

**Practicing Precarity: The Contested Politics of
Work Experience in Cultural Industries**

**by
Elizabeth Sarjeant**

B.A. (Media, Information, and Technoculture), University of Western Ontario, 2013

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in the
School of Communication
Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

© Elizabeth Sarjeant 2018
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Spring 2018

Copyright in this work rests with the author. Please ensure that any reproduction or re-use is done in accordance with the relevant national copyright legislation.

Approval

Name: Elizabeth Sarjeant

Degree: Master of Arts (Communication)

Title: Practicing Precarity: The Contested Politics of Work Experience in Cultural Industries

Examining Committee: **Chair:** Svitlana Matviyenko
Assistant Professor

Enda Brophy
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor

Stuart Poyntz
Supervisor
Associate Professor

Kathleen Millar
External Examiner
Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Date Defended/Approved: February 23, 2018

Abstract

Over the past decade in Canada, student work has become a topic of public criticism, legal action, academic research, and labour activism. Cultural industry employers' use of unpaid, low-paid, and flexibilized labour in the form of internships and other kinds of 'work experience' raises questions about the future of work in already precarious fields such as news production, advertising, television, and film. Against the backdrop of neoliberal processes still shaping universities and labour markets, the student worker emerges as a strategic figure in the contested politics of cultural work. This thesis offers a theoretical and empirical investigation of the dominant discourse and counter-discourse through which work experience is constructed, legitimized, critiqued, and re-visioned. Drawing on autonomist Marxist theory, critical philosophies of education, and feminist political economy, I situate cultural work experience as a discursive site where struggles over knowledge production and labour rights become visible and urgent.

Keywords: work experience; internships; cultural work; precarious work; critical discourse analysis; autonomist Marxism

This thesis is dedicated to student workers and their advocates.

Acknowledgements

First I would like to thank Enda Brophy, my Senior Supervisor, who devoted so much time and careful attention to my ideas and their expression. I am very lucky to have had his guidance and support throughout this project. I would also like to thank Stuart Poyntz, my committee member, and Kathleen Millar, my external examiner, for their engagement with my work and the important conversations they raised during my defense.

I would also like to thank my parents, Anne Louise Gould and Doug Sarjeant, and my brother, Jon Sarjeant, for their love and encouragement. Thanks to my grandpa, George Gould, for his love of thinking and his enthusiasm about my own thoughts. Thank you to my partner, Noel Glover: there is no one with whom I'd rather share ideas.

Thanks to the many people in my life who supported and inspired my work with friendship and solidarity: Lillian Deeb, Siobhan Watters, Yi Chien Jade Ho, Benjamin Anderson, Alexandra Rodgers, Reagan Belan, Melissa Roth, Phillip Dluhy, Carl Mandy, and Alicia Massie.

Thanks to Atle Mikkola Kjösen, Nicole Cohen, Vincent Manzerolle, and Cindy Patton for the generous help and mentorship that motivated me through many stages of this project. Thanks to Kayla Perry for teaching me so much about the CWA Associate Members program.

To all the student worker organizers I met along the way, thank you for the important work you do. Thanks also to the student workers and advocates whose words I have quoted within. And thanks to my own students, who made me feel useful over the past three years and who shared their thoughts with courage.

Finally, this work would not have been possible without funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) in the form of a Joseph Armand Bombardier Canadian Graduate Scholarship.

Table of Contents

Approval	ii
Abstract	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Acronyms	viii
Chapter 1. Introduction: A Frontier of Cultural Work.....	1
1.1. Key Concepts and Themes	5
1.1.1. Cultural Work	5
1.1.2. The Student Worker	7
1.1.3. Media and Communication Studies	9
1.1.4. Work Experience	10
1.1.5. Neoliberalism and Discourse on Work Experience.....	13
1.2. Chapter Overview and Methodology	15
Chapter 2. Toward a Critical Theory of Work Experience.....	21
2.1. Neoliberalism, the University, and Student Cultural Work	22
2.2. The Neoliberal Concept of Work Experience	28
2.3. Experience and Knowledge in Education	33
2.3.1. Theorizing and Politicizing Experience	34
2.3.2. Contesting the Valorization of Experience	37
2.3.3. Situating the Student as Producer	39
2.4. Autonomist Marxism and the Work of Experience	42
2.4.1. Immaterial Labour and the Student Worker	44
2.4.2. Precarious Work and Subjectivity	46
2.4.3. Affect and Feminization	49
2.4.4. Living Knowledge	50
2.4.5. Exit and Refusal.....	53
2.5. Conclusions.....	56
Chapter 3. Teaching Disentitlement: Neoliberal Discourse on Work Experience	58
3.1. Methodology.....	59
3.1.1. Text and Texture	60
3.1.2. Discourse Practice.....	61
3.1.3. Sociocultural Practice	63
3.1.4. Sources	65
3.2. Themes of Neoliberal Discourse	72
3.2.1. Individual Responsibility	72
3.2.2. Initiation.....	79
3.2.3. Valorization of Experience.....	88
3.2.4. Mutual Benefit.....	91

3.3.	Cracks in the Discourse.....	95
3.4.	Conclusions.....	100
Chapter 4. Making Student Labour Visible: Counter-Discourse on Work Experience		102
4.1.	Methodology.....	103
4.1.1.	Genre	103
4.1.2.	Order of Discourse	104
4.1.3.	Sources.....	107
4.2.	Counter-Discourse on Work Experience.....	114
4.2.1.	Shifting Responsibility	114
4.2.2.	Situating Students as Workers.....	126
4.2.3.	Questioning the Value of Work Experience	131
4.2.4.	Calling for Resistance.....	137
4.3.	Conclusions.....	144
Chapter 5. Conclusion: Practicing Resistance		147
5.1.	Work Experience and Discursive Struggle	148
5.2.	Policy Change	151
5.3.	Education Initiatives.....	155
5.4.	Union Support	158
5.5.	Direct Action.....	161
5.6.	Concluding Thoughts.....	164
Bibliography		166

List of Acronyms

CIA	Canadian Intern Association
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CLC	Canada Labour Code
CMG	Canadian Media Guild
COU	Council of Ontario Universities
CUTE	comités unitaires sur le travail étudiant
CWA	Communication Workers of America
CWO	Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams
ESA	Employment Standards Act
FIMS	Faculty of Information and Media Studies
IDF	Ideological-discursive formation
PMP	Professional Management Program (Bell)
PR	Public relations
SAUIS	Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams
SFU	Simon Fraser University
VFW	Vancouver Fashion Week

Chapter 1.

Introduction: A Frontier of Cultural Work

In May 2012, former intern Jainna Patel filed a complaint against Bell Media and demanded back-pay for three months of unwaged work.¹ Patel testified that she “didn’t learn or benefit from” Bell’s Professional Management Program (PMP) at all, and that the company was breaking federal labour laws by employing unpaid workers whose labour contributed to the company’s bottom line.² In the months that followed, several other former Bell interns spoke out about the injustice of the program and its disempowering effect on student workers, who were reportedly “afraid to say no” to their employers’ demands, even when that meant working without pay until two- or three-o-clock in the morning on projects that might otherwise have been staffed by paid, full-time employees.³ An anonymous colleague who filed alongside Patel declared, “I didn’t learn anything. I learned not to trust corporations. Anything I learned professionally was from the other interns.”⁴

Patel’s case is paradigmatic of struggles over cultural work experience, a site of exploitation, resistance, and growing solidarity amongst young and new workers. Communications and cultural industry employers such as Bell rely increasingly on the inexpensive labour of workers who are deemed ‘inexperienced’. The resulting devaluation

¹ Kathy Tomlinson, “Bell Accused of Breaking Labour Law with Unpaid Interns,” *CBC News*, June 24, 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/bell-accused-of-breaking-labour-law-with-unpaid-interns-1.1356277>.

² *Ibid.*

³ Tomlinson; “Go Public Inbox: Unpaid Interns Speak out,” *CBC News*, June 24, 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/go-public-inbox-unpaid-interns-speak-out-1.1347934>.

⁴ Tomlinson, “Bell Accused of Breaking Labour Law with Unpaid Interns.”

of labour performed by students and other entry-level cultural workers through unpaid or poorly paid internships, cooperative education programs, and practicum placements in Canada facilitates the precarity and income polarization characteristic of neoliberal labour markets.⁵ Through these work experience arrangements and programs, observers have argued, the costs of education and training are offloaded on to workers.⁶

This thesis offers a critique of the concept of ‘work experience’, one which remains under-theorized in academic literature,⁷ despite what I argue is its discursive legitimization of a wide array of student work arrangements. Work-based learning has long been used to train new workers in a variety of trades and historical milieu.⁸ In the contemporary Canadian context, I argue, the concept of work experience has been developed through a neoliberal discourse that authorizes exploitative and disempowering labour arrangements through claims to the educational ‘value’ of workplace experience. However, as the following chapters reveal, the lesson taught through cultural industry work

⁵ Drawing on David Harvey’s (2005) definition, I use the term ‘neoliberal’ to refer to an ideological framework that privileges individual freedoms and responsibilities, strong private property rights and a highly competitive labour market, regulated to maximize capital accumulation. See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5.

⁶ Nick Dyer-Witheford, “Teaching and Tear Gas: The University in the Era of General Intellect,” in *Utopian Pedagogy: Radical Experiments Against Neoliberal Globalization*, ed. Mark Coté and Richard J. F. Day (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 51.

⁷ While the concept of ‘work experience’ itself has been overlooked, there is a growing body of academic work on student labour in the field of communications. In 2007, Gina Neff and Giovanni Arata called for research into the role of interns in media and communications industries.⁷ Since then, the topic of student cultural work has been broached by a growing number of scholars and activists in the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada. Of particular note is Daniel Ashton and Caitriona Noonan’s *Cultural Work and Higher Education* (2013), an edited volume focusing on the experiences of student workers in the United Kingdom. Another important example is a special issue of the international journal *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism, and Critique*’s dedicated to *Interrogating Internships* (2015), edited by Greig de Peuter, Nicole Cohen, and Enda Brophy. In this thesis I draw from this issue’s critical explorations of student work in the US, UK, Canada, and Hong Kong to explore the relationship between work experience and cultural industries, and to draw on critical accounts from those who have worked with and interviewed student workers.

⁸ In *Intern Nation* (2011), Ross Perlin traces a history of apprenticeship back to the Code of Hammurabi in ancient Mesopotamia. See Ross Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2011), 46.

experience often provides a harsh awakening to the prevailing labour conditions in fields such as news production, film, television, radio, advertising, publishing, and public relations (PR). As communication scholar Thomas Corrigan points out, the precarity and lack of pay suffered by student workers often reflect longer-term experiences of cultural workers.⁹ Thus, in some ways, the ongoing integration of 'work experience' into post-secondary learning offers up a troubling educational byproduct: such programs can teach aspiring cultural workers to expect low pay and insecurity throughout their careers.

This thesis approaches work experience not only as a period of assimilation into a specific work environment, industry, or mode of production, but also as a discursive site of struggle through which students can challenge the prevailing conditions for work in cultural industries. While student workers are a vital source of knowledge and labour power for cultural industries, they are not yet acclimatized to the conditions that structure these workplaces. No matter how well student workers may adapt to a work placement, they are only rarely guaranteed a more secure place in the workforce once the period of 'work experience' has ended.¹⁰ As we will see in what follows, the interplay of dominant and counter-discourses on work experience unfolds a contested politics of cultural work that is ultimately at odds with the notion of a well-adapted and compliant young labour force once conjured by the word 'internship'.

My analysis draws on critical philosophies of education, autonomist Marxism, and feminist political economy to situate the student worker at the edge of capitalist labour

⁹ Thomas F. Corrigan, "Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels," *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 337.

¹⁰ Mara Einstein, "Nothing for Money and Your Work for Free: Internships and the Marketing of Higher Education," *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 480; Gina Neff and Giovanni Arata, "The Competitive Privilege of Working for Free: Rethinking the Roles Interns Play in Communication Industries," 2007, 2, http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/8/3/9/6/pages183960/p183960-1.php.

relations, and also to cast her as a strategic figure in the emergent politics of cultural work. The theoretical framework that emerges also exposes the flaws and contradictions that surface within what I have termed the 'neoliberal concept of work experience'. Through this lens, in connection with my empirical use of critical discourse analysis (CDA), I ultimately articulate discourse on work experience as a site where struggles over knowledge production occur and against which labour rights are made visible and urgent.

This chapter provides an introduction to the concepts and themes central to my thesis. I first describe why cultural work is a vital site of study for the problem of student work. Next, I highlight the theoretical dimensions of the student worker, drawing on autonomist scholar Gigi Roggero's location of this subject "along the porous frontier" between the educational market and the labour market.¹¹ I then contextualize the role of media and communication studies programs in forming the student worker. I also distinguish three forms of work experience that prevail in Canadian cultural industries: internships, co-operative education, and practicum placements. Articulating neoliberalism as a mode of regulation that privileges individual responsibility and competitiveness, austerity measures for public institutions, and a labour market regulated to maximize capital accumulation, I argue that the ideological underpinnings of neoliberalism play a central role in constructing the concept of work experience.¹² Finally, I offer a breakdown of the following three chapters by highlighting theoretical orientations, methodologies, and central arguments.

¹¹ Gigi Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge : The Crisis of the University and the Transformation of Labor in Europe and North America*, trans. Enda Brophy (Philadelphia, US: Temple University Press, 2011), 84, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10489050>.

¹² Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 5.

1.1. Key Concepts and Themes

1.1.1. Cultural Work¹³

In his book *The Cultural Industries*, David Hesmondhalgh describes such industries as “those involved in the making and circulating of products – that is, texts – that have an influence on our understanding of the world.”¹⁴ I use the term cultural work to describe the work of cultural production in these industries – that is, the work directed at producing the informational or affective content that define cultural commodities. In particular, this project focuses on labour in for-profit industries that produce news media, television and radio programming, books, advertising, and corporate communications. It is important to acknowledge here that cultural workers experience a range of working conditions across many diverse fields of production.¹⁵ I have limited the scope of my definition of cultural work by focusing on ‘white collar’ sites of cultural production, identified by several studies as a key venue for unpaid student labour.¹⁶ Moreover, the role of student labour in office-

¹³ While some of the sources I cite refer to ‘media’ or ‘creative’ industries, I primarily use the terms “cultural work” or “cultural industries,” in keeping with the specific tendencies of other scholars. In her recent book, *Writers’ Rights*, Cohen aptly attributes her choice of the term to its “critical edge.” She explains that the term “remains resistant to the ideological slant of creative industry discourse” that marks political and economic pressure to commodify cultural production. Cohen also points to Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s use of the term “culture industry” in their foundational critique of cultural production under capitalism. By taking up the terminology central to a political economy of communication, I aim to bring these critical theoretical orientations forward into my own analysis. See Nicole S. Cohen, *Writers’ Rights: Freelance Journalism in a Digital Age* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2016), 251.

¹⁴ David Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2007), 3, 12.

¹⁵ Most notably, the domain of intellectual labour often described in academic discourse as ‘immaterial’ excludes the extraction and manufacturing industries that remain central to processes of cultural production. Nick Dyer-Witheford provides a thorough and compelling exploration of the role of these labour processes in *Cyber-Proletariat*. See Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Proletariat* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

¹⁶ Neff and Arata, “The Competitive Privilege of Working for Free: Rethinking the Roles Interns Play in Communication Industries,” 2; Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little*

and studio-based workplaces in Canada has been taken up widely in public discourse, which is the primary object of my study.

Cultural work is characterized in dominant discourse by a romantic notion that workers should enjoy emotional connections to their work.¹⁷ My analysis pays close attention to workers' troubled relationships to the affective and material conditions of cultural production, which labour scholars have brought into focus over the past decade. As Nicole Cohen points out, the exploitative conditions of cultural work are obscured by "a 'labor of love' discourse that preempts discussion of power relations."¹⁸ Ursula Huws argues that because cultural work characteristically involves an intense intellectual or creative commitment to the labour process, workers struggle to negotiate genuine enjoyment of the work they do as a source of "self-expression and recognition" with their basic need to earn a living.¹⁹ The cultural worker is mythologized for a perceived willingness to work without pay and to allow work to permeate all aspects of her life. As we will see in Chapter Three, neoliberal discourse on work experience also calls for a highly individualistic emotional investment in the labour process.

However, as cultural theorists Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt remind us, such notions tend to be perpetuated by industry-driven discourse that inflates the positive affective conditions of cultural work and hides its more damaging consequences – for example,

in the Brave New Economy, 27; James Attfield and Isabelle Couture, "An Investigation into the Status and Implications of Unpaid Internships in Ontario" (University of Victoria, 2014), 39, http://internassociation.ca/tempcia/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Attfield_James_and_Couture_Isabelle_MPA_2014.pdf.

¹⁷ Cohen, *Writers' Rights: Freelance Journalism in a Digital Age*.

¹⁸ Nicole S. Cohen, "Cultural Work as a Site of Struggle: Freelancers and Exploitation," *tripleC* 10, no. 2 (2012): 145.

¹⁹ Ursula Huws, "Expression and Expropriation: The Dialectics of Autonomy and Control in Creative Labour," in *Labour in the Global Digital Economy: The Cybertariat Comes of Age* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014), 101.

over-work, under-pay (or no pay at all), and a lack of recourse to worker protections.²⁰ In this way, the elusive glamour of cultural industry workplaces facilitates neoliberal cost-cutting measures and, Thomas Corrigan writes, “makes these firms hotbeds for intern exploitation.”²¹ Meanwhile, the situation faced by student workers resembles the one faced by cultural workers: both experience highly precarious conditions and participate in low paid or unpaid labour in hopes of building a good reputation in the labour market.²² Therefore in many ways, cultural industry internships provide not only a window into the working conditions that dominate cultural workers’ careers, but also a strategic site of resistance to these conditions.

1.1.2. The Student Worker

The central figure of this thesis is the student worker, whose conceptual dimensions have been developed by autonomist scholar Gigi Roggero.²³ In her relationship to the labour market, the student occupies a “hybrid condition,” Roggero notes.²⁴ Whereas political and experiential divisions between students and workers may have characterized the Fordist era, these subjectivities are inextricably intertwined in what Roggero and others have called cognitive capitalism.²⁵ Today’s student assumes a position in the labour

²⁰ Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt, “In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 25, no. 1 (2008): 1–30.

²¹ Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels,” 344.

²² Corrigan, 336.

²³ Gigi Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge: The Crisis of the University and the Transformation of Labor in Europe and North America*, trans. Enda Brophy (Philadelphia, US: Temple University Press, 2011), 84, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10489050>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ I take up Roggero’s use of the term “cognitive capitalism” to describe a contemporary political and economic situation in which intellectual labour processes make up a vital source of capital accumulation and in which knowledge, he writes, has become “a battlefield [...] central to class struggle.” Roggero, 2. Further in the text, he also stresses that cognitive capitalism is not a stage in the necessary progression of the capitalist system, nor in the development of information

market not after, but during the formal schooling process. Roggero writes, “the figure of the student no longer corresponds to the classic definition of labor power *in formation*, and becomes for all intents and purposes a worker.”²⁶ He identifies internships and co-op placements as a key feature of this hybridity, noting that post-secondary students take on unpaid work experience or freelance projects to prepare themselves for much sought-after careers.²⁷ On the other hand, the need to take on *paid* work is compounded when students pay tuition to access unpaid work placements, which is often the case at Canadian schools.²⁸ Post-secondary education therefore marks what Marxist scholar Nick Dyer-Witford calls the “inauguration of indentured servitude”²⁹ for students, who must work service industry jobs to sustain their material needs and lessen the impact of their growing debt loads. Given these social and economic contexts, my thesis approaches the relationship between learning and labour as one of overlap, both materially and subjectively.

Discourse that paints work experience as a transitional phase *between* learning and labour makes what I argue is a false delineation between work and non-work. In this way, the student worker is emblematic of myriad subjectivities whose identities and social utility are ignored or trivialized under capitalism. For Dyer-Witford, the devaluation of student labour in both paid and unpaid arenas submits the student to a “rapid and practical education in the various registers of exploitation,”³⁰ shaping her expectations for working conditions in the neoliberal job market more generally. At the same time, the student

technologies, but rather “the result of a fierce period of struggle that threw Fordism into crisis.” Roggero, 41-2.

²⁶ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 84.

²⁷ Roggero, 84.

²⁸ Aleksandra Sagan, “Unpaid Intern Hell: Overtime, Tuition Fees,” *CBC News*, September 10, 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/unpaid-intern-hell-overtime-tuition-fees-1.1699105>.

²⁹ Dyer-Witford, “Teaching and Tear Gas: The University in the Era of General Intellect,” 51.

³⁰ Dyer-Witford, 51.

worker has been a key figure of dissent in many areas of the world. Students have played a central role in protests in Chile, the United Kingdom, Argentina, and Québec in recent decades, where they have shown solidarity in labour disputes, fought for the recognition of scholarship as reproductive labour, and situated the economic status of the student within anti-capitalist struggles.

