Publication Ashton and Patel (2017) - Vlogging Careers: Everyday Expertise, Collaboration and Authenticity (pre-published version)

Daniel Ashton and Karen Patel

Introduction

The rise in 'entrepreneurial vlogging' has attracted widespread attention in the global media, with articles emerging about the superstar vloggers who are earning a lot of money for pursuing their professed passions. The phenomenon of vlogging is positioned as something that 'anyone' can do, with YouTube appearing to offer the opportunity to combine freedom of creative expression with the possibility of making a living. The idea that anyone can vlog and make a career out of it is pervasive, yet only a few manage to do so.

For those who are successful, there follows hostility from some critics (Bish, 2014) and stories of failure. Some of the most popular vloggers attract a great deal of criticism for attention-seeking when seemingly doing little more than sitting in front of the camera and talking. Critique that focuses on the celebrity however, tends to obscure the additional labour that is involved alongside the creation of video content. The effort in designing, creating, and sharing that goes into these videos is little acknowledged. These complementary activities and the specialist subject knowledge that is often in evidence highlight the expertise required by vloggers. To examine vlogging's status as part of the 'new normal' of cultural work, we show how signalling expertise is a key aspect of vloggers' online self-presentation as they build their cultural work career.

This chapter is organised into two main parts. In part one, we reference a range of media sources to examine the increasing public visibility of vlogging as a cultural work career. Of particular note is the curiosity around vlogging as a commercially viable undertaking and the how-to guidance materials that have emerged to steer would-be YouTube entrepreneurs onto a successful path. The notion of career paths is particularly relevant to our discussion of the 'new normal' and the ways in which vlogging can be understood both as a stepping stone towards established careers in media, journalism, fashion and so on, and as a distinctive occupation in its own right. In bringing together a mixture of 'how-to' materials and more general journalistic coverage, we consider how 'starting up' and 'sustaining' oneself as a vlogger are explored. Having considered some of the broader stories of the successes and failures of vlogging and questions of career-building, part two examines the importance of expertise for vlogging careers.

In part two, we specifically focus on how expertise is signalled by four prominent vloggers from around the world: UK, Ireland and Korea. The vloggers were involved in gaming, fashion, make-up and comedy. These areas were chosen because they require a degree of knowledge and skill on behalf of the vlogger, and we wanted to analyse how such forms of expertise were presented. We analysed the social media presence of each vlogger to address how signalling-expertise strategies may be

tailored to suit multiple platforms and multiple audiences. Our discussion for this chapter focuses on two themes from our analysis. The first is the ways in which associations with other vloggers formed an important part of how they signalled their expertise and helped to attract more fans. The second is the ways in which expertise is signalled in the staging of authentic vlogging identities and locations. Beyond the more obvious work involved in creating and uploading a video, our analysis highlights the extensive range of other activities and undertakings that help to signal expertise as vloggers negotiate their 'career'.

Part One: Constructing Careers?

In examining media coverage of entrepreneurship, Taylor (2015) notes the wide range of representations and suggests that journalistic reporting and editing is one of the ways in which understandings of entrepreneurship are constructed. Likewise, we are interested in the ways in which vlogging as a potential career is afforded visibility through how-to guides and journalistic accounts of vloggers. When it comes to career opportunities and pathways, how-to guides proliferate in various forms and styles. As Ashton and Conor (2016) have explored, how-to guides provide resources through which sources of information, often industry 'professionals' and 'experts', establish themselves as authorities in guiding aspirants in the ways of a particular role or sector. This chapter builds on previous cultural work research looking at screenwriting (Conor, 2014) and film and television production (Ashton, 2014) to explore how-to guidance for aspiring YouTubers. In relation to the new normal, exploring public accounts of vlogging can help to investigate the ways in which vlogging is woven into established career occupations and careers, and the ways in which it is positioned as a 'job' in its own right.

How to Understand Vlogging as a Career

Creative Skillset (n.d.), a UK organisation that works with industry to 'develop skills and talent, from classroom to boardroom', created an entry for vlogging in its job role directory that gives the 'lowdown' for the role:

> Communicating an idea, thought or story to a wide online audience
>
> Regularly posting content for new and existing subscribers and followers
>
> Generating revenue either by working for a company, utilising advert space or by product placement

The creation of a job role for vlogging shows the growth in significance and visibility of vlogging. The job role overview also provides guidance on how vlogging can be both a stepping-stone career and a standalone career. In relation to the former, the Creative Skillset job role overview notes how many vloggers 'expand elsewhere', including into social media positions, based on the associated skills, and TV and radio presenting, based on personality and performance (see also Singh Chawla's 2014 conversation with vlogger Alfie Deyes).

Referring to vlogging as a career in its own right, Creative Skillset (n.d.) note how vloggers operating as freelancers can make careers through a number of activities, including establishing relationships with brands and advertising. The growth in freelance cultural work careers has been well documented across academic scholarship (Hesmondhalgh &Baker, 2011), policy reviews (Oakley, 2009), and industry reports (Tambling, 2015). Of specific relevance for vlogging is recent research that has focused on the emergence of entrepreneurship in relation to digital

media platforms, such as Burgess and Green's (2009) research on YouTube and Luckman's (2015) research on Etsy, the online design craft marketplace. Vlogging has been associated primarily with celebratory discourses around freedom, following a passion as a dream job, and being your own boss (Solon, 2016). In turn, issues around maintaining a secure and sustainable income that have been examined in relation to freelance cultural work more widely (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Oakley, 2009) also feature in some discussions of vlogging (Dunn, 2015). With some vloggers however, it is more appropriate to see an overlap between freelance vlogging and vloggers working in more established media occupations. Rather than offering a linear path from one into the other, these activities can mutually reinforce each other. This overall approach also helps for better identifying and understanding the entrepreneurial ethos and activities that existing studies of YouTube have examined (Burgess & Green, 2009).

The entrepreneurial ethos is explicitly addressed in the Creative Skillset 'lowdown' when it brings together the communication and posting of ideas with generating revenue. The YouTube Creator Academy (n.d.), a place to 'learn tips from savvy creators as they showcase their secrets and best practices', also brings together courses and videos on production practices and content creation with advice on growing an audience and making money. Alongside the official YouTube offering that includes courses, lessons, and quizzes, there are similarly themed videos from YouTubers. Another useful way to identify major areas of interest and entrepreneurial guidance for career vlogging comes with *YouTube channels for dummies* (Ciampa & Moore, 2015), part of the well-known series of instructional books. This book is structured around the following themes: getting started; making videos, growing audiences, and serious business. These themes are also picked up in a further source of guidance we reviewed—the Vlog Nation website. Specifically, this website uses the menu headings: 'Starting a vlog'; 'How to vlog'; 'Get more views'; and 'Earn money'. These guidance themes provide instructive ways to organise a closer analysis of how vlogging is understood and constructed as a cultural work career.

Starting up as a Vlogger

Unsurprisingly, on YouTube itself there are many videos on vlogging and how to start and develop a channel. Honor's *How to make your first YouTube video* is one of many similarly titled and themed videos (at the time of writing in November 2016, a search within YouTube for 'how to vlog' returns 42,300,000 results). In this video there is the often stated and widely circulated view that personal interests and passion are essential: 'When you make a YouTube channel it shouldn't be about how many subscribers you can get or how popular you can get. It's about doing something you love because you love it.' This approach resonates with that set out within the YouTube (n.d.) Creator Academy videos, which emphasise passion and building relationships with audiences before any consideration of monetisation. With vlogging, the passionate investment and love of creating and sharing content on a particular topic is often held to be the starting point above and beyond making money (Postigo, 2016). The 'do what you love' mantra is in clear evidence in the advice to those setting up as YouTube vloggers. As Tokumitsu (cited in Lam, 2015) notes as part of the critique associated with her book, *Do what you love and other lies about success and happiness*, there is a 'pantheon of super successful blissful workers who are held up as these cultural ideals, and there is this kind of lifestyle peddling that goes along with it, the imagery of which is saturating our visual

landscape more than ever.' To this visual landscape we could add the stories of the vloggers who 'own the world of YouTube' (Samuelson, 2014) are 'changing the face of youth culture' (Singh Chawla, 2014), and are vlogging their way 'to a million pounds' (Solon, 2016). The lifestyles associated with prominent vloggers do not fit a particular formula and there can be significant differences across, for example, fashion and videogaming. Nevertheless, passion remains a recurring theme in how-to guidance materials.

