



Jennifer's Design Spine #1

Title

Act 3: What can the artistic labour market tell us about the “employee of the future”?

The Question

How do people in inherently precarious labour markets manage their careers and can that inform our understanding of the potential changes happening in the general labour market?

It will focus on the question of how professional actors negotiate the non-standard nature of their vocation. What types of strategies do they engage in to sustain their careers in the face of the challenges inherent in artistic labour markets. What are the impacts to their personal and professional lives and identity and how are their social relationships affected as a result of non-standard work?

The Problem

The Artistic Labour Market is inherently precarious in terms of a lack of stability and limited benefits to workers therefore it demonstrates many of the qualities being predicted for the workforce of the future. Work is foundational to societies and their members, but labour policy can't get ahead of the wave of change being precipitated by technological and socioeconomic change. Can we use the artistic labour market as a proxy to learn about the impact of the new world of work and what is needed to inform policy to limit the amount of policy design “catch-up”?

The aim of this research project is to look at a sector of the labour market that demonstrates many of the characteristics of that future and identify the ways its workers are navigating the conditions of work. By investigating various strategies used by professional actors to sustain their careers in the face of precarious employment conditions and outcomes, this study will seek to offer additional insight on the impact of these approaches to inform a wider social policy direction.

The Background Scene

I need to know what are the aspects of work being defined as “characteristic of the future”

I need to know what are the characteristics of the artistic labour market

I need to know the barriers or challenges facing workers in this market

I need to know the strategies employed – are they unique to this market or common to all markets?

What is the theoretical framework I need to apply?

The Case

Geographic location – Ottawa.

Accessible but the labour market for actors is limited here.

Maximum variation might offer insight into strategies used (e.g. same strategy used by someone unsuccessful vs successful) - by interviewing actors I can get insight on the challenges and how they overcame them.

The Plot

Send out a call for participants from a contact involved in the community (use Facebook or other communication medium)

The Plot Holes

There might be an unintended impact on my “contact” with this labour market. Will his position compromise the participation rate or type of participant? The project might also impact personal relationships and the level of information shared due to sensitivity of the information being asked. Consideration of personal characteristics of actors (age, gender, marital status, etc.) might also play a role in being able to make any conclusions as there could be many confounding factors.

This might not be an issue given the interpretive nature of this type of research and the context in which it is conducted.

There might be a need to be more selective in the participants and this might impact my ability to get participants.

What role does the labour union have (ACTRA or EQUITY)?

The Plot Variations

Focus on non-standard work – use a variety of jobs to look at the nature of precarity as it relates to all types of non-standard working arrangements. The “new” normal work – perhaps the idea of worker rather than employee.