1.1.3. Media and Communication Studies

Crucial to my study of the student cultural worker is an analysis of academic programs that support work placements in cultural industries. Communication scholars Gina Neff and Giovanni Arata locate the undergraduate communication department as a key site where student cultural workers are made.³¹ While not all student cultural workers have a background in media or communication studies, many of these departments offer work experience programs. As Nick Dyer-Witheford notes, these programs supply cultural industries with a steady stream of “free labour”³² as students scramble to find a place in the labour market. Despite the critical theoretical content of these humanities- and social science-based course offerings, enrolment is fueled by students’ “professional aspirations” in cultural industries.³³ Moreover, government funding and tuition revenue both increasingly depend on these departments’ ability to provide vocational training,³⁴ which has contributed to the rise of work experience programs in media and communication departments.

Cultural work researchers Greig de Peuter, Nicole Cohen, and Enda Brophy point

³¹ Neff and Arata, “The Competitive Privilege of Working for Free: Rethinking the Roles Interns Play in Communication Industries,” 1.

³² Dyer-Witheford, “Teaching and Tear Gas: The University in the Era of General Intellect,” 58.

³³ *Ibid.*, 57.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

out that while work-based learning is a key feature of many academic programs, media and communication programs stand out because their curricula are often devoted to critical interrogations of “the very industries that are routinely singled out as playing a key role in recruiting and normalizing unpaid or low-paid intern labour.”³⁵ Media and communication studies are therefore ambivalently located within “traditions of antagonism to, and critique of, corporate power” at Canadian universities, Dyer-Witheford contends.³⁶ Tensions between critical and vocational media education are often played out in the realm of work experience.³⁷ In Chapter Three, I explore student workers’ attempts to reconcile critical theoretical approaches from the classroom with overwhelming pressures to adapt and be productive within corporate environments during their work placements. I also demonstrate how, in their embrace of work experience opportunities, media and communication programs expose students to frictions – and occasionally struggles – between capital and its antagonists. As we will see in Chapter Four, the academy hereby becomes a crucial site of student worker resistance to capitalist systems of cultural production.

1.1.4. Work Experience

The term ‘work experience’ is used in dominant discourse to describe a broad category of labour arrangements that promise to provide workers with knowledge or skills relevant to a certain industry or vocation. Discourse on work experience tends to implicate young workers, students, recent post-secondary graduates, or those entering a field of

³⁵ Greig de Peuter, Nicole S. Cohen, and Enda Brophy, “Interrogating Internships: Unpaid Work, Creative Industries, and Higher Education,” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 330.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

³⁷ Dyer-Witheford uses the example of the Faculty of Information and Media Studies (FIMS) at Western University, where he teaches. FIMS’s undergraduate program offers both internships at corporate sites of media production and practicum places with non-profits whose use of media production serves social justice-oriented or subversive goals. See Dyer-Witheford, 58.

work for the first time.³⁸ Such labour arrangements are difficult to categorize, partly because of their informality and lack of enforceable regulation.³⁹ As Sandra Smeltzer notes, there are “no agreed-upon definitions” that structure the landscape of work experience,⁴⁰ and student worker roles are essentially vague in definition.⁴¹ As it is commonly used, the term ‘work experience’ refers to a wide range of roles, from tackling menial office tasks to taking on greater responsibility, for example as a limited-term project manager (thus eliminating paid positions and saving labour costs for employers).⁴² In this way, the malleability of the concept of work experience serves the interests of the employer class, which thrives on the availability of a flexible workforce.

Despite great variation in the terminology used among communication studies programs, cultural industries, and the examples in this thesis, there are three broadly defined types of student labour arrangements salient to my analysis: internships, co-operative education, and practicum placements. Of these three categories, *internships* are in theory the least connected to specific academic curricula and are likewise the most dependent on guidance and supervision from an employer, rather than an academic

³⁸ While ‘student worker’ serves as a useful shorthand for ‘one who works for experience’, it is important to note that not all workers implicated in this system are – or were ever – post-secondary students. My own analysis, as well as the literature and examples I address, often speak to workers outside of academia who take on such probationary positions. Insofar as these workers’ labour is undervalued through hierarchies of experience, they too can be understood as student workers in the context of this project.

³⁹ Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*, xi.

⁴⁰ Sandra Smeltzer, “Interrogating Course-Related Public Interest Internships in Communications.,” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 512.

⁴¹ Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*, xi; Alexandre Frenette, “Making the Intern Economy: Role and Career Challenges of the Music Industry Intern,” *Work and Occupations* 40, no. 4 (November 1, 2013): 372, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888413504098>; Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels,” 343; Ip lam Chong, “Negotiating Educated Subjectivity: Intern Labour and Higher Education in Hong Kong,” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 507.

⁴² Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels,” 346; Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*, xvii.

advisor.⁴³ In fact, they can take place entirely independently of the university. Media scholar Mara Einstein points out that more so than co-op or practicum programs, internships are promoted as a “stepping-stone to future employment.”⁴⁴ For this reason, the suitability of an internship hinges more closely on its relevancy to a sought-after career.⁴⁵ In contrast, *co-operative education* is more likely to privilege the inherent benefits of “experiential learning” than are internships.⁴⁶ Co-op terms are often interspersed with academic terms so that students alternate between periods of skill development and classroom learning.⁴⁷ Finally, *practicum programs* focus on the specific application of classroom theory to a particular professional environment, often for students to meet degree requirements.⁴⁸ In the definitions provided by provincial governments and by scholars of student work, internships are more often aligned with work, whereas co-operative and practicum placements are more closely tied to a discourse on learning through experience.⁴⁹ While the academic, legal, and popular discourse I examine in this thesis does make distinctions between these three categories, there is much overlap in the conditions of work these terms describe.

⁴³ Frenette, “Making the Intern Economy,” 365; Ashley Stirling et al., “A Practical Guide for Work-Integrated Learning” (Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2016), 34, http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/HEQCO_WIL_Guide_ENG_ACC.pdf.

⁴⁴ Mara Einstein, “Nothing for Money and Your Work for Free: Internships and the Marketing of Higher Education,” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 477.

⁴⁵ Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*, 25.

⁴⁶ Einstein, “Nothing for Money and Your Work for Free: Internships and the Marketing of Higher Education,” 472, 477.

⁴⁷ Stirling et al., “A Practical Guide for Work-Integrated Learning,” 34–35.

⁴⁸ “Interpretation Guidelines Manual British Columbia Employment Standards Act and Regulations,” Government of British Columbia, 2017, <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/igm/esa-definitions/esa-def-work>.

⁴⁹ For example, while internships are included in the BC government’s definition of “work,” practicum placements are not (see “Interpretation Guidelines Manual British Columbia Employment Standards Act and Regulations,” *Government of British Columbia*, 2017, <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/igm/esa-definitions/esa-def-work>).

1.1.5. Neoliberalism and Discourse on Work Experience

This thesis adopts David Harvey's definition of neoliberalism as a mode of regulation within a capitalist society that values the liberation of "individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade."⁵⁰ At the level of policy, neoliberalism can be seen in cuts to public spending and the maintenance of a highly flexibilized workforce through employer-friendly labour laws and high barriers to unionization.⁵¹ Under this regime, universities in Canada have been subjected to a range of austerity measures, and to an accompanying system of economic rationalization where funding structures are increasingly determined through an assessment of academic programs' economic worth.⁵² Departments are increasingly pressured to adopt a vocational approach designed to drive post-graduate employment rates, for which work experience programs are promoted as a boosting measure. When work experience programs displace classroom-based courses, they also cut the costs of hiring faculty and instructors. For industry employers, these programs offer inexpensive, indeed sometimes 'free' labour in the form of a flexible, short-term contract-based workforce.⁵³ It is not surprising, then, that since the rise of neoliberalism in the late 1970s in Canada, work experience programs at universities have multiplied, facilitating what Dyer-Witthford calls the "downloading of education costs onto students."⁵⁴ Students often compound their debt levels or take on extra paid work to "subsidize" unpaid

⁵⁰ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 5.

⁵¹ Harvey, 5; David B. Fairey, "New Flexible Employment Standards Regulation in British Columbia," *Journal of Law and Social Policy* 21 (2007): 94.

⁵² Dyer-Witthford, "Teaching and Tear Gas: The University in the Era of General Intellect," 47.

⁵³ Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*, xvii; *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide* (Canadian Intern Association, 2016), 49, http://www.scsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CanadianInternRightsGuide_FINAL_Digital.pdf.

⁵⁴ Dyer-Witthford, "Teaching and Tear Gas: The University in the Era of General Intellect," 51.

placements, fueling economic inequality.⁵⁵ Neoliberal policy thus shapes work experience programs at the level of both post-secondary education and the labour market, ultimately linking the public education system more closely to the needs of the market.

This thesis pays particular attention to the discourse of neoliberalism, which subtends the concrete structural implications of neoliberal policy measures such as deregulation, privatization, and cuts to social programs. Norman Fairclough, whose method of critical discourse analysis (CDA) I employ, describes neoliberalism as a social order whose operational logics are naturalized by a corresponding “neoliberal order of discourse.”⁵⁶ The ideological underpinnings of neoliberalism uphold the values of competitive individualism, privatization, and the infiltration of market logic into all areas of social life. The ways in which this logic has been taken up in both education and the labour market are evident in the neoliberal discourse on work experience that I explore in Chapter Three.

Fairclough’s approach also lends a vital layer of complexity to my use of the concept of neoliberalism and to its analytical valence. By interrogating neoliberalism at the level of discourse, my analysis resists what Roggero charges is the totalizing tendency found in critiques of neoliberalism, which can depict a perceived “oneness of ‘neoliberal’ thought.”⁵⁷ For Roggero, such perspectives often fail to account for the active role of labour in provoking capitalist re-structuring, and ultimately neglect the “processes of resistance and conflict” that have also characterized neoliberal transformations.⁵⁸ On the other hand, Fairclough’s approach to the neoliberal order of discourse emphasizes its permeability, its

⁵⁵ Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*, 331.

⁵⁶ Norman Fairclough, “The Dialectics of Discourse,” *Textus* XIV, no. 2 (2001): 232.

⁵⁷ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 40.

⁵⁸ See Roggero, 40.

relationship to an outside, and the extent to which it is threatened by – and responds to – counter-discourse.⁵⁹ In what I refer to as a neoliberal discourse on work experience, the incoherencies, contradictions, and conflicts that constitute these processes rise to the surface.

1.2. Chapter Overview and Methodology

In Chapter Two, I argue that the concept of work experience is constructed through a neoliberal framework for learning and labour, and that the use of work experience as education reproduces highly exploitative forms of cultural work by positing precarity as an industry norm. I then establish a theoretical framework that combines critical and radical philosophies of experience and education with an autonomist Marxist approach to labour and knowledge. This framework facilitates a critique of what I call the neoliberal concept of work experience, which is based on four main assumptions essential to its logic. Here I show how this conceptualization individualizes and infantilizes student workers, valorizes experience as an inherently beneficial resource, and obscures antagonisms between student workers and their employers.

Critical and radical philosophies of education and experience help to reconceptualize work experience by problematizing the value of experience, the dichotomous relationship between theory and practice, and the passivity of the student worker. I draw on the work of Paulo Freire, Jacques Rancière, Walter Benjamin, John

⁵⁹ For a more thorough discussion of Fairclough's approach to discourse, please refer to the following section of this thesis, "Chapter Overview and Methodology." Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003), 41.

Dewey and Deborah Britzman⁶⁰ to explore the valorization of experience in neoliberal conceptualizations and to show how students actively produce knowledge through experience and contest its existing forms.

I then work with autonomist Marxist theory to contend that experience, knowledge and labour power are embodied in, and inseparable from, the student worker. Autonomists and autonomist-influenced scholars centre worker resistance and struggles for autonomy despite capital's attempt to harness creative and intellectual labour power. Gigi Roggero, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Maurizio Lazzarato, and Tiziana Terranova⁶¹ shed light on the concrete processes of production through which knowledge and experience are made by and embodied in the cultural worker. The theoretical framework that emerges from these interventions posits student cultural work as a site of struggle through which working conditions can be challenged and transformed.

The theoretical orientation I develop in Chapter Two informs my empirical study of discourse in Chapters Three and Four, where I apply Norman Fairclough's framework for critical discourse analysis to a range of discourses on work experience. Fairclough takes up Michel Foucault's theory of discourse to illustrate the centrality of discourse analysis to social research. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault writes of discourses as

⁶⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. M Bergman Ramos (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970); Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation.*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Walter Benjamin, "Experience," in *Early Writings 1910-1917*, trans. Howard Eland (London: Belknap Press, 2011); John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Touchstone, 1997); Deborah P. Britzman, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach* (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1991).

⁶¹ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (USA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy," *Social Text* 18, no. 2 (2000): 33–58; Gill and Pratt, "In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work."

“practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.”⁶² For Foucault, what is at stake in a discursive study is how discourse orders the world, how it creates hierarchies, and how particular discourses acquire authority. Similarly, Fairclough uses the term on an abstract level to refer to “language and other types of semiosis as elements of social life” and on a more concrete level to indicate “particular ways of representing part of the world.”⁶³ Following Foucault, Fairclough views discourse as a site of social struggle. The central aim of Fairclough’s method is to denaturalize ideological-discursive formations by “showing how social structures determine properties of discourse, and how discourse in turn determines social structures.”⁶⁴ His approach to analysis is useful for grounding texts in the social and political contexts of their production and consumption.

I use Fairclough’s framework to explore examples of discourse on work experience generated by social commentators, employers, student workers, and their advocates. My analysis takes up two genres of discourse, which I have termed *advice literature* and *advocacy literature*. Advice literature refers to texts that provide recommendations for shaping or responding to student work, either in the context of specific student work arrangements or the culture of work experience more broadly. This body of literature is written by student workers themselves, their employers, and social commentators and is directed at students, employers, and policy-makers. I study advice literature in Chapter Three to provide examples of neoliberal discourse on work experience. In Chapter Four I turn to a study of counter-discourse on work experience, or discourse that subverts and challenges the neoliberal assumptions. The texts I examine here fall into the category of

⁶² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 49.

⁶³ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, 26.

⁶⁴ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995), 27.

advocacy literature, in that they are produced by student workers and their advocates to protest the prevailing conditions for student work and re-vision structures of work experience.

I focus my investigation on cultural industry employers and communication studies programs⁶⁵ in Ontario and British Columbia. These provinces stand out because they both house a relatively high concentration of post-secondary schools. They also contain large cities – namely Toronto and Vancouver – that represent key sites of cultural production in Canada. Moreover, because my own experience has been based mainly in these provinces, I am better equipped to navigate the resources produced there in my exploration of discourse on work experience. Lastly, this focus yields a manageable sample of a much larger body of discourses that are illustrative of neoliberal ideology. When it comes to counter-discourse, I also take up examples of advocacy literature produced by student workers in Québec, as French-speaking Canada has been the main locus of radical student activism in recent years.

Chapter Three provides a closer look at the neoliberal concept of work experience through an investigation of the discourse that mobilizes its fundamental assumptions. I use Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) to identify neoliberal discourse on work

⁶⁵ When addressing discourses generated by specific academic institutions, I focus primarily on universities instead of colleges, mainly because I came to this project through an interest in the rise of vocationalism in university media and communication studies programs. The shift to vocationalism is less remarkable at colleges, because the traditional focus of college education in Canada has been vocational training. Further, the university is a particularly controversial site through which to study the rise of work-based learning, because as Dyer-Witthford points out, communication studies at Canadian universities has an academic tradition of critique toward cultural production under capitalism. See Dyer-Witthford, "Teaching and Tear Gas: The University in the Era of General Intellect," 56.

experience as part of the dominant “ideological-discursive formation”⁶⁶ that reflects and shapes the ways in which university students participate in cultural work in Canada. Using Fairclough’s framework, I analyze twenty examples of discourse generated by student workers, employers, and social commentators. Here neoliberal logic is recognizable through four pervasive themes: *investment*, *initiation*, *valorization*, and the *alignment* of student workers with employers. While these four narratives authorize exploitative and disempowering forms of student cultural work, they also reveal traces of doubt, dissent, and a building sense of injustice that threaten the neoliberal concept of work experience and foreground resistance.

In Chapter Four I return to Fairclough’s method, this time to explore counter-discourses that complicate and destabilize the neoliberal concept of work experience. I identify four main strategies used by labour organizations, advocacy groups, and student workers in Canada. Each of these strategies disrupts one of the neoliberal assumptions explored in Chapter Three. First, fighting neoliberal narratives of individual responsibility, counter-discourse shifts responsibility for student work on to employers, governments, educators, and broader communities, in some cases disrupting notions of responsibility altogether. Second, counter-discourse challenges the denial of labour rights for students by affirming that students are also workers. Third, it combats the valorization of experience by acknowledging the material and emotional impacts of work experience on students and exploring the role of inexperience – both in the student’s productivity and in her capacity for resistance. Fourth, counter-discourse rejects the claim that student work arrangements are equally beneficial for students and employers, drawing attention to systems of labour exploitation while calling for collective resistance. Using the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two, I show how these counter-discourses can be read through

⁶⁶ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 10.

autonomist Marxist theory, feminist political economy, and critical philosophies of education to explore possible avenues of dissent.

My concluding chapter sheds light on how resistant discourses are taken up to fight for better working conditions for students. In the realm of policy, advocacy groups fight to extend labour protections to student workers. Educational institutions are called upon to teach student workers about their rights, and education campaigns use social media to spread awareness of these struggles. Unions such as Communication Workers of America (CWA) Canada develop membership programs for students and other cultural workers in precarious roles. Student worker activism is on the rise, particularly in the province of Québec, where student collectives situate the student labour movement within broader struggles for the recognition of all work under capitalism.

Chapter 2.

Toward a Critical Theory of Work Experience

The problem of underpaid and underappreciated student work has been the subject of much research and advocacy in the past decade.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, the concept of “work experience,” which authorizes the devaluation of labour performed by students and young workers, remains under-theorized, despite its deep roots in capitalist labour relations. As a discursive attempt to reconcile tensions between learning and labour, the concept of work experience plays a formative role not only in students’ education about the cultural industry but also in the power structures around which cultural work is organized. The casual employment relationships through which students learn about cultural work are prototypes for labour relations under neoliberalism, which often fall beyond the scope of union protection and elude definitions in labour law.⁶⁸ In this chapter, I draw on critical theories of experience, education, and labour to argue that the use of work experience as education reproduces highly exploitative forms of cultural work and posits precarity as an industry norm.

In what follows I explore how the concept of work experience facilitates contemporary student work arrangements in Canadian cultural industries, and how it has developed through a set of assumptions emblematic of a neoliberal framework for learning

⁶⁷ Frenette, “Making the Intern Economy”; Kate Oakley, “Making Workers: Higher Education and the Cultural Industries Workplace,” in *Cultural Work and Higher Education*, ed. Daniel Ashton and Caitriona Noonan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 25–44; de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, “Interrogating Internships: Unpaid Work, Creative Industries, and Higher Education”; Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels”; Greig de Peuter and Nicole S. Cohen, “Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada,” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 587–98.

⁶⁸ Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels,” 342.

and labour. I begin with a brief discussion of neoliberal governance in Canadian universities and in cultural industries. I then outline four main tenets of what I call the *neoliberal concept of work experience*. This conceptualization emphasizes notions of individual responsibility and posits student work as a liminal period during which labour rights are often withheld. It also valorizes ‘experience’ as an inherently beneficial resource for student workers and suggests that work experience programs are of mutual advantage to both students and cultural industry employers. I then develop a theoretical framework for work experience through which to challenge these key tenets of the neoliberal formulation. The framework I propose draws from both critical and radical philosophies of education alongside autonomist Marxist theory to contend that experience, knowledge and labour power are embodied in, and inseparable from, the student worker. Through this framework, I posit student cultural work as a site of struggle through which working conditions are challenged and transformed.

2.1. Neoliberalism, the University, and Student Cultural Work

“Neoliberalism is finished,” Gigi Roggero writes at the beginning of *The Production of Living Knowledge*, adding that while the effects of neoliberal politics are still tangible, “they are no longer able to constitute a coherent system.”⁶⁹ The effects of neoliberalization on Canadian universities are indeed evident in the way they function today, not least in their embrace of work experience as a form of higher education. The neoliberal transformation of the Canadian university is characterized by several interrelated processes: austerity measures resulting in funding cuts for academic programs; closer ties

⁶⁹ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 1.

between the university and industry, particularly through vocational programs and work placements; and the progressive offloading of the costs of education on to students. Yet as Enda Brophy and Myka Abramson-Tucker point out, “the neoliberalization of the university is producing its own antagonists.”⁷⁰ Counter-processes of dissent include union drives organized by academic workers, anti-tuition hike protests amongst student populations, and growing communities of solidarity that transcend the university’s borders.⁷¹ As we will see throughout this thesis, neoliberal processes shaping the landscape of student work have also made it a crucial site of resistance and immanent critique.