A common approach with how-to materials is to help encourage and facilitate by stressing accessibility and providing suggestions that would lower barriers to participation. As our analysis in part two reveals, however, there are significant further levels of expertise in operation as vlogging is pursued as a career. Whilst it is important to show passion, as suggested in how-to materials, the expertise to construct a public performance and profile is a different matter.

A further aspect of guidance concerns the set-up costs and the resource implications of vlogging. The most celebratory accounts of YouTube and participatory cultures emphasise democratisation and the equal availability of opportunities for creating content. Vlogging connects with wider accounts of participation and creativity, in which the tools and technologies are readily available for many to pursue their own creative and political agendas (Shirky, 2008) However, as Burgess (2012) notes in examining the YouTube Creator Hub, the larger host for the YouTube Creator Academy, the range of tips and suggestions are orientated towards professionalising content. Burgess (2012, p. 55) goes on to suggest that 'this initiative can be seen as an attempt on behalf of YouTube to reduce the ratio of non-monetisable to monetisable amateur content.'

Similarly, other commentators, such as Jenkins and Carpentier (2013), have addressed tensions around participatory promises and potentials. Whilst the sentiment that vlogging is available to all was clearly evident, the analysis we undertook also connected with these cautionary accounts of challenges to access and participation. For example, Dennis (2015) provides a list of required equipment, noting that 'DSLR cameras and lenses can cost upwards of $800, and then you need lighting equipment, tripods, and microphones', and summarising by reflecting, 'it takes quite a lot of dedication for these vloggers to do what they do.' Having reviewed their start-up costs, Lennard (2015) adds that, 'unlike most jobs, working on YouTube is something you have to pay to do for a long time before anybody will pay you back.' Again, there are some strong parallels with extant research examining cultural work, in which essential risks and choices in cultivating employment opportunities operate at the individual level (Gill, 2010). The examination of expertise in part two critically addresses the requirements and pressures of vlogging. The comments on set-up costs also lead to a similar set of concerns around the viability of maintaining a sustainable YouTube channel.

Sustaining Vlogging Practices

The how-to materials we reviewed focused mainly on the low-level requirements for getting going as a vlogger. There is, however, a range of further considerations in growing and sustaining a vlogging profile. The how-to materials produced by YouTube and *Vlog Nation* emphasis that a vlogger's growth is associated with building audiences and the consistent creation of new materials. For videogame commentator Destructnatr (2015), sustainability and growth are the major considerations driving his decision to post an eye-catching video to save viewers

from making a mistake of setting up a YouTube channel. With a provocatively titled twist on the how-to genre, *Why you shouldn't start a YouTube channel*, Destructnatr laments the saturation of the field and the near impossible task of standing out in a way that can generate significant subscriptions. As highlighted by Marwick's (2016) discussion of YouTuber creator Amanda Sings, there are different strategies and scales for connecting with audiences and the kinds of how-to materials we reviewed might be an irrelevance for some (successful) vloggers. Nevertheless, by highlighting oversupply, Destructnatr's approach marks an interesting contrast to that of Honor (2014) and others, who suggest that passion and personally purposeful content will be enough. Destructnatr attributes his success to timely membership of a specific videogaming clan, and makes the claim that, from 2015, YouTube has reached a scale where the challenges for starting a new channel and generating significant subscriptions, presumably in relation to videogaming, are too great. Destructnatr also signals the effort required in creating videos.

These comments are echoed by those from other commentators,which highlight the relentless production schedule and constant pressure on creating content. In reflecting on her channel, *Just between us*, Dunn (2015) outlines the commitments involved: 'when we're not producing and starring in a comedy sketch and advice show, we're writing the episodes, dealing with business contracts and deals, and running our company Gallison, LLC.' Similar accounts come in Harvey's (2013) interview with vloggers, in which Anna Gardner (*Vivianna does makeup*) recounts a 7 a.m. – 6 p.m. working day. Harvey outlines how vlogger Lily Pebble 'spends her days tweeting, recording vlogs, writing blogs, researching beauty products, chatting with followers and negotiating contracts.' From these accounts we can see that the viability of a successful YouTube channel is closely connected with understanding and expertise that extends well beyond making the video. As our later analysis through the signalling-expertise framework shows, the cultivation and maintenance of a social media profile is intricately enmeshed with creating content on YouTube.

For other commentators, the issue of survival and sustainability loom much larger than questions of 'where next?'. Whilst it is the high-profile vloggers that might attract attention, an important part of understanding vlogging, and cultural work more generally, is to ask questions of feasibility and sustainability. This is something Heritage (2017) takes aim at in his satirical career guide, noting the salary for starters as 'nothing', the salary for experienced as 'almost nothing', and for highly experienced as 'hundreds of thousands of pounds a month'. For this final salary range, Heritage adds: 'note: you will never reach this stage.' For Dunn (2015), this issue of income and sustainability is most pressing for 'moderately successful YouTubers' and 'mid-level web personalities', where 'the disconnect between internet fame and financial security is hard to comprehend for both creators and fans.' Specifically, Dunn identifies a tension in which 'many famous social media stars are too visible to have "real" jobs, but too broke not to.' Again, there are strong parallels with extant research on cultural work and multiple job-holding (Throsby & Zednik, 2011; Ashton, 2015). Earlier, we argued that vloggers' entrepreneurial approach is evident in how vloggers can overlap YouTube vlogging with TV presenting and more established media roles (Singh Chawla, 2014). To this we should add that vlogging portfolio working and multiple-job-holding extend into *other* forms of employment, such as retail and service industry work (see Dunn, 2015, for example). Alongside the coverage that focuses on the novelty of 'bedroom millionaires' and (micro)celebrity heroes for teenagers, there is pointed discussion of bloggers' working routines, conditions, and challenges (see Duffy & Hund, 2015;

Graefer, 2016). The 'always on' nature of vlogging, the raft of skills demands, and the need to develop expertise in a range of areas also highlight the strong parallels with ways of working common to established forms of cultural work.

The how-to guidance and journalistic coverage position vlogging as a viable career that anyone can do, provided they have passion for their subject and are able to put that across on camera. Such coverage suggests low barriers to entry and the potential for widening participation in cultural production, yet it obscures the need for expensive equipment, the time required to invest in creating and promoting videos, and thus the various forms of expertise required beyond talking in front of the camera. This can include using social media for promotion and self-branding, and the technical skills to operate camera equipment and editing software. In our consideration of vlogging as part of a 'new normal' of cultural work, these practices require further critical attention.

Part two: Expertise, Self-branding and Micro-celebrity

In their exploration of cultural production and participation in digital environments, Cruz and Thornham (2015, p. 315) argue that discourses around expertise and the digital 'seem to conflate ideas of participation with literacy, content with engagement, novelty with innovation and ubiquity with meaning'. The authors take issue with discourses of participation in the social media age as equating to expertise—in other words, anyone who is able to participate in cultural production online can be perceived as an expert. The signalling-expertise analysis we use in this research demonstrates how vlogging requires much more than the passion and knowledge of the subject that is suggested in the how-to guidance. The expertise involved goes far beyond mere participation. Additional and varied skills are required in creating the content, tailoring it for promotion on social media, and using social media to foster relationships with audiences and potential collaborators. These practices are crucial for building an online following and gaining visibility as a vlogger.

What is expertise? It is a term often used and yet taken for granted in accounts of cultural work (Patel, 2017), and defining expertise itself is an area of contention. However, we will approach it by drawing out commonalities across definitions. One common feature is the possession of knowledge and/or skill in a specialist area (see Prince, 2010; Schudson, 2006), and the second is recognition and endorsement of that knowledge or skill from others of a higher status within the same sector or industry (Cruz & Thornham, 2015; Prince, 2010; Turner, 2001). Bassett, Fotopoulou and Howland (2015, p. 28) provide a useful definition that acknowledges both knowledge and skill, and social context. They suggest that:

> building expertise in a particular area demands particular kinds of cognitive activity and work. However, this process is also always contextualised within social contexts, which not only tend to define what constitutes the cut-off level ... but that also temper or condition how expertise is acquired.