During the rise of neoliberal policy in the late 1970s and 1980s, Canadian universities were subject to sustained budget cuts.⁷² In this period, Nick Dyer-Witheford writes, “programs seen as subversive or simply inutile to industry were slashed.”⁷³ Vocational programs are now increasingly promoted by administrators in an effort to validate the university’s role in a neoliberal economy. The Council of Ontario Universities (COU),⁷⁴ an organization that lobbies for funding on behalf of universities, advocates that academic programs supporting Ontario’s economic prosperity should receive the most government funding.⁷⁵ Within the university, programs are often funded based on

⁷⁰ Enda Brophy and Myka Tucker-Abramson, “Struggling Universities: Simon Fraser University and the Crisis of Canadian Public Education,” *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 28, no. October 2012 (2012): 33.

⁷¹ Brophy and Tucker-Abramson, 32–34.

⁷² Dyer-Witheford, “Teaching and Tear Gas: The University in the Era of General Intellect,” 47.

⁷³ Dyer-Witheford, 47.

⁷⁴ I refer to the COU because Ontario is host to the highest density of post-secondary institutions in Canada, and is therefore at the forefront of Canadian policy development in higher education. Alan Sears and James Cairns, “Austerity U: Preparing Students for Precarious Lives,” *New Socialist Webzine*, January 24, 2014, <http://newsocialist.org/austerity-u-preparing-students-for-precarious-lives/>.

⁷⁵ “Framework for Planning and Funding of Enrolment” (Toronto: Council of Ontario Universities, June 10, 2010), 8, <http://cou.on.ca/papers/framework-for-planning-and-funding-of-enrolment/>.

enrolment, and vocational programs are increasingly popular with students, who are cognizant of the need to treat tuition as an investment for future earnings.⁷⁶ Where both government funding and tuition dollars are concerned, therefore, programs must compete for funding based on their ability to offer industry connections.

Neoliberalization has been characterized by a proliferation of close, synergistic relationships between the university and industry,⁷⁷ which have grown partly in response to austerity. As a key manifestation of such relationships, work experience programs factor into the cost-benefit analyses by which universities operate⁷⁸ in two main ways. First, they help improve academic programs' eligibility for funding, as post-graduate employment rate is a key metric for determining funding schemes.⁷⁹ The COU's 2014 report on experiential learning insists that "Bachelor's level graduates with co-op experience earn more than their peers, have higher employment and full-employment rates."⁸⁰ Second, work-based learning programs help to cut down on labour costs, which comprise the greatest part of universities' budgets.⁸¹ Internship, co-op, and practicum programs supplement departments' course offerings and thereby reduce the university's payroll. As a result, work experience programs accelerate the devaluation of teaching work in the shift away

⁷⁶ Dyer-Witthford, "Teaching and Tear Gas: The University in the Era of General Intellect," 58.

⁷⁷ Gigi Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge: The Crisis of the University and the Transformation of Labor in Europe and North America*, trans. Enda Brophy (Philadelphia, US: Temple University Press, 2011), 63, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10489050>.

⁷⁸ Sears and Cairns, "Austerity U: Preparing Students for Precarious Lives."

⁷⁹ For example, immediate employability upon graduation is highlighted consistently across COU's funding framework reports. See COU, "Framework for Planning and Funding of Enrolment."

⁸⁰ "Bringing Life to Learning at Ontario Universities: Experiential Learning Report" (Toronto: Council of Ontario Universities, March 26, 2014), 1.

⁸¹ Brophy and Tucker-Abramson, "Struggling Universities: Simon Fraser University and the Crisis of Canadian Public Education," 32.

from traditional course offerings and toward work-based learning.⁸²

Work experience programs thus serve as a mechanism for offloading an increasing part of the costs of education on to students.⁸³ This effect is particularly pronounced when students pay tuition while participating in such programs, despite scarcely drawing on the university's resources during their work terms.⁸⁴ Outside the realm of work experience, tuition fees themselves increasingly reflect the neoliberal inclination to shift financial burden on to the shoulders of individuals. According to a study conducted by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, undergraduate tuition rates are higher than ever in Canada, having tripled between 1993–94 and 2015–16.⁸⁵ The ensuing debt load taken on by students urges them to treat their education as an investment in future economic success.

In Ontario and British Columbia, labour laws frequently facilitate the offloading of costs on to students. *Employment Standards Acts* in both provinces specify that unpaid internships are illegal *unless part of formal education or training programs*.⁸⁶ Such regulations imply that academic credit can replace pay, and therefore that students' labour power is not valuable. They also enable situations in which students pay to work – that is,

⁸² As Dyer-Witheyford points out, this shift is occurring in a scenario where professorial labour is already profoundly undervalued, since low-waged sessional and part-time instructors without benefits or job security perform much of the teaching work at Canadian universities. Dyer-Witheyford, "Teaching and Tear Gas: The University in the Era of General Intellect," 50.

⁸³ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 9.

⁸⁴ Sagan, "Unpaid Intern Hell: Overtime, Tuition Fees"; de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, "Interrogating Internships: Unpaid Work, Creative Industries, and Higher Education," 330; CWA Canada Associate Member Steering Committee, "Student/Young Media Union Members Program Supports Recommendations of Youth Employment Report," CMG Freelance, June 19, 2017, <http://cmgfrelance.ca/en/studentyoung-media-union-members-program-supports-recommendations-of-youth-employment-report/>.

⁸⁵ Erika Shaker and David Macdonald, "What's the Difference?: Taking Stock of Provincial Tuition Fee Policies" (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, September 2015), 5, https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2015/09/Whats_the_Difference.pdf.

⁸⁶ "What Is the Law?," Canadian Intern Association, May 25, 2012, <http://internassociation.ca/what-is-the-law/>.

in which they must pay tuition in order to access unpaid work experience opportunities. These restrictions do little to assuage concerns about the inequity of labour markets. In fact, the seemingly necessary passage through a period of unpaid work as a precondition for securing waged labour poses a significant barrier to groups that cannot afford higher education and who are therefore already at a disadvantage in the labour market. This legal atmosphere can thus be seen to intensify the “inequalities of opportunity” which, as Ross Perlin writes, work experience programs already “quietly embody.”⁸⁷

In this way, work experience programs tend to reproduce existing barriers to participation in neoliberal labour markets. Social exclusions take shape along lines of class, race, and gender, among other axes of oppression, as unpaid and under-paid positions inhibit those who cannot afford to work for free from the pathways that are crucial to accessing labour markets. James Attfield and Isabelle Couture’s 2014 study of internships in Canada indicates that cultural industry employers have a particular tendency to hire mainly white workers, contributing to the marginalization of Indigenous people and people of colour.⁸⁸ Cultural industries represent a significant case of labour market exclusions, as the absence of these groups’ voices from production processes puts equitable media coverage in jeopardy.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, as Attfield and Couture’s study also reveals, women are overrepresented in unpaid internships,⁹⁰ a dynamic that situates

⁸⁷ Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*, xvii.

⁸⁸ Attfield and Couture, “An Investigation into the Status and Implications of Unpaid Internships in Ontario,” 14.

⁸⁹ Attfield and Couture, 14; Enda Brophy, “Labouring to Learn: Lineaments of the Creative-Academic Complex in Vancouver,” *Line*, no. About Academia (2013): 110.

⁹⁰ Attfield and Couture, 14. Research conducted by Leslie Regan Shade and Jenna Jacobson, as well as Michelle Rodino-Colocino and Stephanie Beberick, indicates that this gender dynamic might be particularly true of cultural industries. See Leslie Regan Shade and Jenna Jacobson, “Hungry for the Job: Gender, Unpaid Internships, and the Creative Industries,” *The Sociological Review* 63, no. S1 (2015): 188–205; and Michelle Rodino-Colocino and Stephanie N. Beberick, “‘You Kind of Have to Bite the Bullet and Do Bitch Work’: How Internships Teach Students to Unthink Exploitation in Public Relations,” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 486–500.

student labour within a long history of the devaluation of women's work under capitalism.⁹¹

The notion that higher education is an economic investment helps to naturalize the contradictory logic of neoliberal education, which condemns the university as an ivory tower out-of-touch with the 'needs' and 'realities' of today's job market, all the while touting it as the only possible site of job market entry. According to Alan Sears and James Cairns, these contradictions are negotiated at the level of student subjectivity. The authors characterize the contemporary university as "Austerity U" to describe how neoliberal cost-cutting measures lend shape to a project of "teaching disenfranchisement," whereby higher education institutionalizes a culture of disempowerment affecting students' expectations for life beyond the university.⁹² The authors write,

the key to preparing students for the real world they face upon graduation would be to shatter their expectations of a decent life by teaching disenfranchisement either openly in the curriculum (for example, through entrepreneurship education) or through the structure of the system (for example, through user pay, sharp tuition increases, and ever-expanding class sizes). Ultimately, the goal of this transformation is a university system that, along with certain skills and knowledge, teaches students: 'You are entitled to nothing.'⁹³

In this way, post-secondary education is also a lesson in flexibility and precarity; it facilitates the subjective conditions that make possible the student's acceptance of the unstable conditions that are likely to shape the trajectory of their working lives.

Meanwhile, the cultural industry's presumed ability to grant workers emotionally fulfilling or even glamorous labour has made it a unique site of exploitation. Expectations that both emerging and experienced cultural producers will work for free have been

⁹¹ Rodino-Colocino and Beberick; Shade and Jacobson.

⁹² Sears and Cairns, "Austerity U: Preparing Students for Precarious Lives."

⁹³ Sears and Cairns.

facilitated by the notion that cultural workers ‘do what they love’.⁹⁴ This trend has expedited the industry’s reliance on unpaid labour⁹⁵ and makes it a key venue for studies investigating the exchange of labour power for work experience. As Thomas Corrigan notes, the conditions of precarity and low pay facing student workers are comparable to those faced by many workers in media and cultural industries. Further, interns’ frequent compliance with these conditions reflects their hope of achieving a more secure position, a dynamic that likens student work to the “hope labour” undertaken by cultural workers trying to gain “experience and exposure” by taking on unpaid creative projects.⁹⁶

2.2. The Neoliberal Concept of Work Experience

The material impacts of neoliberalization on post-secondary education are in part supported by what I call the *neoliberal concept of work experience*. Here I lay out four central assumptions of this concept, which I argue works to naturalize conditions of exploitation and disempowerment for student workers. My focus on assumptions here reflects Norman Fairclough’s contention that “ideologies are primarily located in the ‘unsaid’,” in the “implicit propositions” that shape our perception of the world.⁹⁷ In Chapter Three, I build on this theoretical analysis to offer concrete examples of a neoliberal *discourse* on work experience, as it mobilizes these assumptions by offering advice for student workers, employers, and policy-makers.

⁹⁴ Miya Tokumitsu has an important analysis of this relationship to work in *Do What You Love: And Other Lies About Success and Happiness* (New York: Regan Arts, 2015).

⁹⁵ Doug Tewksbury, “Educating the Precariat: Intern Labour and a Renewed Approach to Media Literacy Education,” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 526–32.

⁹⁶ Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels,” 342.

⁹⁷ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 24.

First, the neoliberal concept of work experience assumes that students are individually responsible for their own vocational training. Educational scholar Deborah Britzman observes that work-based learning programs ascribe to an anti-intellectual model of self-reliance.⁹⁸ The individualistic logic of neoliberalism encourages students to reject traditional course work, which is based in a more collective student experience, and to strike out on one's own in the workplace. Internships, practicum placements, and co-operative education have in this way become an individual rite of passage, indispensable to the student's capacity to find work after graduation. This idea is especially salient for student cultural workers, Corrigan notes, where barriers to more desirable paid positions are high.⁹⁹ Under a neoliberal model of worker training, hiring managers expect that entry-level employees have already acquired a practical set of skills in their field before they apply for paid positions.¹⁰⁰ However, as the discourse investigated in Chapter Three reflects, there remains a disconnect between the critical, theoretical education in communications and media studies offered by Canadian universities and employers' expectation that students will graduate with hands-on media production skills.¹⁰¹

Narratives of individual responsibility hold students accountable for having 'agreed' to the working conditions they face. By this logic, if students have a negative experience in the workplace, they have only themselves to blame. Such thinking also relies on the

⁹⁸ Britzman, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*, 193.

⁹⁹ Corrigan, "Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels," 336.

¹⁰⁰ Erin Millar, "The Expectation Gap: Students' and Universities' Roles in Preparing for Life after Grad," *The Globe and Mail*, October 21, 2014, <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/the-expectation-gap-students-and-universities-roles-in-preparing-for-life-after-grad/article21187004/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&page=all>.

¹⁰¹ Smeltzer, "Interrogating Course-Related Public Interest Internships in Communications.," 519; de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, "Interrogating Internships: Unpaid Work, Creative Industries, and Higher Education," 330.

assumption that students have the power to leave harmful situations, and should therefore take responsibility for removing themselves from work arrangements that are simply unbearable. For the most part, however, the onus is placed on individual workers to make the most of their experience, a demand exacerbated by the well-documented ambiguity of the role students play in cultural industry workplaces.¹⁰² Dominant discourse generated by universities, employers, and peers alike advises students that a work experience is simply “what you make of it.”¹⁰³ In this way, employers are absolved of responsibility for ensuring that student workers’ experiences are meaningful and educational, and workers are regularly advised “stick it out” in degrading work environments for the sake of the investment.¹⁰⁴ Such narratives discourage sustained critique of student working conditions and of structural power abuse. They also dissuade students from sharing negative experiences with each other, thereby limiting the potential for collective resistance.

The second assumption of the neoliberal concept of work experience is that student workers occupy a liminal space in which they are neither learners nor labourers. When a work placement is seen as a transition phase, students are relegated to a state of becoming, where they are guaranteed neither the opportunities of learners nor the rights of workers. In the acquisition of work experience, students generate value for a company that, however informally, employs them. Yet, the concept of work experience suggests that because time in the workplace might be educational for students, the labour they perform there is an ‘experience’ that they consume, not one that they produce. To convince the student worker of her need to acquire experience, the dominant discourse

¹⁰² Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels,” 346.

¹⁰³ Frenette, “Making the Intern Economy,” 372.

¹⁰⁴ Tewksbury, “Educating the Precariat: Intern Labour and a Renewed Approach to Media Literacy Education,” 529.

on work experience must place the student in a position of lack, or 'inexperience'. Inexperience is then the main condition upon which her labour is devalued. As Roggero writes, "prevalent in the representation of new laboring subjects is in fact an image of absence – of rights, of protections, of employment."¹⁰⁵ Inexperience prescribes a willingness to work for the sake of experience, an exchange that evades the question of material wellbeing and thereby precludes the wage.

From the denial that students are workers comes the third assumption, that experience is of unequivocal benefit to students and can therefore function as pay. As we have seen, the educational value of experience has been increasingly institutionalized at the level of higher education through the expansion of work-based learning programs. The currency of academic credit, increasingly earned in the workplace as well as in the classroom, flattens important differences between course work and work experience. Meanwhile, experience is privileged over theoretical knowledge in neoliberal funding frameworks, as we saw in the COU's contention that work experience puts students "ahead of their peers."¹⁰⁶ For educational scholar Deborah Britzman, experience is 'valorized' when it is interpreted as an educational end in itself and thought to operate outside of other modes of knowing.¹⁰⁷ Britzman argues that the valorization of experience thereby "comes to represent the triumph of practical over theoretical knowledge, in their false opposition."¹⁰⁸ As demonstrated in Chapter Three, dominant discourse generated by universities, employers, commentators, and even students themselves emphasizes the insufficiency of theoretical learning. Such narratives posit the workplace as an opportune site for the translation of theory into practice, a putting 'to use' of seemingly latent

¹⁰⁵ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 18.

¹⁰⁶ "Bringing Life to Learning at Ontario Universities: Experiential Learning Report," 1.

¹⁰⁷ Britzman, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*, 33.

¹⁰⁸ Britzman, 193.

classroom concepts.¹⁰⁹ Neoliberal discourse then attributes an intrinsic value to experience that authorizes its substitution for a wage.

The fourth assumption of the neoliberal conceptualization is that work experience programs are of mutual advantage to both student workers and employers, and thereby align the interests of labour and capital. This notion draws on the assumption that experience is innately beneficial for student workers. It also assumes that the precarious working conditions student workers suffer do not detract from the positive effects of this experience. This conjecture is particularly worrisome when we consider how students' early workplace experiences shape their expectations for working conditions throughout cultural industry careers, especially when little effort is made by university internship programs to question labour conditions in these sectors.¹¹⁰ Because internships and co-op placements are probationary forms of employment that may or may not lead to paid, full-time jobs, student workers practice the precarity they learn to expect from the industry at large.

As we will see in Chapter Three, much of the advice disseminated through universities about work experience programs takes for granted poor conditions for cultural work and normalizes flexible, on-demand schedules and low pay. In some instances, work-integrated programs de-emphasize the immediate effect of these conditions by promising to equip students with the skills, networks and connections necessary to guard themselves against instability in the future.¹¹¹ This distraction also works to de-

¹⁰⁹ Smeltzer, "Interrogating Course-Related Public Interest Internships in Communications.," 512; Chong, "Negotiating Educated Subjectivity: Intern Labour and Higher Education in Hong Kong," 502.

¹¹⁰ Brophy, "Labouring to Learn: Lineaments of the Creative-Academic Complex in Vancouver," 108–9.

¹¹¹ Oakley, "Making Workers: Higher Education and the Cultural Industries Workplace," 26–28.

problematize the low pay and precarity that plague cultural workers, obscuring the fundamental antagonism between labour and capital.

So far I have explored the role of neoliberal logic in shaping the concept of work experience. The categorization of work as a kind of “experience” – rather than as a value-producing activity – contributes to the normalization of unpaid and precarious conditions for students. Thus the neoliberal concept of work experience facilitates the cultural industry’s use of unpaid labour and helps the university to outsource the costs of education. It renders entry-level cultural work inaccessible to those who cannot afford to work for free and reproduces the flexibilization and devaluation of student labour. Finally, the unpaid and precarious quality of student work in cultural industries helps shape students’ expectations for working conditions in the field at large. In what follows, I explore alternative theoretical frameworks for re-articulating work experience as a site of struggle.

2.3. Experience and Knowledge in Education

As it stands, the concept of work experience discursively robs students of their capacity for knowledge production, relying instead on the image of a student whose labour power is not yet valuable. Radical critique of a neoliberal concept of work experience calls for a framework that complicates the student worker’s relationship to knowledge and to experience, by taking into consideration the material labour processes through which that experience is produced. In this section, I begin to reconceptualize work experience by questioning the value of experience, the dichotomous relationship between theory and practice, and the passivity of the student worker. I begin with a brief genealogy of the concept of experience as it appears in theories of education. I then engage Western philosophies of experience to suggest that ‘inexperience’ can fortify student workers’

ability to resist prevailing power structures. I go on to use Deborah Britzman's work on experience and education to argue that theory and practice are mutually constitutive and can support student workers' critical engagement with labour issues. Finally, I draw from the work of Jacques Rancière, Paolo Freire, and John Dewey to re-articulate experience as a site in which students actively produce knowledge and contest its existing forms.

2.3.1. Theorizing and Politicizing Experience

Crucial to a radical critique of the concept of work experience is some historical perspective on theories of experience more generally. Philosophy historian Martin Jay's work on the philosophy of experience distinguishes two German concepts, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, both of which have been translated into English as "experience."¹¹² *Erlebnis*, sometimes translated as 'lived experience,' describes the "everyday world' (the *Lebenswelt*) of commonplace, untheorized practices," and therefore "connotes a more immediate, pre-reflective, and personal variant of experience."¹¹³ *Erfahrung*, on the other hand, lends itself to a more "dialectical notion of experience" from which the image of an educational 'journey' (*Fahrt*) emerges; *Erfahrung* discursively combines a series of "discrete moments of experience into a narrative whole or adventure."¹¹⁴ Jay notes that the combination of the term *Gefahr* ('danger') with 'journey' makes the connection between memory and experience, sustaining the "belief that cumulative experience can produce a kind of wisdom that comes only at the end of the day."¹¹⁵ The complex relationship between experience and knowledge evoked by the concept of *erfahrung* is essential to

¹¹² Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 11.

¹¹³ Jay, 11.

¹¹⁴ Jay, 11.

¹¹⁵ Jay, 11.

my critique of the educational value of work experience.

As a form of education, experience has often been associated with risk and corruption. Etymologically, the English word for experience comes from the Latin *experiential*, which according to Jay (2005) “denoted ‘trial, proof, or experiment’.”¹¹⁶ Further, the Latin *expereri*, meaning ‘to try,’ shares its root with *periculum*, meaning ‘peril’ or ‘danger’.¹¹⁷ In Jay’s analysis, these connections suggest that experience is produced in the survival of risk and in the retrospective learning process it inspires. Experience can therefore “connote a worldliness that has left innocence behind by facing and surmounting the dangers and challenges that life may present.”¹¹⁸

Jay draws on cultural philosopher Walter Benjamin’s 1913 essay on experience to explore this darker side of experience. Reflecting on his own youthful participation in subversive politics, Benjamin refers to experience as “the mask of the adult,” who arrives at the scene of dissent to dash the idealistic hopes of the inexperienced.¹¹⁹ He writes, “The adult has already experienced everything: youth, ideals, hopes [...] It was all illusion. Often we feel intimidated or embittered. Perhaps he is right. What can our retort be? We have not yet experienced anything.”¹²⁰ In this way, Benjamin suggests, experience establishes a hierarchical divide between the experienced and the inexperienced. The energetic optimism of the young, say the weathered adults, will eventually succumb to experience, which, Benjamin writes, brings with it “years of compromise, impoverishment of ideas, and apathy,”¹²¹ forcing a negotiation between political ideals and the futility of class struggle

¹¹⁶ Jay, 10.

¹¹⁷ Jay, 10.

¹¹⁸ Jay, 10.

¹¹⁹ Benjamin, “Experience,” 116.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

that is, in this case, the lesson taught by experience.

Benjamin's interpretation rejects the association of inexperience with powerlessness. Indeed, for experience to pose a threat to rich ideas, freedom of thought must precede experience. In the contemporary case of the student worker, the tradition being handed down through *Erfahrung* is one of deeply embedded, and ever intensifying, systems of exploitation. A student may therefore be better situated to challenge industry norms precisely because of her 'inexperience' in the labour market. Yet, this student is not altogether without experience. Her situation may be described in terms of *erlebnis*, the immediate lived experience through which she encounters the workplace for the first time. Seeing the workplace from outside the oppressive weight of its tradition, the student worker is in some ways better equipped to recognize and challenge unjust conditions for cultural work than her more seasoned co-workers.

American pragmatist John Dewey wrote extensively on the role of experience in education. His interpretation also helps to dismantle the assumption that inexperience constitutes an absence of knowledge or of capability. For Dewey, "every experience is a moving force," and the educational value of experience lies in its ability to "move us into the future rather than tying us down to the past."¹²² Dewey makes a distinction between "continuity" and "routinization" in education: continuity addresses the impact of one's previous experience on the way one approaches further situations, and routinization refers to a desensitizing repetition that precludes one's ability to create new meanings from experience.¹²³ He laments that the principle of continuity is misunderstood in "traditional" education, which assumes that a student's experience will not only shape her further

¹²² Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*, 290.

¹²³ Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 34.

experience, but that experience can prepare students for future endeavours by fostering skills.¹²⁴

Dewey is skeptical of the translation of experience into readiness or mastery. He points instead to the effects of experience upon students' subjective attitudes, chief of which is for Dewey "the desire to go on learning."¹²⁵ If an experience should weaken this desire, the result is not a mere "lack of preparation" but a depletion of energy; the student is "robbed" of the tacit knowledge and ability that had formerly allowed her to "cope" with her circumstances.¹²⁶ For Dewey as well as for Benjamin, experience can involve a 'taking away,' a robbery, an impoverishment. This acknowledgement of the harmful and discouraging side of experience helps us reject the assumption that it is an unmitigated good.

2.3.2. Contesting the Valorization of Experience

The neoliberal concept of work experience relies on a discursive valorization of experience that justifies its substitution for monetary compensation. In this way, neoliberal logic resists the notion that theory and practice are inextricably intertwined. Deborah Britzman's work challenges this valorization by calling attention to the "underlying structures and assumptions" that "authorize" the educational value of experience.¹²⁷ She writes, "Enacted in every pedagogy are the tensions between knowing and being, thought and action, theory and practice, knowledge and experience."¹²⁸ Experience and theory

¹²⁴ Dewey, 47.

¹²⁵ Dewey, 48.

¹²⁶ Dewey, 48.

¹²⁷ Britzman, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*, 33.

¹²⁸ Britzman, 2.

therefore “shape each other in the process of coming to know.”¹²⁹

Significantly for Britzman, vocational models of education tend to rely on a “monological” interpretation of the learning process, where “knowledge may change the knower, [but] the knower is perceived as incapable of changing or producing knowledge.”¹³⁰ The neoliberal concept of work experience privileges this one-directional interpretation of the learning process. Here the student is denied a productive role in her relationship with knowledge and in the workplace; her role as learner proscribes her role as worker. Conversely, Britzman situates the student as a producer rather than a consumer. Such a lens accounts for the active role that students play in producing knowledge and experience through their work placements. It also suggests that the knowledge produced by the student can be situated within a wider system of value. Instead of viewing experience as a resource to be accumulated by students, Britzman reveals student work as a power struggle through which knowledge is lived, interpreted, contested, and transformed.¹³¹

Britzman further argues that the valorization of experience marks its conflation with common sense, and so works to posit “essential truths, resist[ing] explanations about the complications we live.”¹³² In its reliance on simplification, this common-sense narrative stifles criticism and fosters complacency with the dominant order. It assumes that if a student cannot cope with or learn from her experience, the fault is her own. For Britzman, who writes about student teachers in a classroom-based training program, “the cycle of self-blame” is reproduced as the student “situates the problem as her own failure to know

¹²⁹ Britzman, 2.

¹³⁰ Britzman, 30.

¹³¹ Britzman, 32.

¹³² Britzman, 7.

rather than as an effect of the absurdity of the system.”¹³³ As in the case of a cultural industry internship, students are distracted from the material power structures that authorize their disempowerment and feel they should take it upon themselves to overcome this deprivation. To combat the valorization of experience, we must emphasize that work experience cannot stand alone as an education in itself. When experience is put into conversation with critical reflection, students are better equipped to see the structures that dictate their conditions of work.

2.3.3. Situating the Student as Producer

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, political philosopher Jacques Rancière also contends that student self-blame is fed by traditional schooling methods. Rancière observes that in educational institutions, “those excluded from the world of intelligence themselves subscribe to the verdict of their exclusion.”¹³⁴ What for Britzman is a cycle of blame is for Rancière a “circle of powerlessness.”¹³⁵ He sees this pattern perpetuated by the relationship between student and teacher, wherein “one intelligence is subordinated to another.”¹³⁶ Institutional education is then predicated upon the student’s intellectual impoverishment; her subordination is naturalized by her presumed lack of knowledge and experience. In place of this, Rancière conceives of an “emancipatory” method of education¹³⁷ in which the knowledge and experience already embodied in the student are mobilized to inspire her active participation in the production of knowledge. Rancière uses

¹³³ Britzman, 86.

¹³⁴ Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation.*, 16.

¹³⁵ Britzman, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*, 13.

¹³⁶ Britzman, 13.

¹³⁷ The “ignorant schoolmaster” is Rancière’s prototype for an educational process that begins by casting the student and teacher as equals. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation.*

the example of students learning an additional language under the guidance of a teacher who does not know that language. With the teacher's encouragement, students use their own interpretive skills to decipher the meaning of unfamiliar prose. From this perspective, the role of experience in education is to "reveal an intelligence to itself" in deliberate rejection of self-blame.¹³⁸

Rancière's problematization of self-blame echoes the argument made by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a foundational text for the critical pedagogy movement. Freire draws on Hegelian dialectics and Marx's theory of exploitation as well as interviews with workers in Brazil to explain how education can serve as a liberating force. Freire's critique of the "banking" model of education¹³⁹ points toward a radical re-visioning of knowledge production. As it is described by Freire, the banking model treats the student as an object of teaching: passive and empty until filled with external knowledge, so that "the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits."¹⁴⁰ Like Britzman and Rancière, Freire argues that one of the main barriers to meaningful pedagogy is the student's tendency to "self-depreciate" in accordance with the condition of emptiness imposed by the banking model, so that "they become convinced of their own unfitness."¹⁴¹

Similarly, in the neoliberal concept, education and experience are treated as a form of currency. The educational process centres on depositing both knowledge and experience into the student and denies her an active role in the production of both. For Freire, this emphasis discourages the student's critique of her lived conditions:

¹³⁸ Rancière, 28.

¹³⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 58.

¹⁴⁰ Freire, 58.

¹⁴¹ Freire, 49.

The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they intend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them.¹⁴²

While experience is for Freire a resource, it does not lend itself to simple acquisition or accumulation by students. Instead, students play an active role in the production of experience. Such analysis disarms the neoliberal logic that posits an inexperienced student characterized by absence upon her entry into the workforce.

In his own reflection on Freire's thought, education scholar Henry Giroux writes that in order for experience to become a "meaningful pedagogical resource," it must "take a detour through theory, self-reflection, and critique."¹⁴³ In this way, experience lends context to learning material, endowing it with meaning by giving students "the opportunity to relate their own narratives, social relations, and histories to what is being taught."¹⁴⁴ Like the other thinkers encountered in this section, Freire warns us that practice works not instead of but alongside theory "in order to dispel the notion that experience provides some form of unambiguous truth."¹⁴⁵ Through theory, students can problematize their experiences of exploitation or disempowerment. Indeed, Giroux suggests, Freire sees experience as not only a means of helping students to become aware of their material conditions but also to further "their understanding of the limits often imposed by such conditions."¹⁴⁶ Thus the production of knowledge through experience can foster class

¹⁴² Freire, 60.

¹⁴³ Henry Giroux, "Critical Pedagogy, Paulo Freire, and the Courage to Be Political," 2015, 3, https://www.academia.edu/15689086/Critical_Pedagogy_Paulo_Friere_and_the_Courage_to_be_Political.

¹⁴⁴ Giroux, 2.

¹⁴⁵ Giroux, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Giroux, 2.

consciousness, which is otherwise obscured by the neoliberal formulation that deemphasizes antagonisms between labour and capital.

To summarize, a historical analysis of the concept of experience as education yields a theoretical framework that grants the student agency in shaping her experiences through interpretation and critique. It attributes to students the tacit knowledge and capability of which the neoliberal approach disarms them. Jay situates the value of experience within discourses of knowledge and of risk, through which the student who learns from experience can be both enriched and deprived. Dewey, Freire, and Britzman emphasize that experience cannot be separated from theory, and that the knowledge borne by experience is produced dialogically. These collaborative processes of knowledge production work to denaturalize – and in many cases problematize – dominant neoliberal understandings of education, experience, and work. Moreover, Freire and Rancière reject the disempowering approaches to knowledge that have characterized traditional education. Instead, they advance an understanding of knowledge that both precedes and makes possible an emancipatory learning process through experience. As Britzman writes, the value of experience “depends upon the ways in which we construct experience as lived, and whether such constructions permit the agency of the knower.”¹⁴⁷ The theories explored in this section privilege the student worker not only as a locus of knowledge, but also as an immanent challenge to the prevailing conditions for cultural work.

2.4. Autonomist Marxism and the Work of Experience

In this section I expand on the previous theoretical approaches to experience and

¹⁴⁷ Britzman, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*, 215.

education by addressing the problem of precarious student cultural work through an autonomist Marxist framework. I argue that autonomist theorizations of immaterial labour, precarity, subjectivity, affect, and living knowledge can complement the critical and radical approaches to experience and education explored in the previous section. Autonomist Marxism, the English term referring to the Italian theoretical tradition of *post-operaismo*, centres workers' struggles and search for autonomy at the core of its analysis and emphasizes the dynamic antagonisms between labour and capital.¹⁴⁸ In this way, autonomist perspectives destabilize the neoliberal positioning of the student worker as merely a beneficiary of work experience and as attentive to the demands of capital, re-positioning her as a potential force of dissent.

I structure this section by pointing to several key dimensions of the autonomist approach to labour and resistance. I begin with a discussion of immaterial labour,¹⁴⁹ the theoretical dimensions of which lend insight into contemporary conditions for precarious work. I then locate processes of precarity within an analysis of student worker subjectivity. Next, I explore tensions between cultural workers' emotional relationships to their labour and their need for material compensation. Here I also investigate the feminization of cultural work through a 'labour of love' discourse. I then draw on Gigi Roggero's concept of "living knowledge" to position the student worker as a producer of knowledge and experience. Lastly, I consider two strategies of worker resistance upheld by the autonomist tradition – exit and refusal of work – in the context of the student cultural worker. Together these theories provide a framework through which to articulate work experience as

¹⁴⁸ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 64; Gill and Pratt, "In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work," 5.

¹⁴⁹ Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour."

grounds for resistance.

2.4.1. Immaterial Labour and the Student Worker

Autonomist Marxist analyses of immaterial labour shed light on the student's relationship to cultural work. Immaterial labour can be defined as the production of intangible commodities such as information, communication, entertainment, emotion, education, or care.¹⁵⁰ The rapidly expanding category of jobs that involve immaterial labour includes a wide range of productive activity, from elder care, to blogging, to sex work. Yet the line between material and immaterial labour is hardly well-defined. This is at first because immaterial labour has material consequences for workers and for the environment – as in the case of cultural industries, where immaterial production often relies on material tools and infrastructure produced at sites of intense manual labour and environmental degradation.¹⁵¹ Further, this line is blurred because manual work increasingly involves information-based work as well, with traditional manufacturing sectors requiring digital designers to maintain databases and program automated production processes.¹⁵² Such corollaries of post-Fordism mark what Gill and Pratt call the “stubborn materiality of most work,” which sheds controversy on the concept of immaterial labour.¹⁵³

Optimistic accounts of the rise of immaterial labour highlight its potential to elude capitalist organization.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, such labour processes have also been subject to

¹⁵⁰ Lazzarato, 132; Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 53.

¹⁵¹ Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Proletariat*, 3.

¹⁵² Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labour,” 132.

¹⁵³ Gill and Pratt, “In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work,” 9.

¹⁵⁴ See for example Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's discussion of the “hegemony of immaterial labour” in Hardt and Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, 113.

capitalist capture in a variety of ways, from the development of increasingly invasive forms of technological labour discipline¹⁵⁵ to the aggressive use of intellectual property rights for controlling workers' creative products.¹⁵⁶ In 'post-industrial' workplaces, workers are often responsible for decision-making and for using a personal sense of "creativity" in the work routine.¹⁵⁷ Due in part to the mental and emotional investments demanded of the worker, labour seeps into leisure time, as autonomists such as Lazzarato and Papadopoulos have argued.¹⁵⁸

Meanwhile, recreational activities such as posting on social media and shopping online are brought into the realm of immaterial labour in autonomist analyses. For example, Tiziana Terranova's discussion of "free labour" recognizes cultural work in the value-producing activity of digital technology users, whose every click is monitored and commodified by vast corporate databases.¹⁵⁹ In this context, Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus point out, the production of labouring subjects has begun long before students are implicated in formal work-based learning.¹⁶⁰ The process of growing up in and through digitally mediated spaces constitutes participation in cultural work from a young age. Cultural production undertaken by young people in the form of social media activity and independent media production is heavily commodified by the corporate owners of online spaces, so that young digital media users are subjected to casual employment

¹⁵⁵ Enda Brophy uses work in a call centre as an example of immaterial labour subject to intense systems of rationalization, routinization, and measure in the service of capital. Enda Brophy, *Language Put to Work: The Making of the Global Call Centre Workforce*, Dynamics of Virtual Work (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 221.

¹⁵⁶ Cohen, *Writers' Rights: Freelance Journalism in a Digital Age*, 51.

¹⁵⁷ Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour," 133.

¹⁵⁸ Lazzarato, 137; Gill and Pratt, "In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work," 17.

¹⁵⁹ Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy."

¹⁶⁰ Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus, "Learning to Immaterial Labour 2.0: Facebook and Social Networks," in *Cognitive Capitalism, Education, and Digital Labor*, ed. Michael A. Peters and Ergin Bulut (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 177.

relationships long before they begin higher education.¹⁶¹

2.4.2. Precarious Work and Subjectivity

Subjectivity is a central concern for autonomist Marxist thought and, according to Lazzarato, one of the “raw materials” of immaterial labour.¹⁶² As Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt write, “more than any other body of scholarship [autonomist Marxism] has been concerned to connect changes in the organization of capitalism to transformations in subjectivity.”¹⁶³ It is at the level of subjectivity that autonomism contributes most significantly to an analysis of precarious work. This framework elucidates a connection that will be explored more concretely in Chapter Three: the student cultural worker is encouraged to cultivate a flexible worker subjectivity in preparation for a future of precarious work.

Autonomists often associate precarious work with the rise of the post-Fordist economy, where fluidity and uncertainty prevail. However, precarious labour conditions are not unique to contemporary capitalism. Labour researcher Leah Vosko notes that precarious employment was in fact “the norm” in late 19th and early 20th centuries in Canada, for migrant workers especially.¹⁶⁴ She reminds us that during the late Fordist, post-World War II era, “the standard employment relationship came to be identified with a full-time continuous employment relationship” characterized by a living wage as well as access to union protection and social benefits.¹⁶⁵ Meanwhile, the very possibility of stable

¹⁶¹ Brophy, “Labouring to Learn: Lineaments of the Creative-Academic Complex in Vancouver,” 108.

¹⁶² Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labour,” 142.

¹⁶³ Gill and Pratt, “In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work,” 18.

¹⁶⁴ Leah Vosko, *Precarious Employment* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 5.

¹⁶⁵ Vosko, 6.

employment under capitalism has always been Euro-centric and gendered, and the expectation of stable work is still primarily reserved for the white male worker.¹⁶⁶ Vosko writes that in the 1970s, with the shift to a post-Fordist regime of accumulation, the standard employment relationship “eroded” in Canada and was replaced with “part-time and temporary wage work, solo self-employment (where the worker has no employees), and multiple job holding.”¹⁶⁷ However, a process-oriented understanding of precarity upheld by autonomists such as Roggero shows us that precarization is not an even or unidirectional process. Instead, continually fluctuating conditions of precarity are tied to the recomposition of labour and capital, and are therefore driven by ongoing struggle.

As a contested figure in the current landscape of cultural work, the student worker’s relationship to precarity is of great consequence to the future of working conditions in cultural industries. If, as the neoliberal formulation suggests, the student worker is a blank slate, we might project on to her the characteristics of what Greig de Peuter calls the “role model worker” of the cultural industry.¹⁶⁸ The worker best suited to precarious work is not only materially equipped to work for free, but is also, in her subjective traits: passionate about her work, adept at self-management, and malleable to job market demand.¹⁶⁹ For

¹⁶⁶ Vosko, 6.

¹⁶⁷ Vosko, 9.

¹⁶⁸ Greig de Peuter, “Beyond the Model Worker: Surveying a Creative Precariat,” *Culture Unbound* 6 (2014).

¹⁶⁹ For de Peuter, “the thrust of the role model proposition is that priorities of post-Fordist, neoliberal capitalism are exemplified by the conditions and propensities of those in nonstandard employment navigating the liquid labour markets of the vaunted ‘creative economy’: habituated to self-reliance; accepting a high level of risk; allergic to bureaucracy; juggling multiple short-term ‘projects’; blurring the boundaries of work and non-work time; preternaturally adaptable; striving to be innovative and unique; producing monetary value from knowledge, symbols, or other-wise intangible resources; carefully branding the self; personally funding perpetual education upgrades; vigorously managing social networks within highly informal labour markets; performing work without a guarantee of compensation; assuming responsibility for maintaining a steady flow of paid work and, hence, on a job search without end; and willingness to put the passion for the work ahead of the size of the pay.” de Peuter, 264.

the proper functioning of a flexible cognitive labour force, Roggero writes, “the precariat must not be born only at the moment of its encounter with the labour market, it must be constitutive of the mentality of the person, it must be inoculated into the person as self-perception.”¹⁷⁰ Because, as Roggero holds, the university is “a space for the production of subjectivity,”¹⁷¹ the post-secondary work placement provides a powerful moment for shaping students into ideal candidates for precarious cultural work. Yet the student worker, whose access to work experience through internships and practicum placements is predicated upon her own flexibility, is not only a ‘model worker’ in the making but in fact already embodies the key qualities of this figure.

Such analysis resonates with that of Nancy Fraser, who, while working outside the autonomist tradition, uses the term “flexibilization” to describe the way in which subjects are conditioned for life and labour in a post-Fordist regime of accumulation.¹⁷² For Fraser, neoliberal governance produces subjects who are accustomed to lifestyles of “fluidity, provisionality, and a temporal horizon of ‘no long term’,”¹⁷³ thus reproducing the flexible relations of production ideal for the post-Fordist worker. Flexibilization hereby becomes a new frontier of labour discipline for ‘immaterial’ labour, in which, Lazzarato writes, “the worker’s personality and subjectivity have to be made susceptible to organization and command.”¹⁷⁴ In these contexts, Roggero suggests that the newest challenge to corporations will be to increase workers’ “loyalty” to flexible labour.¹⁷⁵ As we have seen already in this chapter, the neoliberal concept of work experience does encourage the

¹⁷⁰ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 84.