This definition informs our own understanding of expertise as the possession of specialised knowledge and skill that is recognised by others as legitimate, and mobilised, accumulated and signalled within a particular social context (Patel, 2016).

The relationship between expertise and cultural careers is explored by Candace Jones (2002), who proposes that the project-based nature of work in the cultural industries means that signalling expertise is important because projects need to be matched to the right people. The process of signalling by the cultural worker conveys

information to others about their competencies, skills, relevant relationships, individual context, and prior projects. Jones devised a signalling-expertise framework to characterise expertise signals, and we use an adapted version of this framework (Patel, 2017) as a methodological tool. According to Jones (2002, p. 223), the final product is the most important form of expertise signal, and 'the market niche in which one gains experience then showcases specific skill sets and shapes one's opportunity structure. Thus, initial experiences constrict or open up opportunities for work in different niches.'

The signalling-expertise framework can provide a nuanced analysis of social media performance which considers not only how expertise is signalled but cross-platform strategies, and the individual context behind online signals. Social media platforms are central to the work of the vloggers in this research, not only for distributing their work but for self-presentation and interacting with others, particularly fellow vloggers and fans. The popularity of social media has led to a growing body of research into self-presentation and much of this centres on ideas of self-branding and micro-celebrity (see Duffy & Hund, 2015; Gandini, 2015; Hearn, 2008; Jerslev, 2016; Khamis, Ang & Welling, 2016; Marwick, 2013; Senft, 2008). The two ideas are interlinked; self-branding is 'the strategic creation of identity to be promoted and sold to others' (Marwick, 2013, p. 166) and micro-celebrity is associated with 'the presentation of oneself as a celebrity regardless of who is paying attention' (Marwick, 2013, p. 114).

Micro-celebrity is not only about promoting one's own image, it also involves what Jerslev (2016, p. 5238) describes as 'permanent updating', where social media celebrities, particularly vloggers, are expected to continuously upload 'performances of a private self; it is about access, immediacy and instantaneity.' As well as posting and updating, there is also an expectation that the micro-celebrity will interact with followers. In reflecting on the cultivation of micro-celebrity, Senft (2013, p. 349) suggests that the curating and circulating of pictures, videos, and status updates 'in a professional venue would be a concerted audience-segmentation strategy.' As we show through the following analysis, vloggers' interactions with audiences operate in a natural and everyday conversational manner whilst forming part of a carefully considered communication strategy. Nancy Baym (2015, p. 16) examines relationships with audiences in terms of relational labour: 'regular, ongoing communication with audiences over time to build social relationships that foster paid work' and argues that this relational labour is an important part of cultural work. As well as creating their videos, vloggers must also maintain the rest of their social media presence, taking into account different platform strategies (Van Dijck, 2013; Marwick, 2015) and their 'imagined audience' (Marwick & Boyd, 2011), which may differ across platforms. The adapted version of the signalling-expertise framework we use can help us understand these cross-platform strategies and how they relate to vloggers' expertise signals online. The framework consists of three elements: institutional context (the context of the user, the user's background, and career trajectory); signalling content (the style of social media text and images, exhibiting the requisite skills and career-relevant connections on social media) and signalling strategies (using affordances such as retweets to enhance status, type of relationships pursued on social media, and strategic approaches to impression management on social media).

The framework was used to analyse samples of social media posts by four prominent vloggers: UK-based fashion commentator Tanya Burr, UK-based

comedian Danisnotonfire, Korean-based beauty reviewer Lia Yoo, and Ireland-based game reviewer Jacksepticeye. Each element of the signalling-expertise framework was considered for the post sampled, which included one of their YouTube videos and samples from one or two of the social media accounts that they used most frequently (most often Twitter). The common themes emerging from both the exploration of materials about vlogging and the signalling-expertise analysis of vloggers' social media posts reveal a set of tensions at the heart of this new normal of cultural work. In the following sections, we focus on the ways in which associations with other vloggers formed an important part of how vloggers signalled their expertise by facilitating greater recognition, and the ways in which expertise is signalled in the staging of authentic vlogging identities and locations.

Collaborations, Associations and Networks

From our analysis of four vloggers, the relational aspects of signalling-expertise were prominent. In an area dominated by micro-celebrity and individualistic 'attention-seeking', we found that associations and networks can form an important part of how vloggers signal expertise. One way that this appeared was that all of the vloggers teamed up with other vloggers in some way for their videos. For example, Tanya Burr, a fashion commentator, created a video with arguably the UK's most famous vlogger, Zoella, generating a positive reaction from fans of both, as demonstrated in this retweet by Tanya:

> Tanya Burr Retweeted
>
> Maddy 22 Aug 2016
>
> @TanyaBurr @Zoella Tanya and Zoe's videos together always make me so happy. Please do more soon. #TanElla

The partnership even has its own hashtag, '#TanElla', adopted by fans. At the time of writing Tanya has around 3.5 million YouTube subscribers. Zoella has over 11 million subscribers of her channel and is in comparison, hugely successful. By creating a video with Zoella and promoting it on Twitter, Tanya can try and attract more views and potential subscribers from existing fans of Zoella, and vice versa. The two vloggers comment on similar topics and are seemingly in competition with each other, but instead they collaborate so they can benefit from each other's following through a joint performance of expertise in the areas of fashion and beauty.

Some scholars argue that social media platforms are structured to encourage self-promotion and micro-celebrity practices that focus on the individual (Marwick, 2013; Williamson, 2016). While we do not disagree with this, our research indicated that the platforms can also facilitate or present examples of collaboration for the benefit of all parties involved. Grünewald, Haupt, and Bernardo (2014) argue that YouTube is the site for a 'post-industrial media economy' that 'involves cooperation of YouTubers, cultural references between YouTubers, parodies and other types of cultural intertextuality that they call "cross-promotion".' This, they argue, is backed up by social bonds, friendships, and networks that are crucial for the careers of vloggers. This was in evidence among all of vloggers in our research. For example, comedy vlogger Danisnotonfire often creates videos with his collaborator, Phil, who he also tours with. Beauty reviewer Lia Yoo also features other vloggers in her videos, and Jacksepticeye appears to have remix videos made for him by a fan/friend.

Interaction with fans and audiences was also evident from the signalling-expertise analysis. Sometimes vloggers would reply to comments directly on Instagram, as Lia Yoo often did. Most replied to Tweets from fans, too, either directly or by quoting the Tweet first and replying, as in this Tweet by Tanya Burr:

> Tanya Burr @TanyaBurr 22 Aug 2016
>
> Yay! Tweet me photos of what you bake - I'd love to see! #TanyaBakes
>
>> Leah
>>
>> Went out and brought @TanyaBurr's #TanyaBakes today so excited to see what things I can make this week!

Tanya is cultivating her relationship with her fans by showing that she reads their Tweets and takes the time to reply to them, and the practice of quoting the Tweet rather than replying directly means it appears on Tanya's own Twitter profile and not in the 'replies' column, which is separate. In the particular example above, Tanya is also encouraging further interaction from her fans by asking them to Tweet photos of what they bake from her book. This direct engagement with fans contributes to a sense of authenticity, in that Tanya appears approachable and willing to interact with her audience. Marwick (2015) argues that audience interaction is key for micro-celebrities, as a means for them to position themselves as 'authentic' in opposition to mainstream celebrities or, in the case of fashion vloggers, luxury brands. Behind these interactions is a great deal of relational labour (Baym, 2015), where the cultivation of relationships and audience interaction online are key to the vloggers' success. As Baym (2015, p. 16) states, 'the shift to media that enable continuous interaction, higher expectations of engagement, and greater importance of such connections in shaping economic fortunes calls for new skills and expertise in fostering connections and managing boundaries.' Our signalling-expertise analysis shows that expertise in fostering connections extends to audiences and to other vloggers.