¹⁷¹ Roggero, 84.

¹⁷² Nancy Fraser, “From Discipline to Flexibilization? Rereading Foucault in the Shadow of Globalization,” *Constellations* 10, no. 2 (2003): 160.

¹⁷³ Fraser, 170.

¹⁷⁴ Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labour,” 133.

¹⁷⁵ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 101.

student to embrace conditions of uncertainty and underpay. However, as we will see in Chapter Four, flexibilization does not proceed uncontested in the arena of student work.

2.4.3. Affect and Feminization

In her Marxist feminist analysis of precarity and subjectivity, cultural critic Madeleine Schwartz writes that interns' "submissiveness and tractability, their willingness to perform work for free" illustrates the "flexibility and obedience demanded by contingency."¹⁷⁶ Such characteristics are profoundly feminized in patriarchal capitalism, Schwartz argues. They are also reminiscent of the model cultural worker qualities that for de Peuter include flexibility and a passionate relationship to work.¹⁷⁷ Feminization has long been used to devalue many kinds of work, including reproductive tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing. Autonomist Marxist feminists such as Silvia Federici and Giovanna Franca Dalla Costa have identified an "ideology of love" that obscures the productivity of household labour, which under capitalism has traditionally been unpaid and designated for women.¹⁷⁸ As in the case of reproductive work, cultural production is thought to appeal to those who are naturally equipped for and emotionally attached to the labour process it entails. As such, popular assumptions about cultural workers' passionate relationships to their labour echo the patriarchal mechanisms used to disqualify feminized labour as real work.¹⁷⁹

As labour researchers such as Ursula Huws and Nicole Cohen have noted, popular impressions that cultural work is a 'labour of love' and not 'real work' obscure the working

¹⁷⁶ Madeleine Schwartz, "Opportunity Costs: The True Price of Internships," *Dissent Magazine*, 2013, <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/opportunity-costs-the-true-price-of-internships>.

¹⁷⁷ de Peuter, "Beyond the Model Worker: Surveying a Creative Precariat," 264.

¹⁷⁸ Rodino-Colocino and Beberick, "'You Kind of Have to Bite the Bullet and Do Bitch Work': How Internships Teach Students to Unthink Exploitation in Public Relations," 493.

¹⁷⁹ Rodino-Colocino and Beberick, 492.

conditions around which this work is organized.¹⁸⁰ Cultural workers themselves often internalize such patronizing discourse, Huws contends, and struggle to negotiate genuine enjoyment of their work with their need to support themselves materially.¹⁸¹ Similarly, Roggero identifies “passion” among these workers as a relationship to labour that “allows one to accept the unacceptable.”¹⁸² However, the cultural worker’s martyrdom is a myth perpetuated by the dominant discourse of the industry.¹⁸³ Seldom publicized affective conditions that structure these workers’ experience include the well-documented “fatigue, exhaustion and frustration” of cultural work, as well as fears of rejection and unemployment, relentless competition, and a looming anxiety stemming from the need to incessantly self-promote and network, both on- and off-line.¹⁸⁴

2.4.4. Living Knowledge

Amidst backlash against the ‘ideology of love’ that surrounds cultural work, it is important to acknowledge the flipside of the commitments that characterize cognitive labour. Autonomists reckon with the closeness between worker and labour process not only in terms of affect, but also through the notion of embodiment. Gigi Roggero takes up this thread in *The Production of Living Knowledge*, in which he develops the concept of “living knowledge” and positions it at the centre of antagonisms between labour and capital under a regime of “cognitive capitalism.” For Roggero, cognitive capitalism is marked by the organization of capital around the production of knowledge- and information-based

¹⁸⁰ Huws, “Expression and Expropriation: The Dialectics of Autonomy and Control in Creative Labour,” 101; Cohen, “Cultural Work as a Site of Struggle: Freelancers and Exploitation,” 145.

¹⁸¹ Huws, “Expression and Expropriation: The Dialectics of Autonomy and Control in Creative Labour,” 101.

¹⁸² Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 103.

¹⁸³ Gill and Pratt, “In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work,” 15.

¹⁸⁴ Gill and Pratt, 15–16.

commodities, and by the centrality of cognitive or intellectual labour processes to the terrain of class struggle.¹⁸⁵ In these contexts, capital's attempts to abstract knowledge from the worker are met by labour's search for autonomy and self-valorization,¹⁸⁶ in which living knowledge becomes a key tool.¹⁸⁷

Roggero's concept of living knowledge aligns with the Marxist category of "living labour" or "labour-power in action,"¹⁸⁸ defined in relation to "dead" or "objectified" labour.¹⁸⁹ Whereas living labour is performed directly by the worker, dead labour refers to the objectification of past labour for use in the future. Marx writes, "the distinction between *objectified* and *living labour* manifests itself in the actual *process of labour*. The means of production, [raw materials and tools] are products, use-values, which *embody* definite, useful, concrete acts of labour."¹⁹⁰ For example, once a machine has been designed, the labour that went into its production, as well as the production process it performs, is stored for future use. The machine is hereby a form of capital that, as Marx writes, "becomes the real master of living labour" through capitalist modes of production.¹⁹¹ However, as David Harvey reminds us, "it is the contact with living labor which resuscitates the value of the dead labor congealed in past products."¹⁹² In this way, the worker is vital to the labour process and brings to it a unique capacity to produce value. For Marx, living labour is the

¹⁸⁵ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*.

¹⁸⁶ "Self-valorization" is the English term for the concept of "autovalorizzazione," developed in Italian by Antonio Negri. For Negri, self-valorization describes workers' use of liberated time, after the refusal work. The term speaks to workers' ability to develop their own capacities and creativities and participate in a range of alternative pursuits outside of capital's control. See Antonio Negri, *Marx beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*, ed. Jim Fleming, trans. Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan, and Maurizio Viano (South Hadley: Bergin & Garvey, 1984).

¹⁸⁷ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 97.

¹⁸⁸ Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. I (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 315.

¹⁸⁹ Marx, I:994.

¹⁹⁰ Marx, I:993.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital* (London: Verso, 2010), 118.

“realization” of the worker’s “productive faculties,” and ultimately “the function of the worker, not the capitalist.”¹⁹³

Roggero seeks to “denaturalize” knowledge and to emphasize its roots in this labour process.¹⁹⁴ By highlighting the extent to which cognitive labour power is produced by and embodied in the worker, the concept of living knowledge draws attention to the fundamental antagonism internal to capital’s logic. It also reveals that capital’s attempts to capture the knowledge of workers are never completely successful.¹⁹⁵ As Roggero writes, “the living body is one of the irreducible sources of resistance to capitalist abstraction.”¹⁹⁶ An autonomist Marxist framework for understanding the cultural worker’s relationship to knowledge thereby helps us to recognize the student’s active role as producer and to bring her potential for resistance to the fore.

In these contexts, work experience emerges as a terrain of struggle over the knowledge that students both produce and embody. Whereas neoliberal formulations hold students apart from their knowledge and experience, autonomism offers a means of conceptual reunion. To say that knowledge is embodied is not merely to suggest that it is owned or possessed by the student. Embodiment posits a form of possession without the implications of property ownership; it situates knowledge within and of the student worker without implying, first, that knowledge could be possessed, and second, by extension, that its knower could be dispossessed of it. The autonomist Marxist notion of embodiment rejects the trade relationship that is built around knowledge in its ideological commodity

¹⁹³ Marx, *Capital*, I:982.

¹⁹⁴ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 8.

¹⁹⁵ Roggero, 96.

¹⁹⁶ Roggero, 96.

form, and points toward the wholesale rejection of experience as a form of currency that can be exchanged for labour power.

The neoliberal concept of work experience deemphasizes the role of living labour to conceal the value that a student worker adds to an organization. Further, by emphasizing the knowledge that the student worker will gain from the experience, this formulation does not account for the knowledge brought to the organization by the student worker, and for her role in producing knowledge through labour. Roggero's conceptualization helps us to understand the relationship between experience and living labour. For Roggero, knowledge is "embodied in living labor, its production, and its struggles."¹⁹⁷ The neoliberal concept of work experience relies upon the commodification of knowledge, which implies its externalization from the knower and therefore its ability to be objectified in a machine. However, as Nicole Cohen puts it, "certain skills or capacities are fundamental to cultural production and cannot be fully separated from the worker."¹⁹⁸ From an autonomist perspective, both experience and the potential that resides in inexperience are forms of living knowledge, and therefore embodied by the student. In this way, experience is not a resource that the student must pay to access – it is both a condition and product of her labour. To recognize that knowledge is inseparable from the knower and to acknowledge its roots in concrete relations of production is to reject the neoliberal concept of work experience.

2.4.5. Exit and Refusal

As a site for the production of living knowledge, the university is a site of struggle for

¹⁹⁷ Roggero, 8.

¹⁹⁸ Cohen, *Writers' Rights: Freelance Journalism in a Digital Age*, 44.

student workers. Though they enter the workforce unprotected and undervalued, these workers can arm themselves with the knowledge they embody and demand compensation for their value-creating experience in cultural industries. For Lazzarato, young precarious workers hold the capacity to enact struggle because their control over their own work has not yet been undermined.¹⁹⁹ Through its emphasis on the worker's search for autonomy, autonomist Marxism calls the worker's vulnerability into question. As Greig de Peuter ultimately argues in "Beyond the Model Worker," analyses of the worker's acceptance of precarity often underestimate her ability to recognize and resist poor working conditions.²⁰⁰ de Peuter contests the assumption that today's "creative precariat" is eager to bend to the volatile demands of the cultural industry job market. He writes, "the notion of the model-worker," while a "compelling critical diagnostic of the self-management of precarity in post-Fordist times, [...] occludes the capacity to contest among the workforces it represents."²⁰¹

The autonomist position suggests that the precarity imposed upon workers was both a response to the victories won by organized labour in the post-war era²⁰² and to the demands for "flexibility" made by workers themselves during this period.²⁰³ More contentiously, autonomists grapple with the idea that precarity can fuel workers' emancipation. Lazzarato, for instance, points out that capital's need to incorporate workers' subjectivities into their control strategies has the effect of "re-pos[ing] the antagonism at a higher level, because it both mobilizes and clashes with the very personality of the individual worker."²⁰⁴ Roggero frames this potential in terms of loyalty,

¹⁹⁹ Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour," 135.

²⁰⁰ de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, "Interrogating Internships: Unpaid Work, Creative Industries, and Higher Education."

²⁰¹ de Peuter, "Beyond the Model Worker: Surveying a Creative Precariat," 265.

²⁰² Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 40.

²⁰³ Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*, 37.

²⁰⁴ Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour," 134.

noting that an absence of loyalty toward workers on the part of employers, manifest in a lack of salaries, job security, and seniority rights, is often met with a rebellious disloyalty on the part of workers, who have little to lose by inflicting damage or inconvenience upon their employers.²⁰⁵ In this way, “the mobility of knowledge and the horizontal mobility of subjects become tools for the self-valorization of living labour and for bargaining as well” even in the absence of a union.²⁰⁶ Roggero uses the example of a precariously employed computer programmer planning an “exit” from his current company.²⁰⁷ The worker’s assertion, “my knowledge will go with me” signals his confidence in the decision to abandon his employer,²⁰⁸ and as a general attitude captures the potential inherent in the concept of living knowledge, which is always a step ahead of capital’s attempts at expropriation.

The radical politics of exit are part of the long-standing autonomist strategy – inherited from the Italian *operaismo* movement – of the refusal of work.²⁰⁹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri write in *Empire*, “The refusal of work and authority, or really the refusal of voluntary servitude, is the beginning of liberatory politics.”²¹⁰ In practice, this strategy may include “slacking, absenteeism, wildcat strikes and acts of refusal or sabotage within the workplace.”²¹¹ Such acts have occasionally been documented in the literature on internships I review. For instance, Alexandre Frenette makes note of stories about “bad

²⁰⁵ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 100.

²⁰⁶ Roggero, 100.

²⁰⁷ Roggero, 103.

²⁰⁸ Roggero, 103.

²⁰⁹ Gill and Pratt, “In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work,” 6.

²¹⁰ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 204.

²¹¹ Gill and Pratt, “In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work,” 6.

interns who did little or no work, were fired, quit, or simply stopped showing up.”²¹² A cultural industry intern interviewed by Shade and Jacobson declares having quit as soon as she felt she was no longer benefitting from her work placement.²¹³ As part of the subversive ethic of student labour struggles, these refusals offer an alternative to the “productivist values”²¹⁴ that uphold the centrality of work to education. However, Hardt and Negri remind us that refusal is only part of a necessary response to capital: “Our lines of flight, our exodus must be constituent and create a real alternative. Beyond the simple refusal, or as part of that refusal, we need also to construct a new mode of life and above all a new community.”²¹⁵ In Chapter Four, we will see how the mobilization of student workers and their advocates offers varying degrees of traction to these liberatory goals.

2.5. Conclusions

Drawing on critical philosophies of education alongside autonomist Marxism, this chapter has assembled a framework through which to critique the neoliberal concept of work experience. It has shown how the neoliberal framework diminishes the accessibility of learning experiences and normalizes, as it reproduces, the devaluation and precarization of cultural work. As we will see in the next chapter, the neoliberal approach has set the tone for both policy and standard practice shaping student cultural work in Canada. It pervades the dominant discourse on work experience produced by student workers, employers, and social commentators. The neoliberal concept relies on four

²¹² Frenette, “Making the Intern Economy,” 387.

²¹³ Shade and Jacobson, “Hungry for the Job: Gender, Unpaid Internships, and the Creative Industries,” 198.

²¹⁴ Kathi Weeks, “The Refusal of Work as Demand and Perspective,” in *Resistance in Practice: The Philosophy of Antonio Negri* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 109–35.

²¹⁵ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 204.

primary assumptions: that the student worker is individually responsible for the material and emotional costs of her own education, that her labour power is less valuable for her inexperience, that experience is of unequivocal benefit to her, and that the demands of the employer are in her best interests.

This chapter has taken up philosophies of experience and education and autonomist Marxist thought to challenge the neoliberal concept of work experience and move toward its re-formulation, emphasizing the active role of students in the production of knowledge and experience as well as the value they bring to the workplace. In both frameworks, knowledge is understood as a product of our lived experiences, and, more specifically, as a product of our reflections upon – and struggles with – the meaning of our experience. If knowledge is embodied in the knower, then its expropriation in the form of unpaid work can and should be resisted. The source of liberation upon which each body of thought depends is the realization that knowledge is a social product; it does not occur outside the subject and cannot be treated as a resource for acquisition. Together, these theories help to reconceptualize work experience to recognize the value that students bring to employers through the production of experience. As such, students can be acknowledged as what they are: workers who should be compensated for their labour, and whose collective mobilization can achieve better conditions for cultural work.

Chapter 3.

Teaching Disentitlement: Neoliberal Discourse on Work Experience

Throughout this thesis, I argue that the dominant discourse on work experience authorizes and reproduces conditions of low pay and precarity by establishing a neoliberal framework for student cultural work. In Chapter Two, I identified four main assumptions that underpin the neoliberal concept of work experience: that students are individually responsible for their own vocational training; that student workers' labour power is not valuable; that experience is inherently beneficial and can function as compensation; and that the interests of student workers and their employers are aligned. This chapter investigates concrete examples of the discourse that mobilizes these assumptions. I use Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) to identify neoliberal discourse on work experience as part of the dominant "ideological-discursive formation (IDF)"²¹⁶ that reflects and shapes university students' participation in Canadian cultural work. Using Fairclough's framework, I analyze twenty "discursive events"²¹⁷ that exemplify neoliberal logic, including articles from university- and employer-facilitated blogs as well as editorial articles from two mainstream Canadian news sources and one student zine.

Neoliberal discourse on work experience is recognizable through four pervasive themes, each supporting a key assumption explored in Chapter Two. First, the assumption that students are individually responsible for their own vocational training is expressed through the discursive theme of *investment*, often articulated in terms of individual responsibility. Second, the assumption that student workers are liminal subjects who have

²¹⁶ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 10.

²¹⁷ Fairclough, 10.

not yet earned labour rights is expressed through the discursive theme of *initiation*. Third, the assumption that experience is of unequivocal benefit to students is expressed through a discursive *valorization* of experience. Fourth, the assumption that work experience programs are of mutual benefit to student workers and employers is expressed through the *alignment* of student workers' best interests with those of their employers. While these four narratives authorize exploitative and disempowering forms of student cultural work, they also hold the potential for doubt, dissent, and a building sense of injustice that threaten the neoliberal concept of work experience.

3.1. Methodology

I use Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis to interpret a set of examples that operationalize the four central assumptions I discuss in Chapter Two. For Fairclough, such assumptions are situated within value systems and belong to particular discourses.²¹⁸ Instances of discourse can be attributed to "ideological-discursive formations (IDFs)," each abiding by its own set of ideological norms, which it in turn reproduces.²¹⁹ Drawing from Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, Fairclough describes how dominant IDFs naturalize ideologies by "win[ning] acceptance for them as non-ideological 'common sense'."²²⁰ The central aim of his method is to denaturalize ideological-discursive formations by "showing how social structures determine properties of discourse, and how discourse in turn determines social structures."²²¹ For Fairclough, text itself is a site of social struggle through which ideological contradictions are

²¹⁸ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, 58.

²¹⁹ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 27.

²²⁰ Fairclough, 27.

²²¹ Fairclough, 27.

negotiated.²²² He writes,

it is in concrete discursive practice that hegemonic structuring of orders of discourse are produced, reproduced, challenged and transformed. Any instance of discursive practice can thus be interpreted in terms of its relationship to existing orders of discourse and discursive practices (is it broadly normative, reproducing them, or creative, contributing to their transformation?), as well as its relationship to existing social structures, ideologies and power relations.²²³

In this way, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is an "oppositional practice" centred on textual analysis.²²⁴ His "three-dimensional" framework for critique "looks to establish connections between properties of texts, features of discourse practice (text production, consumption, and distribution), and wider sociocultural practice."²²⁵ I explore each of these dimensions in my analysis of neoliberal discourse on work experience.

3.1.1. Text and Texture

Fairclough's study of text is concerned not only with 'content' in relation to meaning, but also with what he calls the "*texture* of texts," that is, their form and organization.²²⁶ These "textural properties" he writes, are "sensitive indicators of sociocultural processes, relations, and change."²²⁷ Fairclough considers many "levels of organization" when it comes to textual analysis: "textual form, structure and organization at all levels; phonological, grammatical, lexical (vocabulary) and higher levels of textual organization

²²² Fairclough, 7.

²²³ Fairclough, 95.

²²⁴ Fairclough, 24.

²²⁵ Fairclough, 87.

²²⁶ Fairclough, 4.

²²⁷ Fairclough, 4.

in terms of exchange systems (the distribution of speaking turns), structures of argumentation, and generic (activity type) structures.”²²⁸ Given this scope, Hilary Janks proposes, a thorough Faircloughian analysis calls for very few texts.²²⁹ I have opted to study a greater number of short texts that allow me to identify common themes, each of which I elaborate here with reference to previous scholarship on student cultural work. As such, my attention to text and texture is focused mainly on structures of argumentation and lexical concerns.

3.1.2. Discourse Practice

Crucial to Fairclough’s method is the relationship between texts and their intertextual meanings. He writes, “The discourse practice dimension of the three-dimensional analytical framework introduced above shows, for any discursive event, how text producers and interpreters draw upon the socially available resources that constitute that order of discourse.”²³⁰ An analysis of discourse practice merits discussion of genre, as well as what Fairclough calls “order of discourse.”

All of the texts I use are part of the genre I call ‘advice literature.’ For Fairclough, a genre is a “socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity.”²³¹ He writes, “we can distinguish different genres as different ways of (inter)acting discursively.”²³² This approach to genre helps to define a set of texts in terms of social relations without making crude generalizations about form. For example,

²²⁸ Fairclough, 7.

²²⁹ Hilary Janks, “Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 18, no. 3 (1997): 331.

²³⁰ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 10.

²³¹ Fairclough, 14.

²³² Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, 26.

Fairclough sees “narrative” as a genre in itself. Thus while an oral tale and a published novel share a place in social life, their differences can be attributed to “text type,” which, Fairclough writes, is “situationally and historically quite particular.”²³³ The texts I use vary in text type: they include blog posts, editorial news articles, and a zine post. However, all of these texts can be categorized by genre as ‘advice literature’ because each recommends practicable ways of shaping or responding to the culture of student work. In cases where the authors are current or former student workers, this advice is usually proffered to other student workers or to students seeking work placements.

The student-written advice here is all specific to cultural industry pursuits. In order to reach other categories of authorship, however, I draw from advice that, while relevant to student work in its claims about work experience, is not necessarily industry-specific. These non-student authors fall into the broad categories of employers and social commentators, and direct their advice to other employers of student workers, or to governments and policy makers who exert influence over the climate for student work in Canada. I provide more specific analysis of production, consumption, and distribution in the “Sources” section of this chapter.

Fairclough uses the term “order of discourse” to refer to the “discoursal aspect of a social order.”²³⁴ For Fairclough, neoliberalism is a kind of social order, comprised of a particular network of social practices.²³⁵ Because I argue that practices of student cultural work are heavily influenced by neoliberal logic, this chapter focuses on a neoliberal order of discourse. Order of discourse is fundamentally concerned with intertextuality, which,

²³³ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 14.

²³⁴ Fairclough, “The Dialectics of Discourse,” 232.

²³⁵ Fairclough, 232.

Fairclough writes, “mediate[s] the relationship between texts on the one hand and (nontextual parts of) society and culture on the other.”²³⁶

Intertextuality informs my research on two levels: in my method for selecting texts, and in the way I organize this chapter. Instead of approaching the texts one by one, I have organized the following chapter into four sections based on four main themes upon which the texts at hand confer. In my choice of texts for analysis, I looked for relationships between the institutions that helped produce them. For example, having found a group of career advice blog posts written by a student from the Faculty of Information and Media Studies (FIMS) at Western, I then sought out commentary written for a FIMS student publication. In this way, the texts I use form a web that unites the four themes in question across several fields of cultural work (journalism, advertising, publishing, public relations, and broadcasting), and across programs of study and workplaces in Ontario and British Columbia.

3.1.3. Sociocultural Practice

For Fairclough, “the question of how discourse cumulatively contributes to the reproduction of macro structures is at the heart of the explanatory endeavour.”²³⁷ Relationships between texts give us insight into the ways in which individual texts at the micro level are imbued with dominant ideology at the macro level. By taking “sociocultural practice” into account, Fairclough offers a notion of “ideological/discoursal” power, which he describes as “the power to shape orders of discourse, to order discursive practices in dominance.”²³⁸ For Fairclough, the relationship between language and social relations is dialectical: “although the discourse element of a social practice is not the same as for

²³⁶ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 10.

²³⁷ Fairclough, 43.

²³⁸ Fairclough, 24.

example its social relations, each in a sense contains or internalizes the other – social relations *are* partly discursal in nature, discourse *is* partly social relations.”²³⁹ An understanding of work experience as social practice therefore necessitates an analysis of the discourse that both shapes and responds to common practice.

While the texts reviewed here are authored by individuals and formally represent their personal views, we should not underestimate the role institutions have played in shaping advice literature. As Deborah Britzman writes, “a discourse becomes powerful when it is institutionally sanctioned.”²⁴⁰ In this chapter I trace discourses either directly published or indirectly motivated by universities, employment agencies, prominent news corporations, and cultural industry employers. We can think of the authors of these texts as “institutional subjects,” who, Fairclough notes, are cast “in subject positions whose ideological underpinnings they may be unaware of.”²⁴¹ Fairclough’s approach is similar to that of Britzman, for whom “discourse positions the subject in a dual way: in relation to what and how something is said and in relation to a community that makes particular practices possible and others unavailable.”²⁴²

This positioning of the subject in relation to discourse does not undermine her agency within institutional structures, nor the complexity she brings to her authorship. Rather, Fairclough’s method takes into account that “people attempt to work out textually, in their use of language, the dilemmas they face in defining their own identities.”²⁴³ The final section of this chapter speaks to how student worker discourse is complicated by the

²³⁹ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, 25.

²⁴⁰ Britzman, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*, 17.

²⁴¹ *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 27.

²⁴² Britzman, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*, 17.

²⁴³ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 8.

diversity of these subjects' material conditions of experience and by their conflicted feelings about and relationships to work. Such complexities pose challenges to the coherence of a neoliberal order of discourse. Nonetheless, these authors attach their names (though they have been removed in this analysis) – and often those of their employer or university – to these publicly available texts, and are therefore constrained by the dimensions of the public profile they want to cultivate.

3.1.4. Sources

My research draws from twenty online articles that fall into the category of advice literature. Whether addressed to student workers, employers of student workers, or policy makers, the advice I explore in this chapter gathers around neoliberal conceptualizations of responsibility, initiation, value, and the relationship between student labour and capital. The set of texts I have chosen is not a formal representation of the available range of discourse on work experience, nor even a comprehensive representation of the neoliberal ideological-discursive formation. However, these texts are what Hilary Janks calls “instantiations of a socially regulated discourse”²⁴⁴ that, while constrained by their conditions of production and reception, are equally emblematic of the tensions that threaten a neoliberal order of discourse. In the ways that advice literature aims to defend, criticize, discipline, or congratulate, it provides us with insight into the deeply contradictory discourses through which student work is constructed, legitimized, critiqued, and re-visioned.

From mainstream Toronto-based daily newspaper *The Globe and Mail*, I review an article titled “Experiential learning, agile employees: Getting our students on the right path,” a powerful example of advice literature written to address policy-makers in Canada.

²⁴⁴ Janks, “Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool,” 329.

The article is excerpted from a speech delivered to the Universities Canada Governing Council in April 2016 by Dave McKay, CEO at the Royal Bank of Canada. McKay advocates for universities and employers to help integrate the “millennial” generation into a new “agile” regime of work necessary for profit in the wake of ongoing cultural and economic changes.²⁴⁵ In order to facilitate a boom in work-integrated learning, he advises governing bodies to fund co-op programs at universities and to offer greater tax incentives to businesses that offer students work terms.²⁴⁶ McKay’s contribution is part of an ongoing focus in the *Globe* on the topic of student work.

TalentEgg is a Toronto-based online career resource that aims to connect “budding young professionals” with “internships, co-ops, summer jobs and entry-level jobs.”²⁴⁷ It was founded in 2005 by a recent university graduate struggling to break into the job market.²⁴⁸ While TalentEgg also serves as a recruiting tool for employers, its blog is targeted mainly at workers. Blog contributors offer advice to students seeking or coping with work in cultural industries. Two of the contributions I analyze here are written by a former student in Western’s Faculty of Information and Media Studies (FIMS) and graduate of Humber College’s post-graduate program in Public Relations.²⁴⁹ Her first article, entitled “Canadian media internships: glitz, glamour, or

²⁴⁵ Dave McKay, “Experiential Learning, Agile Employees: Getting Our Students on the Right Path,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 3, 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-commentary/experiential-learning-agile-employees-getting-our-students-on-the-right-path/article29825807/>.

²⁴⁶ McKay.

²⁴⁷ “About Us - TalentEgg,” accessed December 2, 2016, <http://talentegg.ca/about-us>.

²⁴⁸ “About Us - TalentEgg.”

²⁴⁹ “Advice From A Former MuchMusic Intern,” *TalentEgg Career Incubator* (blog), July 22, 2009, <http://talentegg.ca/incubator/2009/07/22/twenty-something-advice-from-a-former-muchmusic-intern/>.

gopher?,” offers insight based on the stories of two MTV interns.²⁵⁰ Her second, “Advice from a Former MuchMusic Intern,” relays recommendations from a fellow FIMS grad.²⁵¹ The third TalentEgg article I review, “Internships are the way to get your foot in the entertainment industry’s door,” draws on advice from a former music publicity intern.²⁵² Finally, I draw on “Dos And Don’ts Of Post-Grad Internships,” written by a radio broadcasting intern.

OPENWIDE Zine is a student-run publication funded by the Faculty of Information and Media Studies (FIMS) Student Council, the governing body overseeing the program in which both TalentEgg contributors studied. Based at the University of Western Ontario, FIMS boasts two student work placement programs, an academic internship optional to its Media, Information, and Technoculture program,²⁵³ and a practicum course integral to its Media and the Public Interest program.²⁵⁴ *OPENWIDE* publishes a bimonthly print issue and hosts a blog for more frequent publishing. Its editors describe the zine as “a place where people can express opinions with much less filter than in a traditional (or corporate) publication” and where “contributors have the freedom to grapple with controversial ideas and sentiments, sometimes in controversial ways.”²⁵⁵ While this subversive aim is not

²⁵⁰ “Canadian Media Internships: Glitz, Glamour or Gopher?,” *TalentEgg Career Incubator* (blog), June 2, 2009, <http://talentegg.ca/incubator/2009/06/02/canadian-media-internships-glitz-glamour-or-gopher/>.

²⁵¹ “Advice From A Former MuchMusic Intern.”

²⁵² “Internships Are the Way to Get Your Foot in the Entertainment Industry’s Door,” *TalentEgg Career Incubator* (blog), accessed November 17, 2016, <http://talentegg.ca/incubator/2009/06/29/internships-are-the-only-way-to-get-your-foot-in-the-entertainment-industrys-door/>.

²⁵³ “Internships - Faculty of Information & Media Studies - Western University,” Western - Faculty of Information and Media Studies, accessed February 22, 2017, http://www.fims.uwo.ca/programs/undergraduate_programs/experience_more_be_more/internships.html.

²⁵⁴ “Media & the Public Interest - Faculty of Information & Media Studies - Western University,” Western - Faculty of Information and Media Studies, accessed February 22, 2017, http://www.fims.uwo.ca/programs/undergraduate_programs/media_the_public_interest/.

²⁵⁵ “About,” *OPENWIDE Online* (blog), October 1, 2010, <https://openwidezine.com/about/>.

always realized in its contributors' arguments, *OPENWIDE*'s anti-corporate positioning sets it apart from the other publications here.

From Volume 13, Issue One of *OPENWIDE*'s paper issue I analyze an article titled "FIMS in the Field," including three testimonials from three former student cultural workers.²⁵⁶ The authors summarize their respective experiences working for an online magazine, *Urban Times*, the TV show *eTalk*, and Post City Magazines.²⁵⁷ While advice is not their explicit goal, this article still fits the genre given *OPENWIDE*'s mandate and its positioning of these authors as examples for other students. I also review a 'head-to-head' style article called "*Intern, Uninterrupted*" from Volume 14, Issue Two; here it is argued by a journalism intern that unpaid internships are exploitative and inaccessible to many; and conversely, by an advertising intern, that they are worth the lack of pay.²⁵⁸ The authors offer advice to students, not on how to navigate internships, as in the case of TalentEgg, but on whether to do them in the first place. Lastly, I examine one piece from *OPENWIDE Online*, "FIMS Graduate on National Post Internship." The author connects the challenges she faced at the *Post* to broader critiques of journalism internships, but ultimately advises students to take full advantage of opportunities for student work.²⁵⁹

The *National Post* is a Toronto-based daily newspaper known for its right-wing political perspective. It is the flagship publication of Postmedia, which now owns nine other Canadian news outlets.²⁶⁰ Here I review Andrew Coyne's editorial in the *Post*'s "Full Comment" section, "If unpaid internships are exploitation, why don't the kids just

²⁵⁶ "FIMS in the Field," *OPENWIDE*, September 2013.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁵⁸ "Intern, Uninterrupted," *OPENWIDE*, October 2013.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ "Author: Andrew Coyne," National Post, accessed February 9, 2017, <http://www.nationalpost.com/index.html>.

stay home?”, in which he expresses a strong belief in student work experience programs and recommends that provincial governments subsidize them by extending the student loan system.²⁶¹ From the same section, I also review Jesse Kline’s “Let Interns Work for Free.” Here he criticizes the Ontario government’s ban on unpaid internships outside of those facilitated by an academic institution, and supports his argument with a Fraser Institute report that correlates rising minimum wages with an increase in youth unemployment.²⁶²

The Fraser Institute is a Canadian ‘think tank’ based in Vancouver. It hosts a blog containing editorial-style articles, in contrast with news pieces based on the research it conducts. The Fraser Institute is notoriously right-wing, exemplified by its collection of news stories lamenting government spending on education and government staff wages.²⁶³ Here I analyze an opinion post on the Fraser Institute’s blog written by Fergus Hodgson, an independent economic consultant.²⁶⁴ In “Canada’s opposition to unpaid internships hurts the unskilled,” he advises provincial governments to lift the ban on extra-curricular unpaid internships in order to alleviate “barriers to vocational development” for those he deems unprepared for the paid workforce.²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Andrew Coyne, “Andrew Coyne: If Unpaid Internships Are Exploitation, Why Don’t the Kids Just Stay Home?,” *National Post* (blog), September 18, 2013, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/andrew-coyne-if-unpaid-internships-are-exploitation-why-dont-the-kids-just-stay-home>.

²⁶² Jesse Kline, “Jesse Kline: Let Interns Work for Free,” *National Post*, June 18, 2013, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/jesse-kline-let-interns-work-for-free>.

²⁶³ “Fraser Institute,” Fraser Institute, accessed February 11, 2017, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/>.

²⁶⁴ “Fergus Hodgson,” Fraser Institute, accessed February 11, 2017, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/profile/fergus-hodgson>.

²⁶⁵ Fergus Hodgson, “Canada’s Opposition to Unpaid Internships Hurts the Unskilled,” Fraser Institute Blog, February 23, 2016, <http://bit.ly/20TeE8T>.

Looksharp, formerly InternMatch, is an online employment service comparable to TalentEgg but based in San Francisco.²⁶⁶ Looksharp advertises itself as “the largest internship and entry-level jobs marketplace dedicated entirely to students and new grads.”²⁶⁷ The Looksharp blog includes a post authored by an executive at Vancouver-based digital media company HootSuite. “Rockstar Training School: Tips for Managing and Inspiring Interns,” came to the attention of intern rights advocates when HootSuite’s labour practices sparked controversy in April 2013.²⁶⁸ HootSuite’s critics posted the Looksharp article along with the company’s unpaid internship listings on the online discussion forum, Reddit.²⁶⁹ In “Rockstar Training School,” HootSuite’s former Community Manager offers advice to fellow employers who are hiring or managing interns, with a focus on how to make student workers feel valued despite their lack of pay.²⁷⁰

HootSuite is touted as a useful tool for interns on *Communiqué*, a blog hosted by the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University. The School of Communication houses a well-established co-operative education program, which uses several social media channels to offer students advice on how to find a co-op position, navigate the application process, network professionally, conduct oneself on the job, and balance work

²⁶⁶ Sarah Perez, “InternMatch Raises \$1.2 Million To Expand Beyond Internships To Include Paying Jobs, Is Thinking About Rebranding,” *TechCrunch* (blog), January 16, 2013, <http://social.techcrunch.com/2013/01/16/internmatch-raises-1-2-million-to-expand-beyond-internships-to-include-paying-jobs-is-thinking-about-rebranding/>.

²⁶⁷ “Find a Career You Love,” Looksharp, accessed February 13, 2017, <https://www.looksharp.com/>.

²⁶⁸ Justine Hunter, “HootSuite to Review Unpaid Intern Policy after Barrage of Criticism,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 7, 2013, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/hootsuite-to-review-unpaid-intern-policy-after-barrage-of-criticism/article10839746/>.

²⁶⁹ Hunter.

²⁷⁰ “Rockstar Training School – Tips for Managing and Inspiring Interns,” *Looksharp Blog* (blog), August 16, 2011, <https://www.looksharp.com/blog/hootsuite-managing-and-inspiring-interns>.

with school.²⁷¹ *Communiqué* specifically features alumni spotlights, student testimonials, and a wide range of advice offered to fellow student workers or job searchers.²⁷² I include six *Communiqué* posts in my analysis: “The Secret to Securing Your First Co-op Term” and “5 Ways to Maximize Your Co-op Experience,” both written by the same public relations co-op student; “5 Ways to Stay Motivated During an Extended Work Term,” written by a marketing co-op student; “A Fish on Land: Adjusting to a Company’s Work Culture,” by a software development co-op student; CBC co-op student’s “Co-op Reflection: A Summer at CBC;” and publishing co-op student’s Alumni Spotlight on a Communication Co-op alumna.

Your CBC is a blog hosted by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Canada’s public broadcasting service. While it was last updated in 2014, the blog was intended to enhance transparency and public accountability based on open discussion about the inner workings of the CBC and its place in the broadcasting industry.²⁷³ Written by Ryerson Journalism student and then-intern at the CBC, a post called “Survival tips for interns” offers journalism interns three tips, each of which are motivated by a rigorous student work ethic.²⁷⁴

Another Ryerson graduate wrote a similar piece for *The Editor’s Weekly*, official blog of professional network Editors Canada.²⁷⁵ “DISPATCHES from an Editorial Intern” is a series of eight posts in which the author raises questions about the role of student

²⁷¹ “Home - Co-Operative Education - Simon Fraser University,” Work Integrated Learning - Simon Fraser University, accessed February 15, 2017, <http://www.sfu.ca/coop/programs/cmns/home.html>.

²⁷² “Communiqué - Communication Co-Op,” Our Learning Community - SFU, accessed February 15, 2017, <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blogs/communique>.

²⁷³ “About,” October 1, 2010.

²⁷⁴ “Survival Tips for Interns,” *My CBC* (blog), February 29, 2009, <http://cbcrblog.com/people/survival-tips-for-interns/?lang=en>.

²⁷⁵ “About Us,” *The Editors’ Weekly*, November 24, 2012, http://blog.editors.ca/?page_id=174.

workers in the publishing industry.²⁷⁶ I centre my analysis on two of these articles. The first is “DISPATCHES 3: An Intern’s Survival Guide,” in which this intern provides a list of tips for student worker success and self-preservation, elaborating on each with reference to her internships at the Porcupine’s Quill and Random House Canada.²⁷⁷ The second is “DISPATCHES 4: What’s an Intern Worth?”, in which she inquires into the of value student workers to their employers and “how the editorial staff really feels” about them.²⁷⁸

3.2. Themes of Neoliberal Discourse

3.2.1. Individual Responsibility

Though the claims made through neoliberal discourse on work experience vary widely and are often contradictory, one of the most consistent is its emphasis on individualism. Individualizing narratives are manifest in the insistence that students take responsibility for becoming employable. In this way, capital offloads the costs of training on to entry-level employees. Three main suggestions elaborate this theme through neoliberal discourse: first, that unwaged work is an investment; second, that professional success or productivity is a measure of learning; and third, that student work is a matter of individual survival and emotional resilience.

Student work calls for ‘investments’ of unpaid labour on two levels. On the more obvious level, students are encouraged to make deposits of ‘free’ labour in the workplace

²⁷⁶ “DISPATCHES from an Editorial Intern,” *The Editors’ Weekly* (blog), March 5, 2013, <http://blog.editors.ca/?p=573>.

²⁷⁷ “DISPATCHES 3: An Intern’s Survival Guide,” *The Editors’ Weekly* (blog), May 1, 2013, <http://blog.editors.ca/?p=803>.

²⁷⁸ “DISPATCHES 4: What’s an Intern Worth?,” *The Editors’ Weekly* (blog), May 28, 2013, <http://blog.editors.ca/?p=893>.

as investments in future economic success. Andrew Coyne compares student work to “the job equivalent of a small-cap growth stock – no dividends, but the promise of heady capital gains in future.”²⁷⁹ He further puts the onus on individual student workers to “consider which is the best investment of their time.”²⁸⁰ Students who are unenthusiastic about unpaid and precarious work should “remember,” one PR intern writes, that “you have to start at the bottom to get to the top.”²⁸¹ But for student cultural workers, whose “heady capital gains” are unlikely to materialize in the near post-graduate future, entry-level work is a risky investment.

On another level, students must invest labour in securing a work placement position in the first place. Whether or not they have help from their universities in finding a placement, the application process is up to students, and internship positions can be extremely competitive.²⁸² The work that goes into securing a job falls into Guy Standing’s category of “work-for-labour,” which, he notes, is a particular burden on young people seeking jobs in precarious industries.²⁸³ Work-for-labour has no exchange value, meaning that the labour power expended in this way cannot be exchanged for pay. Yet, as Standing describes, it is a “necessary or advisable” step to securing a job,²⁸⁴ as it includes all manner of activity directed at increasing or maintaining workers’ employability.

²⁷⁹ Coyne, “Andrew Coyne.”

²⁸⁰ Coyne.

²⁸¹ “Canadian Media Internships.”

²⁸² “The Secret to Securing Your First Co-Op Term: A Reflection On My First Co-Op Search And How I Landed My Dream Placement | SFU OLC,” *Our Learning Community*, SFU (blog), June 7, 2014, <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/communique/secret-securing-your-first-co-op-term-reflection-my-first-co-op-search-and-how-i-land>.

²⁸³ Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 121.

²⁸⁴ Standing, 120.