Deuze and Lewis (2013, p. 169) argue that 'as individuals in the workforce increasingly either choose to or are forced to build their own support structures, they must do so within the context of a peer group and some kind of organization.' Though vlogs may appear to be the work of individuals, many of the more prominent vloggers rely on collaborations and networks in order to sustain their success. As Mayer and Horner (2016, p. 246) suggest, 'the act of making/crafting a product ... catalyzes connections and helps to build affinity groups.' For vloggers, these networks include their audiences, who must be replied to, acknowledged and publicly appreciated. Our analysis demonstrates how important relationships and collaborations are for vloggers signalling their expertise. These relationships and collaborations also contribute to a sense of authenticity that vloggers establish with audiences. Reflecting on a survey conducted for *Variety* magazine, celebrity brand strategist Jeetendr Sehdev addresses how 'teens enjoy an intimate and authentic experience with YouTube celebrities' and refers to 'unvarnished individualism' (see Ault, 2014). Part of this is the 'real world' relationships that vloggers show off with fellow vloggers. As the following section addresses, these relationships and collaborations form part of the context by which vloggers signal their expertise. An equally important aspect is the presentation of authenticity in a strategy for signalling expertise that allows vloggers to appear accessible to their audiences.

Staging Authenticity

In her reflections on vlogging, Dunn (2015) addresses 'the huge amount of emotional labor inherent in being an online personality'. Part of this involves the strategic deployment of authenticity. Dunn goes on to add: 'Authenticity is valued, but in small doses: YouTubers are allowed to have struggled in the past tense, because overcoming makes us brave and relatable. But we can't be struggling now or we're labelled "whiners".' The success of vloggers in establishing rapport with followers and building a subscription base can be in large measure attributed to authenticity (Ault, 2014).

The authenticity of bedroom spaces (which are the common setting for vlogs) as the locus for everyday forms of sociality and intimacy with audiences is nuanced and sometimes contradicted by the presence of camera equipment. As the analysis of how-to materials and media coverage alluded to and our signalling-expertise analysis shows more explicitly, vloggers often employ sophisticated production equipment to create their videos. For example, videogame commentator Jacksepticeye appears to use large headphones and microphone to record his commentary. Danisnotonfire's videos are situated in his bedroom, yet there is sophistication in the editing of the video and in particular the re-staging of the events and incidents that happen to him (which is important for the comic element of his videos).

These findings resonate with Burgess and Green's (2009, p. 24) suggestion that 'productive play, media consumption, and cultural performance have always been part of the repertoire of these semi-private spaces of cultural participation.' With vloggers, the bedroom is not just a low cost, convenient site for making videos. It is a specific space for cultural production and performance. The importance of the visibility of the home is a key element in Susan Luckman's (2015) research on women's micro-entrepreneurial homeworking. Focusing on Etsy, Luckman examines how the home both operates as workplace and features in the online public presence of craft producers. Luckman (2015, p. 148) argues that 'the public performance of the craft producer's personal identity as part and parcel of the consumer value of their products … has become an essential part of the home-based maker's online marketing identity.' Our signalling-expertise analysis highlights that the bedroom/home operates for many vloggers as a domestic on-screen set and as a place of work.

There can, however, be significant tensions between the staged authenticity that is presented on camera and on social media, compared to everyday working realities. As the account from Dunn reveals, authenticity is welcomed in relation to ordinary lives, but a detailed account of the production contexts and a fuller picture of working and vlogging lives is not entertained. Dunn addresses this as follows: 'a picture of me out to brunch in Los Feliz will get more likes than a video of me searching for quarters in my car.' Here, Dunn reflects on her expertise in choosing what to communicate and share to her audience. Similarly, through her analysis of UK YouTuber Zoella, Jerslev (2016) suggests that playing down expertise in their subject area is another way for vloggers to perform authenticity. She identifies that in her vlogs, Zoella gives off a sense of spontaneity by appearing to forget brand names and stumbling over her words. Jerslev identifies this as a way for Zoella to attach authenticity to situations where brand names are usually repeated. Though she is playing down her expertise in brand names, Zoella demonstrates an awareness of her audience and what they will relate to. Such a strategy is also

exercised by Tanya Burr in our analysis, who avoids mentioning brand names herself, but instead acknowledges them in the YouTube video description.

The presentation of authenticity is an expertise signalling strategy designed to appeal to audiences and thus increase online exposure, as highlighted by Dunn (2015) and Jerslev (2016). The expertise is in the strategy — vloggers must consciously choose, edit, and then create their content with their audience in mind. Milly Williamson (2016, p. 153) argues that the 'technology of freedom' offered by social media and the internet is in fact a 'technology of self-promotion and celebrity', where celebrity culture has contributed to the construction of hierarchy in the cultural industries. Creating content and managing social media channels takes time and effort for vloggers, and as Williamson argues, although social media platforms are positioned as offering everyone the chance to express themselves and connect with others, the promise and the reality are deeply contradictory. The signalling-expertise analysis reveals that the vloggers in our research are currently relatively successful at what they do. However, what they do not talk about are the struggles they have gone through. One vlogger who did is Zoella, who posted a video of her breaking down in tears, explaining how her rise to fame and the pressures of what she does has become too much for her (Jerslev, 2016). Zoella's status as the UK's most famous vlogger means that while she opens herself up to further scrutiny through her admission of vulnerability, she is also performing authenticity and gaining sympathy and support from her audience; something which appears to be spontaneous can be understood as part of a signalling strategy. The examples we have presented in this chapter show how for vloggers, signalling expertise is much more than the communication of knowledge or deployment of skill; it requires an ability to engage others (the audience) by staging a relatable authenticity. Sometimes, that authenticity is based in the very real struggles vloggers face.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined vlogging as a form of new normal in cultural work, using the analytical lens of expertise. For vloggers, the demands can be constant. The process of creating their videos, maintaining social media profiles, and multiple job-holding are aspects of vlogging production that are obscured by the how-to guidance, which often positions vlogging as a viable career with low barriers to entry, with passion the main requirement for participation. Such guides promote an entrepreneurial ethos and whilst they allude to the diversity of skills and level of time and economic investment required, the full extent and challenges of expertise are only touched upon.

Our analysis reveals the multiple processes that occur around a seemingly 'polished' final video, particularly vloggers' strategies to engage their audience by interacting with fans and collaborators, and the skills required to stage a relatable authenticity. We argue that vloggers possess a certain amount of expertise in their area, which is crucial to their success. Focusing only on the videos and performance, as Bish (2014) does in lamenting vloggers' poor training in the art form of entertainment, overlooks the extensive and diverse skills and demands associated with vlogging and which are glossed over in associated career guidance.

In addition, there remain concerns around access to the right equipment and having the money and connections to 'make it' as a vlogger, which for most will not become a reality. The critical perspectives of vloggers such as Dunn (2015) and Lennard (2015) open up revealing comparisons with debates on cultural work more widely, as

Lennard (2015) suggests in commenting that 'no-one should be fooled by the idea that YouTube is somehow different to the more traditional media industries.' Highlighting cultural work continuities invites a line of comparison around wider production cultures and industry contexts. For example, a number of the vloggers in our study were managed by agencies. Connecting with existing research on what Burgess (2012) describes as 'new commercial cultural intermediaries' (see also Lobato, 2016), future research could explore the role such agents have in vloggers' online performances, in particular the reinforcement of conventional vlogging tropes such as the narrative conventions in videos and the common setting of the home or bedroom.

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Appendix 8: Publication Naudin and Patel (forthcoming) - Entangled expertise: Women's use of social media in entrepreneurial work (pre-published version)

Abstract

Social media platforms are important to self-employed cultural workers as a means of reaching markets and promoting the entrepreneur's brand identity. But beyond self-branding, how are notions of expertise negotiated by individual cultural entrepreneurs and how does this relate to gender? This article addresses issues of identity and professionalism for women cultural entrepreneurs by focusing on their use of Twitter. Given the well documented gender and ethnic inequalities in cultural industry work, what does women's use of Twitter tell us about the nature of women's professional identities within neoliberal economies? We argue that online platforms are an important space for self-employed cultural workers and that within this context, ideas of femininity and entrepreneurship are entangled. The article concludes by discussing the value of examining social media spaces as a means of exploring the presentation of women's expertise in a postfeminist era.