A communications co-op student writes, “I dedicated 8-10 hours weekly, researching companies, composing cover letters and tailoring my resume.”²⁸⁵ While searching for co-op placements, she also kept an “interview journal” in which to reflect upon each “interview experience.”²⁸⁶ She further advises co-op students, “set up mock-interviews, have your cover letters proofed, request to read old work reports and check in with advisors for general application advice.”²⁸⁷ The work-for-labour required of students seeking work placements is compounded by their need to balance schoolwork with professional development. The same student writes, “Keep in mind that co-op employers do look at your GPA (along with many other elements) as part of your application package...don’t forget to make schoolwork a priority!”²⁸⁸ Finally, she reminds the reader, work-for-labour should continue once a position has been secured, as well as after it ends, when student workers are advised to “stay in touch” with their colleagues on LinkedIn.²⁸⁹

The logic of investment is bound up with that of meritocracy. Writes one former *National Post* intern: “you earned your spot at that internship – now get the most of it.”²⁹⁰ Moreover, because student work conflates professional development with education, the neoliberal logic of work experience offers little distinction between learning and upward mobility in the labour force. A PR intern insists, “An internship is about learning and if you learn well, the money will follow.”²⁹¹ In this way, educational value is rearticulated to suit

²⁸⁵ “The Secret to Securing Your First Co-Op Term: A Reflection On My First Co-Op Search And How I Landed My Dream Placement | SFU OLC.”

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ “5 Ways to Maximize Your Co-Op Experience,” *Our Learning Community, SFU* (blog), July 31, 2014, <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/communique/5-ways-maximize-your-co-op-experience>.

²⁹⁰ “FIMS Graduate on National Post Internship.”

²⁹¹ “Canadian Media Internships.”

the context of the workplace and calculated in terms of a presumed financial return. Many of the learning experiences detailed by student workers in this chapter point to experiences of perceived failure or of becoming disillusioned with an industry.²⁹² Still, the logic of meritocracy insists that learning means learning to adjust, to fit in, no matter the sacrifices one might need to make. One CBC intern contends that the purpose of an internship is to “help you soak up some of the corporate culture that you’ll have to learn to navigate while you’re there [...] And by navigate I mean learn to adapt.”²⁹³

No matter how well one adapts, student work is probational. In order to merit success at a work placement, students must compete against each other to qualify as a full-time, paid, job candidate, or to be considered for future opportunities as they come available. In this way, Kline writes, “an abundance of unpaid internships in an industry acts as an appropriate market signal, telling students their chosen field will supply real paying jobs only to the very best and brightest.”²⁹⁴ By this logic, students who are not being paid for their labour should work even harder than those who are. Meanwhile, work experience serves as an evaluative period during which students must demonstrate that they are worthy of paid cultural work in the future. Indeed, Hodgson suggests that students who take on unpaid work do so because “they cannot generate enough value to find paid employment above the minimum wage.”²⁹⁵ The assumption at work in Kline’s and

²⁹² “FIMS Graduate on National Post Internship”; Marmor, Stockall, and Chao, “FIMS in the Field”; Kelly Furey, “5 Career Lessons I Learned From Stepping Outside My Comfort Zone | SFU OLC,” *Our Learning Community, SFU* (blog), November 29, 2016, <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/communique/5-career-lessons-i-learned-stepping-outside-my-comfort-zone>.

²⁹³ “Survival Tips for Interns.”

²⁹⁴ Kline, “Jesse Kline: Let Interns Work for Free.”

²⁹⁵ Hodgson, “Canada’s Opposition to Unpaid Internships Hurts the Unskilled.”

Hodgson's concerns is that before they have accumulated work experience, student workers' labour power is not valuable enough to qualify them for wages.

Neoliberal discourse dictates that in order to merit consideration for a 'real' job, let alone to truly benefit from work experience at all, student workers should consistently exceed expectations. This belief is reiterated in a CBC intern's warning to her peers, "Tasks are tests. You will always be tested."²⁹⁶ When tested, student workers should aim to "impress" employers by exceeding the passing standards, she advises.²⁹⁷ Not only does an intern's performance determine the difference between a "future employee" and a "disgruntled slacker," as a Hootsuite employer suggests,²⁹⁸ but in order to access the true advantages of unpaid work, students must go above and beyond the call of duty. He recommends that "if" – and only if – "someone really stepped up," the employer should consider helping them to network with "industry peers."²⁹⁹ Thus the ability to squeeze every last bit of opportunity out of a work term is part of the job description for student workers.

As labour sociologist Alexandre Frenette found in his study of internships in the American music industry, "it is up to the intern to make the most of the experience."³⁰⁰ Indeed, one co-op student ventures, "it is ultimately your responsibility to step up to the plate and take initiative to go above and beyond to thrive in your position."³⁰¹ Student workers must take responsibility not only for exceeding expectations, but also for putting

²⁹⁶ "Survival Tips for Interns."

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ "Rockstar Training School – Tips for Managing and Inspiring Interns."

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Frenette, "Making the Intern Economy."

³⁰¹ "5 Ways to Maximize Your Co-op Experience." *Communique*. Our Learning Community, SFU.

their over-achievements on display for their co-workers. A publishing intern cautions, “don’t let anyone see that you’re not taking advantage of every minute.”³⁰² Meanwhile, the Hootsuite executive advises employers to implement self-reporting systems for student workers through which they can provide “some empirical evidence of their work” as well “their ideas and insights,” and finally, their “happiness level.”³⁰³ Such accountability systems saddle student workers with a tripartite burden: they must strive to exceed expectations, prove their effectiveness, and self-evaluate on both professional and emotional levels.

Neoliberal discourse on work experience primarily holds student workers responsible for reproducing their own labour power, the foundation of all other duties. Thus unsurprisingly, advice literature written by other interns gathers around the theme of survival. For these often self-consciously undervalued workers, survival hinges on morale and self-confidence. A former Random House intern writes that after nearly two years interning in the publishing industry, she feels she has “developed a good instinct for survival.”³⁰⁴ In order to cope with unappreciative employers, she advises fellow interns to store up small scraps of acknowledgement, such as a “‘Thank You’ or ‘Job Well Done!’ email,” recycling encouragement that can be a scarce resource for student workers.³⁰⁵ She also suggests taking up a hobby outside the office, something “that you enjoy and are good at,” to protect students workers from internalizing their low status.³⁰⁶ Ultimately she reminds student workers, “interns are considered the lowest of the low – and if you forget

³⁰² “DISPATCHES 3.”

³⁰³ “Rockstar Training School – Tips for Managing and Inspiring Interns.”

³⁰⁴ “DISPATCHES 3.”

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

yourself, you might start to feel that way too.”³⁰⁷ Student workers are often advised to conquer discouraging and exploitative working conditions with mood control. A radio intern also warns us that internships “can take a lot out of you,” and recommends transcending burnout with positive thinking: “The better you make yourself feel about this short-term career investment, the better you’ll perform.”³⁰⁸ Student workers are hereby encouraged to take care of themselves only insofar as this care will translate into productivity, and therefore employability.

Neoliberal discourse on individual responsibility is similarly bound up with the logic of self-discovery and personhood. For instance, one marketing student writes, “by actively staying motivated, not only will you increase focus and productivity at work, you’ll learn things about yourself that can ground you as a person, and that can help you be more resilient through any curve balls life throws your way.”³⁰⁹ An MTV intern adds, “Internships are a great way to find out something different about yourself, allow for a lot of personal growth and give you the experience you will need to ‘make it’ in this industry.”³¹⁰ In each of these testimonies, personal development is a direct route to becoming a better employee, so that the end goal of improving work performance is always close at hand.

The emphasis placed on positivity and endurance in the face of adversity can normalize harmful and exploitative conditions for work and discourage students from challenging these conditions. Implicit in this discourse is the suggestion that students can

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ “Dos And Don’ts Of Post-Grad Internships,” *TalentEgg Career Incubator* (blog), accessed January 7, 2017, <http://talentegg.ca/incubator/2009/04/15/dos-and-donts-of-post-grad-internships/>.

³⁰⁹ “5 Ways to Stay Motivated During An Extended Work Term,” *Our Learning Community, SFU* (blog), July 13, 2016, <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/communique/5-ways-stay-motivated-during-extended-work-term>.

³¹⁰ “Internships Are the Way to Get Your Foot in the Entertainment Industry’s Door.”

individually overcome these conditions on the level of self-control or personal growth. For example, one PR intern advises, “Always keep in mind that co-op is competitive... don’t let yourself be discouraged by rejection.”³¹¹ She proposes that a relentlessly good attitude is a means to keeping oneself in a difficult race, and that the student worker should take responsibility for her own self-preservation in the face of such hardships. Abiding a similar logic, the *Post* intern laments her own failure to resist discouragement by sharing a cautionary tale: “I allowed myself to be intimidated by the age, experience, and professionalism of the office and I shouldn’t have.”³¹² Beyond these workers’ revelations, much of the discourse explored in this chapter is intoned with the assumption that sheer willpower can and should prevent student worker disempowerment. In this way, the logic of individual responsibility facilitates self-blame, dissuading student workers and their universities from holding employers – or the economic system – accountable.

3.2.2. Initiation

As Frenette writes, “Internships represent a liminal and indeterminate period during which aspirants form a reservoir of excess workers before potentially getting hired as paid employees.”³¹³ My analysis suggests that dominant discourse highlighting students’ role as liminal subjects is characterized by contradictory appeals to their subjective position in the workplace hierarchy. I explore the theme of initiation first through what Fairclough might call the “lexicalization”³¹⁴ of the student worker, then through the contradictory demands for student workers to demonstrate both disentanglement and professionalism. The

³¹¹ “The Secret to Securing Your First Co-Op Term: A Reflection On My First Co-Op Search And How I Landed My Dream Placement | SFU OLC.”

³¹² “FIMS Graduate on National Post Internship.”

³¹³ Frenette, “Making the Intern Economy,” 388–89.

³¹⁴ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 34.

ways in which students' probationary status is articulated in neoliberal discourse illustrate contradictions in the proposition that students are not real workers.

Fairclough describes a lexicon as a set of “unwritten and unspoken conventions for the use of a particular word or expression in connection with particular events or behaviours, which are operative and taken for granted in the production and intention of written records.”³¹⁵ However, the lexicon itself is a “code,” and therefore representative of “only one among indefinitely many possible lexicalizations.”³¹⁶ For Fairclough, a lexicalization is naturalized to the extent that the ideological-discursive formation with which it is associated “achieves dominance, and hence the capacity to win acceptance for it as ‘the lexicon,’ the neutral code.”³¹⁷ Based on the discourse I examine here, a neoliberal lexicalization of student workers predominantly casts them as naïve young ‘digital natives’ with short attention spans, an aptitude for online social media, and a finger on the pulse of youth culture. In this way, McKay refers to student workers as “kids,”³¹⁸ and one *Communiqué* writer even likens a seasoned intern alumna to Goldilocks, a child-aged fairy tale character.³¹⁹ McKay asserts, “This is a hands-on generation. They like to experiment, to challenge and to share.”³²⁰ Dominant discourse is littered with sweeping generalizations about the millennial generation, their strengths, weaknesses, and desires.

Many aspects of neoliberal discourse on work experience are perpetuated as much by student workers themselves as by employers, politicians, and social commentators. Nonetheless, the discourse that casts interns and co-op students as entitled ‘millennials’

³¹⁵ Fairclough, 34.

³¹⁶ Fairclough, 34.

³¹⁷ Fairclough, 34.

³¹⁸ McKay, “Experiential Learning, Agile Employees: Getting Our Students on the Right Path.”

³¹⁹ “Alumni Spotlight: Laurie Dawkins | SFU OLC,” September 7, 2016, <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/where-are-they-now/alumni-spotlight-laurie-dawkins>.

³²⁰ McKay, “Experiential Learning, Agile Employees: Getting Our Students on the Right Path.”

or simply as petulant children has a clear origin in managerial perspectives. Emblematic of this origin is Andrew Coyne's opinion piece in the *National Post* titled, "If unpaid internships are exploitation, why don't the kids just stay home?".³²¹ Coyne's title at once reduces the population of student workers to an infantile and economically privileged group of young people who 'choose' to work without pay. Crucially, the identification of student workers as "kids" casts them as dependents who can simply "stay home" and be supported by parents or guardians instead of joining the workforce. Not only does Coyne dismiss young people's need to support themselves, but he also ignores those mature students and older workers who are still expected to enter an industry through probationary and unpaid conditions.

McKay also holds student workers responsible for reproducing poor working conditions because they acquiesced to them in the first place. For him, "the rise of millennials" is one aspect of a "seismic disruption" that has also brought rapid development in personal technology and a decline in loyalty to institutions.³²² From this perspective, young people are a threat to the status quo of capitalism, and 'putting them to work,' as McKay's title suggests,³²³ is a way to anchor them to the neoliberal economic order. Like advancements in technology, student workers are lexicalized as the newest conquest for capitalist social relations.

The advice literature reviewed here that is addressed to student workers is often concerned with managing their expectations, ostensibly on behalf of cultural industry employers. One student's list of "dos" and "don'ts" for interns puts it bluntly: "don't expect

³²¹ Coyne, "Andrew Coyne."

³²² McKay, "Experiential Learning, Agile Employees: Getting Our Students on the Right Path."

³²³ McKay.

to be hired after your internship.”³²⁴ A publishing intern warns, “Don’t mention the ‘J’ word. You’re an intern – everyone knows you want a job.”³²⁵ Such admonitions remind student workers that they are at the bottom of the pecking order, despite any positive feedback they might receive from employers. For example, a marketing co-op student writes, “although it’s incredible news to get your work term extended, being immersed in an environment of regular full-timers for an extended period of time can start to feel *comfortable*.”³²⁶ She suggests that in order to maintain “that initial vigor to succeed,”³²⁷ students should stay in a mindset of uncertainty about their competencies as workers, discouraging them from any realization that their labour might deserve pay or recognition comparable to that of their regular, full-time counterparts. For this student, “staying motivated” means staying complacent to sub-standard working conditions.

The performance of modesty in student work also involves a conflation of social etiquette and likeability with respect for the workplace hierarchy. As a PR student divulges to prospective student workers, one of the qualities that makes a “great intern” is “a winning personality.”³²⁸ However, as perpetual ‘new kids’, interns walk a fine line: their desire to be integrated in the workplace must be negotiated with the need to maintain a level of distance from their colleagues; they must never presume to have full worker status. An MTV intern tells TalentEgg readers, “You may know people in the office but don’t act like you guys are friends. They get interns in and out of [the building] every couple of weeks.”³²⁹ Similarly, a CBC intern warns student workers that “no one likes an intern

³²⁴ “Dos And Don’ts Of Post-Grad Internships.”

³²⁵ “DISPATCHES 3.”

³²⁶ “5 Ways to Stay Motivated During An Extended Work Term.”

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ “Canadian Media Internships.”

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

who's so keen that they lose their direction,"³³⁰ and a publishing student informs her peers that if they "appear desperate" for a job, it may make full-time staff feel "uncomfortable."³³¹ In this way, neoliberal discourse frames even the most timid student worker resistance as social faux pas, demanding compliance by vilifying critique.

The same CBC intern writes, "Think of it as hazing only less severe, you learn from it and most importantly it's not illegal."³³² Her comparison of the workplace to a sorority or fraternity is surprisingly apt, given the ways in which student workers are expected to prove themselves and to respect the existing traditions, cultures, and protocol set by employers.³³³ The Hootsuite executive describes student work as a "legacy" that the "newbs" are continuing; he shares with readers his tradition of "tell[ing] stories and shar[ing] photos of past interns."³³⁴ In order to live up to this legacy, interns must therefore navigate their roles in relation to the permanent staff, who are, neoliberal discourse suggests, both social and professional superiors.

Unlike sorority memberships, which favour endurance, student work placements are decidedly short term commitments, whether or not they turn into full-time jobs. The tyranny of the short term is manifold, creating an environment in which student workers need to work extra hard to prove themselves in a limited period, even while they are treated as a drain on company time, told that their suffering is insignificant, and denied the continued support that would suit the longevity of their impact. One marketing intern tells

³³⁰ "Survival Tips for Interns."

³³¹ "DISPATCHES 3."

³³² "Survival Tips for Interns."

³³³ Shade and Jacobson draw this comparison as well. See "Hungry for the Job," in *The Sociological Review*, 63:1.

³³⁴ "Survival Tips for Interns."

co-op students, “It’s crucial to keep in mind that these experiences and opportunities you’ve worked so hard to land are only temporary.”³³⁵ Despite the time and effort spent obtaining a placement, student workers are always in a state of training or adjustment, without much hope of transcending “newb”³³⁶ status during a months-long tenure.

The brevity of a worker’s contract can excuse employers from investing in worker training. For example, Hodgson complains that employers “may struggle with a short-term, untrained worker.”³³⁷ Likewise, the former *Post* intern reports often feeling like “more of a burden in the busy pressroom than anything,” effacing the value that she brought to the company through the numerous articles she published throughout her summer placement.³³⁸ In a short-term capacity, all manner of labour injustice can be deemed endurable. A radio intern writes, “If you feel like you’re doing everything you can to make the most out of it and you’re getting nothing in return, keep in mind it’s only a short-term position.”³³⁹ When this intern felt discouraged, he reportedly “bit the bullet and hoped for better.”³⁴⁰ Congruently, Doug Tewksbury’s research on media industry internships found that “the usual subtext to most advice on internships is rooted in the discourse of ‘paying one’s dues’ and ‘sticking it out,’ ignoring rights violations, tolerating illegal activity, or living with harassment,”³⁴¹ the logic of which rests upon the assurance that these conditions are only temporary.

Student workers’ experiences of temporality highlight a discrepancy between

³³⁵ “5 Ways to Stay Motivated During An Extended Work Term.”

³³⁶ “Rockstar Training School – Tips for Managing and Inspiring Interns.”

³³⁷ Hodgson, “Canada’s Opposition to Unpaid Internships Hurts the Unskilled.”

³³⁸ “FIMS Graduate on National Post Internship.”

³³⁹ “Dos And Don’ts Of Post-Grad Internships.”

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ Doug Tewksbury, “Educating the Precariat: Intern Labour and a Renewed Approach to Media Literacy Education,” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 529.

the level of responsibility they take on and the level of support available to them in the workplace. During her summer internship at the *National Post*, one student published an article that exposed the sexist culture in Toronto firefighting workplaces, helping to spark public attention that eventually led to a police investigation.³⁴² When in the wake of investigations three fire fighters were terminated, the intern faced what she describes as “hate-tweets and irrational anti-feminist dialogue [from] across the Internet.”³⁴³ Because the article was published at the end of the student’s internship term, she was outside of the workplace community when coping with these personal assaults, and was therefore not able to seek support or guidance from those who had briefly been her mentors. The juxtaposition between this turmoil and what she describes as an “anti-climactic” last day when she “shyly said goodbye to the editors in the office”³⁴⁴ highlights one of the key tensions present in student cultural work. While student workers are not considered to be real employees, the cultural products they produce do have an impact on a public, opening students up to vulnerability not only in the confines of a workplace but sometimes in the context of a wider and unsympathetic audience.

The discourse reviewed here also draws parallels between the performance of modesty and the performance of professionalism. Resulting advice calls upon student workers to be grateful for the opportunity to do the work of full-time staff, while being satisfied with a much lower level of reward. The etiquette reinforced by this discourse works to establish acceptance of unwaged work as a necessary quality for being a successful student worker. A practicum student interviewed by Sandra Smeltzer strikingly sums up the kind of disavowal expected of the ideal intern: “It never occurred to me that I

³⁴² “FIMS Graduate on National Post Internship.”

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

would get paid.”³⁴⁵ A PR student surmises that one of the qualities that make a “great intern” includes “the ability to appreciate the internship as a learning experience even though it may include little to no financial compensation.”³⁴⁶ After dashing editorial interns’ hopes of editing manuscripts, a publishing student suggests, “you might get to copy edit a powerpoint presentation, and you should be grateful if you do.”³⁴⁷ Regardless of the tasks assigned, she advises, “don’t ever complain [...] By complaining, you risk appearing ungrateful.”³⁴⁸ An expression of anything less than gratefulness would threaten the power dynamic upon which the devaluation of student labour depends.

The Hootsuite executive advises employers to set the bar at a level of professionalism suiting paid positions: “Post intern openings the same as paid openings with expected qualifications, application process and defined roles. This shows you are taking the search seriously and not just looking for a warm body to do menial tasks.”³⁴⁹ He also eschews the use of “intern” as a job title for its “de-motivating and even embarrassing” connotations in the popular consciousness.³⁵⁰ Instead, he suggests a more dignified term that describes the worker’s role – for example, Hootsuite calls interns “International Community Ambassadors.”³⁵¹ Herein lies a paradox central to the neoliberal ethos of student work. A lack of pay and other rights must be relentlessly coated with a veneer of professionalism.

If employers set the bar for ‘professionalism’ at the level of a ‘real job’, the Hootsuite employer assumes student workers will rise to the occasion and take their roles

³⁴⁵ Smeltzer, “Interrogating Course-Related Public Interest Internships in Communications.,” 516.

³⁴⁶ “Canadian Media Internships.”