Introduction

Contemporary biographies of professional women present a feminist discourse focused on a celebration of empowerment and individual agency. As McRobbie (2004, 2015) states, this neoliberal version of feminism is individualistic rather than collective, relying on one's ability to self-regulate, presenting an emancipated woman in control of her career and life. It portrays entrepreneurial actors as autonomous and their life story as a series of deliberate choices, with little recognition for the social, economic and cultural constraints in which they operate (Gill, 2007) and little acknowledgement of their professional expertise. In this article, we investigate the uses of social media as spaces for articulating and negotiating professional expertise through a feminist lens, drawing on McRobbie's work on female perfection (2015). For feminist scholars contemporary versions of feminism are closely aligned with neoliberal capitalism (Fraser, 2009, Gill, 2007, 2015; McRobbie, 2015), characterised by 'individualistic and competitive inclinations to working life, a readiness to improvise and 'rebrand'' (Morgan and Nelligan, 2015: 68) and in particular, being recognised as an expert in your sector is also advantageous (Jones, 2002) yet expertise as a concept is often taken for granted.

We focus on women entrepreneurs working in the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) and study their use of social media platforms. Social media has become a space in which professional expertise is communicated, and in this context, a form of entrepreneurial femininity is depicted (Duffy and Hund, 2015). To analyse cultural entrepreneurs' online profiles we combined long term observations with a focused period of time to study daily activities of a sample of women. Our study explores themes raised by contributors to Conor et al's collection of articles on *Gender and Creative Labour* (2015), but our specific focus is on depictions of expertise, self-promoting and self-branding (Scharff, 2015) in social media practices, within an entrepreneurial context.

The use of the term 'cultural entrepreneur' is not one which is readily recognised by all cultural workers, rather, it relates to academic discourses on the subject of entrepreneurship in the CCIs (Naudin, 2013; Oakley, 2014). The term 'culturepreneur' (Lange, 2006; Loaker, 2013) has been used to redefine artistic and creative practices within neoliberal regimes of work. To help us define cultural entrepreneurs, we draw on *The Independents* (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999), who describe cultural entrepreneurs as individuals who are self-employed, freelancers and owners of micro-enterprises or who have a portfolio career and work within the so called 'creative industries' (Hesmondhalgh, 2008). The portfolio nature of their careers means that 'they do not fit into neat categories' (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999: 11). By referring to cultural entrepreneurs we seek to situate our study within a critical discourse; a discussion which seeks to problematize the insecurities and challenges of contemporary modes of work (Ellmeier, 2003; Loaker, 2013; Oakley, 2014). Within the context of entrepreneurial CCI work, online platforms are utilised as an opportunity to self-consciously market oneself and construct a 'micro-celebrity' status (Marwick, 2013: 5). The public nature of online activities invites a self-conscious presentation of expertise, reflecting values and qualities connected to women's status as entrepreneurs in the CCIs. We argue that in performing expertise, women's status both as entrepreneurs and as cultural workers are entangled as they negotiate female professional identities online. We explore the gendered aspects of their social media activity but are not concerned with comparing this to men's use of social media. This is partly because it is not necessary to explore women's identities

in binary opposition or in relation to men, but their specific entrepreneurial practices in the CCIs.

Evidence of gendered inequalities are apparent in studies of sub-sectors such as television and film industries (Creative Skillset, 2011, Directors UK, 2014). For instance, in their special issue on *Gender and Creative Labour*, Conor et al (2015) reveal the reluctance to commission work by women (Wreyford, 2015); the under-representation of women producers in film and television (Alacovska, 2015); and the challenges women face in negotiating branding and self-promotion (Scharff, 2015). Taking this on board, we explore how women cultural entrepreneurs present themselves as experts through social media platforms. Our analysis is organised under three key themes: 'Let's do this!'; imperfection in women's professional identities; and not Tweeting.

Feminism, gender and entrepreneurship

The *entanglement* of feminist and anti-feminist ideas illustrated by celebrities such as Sheryl Sandberg (Chief Operating Officer of Facebook) merge a feminist discourse of empowerment with neoliberal values, presenting a version of a 'perfect' femininity (McRobbie, 2015). Of interest to feminist scholars is the pervasiveness of a neoliberal agenda on personal identity and notions of subjectivity as individuals become preoccupied with self-image to demonstrate qualities such as their expertise. To clarify, neoliberalism is a term often used to describe contemporary political values attached to "anti-democratic or pro-corporate power" (Davies, 2014:310). Characteristics of neoliberalism include privatisation of activities which lie outside the market, the state as an active force in institutions and individual conduct, and the encouragement of competition leading to inequalities (Davies, 2014:310). McRobbie (2015) in particular, is concerned with the way in which feminism has been adopted as part of a competitive individualisation synonymous with neoliberalism, rather than as a movement which seeks to contest inequalities through collective action.

In exploring women's entrepreneurial identity, we find McRobbie's (2015) analysis of striving for the 'perfect' in contemporary femininity illuminates the manner in which women entrepreneurs present themselves and their expertise as cultural workers. In this instance, the 'perfect' is understood as a heightened form of self-regulation based on an aspiration to some idea of the 'good life', extending the notion of being 'aspirational' and putting the woman in charge of her affairs (McRobbie, 2015: 10). According to McRobbie, 'perfection' has 'entered into the common currency of contemporary femininity' (McRobbie, 2015: 4) and it is captured in a 'can-do-girl' (Harris, 2004), a woman who strives for success in all aspects of her life.

McRobbie (2015) describes how the idea of perfection has entered into the realm of contemporary femininity as an aspect of the individualised project, driven by celebrities. By way of illustrating this, McRobbie draws on the US drama *Girls* written by Lena Dunham, highlighting how characters in the drama indirectly strives for perfection. Through irony, the programme presents the key protagonist, a character based on Dunham herself, as seeking perfection by expressing her own imperfections. As McRobbie states, a 'can do and must do better' (2015:16) ethos drives the imperative for perfection through constant self-monitoring, including the management of imperfection, as an aspect of contemporary female identity. Given the levels of precariousness associated with self-employment in the CCIs, a gendered perspective presents a specific set of challenges (Conor et al, 2015; Gill,

2002; McRobbie, 2007), as women negotiate their position as 'expert' cultural entrepreneurs, conveying versions of their 'perfect' selves. And similar to other forms of popular culture (Levine, 2015), social media sites help to define identities such as what it means to be feminine, entrepreneurial and a cultural worker.

The entrepreneurial context enhances the need for asserting a female form of expertise given that the popular image of the entrepreneur is dominated by white male role models, embodied by internationally renowned celebrities such as Donald Trump, Mark Zuckerberg or Richard Branson. Recent academic studies are beginning to challenge this by presenting a wider range of entrepreneurial practices (Steyeart and Hjorth, 2006) exploring new narratives as an alternative entrepreneurial identity. Gendered viewpoints contest personality-based theories and seek to reveal inequalities in research and in practice by analysing stereotypes in which women are constructed as 'deviant from the (male) norm' (Tedmanson et al., 2012: 534). However, the notion of an 'alternative' identity raises questions about the space in which professional activities are enacted, potentially leaving women out from competing within broader society, for pay recognition and social status (Taylor, 2015). Academics are problematising the myth of the entrepreneur but dominant discourses associated with the white male image of the entrepreneur still prevail (Shane, 2007).

Cultural work and expertise

Taylor and Littleton (2012) discuss the complexity of constructing and maintaining identities for cultural workers, arguing that identities are fragile and threatened by success as well as failure because of the precarity of cultural work. Women cultural workers in particular are often ascribed a 'deficit identity' (2012: 140) - a negatively positioned identity taken up by those in less privileged positions. They suggest that it is because of this deficit identity that the status of women cultural workers is likely to be challenged, and their process of identity repair and negotiation ongoing.

On social media, the repair and negotiation process is even more fragile, with the highly public nature of social media making it more difficult to maintain a coherent identity (Cover, 2012), but at the same time, providing a space for subversive potential (Cook and Hasmath, 2014). For instance, cultural work is typically constructed so that women do not become the stars or geniuses, do not have equal access to cultural work, are not equally rewarded and are subject to various forms of occupational segregation that reinforce inequalities of both recognition and reward (Sang et al., 2014). Social media platforms offer an opportunity for women to communicate their expertise to a wide audience. We consider the challenges for women in presenting themselves as expert entrepreneurial cultural workers, a perceived necessity for securing ongoing paid work (Andres and Round, 2015; Jones, 2002).

As Morgan and Nelligan argue cultural workers 'must be prepared to endure the scrutiny and arbitrary judgements of gatekeepers in those occupations where work is usually allocated informally' (2015: 68). The informality of most social media platforms do not negate the importance of appealing to peers, clients and key decision makers who tend to share the same online spaces. Given the opportunities social media present to entrepreneurs as a means of marketing themselves and of securing an income, how are women presenting themselves as experts through their Tweets? Expertise is often a term taken for granted in accounts of cultural work, and there is a great deal of ambiguity around what expertise is. To inform our

understanding of expertise we draw on Russell Prince's definition of expertise as 'A social relation where a particular actor has authority over another actor through their possession of a particular form of knowledge.' (Prince, 2010: 6).

Many definitions of expertise commonly acknowledge that in order to be known as an expert in a field, an individual needs to have specialist knowledge and skill, but also the endorsement and approval of others (Bassett, Fotopoulou and Howland, 2013; Schudson, 2006; Turner, 2001). While self-branding tends to be a more individualistic exercise (Marwick, 2013), we argue that expertise performance takes place in a relational context. This is particularly interesting when exploring online practices which invite the use of 'retweets', 'likes' and 'replies' rather than merely broadcasting one's status update. Jones (2002) argues that being able to effectively perform one's expertise is crucial for careers in the CCIs; she uses the concept of 'signalling' to describe how CCI workers communicate their expertise through their relationships with others, exhibiting requisite skills and their aesthetic style. This forms part of Jones' signalling expertise framework, which we draw upon both methodologically and conceptually for this research (Patel, 2017).

Method

In order to examine expertise on social media, we carried out an online ethnography focusing on Twitter activities of six female entrepreneurs. As researchers we are actively involved on Twitter and have been observing and interacting with cultural workers for a number of years. As online ethnographers, we were able to establish the position of each entrepreneur enabling us to examine self-presentation in relation to, for instance, their profile at an international or local level. Evidence of this became apparent when investigating followers and the standing of individuals or companies who retweet them. We have followed the individuals in the sample on Twitter for the past 3 to 5 years (2010-2015), which provided some background context about each person. Over that period, our attention to what the users were tweeting is best characterised as what Kate Crawford terms "background listening" on social media, where "commentary and conversations continue as a backdrop throughout the day" (Crawford, 2009: 528). Crawford argues that even though we may pay little conscious attention to such background commentary, it still contributes to a sense of intimacy and affinity with others in social media spaces. Our position is similar to that of ethnographers, but in this case we are embedded within the digital environment to probe deeper into the online entrepreneurial practices of female cultural workers.

The process of 'listening' assisted our decision making for sampling, establishing who we would analyse and the period of time covered. Our 'listening' in to the individuals' Tweets meant that we had some background knowledge including:

- They are cultural or media workers, self-employed and entrepreneurial in their practice;
- They are active on Twitter making use of the platform as part of their businesses;
- All of the individuals are relatively well established within their fields.

The selection process was based on years of following the entrepreneurs on Twitter and observing that they work professionally in the CCIs. Furthermore, the six women were chosen partly for their active status on Twitter and their use of Twitter as a platform for presenting a proportion of work related Tweets. We were limited as to their background information, for instance social class was impossible to establish, but have been able to estimate the women's ages as ranging from early 30s to early

50s. The women's ethnic background included four white British women and two black Afro-Caribbean British. For the second element, we collected data which focused on ten days' worth of Tweets by the six female entrepreneurs. We collected the data by taking screen shots (grabs) of all their Twitter posts across the period of time and pasting them into a word document. As researchers, we were conscious of the need to capture posts by each person as a means of 'reading' their ten day 'timeline' (the person's stream of posts seen altogether). In addition we undertook a textual analysis of their Twitter profile such as their short biographies, location, profile picture and number of followers and people they follow. Tweets often have a much wider context than the text in the Tweet itself (Barnard, 2014), so we contextualised Tweets to explore the nature of the 'conversation' such as responses from others including 'retweets' and 'likes' (presented on Twitter as a heart).

The process of analysing the data was a 'recursive process' (Bazeley, 2013: 12) evolving through different stages, sometimes backwards and forwards, following steps taken in a non-linear journey. Drawing on the literature and the data, the following themes helped us organise the material: voice and style, relational expertise and gender. Our analysis incorporated an adapted version of Candace Jones' (2002) signalling expertise framework (Patel, 2017) which allowed us to identify the more relational aspects of their Tweets, rather than focusing solely on self-branding and promotional practices. The framework consists of three core elements:

- **Institutional context** considers the institutional and economic context of signals; in the case of our participants, this also included the individual's background, some of which we gleaned from many years of 'background listening' of their activity on Twitter.
- **Signalling content** considers identity (the 'voice and style' aspect of our theme), performance (the 'expertise in the field and position' theme) and relationships (career relevant networks, which could include clients of the entrepreneurs, or the companies they work with).
- **Signalling strategies** consists of status enhancement, reputation building and impression management.

Jones (2002) used the framework for conceptualising CCI careers, and the adapted version specifically accounts for communication on social media platforms, including Tweets, images, replies, quotes and relationships.

As Twitter is a public platform, and users should be aware that their posts can be visible to anyone, there are ongoing concerns raised in social media scholarship about the ethical considerations of using this data without users' knowledge (Rosenberg, 2010). On social media sites such as Twitter, data is freely available and easily searchable. Yet the same debates and concerns about privacy and anonymity remain (Henderson et al., 2013). As argued by boyd and Crawford: "just because it is accessible doesn't make it ethical" (2012: 671). People may be aware they are using a public forum but users sometimes do not fully understand the implications of what they post, or how far it could reach (Byron 2008; Marwick and boyd, 2010).

For these reasons, we anonymised participants by giving them pseudonyms. When conducting research on public sites such as Twitter, the identity of participants can still be revealed through a simple text search (Ess, 2002). To avoid this, any Tweets which are used as examples in this paper are significantly amended to protect our

participants (Markham and Buchanan, 2012), however their meaning and relevance to our analysis will still make sense in the discussion.

Findings and discussion

Our analysis of the findings centres on women's performance of expertise within the context of contemporary feminist debates about cultural work and entrepreneurship. As we will discuss, analysing the Twitter activities of female cultural entrepreneurs through the 'lens' of the performance of expertise reveals the complex and relational nature of online identity formation. We present displays of expertise on Twitter under three themes: 'Let's do this!'; imperfection in contemporary professional women's identities; and not Tweeting.

'Let's do this!'

A significant factor in the cultural entrepreneurs' use of social media is the opportunity for marketing and promoting their professional status, thereby reflecting expertise. The signalling of expertise is identified in relation to their identities as entrepreneurs, as women and as CCI workers. Their online behaviours reflect a pro-active attitude captured in 'Let's do this', typical of a discourse which reflects the celebratory and entrepreneurial attributes (McRobbie, 2015). We single out the upbeat tone in 'Let's do this!' to suggest that a particular kind of online identity is presented, a version of expertise which tends to blur personal and professional life, and reflects high levels of personal investment in their work (McRobbie, 2016; Ucbasaran et al., 2010). In mitigating against the risks and precariousness of entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurs self-consciously negotiate and manage their online identities (Taylor and Littleton, 2012; Taylor, 2015; Duffy, 2015), which forms part of the 'impression management' aspect of signalling expertise.

> It heralds a sliding scale of attentiveness, or what we might call a continuum of professionalism, as work oscillates between multiple mobile locations on a home/work axis. (Gregg, 2014: 122)

Aspects of personal and professional life were mentioned on Twitter by most of our participants, for example, social media and marketing consultant Hazel, writes Tweets which often contain a very determined and rebellious tone which aim to demonstrate her work ethic.

> 'Having an early night. It's a brand new week soon and I mean business! x' (Hazel)

> 'It's getting dark in the mornings already. Morning! Okay Monday, let's do this!' (Hazel)

The Tweets were sent before Hazel went to bed and then early the next morning. There was an eight-hour gap between the two Tweets and the language she uses ('I mean business!'), suggests that Hazel's performance of expertise on social media includes a 'go get it' attitude characteristic of contemporary business women (Gray, 2003). Hazel presents herself by echoing feminist discourse utilised by Sheryl Sandberg and others, a sense of empowerment and sisterhood, targeting some of her business and digital consultancy services specifically at women and creating hashtags using words such as 'rebel' and 'bitches', often alongside selfies, expressing her confidence as a woman entrepreneur. The context for understanding Hazel's confidence is in contrast to the ways in which other forms of feminine communication online such as mummy bloggers are dismissed and 'often constructed as lightweight, frivolous, and excessively emotional' (Levine, 2015, p.1).

The uncertainties of CCI work encourages individuals such as Hazel to make themselves available for work at all times (Gill, 2002) and to draw on a rhetoric associated with 'serious' entrepreneurs (Kariv, 2012). This image is in conflict with equality rights enjoyed by most employees such as sick pay and maternity leave. It also reflects the lack of relevant data on the self-employed CCI work, contributing to enduring inequalities (Connor, Gill and Taylor, 2015).

Gregg highlights how the demands of modern work, exacerbated by the internet and social media contribute to the potential for self-exploitation, and how for women, this is a continuation of the traditionally normalised patterns of flexible, domestic work which took place in the home (2008, 2014). Like Fraser (2013) and McRobbie (2015), Gregg discusses the relationship between 'equal opportunity' feminism and the neoliberal emphasis on individuality, expressing concern about the positive images portrayed of professional women who can choose when and where they work, which reinforce a notion that women 'naturally' prefer flexible work as a means of managing a range of responsibilities such as childcare. In Hazel's case, flexibility in work includes her 'choice' to work at weekends.

> 'The weekends should be days of rest?! Only if you are doing stuff you have to escape from the rest of the week! (Hazel)

Evidence of self-exploitation in cultural work has been highlighted by many scholars (for example see McRobbie, 2016), but social media enables this to be publicly voiced as an aspect of one's online profile. As an expression of expertise, there appears to be a keenness to present a work ethos of being busy and hard-working, in line with neoliberal imperatives of being "mobile and malleable, infinitely energetic and ambitious, living in the present and ready to adapt to the immediate demands of changing markets" (Taylor, 2015:184).

On Twitter, characteristics associated with a ''Let's do this' approach can be exploited through the use of platform affordances such as hashtags, retweets and mentions which allow expertise to be performed in unique ways and are built to reach as many followers as possible. For instance, Stephanie makes a brand association with her own company's success.

> 'Look who's game launched iPhone 6S – [startup name]; backed by @companyname; we must be doing something right! [link]' (Stephanie)

The public nature of the performance on Twitter by entrepreneurs, means that on some level, they take into account their audience. The association with a large company such as Apple is a relational strategy which is a part of signalling expertise; communicating the association with Apple on a platform such as Twitter helps to enhance the status of Stephanie and her organisation (Jones, 2002).

Sharlene, an internationally renowned founder of a UK awards ceremony and a motivational speaker, makes the most of a Tweet by a company who are promoting her talk by retweeting it. The Tweet includes an image of a smiling Sharlene and a quote by her stating: 'the ability to identify an opportunity and act on it is the most powerful weapon of all'. This is presented alongside #MondayMotivation and #NeverGiveUp both of which are hashtags often associated with entrepreneurship on Twitter. For instance #NeverGiveUp is used in Tweets which express sentiments such as 'in the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity' and aspirations relating to personal motivation and self-development with other hashtags such as #RuleYourself, #BecauseWeCan and #BeThe1. We found evidence of Tweets by

women outside of our sample which added #women, #mompreneur #strong #girls #dreambig, to name but a few, further enhancing an upbeat rhetoric.

This also suggests that a 'Let's do this' attitude resonates with a need to belong to an online community, through hashtags and a language which conveys an enterprising positivity. While this appears to be more obviously linked to women's entrepreneurship, rather than specific to CCI work, the level of self-employment in the sector requires cultural entrepreneurs to engage with this language. In building their image as experts, cultural workers must become proficient in the language of social media linked to women, entrepreneurship, CCI work; and the combination of words, emoticons and use of hashtags to categorise Tweets. In addition, this forms part of a global conversation on Twitter which harnesses an entrepreneurial attitude with positivity. A 'can do attitude' suggests empowerment through entrepreneurship and a sense of sisterhood (Winch, 2013) asserted through mutual support by retweeting and the use of affirmative hashtags.

Imperfection in contemporary professional female identities

As women's professional identities are understood as 'other' from the male norm (Taylor & Littleton, 2012; Thomas-Hunt and Phillips, 2004), particularly in the entrepreneurial context (Gray, 2003; Tedmanson et al., 2012), we find the language in some of the Tweets from our sample to present expertise with a level of ambiguity rather than the confidence one might expect from entrepreneurs. In contrast to the 'Let's do this' ethos, we sometimes found a tentativeness when the women communicated their achievements or their appearances at high-profile events. For example Vanessa, a social media consultant, talks about how she is shy at a conference:

> Definitely feeling that 'first day at new school' vibe at #conference.
> Ridiculously shy for no reason. (Vanessa)

Alternatively, Angie's tweet below demonstrates muddled meanings. Angie describes herself as a 'start-up expert' in her Twitter bio, and yet in some of her Tweets, she exhibits some shyness or reluctance:

> Eeeek! I just did my 1st periscope, I'm not a fan of talking to the camera
> but for what the future holds I'd better get used to it. See you soon!
> (Angie)

At one level 'better get used to it' implies that Angie has some success or recognition coming her way, but this potential 'showing off' is tempered by 'Eeeek!' and "I'm not a fan'. Angie's self-proclamation as an 'expert' in her online profile is an example of how expertise can be claimed by someone online, yet an important aspect of expertise is its recognition and legitimation from others of a higher status (Schudson, 2006; Turner, 2001).

We find a connection here between McRobbie's (2015) analysis of 'imperfection' as an aspect of female 'perfection'. The Tweets by Vanessa and Angie appear to embody dual meanings, attempting to communicate their expertise by referring to their attendance at conferences or being in the media, whilst downplaying their confidence to display some level of vulnerability. Winch (p. 196, 2013) argues that in a neoliberal postfeminist context, branded cultures destroy the potential for political solidarity by encouraging comparisons, admiration and feelings of envy. One interpretation of Angie's tweet could suggest a level of antagonism in her message, pointing to the potential for rivalry with others (women and men) in a bid to signal her

expertise as a professional woman, someone whose career will involve 'talking to the camera'.

Studies such as Thelwall et al (2010) suggest that women are more likely to express prosocial behaviour online – "expressing joy for another but not expressing self-pride" (p.196). Moss-Racusin and Rudman (2010), Taylor (2011) and Scharff (2015) claim that the entrepreneurial imperative to self-promote is problematic for women who tend to prefer more social modes of relating online. We found that some Tweets included self-deprecating humour, which Zappavigna (2014) identifies as one of the 'key bonds' in relating with others online. For example:

> That awkward moment when people keep coming up and saying hi + pretend you know who they are #babybrain 5 years on lol (Angie)

In Zappavigna's study of the role of emotion and affect in online identity formation, she identified examples of gendered self-depreciation through use of the #badmother hashtag. This is similar to the #babybrain hashtag use by Angie above, suggesting a playfulness with gender norms, mocking the idea of the 'perfect mother' (Zappavigna, 2014: 218) whilst at the same time facilitating possible affiliation and interaction with other mothers who are using the same hashtag.

Angie is not shy about presenting her glamorous entrepreneurial lifestyle in her Tweets, but by making use of the hashtag 'babybrain' as part of a tweet, she is communicating her imperfections, or 'perfection' through 'imperfection'. Of concern is Adkins' idea of gender re-traditionalization (1999) by signifying potentially gendered aspects of entrepreneurial work as different from the 'norm', namely having to manage motherhood ('babybrain') whilst retaining one's reputation as an entrepreneurial woman.

Tweets by Hazel are also peppered with personal anecdotes such as her successes in mastering water marbling effects for her nails and descriptions of her dreams of marrying a man she hardly knew. Similarly, Angie often retweets her horoscope star sign, '…has intense emotions. Intense love, intense hate, intense everything' adding symbols such as a crying face emoji to personalise the Tweet. Sharlene retweets a photograph of herself with a colleague in Italy, appearing as a 'sexy' woman striding a vespa and using the hashtag TBT (throw back Thursday). For female CCI entrepreneurs, social media offers a space for communicating the narratives they seek to present to themselves and their followers (Taylor & Littleton, 2012), as distinctively female alongside professional and entrepreneurial. For women entrepreneurs, the individualization presented through contemporary work practices, could relieve us from the constraints of traditional roles in labour markets (Adkins, 1999), creating opportunities to negotiate new identities. However, Adkins argues that 'far from being transgressive of the social categories of gender, individualization may re-embed 'women' in new socialities' (1999: 136). By describing the 'retraditionalization of gender' (1999: 129) in individualised work, gender demarcations might be just as significant. Online spaces are a playing field for developing one's identity as an entrepreneurial cultural worker, encouraging peer recognition in an environment where social and professional status are not reliant on the office dynamic but conscious of an imagined audience (Marwick and boyd, 2010). It is a milieu in which individuals tell the 'story' of themselves as a significant aspect of how they choose to perform their expertise, and in this case, it is wrapped up with notions of how they seek to present the 'feminine' as an aspect of their professional selves.

At a conference, Hazel negotiates Tweets relating to having apparently cried on stage during her keynote presentation. Given Hazel's usual online personae as a confident, 'Let's do this' entrepreneur, the Tweet below reveals how she manages what could be perceived as a weakness, namely crying on stage during her keynote speech.

> I'm making a video about how @t*****g made me cry when I was on stage after my keynote at @T*****d last week! :D #T****2015 (Hazel)

Does that jeopardise her performance of expertise as an entrepreneurial worker? Through this Tweet, Hazel is re-claiming her emotional outpouring as a way of managing her online profile, which in turn becomes part of her performance of expertise, by producing a video response. Is this damage limitation? In these Tweets, Hazel feels it is necessary to regain control and she chooses to highlight her experience of crying on stage, incorporating a laughing emoticon. Hazel's 'imperfection' is transformed into a signal to demonstrate self-awareness and control over her image. The context for this Tweet is a set of other Tweets relating to the significance of the event, to crying, to the positive impact of Hazel's keynote Tweeted by others, liked several times and retweeted by Hazel. This resonates with a need for women to disclose forms of intimacy (Berlant, 1998), and emotional work (Hochschild, 1979) which suggests a specifically feminine discourse, connected through hashtags or replies on Twitter, constituting part of their performance of expertise. The disclosure of emotion online plays an important role in forming connections and relationships (Cote and Pybus, 2007). Kuntsman (2012) notes how naming emotions online can create "communities of feelings" (p.6), and such affective communication online is particularly common among women. For instance, Sharlene seeks to present herself as appreciative of others by 'liking' and retweeting a tweet of a female colleague thanking her, for thanking her. This overzealous demonstration of thanks between the two women indicates the dual impact of communicating on Twitter: a demonstration of a personal sentiment in a public space, with its imagined audience.

However, being able to engage in these communities of feelings requires an engagement with and adherence to certain online conventions and practices, fostered by both users and platforms themselves, and a failure to adhere to such conventions can be a disadvantage. Thus despite the egalitarian promise of online spaces for performing expertise, they also potentially reproduce inequalities and exclusion (Jensen, 2013). By including a discussion on 'Not Tweeting' we seek to reveal the challenges in navigating a public space such as Twitter.

Not Tweeting

The pro-active approach demonstrated by Hazel and Angie is not evident in all the women cultural entrepreneurs we sampled. In contrast, Sharlene and Siobhan mainly used the retweeting function to display their expertise. Sharlene retweeted Tweets from either her own company's account, or from companies who have hired her as a motivational speaker. These are examples of status enhancement by retweeting endorsements (as Hazel did) and also, like Stephanie, displaying her expertise by association with the success of her own company.

Siobhan, a film producer, mainly retweeted posts related to her industry sector, film, and through her retweets she appears as someone 'in the know', but there is very little about her own work and success. This appears to be a more altruistic approach

to performing expertise – Siobhan is sharing events and opportunities for others, displaying her knowledge of the film industry and the nature of her networks.

Yet, what Siobhan is *not* doing on Twitter is perhaps just as revealing. As we have stated, presenting one's expertise as an entrepreneurial worker is a significant aspect of securing work but the opposite could also be true. In other words, despite the perceived need to market oneself online, some women cultural entrepreneurs might choose to limit communication to retweets, avoiding 'micro-celebrity' practices and 'oversharing' (Marwick and boyd, 2010). We suggest that if we accept the use of social media as a space for self-conscious identity performances, refraining from Tweeting is also a controlled performance, whether that be out of shyness, a reluctance to engage too much with the technology or to protect one's professional identity. Although our women cultural entrepreneurs appear to know some of their followers, there is a degree to which they are also presenting themselves to an audience whose positive or negative Twitter responses are unpredictable. This lack of full control is pertinent to the presentation of expertise as a relational phenomenon but also plays into the hands of the deficit identity of women cultural workers (Taylor and Littleton, 2012) and challenges associated with being deviant from the 'norm' as a female entrepreneur (Tedmanson et al., 2012).

As Smith (2009) argues, the demonisation of the 'diva' female entrepreneur in the media suggests a problem for women entrepreneurs who appear to reflect traditionally male characteristics. Perhaps it is this image of the 'diva entrepreneur' that some women try to avoid, so that either their expertise is communicated in a more palatable manner. Equally, simply abstaining from actively developing an online profile impedes the possibility of others manipulating or interacting with women's professional identity. This outcome suggests that in limiting their use of platforms such as Twitter, some women are holding back from advancing their professional identity as expert cultural entrepreneurs (Taylor and Littleton, 2012).

Conclusion

In this article we explored Angela McRobbie's notion of the *entanglement* of feminism (2004) and the idea of striving for the perfect/imperfect in contemporary femininity (2015) as a framework for illuminating how women cultural entrepreneurs present themselves on social media. The manner in which our cultural entrepreneurs negotiate an 'imagined audience', as part of the ongoing work of presenting a professional identity varies depending on the individual but we find evidence of a gendered perspective. The self-conscious decisions to refrain from Tweeting or the use of hashtags to make meaning more ambiguous, resonates with feminist discourses. Presenting oneself as an expert is burdened with the potential lack of professional identity for entrepreneurial women and more specifically for those working in the CCIs. The blurring of the personal and professional is connected to a non-stop 'can do' culture - which we characterise as the 'Let's do this' imperative - is expressed online as an aspect of one's dedication and hard working credentials.

We find that in performing expertise, women's professional identity is ongoing, relational work. As a platform, Twitter reinforces opportunities for an expression of expertise through the use of retweets, 'likes', replies and an awareness of an imagined audience. Given the degree to which social media can be important for securing entrepreneurial work in the cultural industries, we argue that the character of women's online activities require further scrutiny. Our approach combines a familiarity with the platform and the characters in our sample with a focus on a

specific period of time to analyse the daily lived experience of presenting and sustaining a professional identity and performance of expertise. The notion of an 'entangled' expertise reflects how women are caught up in diverse narratives when presenting their professional identities. Women draw on feminist discourses of empowerment, demonstrating an entrepreneurial 'can do' attitude but this is interwoven with affective strategies such as expressing emotion or admitting vulnerability through a self-conscious use of relevant hashtags. It is difficult to claim from our research whether this contributes to gender inequalities in the cultural sector, but we argue that at the very least, women's expertise as it is presented online is 'feminine', often muddled with other identities and appearing to exhibit less of the professional confidence which we might have anticipated from entrepreneurial 'experts'.

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