³⁴⁷ “DISPATCHES 3.”

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ “Rockstar Training School – Tips for Managing and Inspiring Interns.”

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

as seriously as if they had paid and permanent status. The employer's testimony that he "almost never" asks interns to fetch him coffee³⁵² is part of this game. Student workers themselves make similar categorizations about the legitimacy of their work. One advertising intern proudly states that she "never once bought anyone a coffee" at her advertising internship.³⁵³ In dominant discourse on work experience, the coffee run is lexicalized as menial and un-enriching labour given to those at the bottom of a workplace hierarchy. This intern hereby implies that she had the opportunity to do more important, educational tasks. Similarly, a magazine intern boasts, "Far from the stereotypical coffee runs and grunt work, I played an actual role in the editorial team and worked alongside editors."³⁵⁴

Ironically, gestures toward professionalism reassert student workers' disempowerment. While for the Hootsuite employer, the veil of legitimacy cast over intern labour should itself be empowering, the calculated performance of professionalism continually reinforces the split between the manner in which work is conducted and the quality of its material rewards. In this way, neoliberal discourse often dismisses the expectation that the former should suit the latter. Thus while this employer exaggerates the respect he has for unpaid interns who behave professionally, he takes no responsibility for ensuring they can afford rent or groceries. Student worker professionalism is thus a kind of play-acting which simultaneously conceals and amplifies labour injustice. A radio intern advises his peers, don't "act unprofessionally because you're making little to no

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ "Intern, Uninterrupted."

³⁵⁴ "FIMS in the Field."

money.”³⁵⁵ For him, treating the internship “like a real job” entails showing up early and staying late.³⁵⁶ Over-performance is prescribed as an antidote to disempowerment.

3.2.3. Valorization of Experience

The expectation of student worker gratitude is predicated upon the valorization of experience, a fundamental pillar of neoliberal discourse. As discussed in Chapter Two, the valorization of experience involves the many ways in which experience is taken to be a benefit in itself, irrespective of students’ ability to reflect upon and question it. In this way, even harmful and disheartening experiences add to the currency of work experience. In this section I focus on the ways in which work experience is conflated with monetary compensation, and how it is constructed through discourse as a resource for acquisition. I then explore how neoliberal discourse privileges work experience as an education precisely in its emancipation from theory.

The Hootsuite executive claims to have “sponsored” dozens of internships, admitting in the same article that the internships he offers are almost always unpaid.³⁵⁷ We can infer that for him, work experience is a resource to be bestowed upon student workers by benevolent employers in lieu of wages. Many student workers tow a similar discursive line, referring to their experiences with cultural work having been “received”³⁵⁸ or as something one can “gain.”³⁵⁹ As one TalentEgg blogger affirms, “Rewards are not

³⁵⁵ “Dos And Don’ts Of Post-Grad Internships.”

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ “Rockstar Training School – Tips for Managing and Inspiring Interns.”

³⁵⁸ “The Secret to Securing Your First Co-Op Term: A Reflection On My First Co-Op Search And How I Landed My Dream Placement | SFU OLC”; “FIMS in the Field.”

³⁵⁹ “5 Ways to Maximize Your Co-Op Experience”; “FIMS Graduate on National Post Internship.”

always monetary.”³⁶⁰ The Hootsuite employer makes sure to remind student workers of the value of non-monetary rewards: he advises other employers, “If you don’t have budget, let them know and explain the types [of] benefits they’ll receive from their efforts.”³⁶¹ Similarly, Icely notes, her paid colleagues are “quick to remind” her that interns “learn a lot” while creating value for employers.³⁶²

The rewards suggested as alternatives to pay are diverse and plentiful: “feedback, inside tips and tactics,” a “well-thought-out” recommendation letter, a testimony on LinkedIn or Twitter, a tribute in the company’s “intern hall of fame gallery,” or a symbolic trinket awarded to an ‘intern of the week’.³⁶³ While some of these benefits are merely gestures of appreciation, student workers often ascribe to dominant discourse, concurring that these non-monetary benefits, though inaccessible to those who cannot work for free, are indispensable assets in the cultural industry job market. An advertising intern writes, “I left my internship with a wealth of knowledge, contacts and experience, which outweighs any paying job at a fast food joint, in my opinion.”³⁶⁴ To fully explore the contradictions of neoliberal logic, it is important not to overlook student workers’ unwillingness to classify work experience as exploitation.

Smeltzer reports that among the chief benefits of work experience programs advertised by Canadian universities is their ability to integrate theory and practice.³⁶⁵ Such assimilation is made difficult, however, by a frequent disconnect between the theory learned in university Communication departments and the skills and attitudes required in

³⁶⁰ “Advice From A Former MuchMusic Intern.”

³⁶¹ “Rockstar Training School – Tips for Managing and Inspiring Interns.”

³⁶² “DISPATCHES 4.”

³⁶³ “Rockstar Training School – Tips for Managing and Inspiring Interns.”

³⁶⁴ “Intern, Uninterrupted.”

³⁶⁵ Smeltzer, “Interrogating Course-Related Public Interest Internships in Communications.”

cultural industry workplaces. Student workers report this discrepancy with a mix of panic and excitement. For example, one co-op student writes, “Coming from SFU’s Communication program I had learned a lot about CBC but I didn’t necessarily know how to be a journalist there. My lack of experience was making me anxious.”³⁶⁶ The application of theoretical work to a cultural industry workplace is rarely a matter of simple translation. No matter how long one spends thinking or writing about cultural industries, a journalism intern reminds us, “real-life experience is the demand.”³⁶⁷

During its much sought-after translation into practice, theory seems to abandon its roots in academia, all the while dissolving in the ‘reality’ of student workers’ experiences, which disillusion them with classroom-based learning. As one TalentEgg blogger writes of an MTV intern’s experience, “while it’s fun to follow and study pop culture, she knew one day she wanted to discover it out in the real world.”³⁶⁸ The *Post* intern dismisses journalism school as an unnecessary expense, deferring to her general life experience, inquisitive nature and adaptability as superior prerequisites for success: “Just throw me on the [newsroom] floor and give me a week or two for adjustment and I’ll be good.”³⁶⁹ An advertising intern writes, “I don’t have the resources to spend years on a degree that leads me into a field where I find myself underprepared and overwhelmed, so an internship proved my most viable option.”³⁷⁰ For her, a summer work term yielded “an unexpectedly refreshing take on advertising [...], something that isn’t shared in an MIT [media studies] classroom.”³⁷¹ Here the university classroom is a place where secrets about the true

³⁶⁶ “Co-Op Reflection: A Summer at CBC | SFU OLC,” *Communique* (blog), November 3, 2016, <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/communique/mack-stannard>.

³⁶⁷ “Intern, Uninterrupted.”

³⁶⁸ “Advice From A Former MuchMusic Intern.”

³⁶⁹ “FIMS Graduate on National Post Internship.”

³⁷⁰ “Intern, Uninterrupted.”

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

nature of the cultural industries are concealed, and for many student workers, it is a world apart from the real. Meanwhile, industry experience is valorized as truth-teller and, perhaps more importantly, as “real life.”³⁷²

Disavowal of the classroom in favour of the ‘sink or swim’ work environment undermines critical and radical pedagogies that might inspire resistance to the status quo instead of conformity. The conflation of learning with its application to corporate environments also excludes the role of critique in education. In this way, neoliberal discourse is quick to shed those ideas which fail to parlay into workplace proficiency. When students crave creative freedom and ethical purpose in their work, “real life experience” can serve as a wake-up call from the labour market. One communications intern writes,

By the time you finish an article, you have an attachment to it. In my case, the product ends up with someone else’s name. The idealist in me wishes for the ultimate freelance gig, writing for non-profit publications and living that hipster life but this internship, more so than my first, has taught me to get over myself and just write. It has been a major reality check.³⁷³

Here the lifestyle and kinds of work that might allow this student to explore an alternative lifestyle and to ‘do good’ are part of an idealist fantasy that is necessarily shattered by an encounter with the ‘real world’.

3.2.4. Mutual Benefit

One of the achievements of neoliberal discourse is its capacity to disguise the fundamentally antagonistic relationship between labour and capital. North American cultural industry employers have notoriously worked to hide workplace hierarchies with

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ “FIMS in the Field.”

the use of creative job titles, team building campaigns, and 'fun' workplace routines.³⁷⁴ In this context, Ursula Huws notes, the "provision of work experience" in cultural industries plays into a regime of control disguised by "gift relationships, the mutual exchange of 'favors', and complicity in ignoring the formal terms of contracts."³⁷⁵ Here an MTV intern divulges that her office "ends up feeling a lot more like a family than a work place."³⁷⁶ While this dynamic helps to make students feel comfortable, it can also persuade them to overlook poor conditions as part of a fair trade-off, or due to feelings of personal attachment to the employer. Two main aspects of the relationship between labour and capital are drawn out in the neoliberal discourse reviewed here: the dimensions of reciprocity between student workers and their employers and the possibility of a fit or match between these parties.

Many of the student worker testimonies I have reviewed so far are tributes to the perceived evenhandedness of student employment relationships, even those that are unpaid. Still, this acceptance is rarely untroubled. Some student workers accept the valuation of experience as compensation but worry that this transaction is "not always a fair deal."³⁷⁷ For example, one communications intern expresses wariness of situations in which "the employer will not provide the experience the interns signed on for, instead tasking them with menial work."³⁷⁸ These sentiments express a caution that takes for granted the value of experience, even while insisting that for it to constitute a "fair" wage, the student's learning goals must be met. In her admonition that unpaid work is "not

³⁷⁴ Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016); Huws, "Expression and Expropriation: The Dialectics of Autonomy and Control in Creative Labour," 120.

³⁷⁵ Huws, "Expression and Expropriation: The Dialectics of Autonomy and Control in Creative Labour."

³⁷⁶ "Internships Are the Way to Get Your Foot in the Entertainment Industry's Door."

³⁷⁷ "Intern, Uninterrupted," 10.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

always” a fair deal, this student affirms that it can be.

For journalist Jesse Kline, unpaid work is fair if undertaken solely in one’s own “self-interest.”³⁷⁹ Kline maintains, “I was able to advance my career by getting college credits, or by gaining experience and making contacts in an industry where the job prospects are few.”³⁸⁰ Citing the amendment to Ontario labour law that prohibits employers from gaining immediate advantage from their unpaid workers’ labour, he declares, “If any of my employers did not gain an ‘immediate advantage’ from utilizing my services, paid or unpaid, then I certainly was not doing my job.”³⁸¹ Kline reckons with the question of fair pay by conflating professional development with his ability to create value for an employer. Here the notion of self-interest sanctions student worker exploitation by making employers appear to be catering to student workers’ needs. For example, McKay’s narrative of the ‘rise of millennials’ casts young people as harbingers of change. By this logic, work placement programs are merely a response to the needs of the needs of a “hands-on generation” that learns best by doing. In this way, McKay ventures, employers’ use of student labour can be traced back to the demands of that very group.

Much neoliberal discourse on cultural work rests on the assumption that such work is a ‘labour of love,’ binding workers to their productivity by passion instead of pay. Advice literature on work experience suggests that employers try to inspire such passionate relationships to work by actively involving student workers in company culture and treating them as equals. For the Hootsuite executive, everything from “taking the time to explain the ‘why’” behind assigned tasks and inviting them to “after-work beer sessions” will help

³⁷⁹ Kline, “Jesse Kline: Let Interns Work for Free.”

³⁸⁰ Kline.

³⁸¹ Kline.

interns to “emotionally invest” in their work.³⁸² These provisions, he assures fellow employers, will “help your company reap quality contributions from an intern who truly enjoys their challenging work experience.”³⁸³ The notion that student workers should enjoy their work placements is part of the ‘labour of love’ discourse on cultural work³⁸⁴ that is often reproduced by students themselves. A software co-op student reminds student workers that in addition to “gaining valuable work experience,” they should be “having fun” and bonding with colleagues: “After all, working in a place you love is just as significant as excelling in the work that you do.”³⁸⁵

Once neoliberal discourse is invested in the notion that work should be pleasurable, it must also narrate the conditions under which work *can* be pleasurable. In the case of work placement programs, this involves a preoccupation with finding the ‘right fit’ between a student worker and a workplace. *Communique’s* alumni profile of a former communications co-op student pronounces her a “modern-day Goldilocks” and documents her prolonged search for a type of work ‘just right’ for her.³⁸⁶ During the search process, this student completed “four very different co-op work terms” before entering a phase during which she “freelanced and explored multiple contracts.”³⁸⁷ The main assumption at work here is that student workers are, in their subjective conditions, suited to a particular kind of waged (or unwaged) entry-level labour performed for a particular employer. This notion that work experience can and should be a ‘win-win’ situation for

³⁸² “Rockstar Training School – Tips for Managing and Inspiring Interns.”

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ Cohen, “Cultural Work as a Site of Struggle: Freelancers and Exploitation,” 145.

³⁸⁵ “A Fish on Land: Adjusting to a Company’s Work Culture | SFU OLC,” *Communique* (blog), March 20, 2015, http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/communique/fish-land-adjusting-company%E2%80%99s-work-culture?page=22&quicktabs_1=0.

³⁸⁶ “Alumni Spotlight: Laurie Dawkins | SFU OLC.”

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

employers and their interns makes room for career resources such as TalentEgg and Looksharp, essentially match-making services for labour seeking capital that promise to help student workers find loveable work.³⁸⁸ The Goldilocks paradigm also prolongs indentured or precarious forms of work by advising students to sample a variety of work placements before settling into a permanent position. Notably, this *Communiqué* author's characterization of co-op as a "process of elimination" puts student workers in an unlikely position of control, thereby illustrating the contradiction inherent to neoliberal discourse on benefit.

3.3. Cracks in the Discourse

Even while reproducing the dominant order, discourse challenges and transforms that order by revealing the tensions and contradictions inherent in its ideology.³⁸⁹ Student workers negotiate their needs, desires and subjectivities in complex ways through the discourse reviewed here. Meanwhile, dominant discourse is already shifting in response to public criticism, activism, legal action, and changes to legislation. Five years after Hootsuite's intern management advice appeared on Looksharp, employers are not as quick to reveal their intern labour practices, unless to warn one another about the possible legal ramifications of 'free' labour.³⁹⁰ Stringent contract stipulations increasingly require workers to declare their acceptance of the underpay and insecurity they face, and to affirm their understanding of the "educational nature" of work experience.³⁹¹ Employers can

³⁸⁸ "Find a Career You Love."

³⁸⁹ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 95.

³⁹⁰ Einstein, "Nothing for Money and Your Work for Free: Internships and the Marketing of Higher Education," 481.

³⁹¹ Einstein, 481.

hereby collect evidence that their student workers were, as one communications intern suggests, “willing victims.”³⁹² The complex dimensions of consent that surround student work are always in a process of negotiation. In this last section, I draw attention to several “cracks” in neoliberal discourse on work experience that preface the next chapter’s focus on counter-discourse.

My analysis has so far focused on the ways in which student workers accept conditions of low pay as ‘fair’ or ‘worth the experience.’ While it is easy to assume that students prefer to be paid for their labour, neoliberal ethics of student cultural work reject the importance of pay and find honourable martyrdom in unpaid labour. Like Smeltzer’s student, who denied having even thought of pay, many student workers shrug off its importance in acceptance of the valorization of experience. For this very reason, it is important to note and take seriously student workers’ suggestions that monetary compensation matters. Even while broadly reproducing neoliberal narratives on work experience, student commentators often indicate that they believe their labour is valuable and deserving of pay. For example, while offset by the fact that she “received” academic credit and work experience, the *eTalk* intern’s description of her unpaid status as “tragic”³⁹³ makes way for a discourse of dissent. This allusion to tragedy may mark the intern’s resignation to her lack of pay, and to its perceived inevitability. Nonetheless, her statement carries with it the bolder suggestion that labour is deserving of monetary compensation.

At several points in this analysis, the question of how much employers profit from student workers’ labour surfaces in a troubled relationship to learning. The discourse I review perpetuates the assumption that students learn more from work experience the more value it creates for the employer. In “What’s an Intern Worth?” a publishing intern

³⁹² “Intern, Uninterrupted,” 10.

³⁹³ “FIMS in the Field,” 7.

contends that student workers should celebrate the extent to which employers profit from their unpaid labour. For the advertising intern who broke the coffee-fetching mold,³⁹⁴ the *National Post* intern who published controversial articles,³⁹⁵ and the CBC co-op student who found himself “pitching three to six [stories] every morning,”³⁹⁶ playing the roles of full-time permanent staff members – despite not being paid as such – was a privilege that made work experience worthwhile. By a similar logic, one SFU student encourages fellow workers to “take advantage of opportunities to pitch in any creative ideas that [they] think can benefit the company.”³⁹⁷ While policy protects students by – at least theoretically – limiting the extent to which companies profit from their labour, student workers express the desire for just this kind of responsibility, and seek to clearly demonstrate the extent to which they create value.

The veil that disguises student work as child’s play is wearing thin, opening up possibilities for students to leverage their ‘worth’ as a bargaining tool. A software student reminds her peers, “Just because you are the Co-op student does not mean your ideas and opinions are automatically less valuable than those of your seniors.”³⁹⁸ For a PR intern, cultural industry work experience necessarily exposes to students the importance of their work:

While interning you will learn that interns make the media world go round. Whether it’s filling an audience, doing coffee runs, studio running for a live television show or simply delivering scripts to impatient actors, interns are an integral cog in the wheel of entertainment. Because of this simple fact, I will

³⁹⁴ “Intern, Uninterrupted.”

³⁹⁵ “FIMS Graduate on National Post Internship.”

³⁹⁶ “Co-Op Reflection: A Summer at CBC | SFU OLC.”

³⁹⁷ “A Fish on Land: Adjusting to a Company’s Work Culture | SFU OLC.”

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

never ever treat any intern (or co-worker for that matter, since they were probably once an intern themselves) with anything but hardened respect.³⁹⁹

This intern's conferral of respect upon the labouring student acknowledges that the more menial tasks assigned to those workers are still vital to the employer. However, her revelation falls short of demanding better working conditions.

Similarly, a publishing intern points out that feeling indispensable to a workplace is a non-monetary reward. Still, she calls upon other interns to share their experiences: "Do you feel appreciated, or taken advantage of?"⁴⁰⁰ While a highly visible Editors Canada blog may not have been a strategic place to solicit intern complaints, her 'advice' theoretically opened up a space for collective dissent. A CBC intern likewise advises student workers,

you should never feel uncomfortable at your job. If you do feel awkward or uncomfortable, ask, "Why am I feeling this way?" Some employers try to abuse the use of internships. I don't say this to discount internships or dissuade you from pursuing an internship, I say all this to ensure you get the most out of your valuable, valuable time.⁴⁰¹

While stopping short of systemic critique, he offers a nuanced account of student worker autonomy, reminding interns that their time and labour power are valuable.

Despite students' awareness of issues of exploitation, they demonstrate a loyalty to unpaid work "because of the unpredictable job market," one intern suggests.⁴⁰² One of the most provocative images painted by neoliberal discourse is that of student workers as

³⁹⁹ "Internships Are the Way to Get Your Foot in the Entertainment Industry's Door."

⁴⁰⁰ "DISPATCHES 4."

⁴⁰¹ "Dos And Don'ts Of Post-Grad Internships."

⁴⁰² "Intern, Uninterrupted."

“willing victims,” choosing to participate in a work culture “where it is our youth and time that is being consumed by employers,”⁴⁰³ as this intern puts it. Her description is no docile submission to this relationship, however. Instead, she invokes the conditions for revolt. If time and youth are draining away, student workers should waste no time in abandoning their parasitic employers. The “unpredictability” of the labour market is, in this way, a double-edged sword. As discussed in Chapter Two, flexible work arrangements emphasize labour’s agility, and student workers may feel no more loyalty to their employers than the employer in turn shows them.

A PR co-op student writes, “keep in mind that at the end of the day, your Co-op experience is entirely dependent on your efforts; you will only walk away with what you contribute to the role.”⁴⁰⁴ Such statements are at least indicative of student workers’ resignation to their powerless position at the hands of an employer who, it would seem, does not owe them anything. In the last analysis, however, this resignation holds the potential for workers to realize how little they ‘need’ the employer in order to develop their skills. In other words, this student’s assertion highlights the centrality of living labour to the production process and thereby foregrounds the potential for worker autonomy. In a similar vein, while student workers’ perception that they are unlikely to be hired full-time when their work placements end is discouraging, it also yields grounds for critique and solidarity. Of the *National Post*, an intern notices, “Many desks are empty, journalists are working on two sometimes three stories a day, [...] the number of paid employees is downsized, which consequently cuts back the depth of their reporting.”⁴⁰⁵ After realizing

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ “5 Ways to Maximize Your Co-Op Experience.”

⁴⁰⁵ “FIMS Graduate on National Post Internship.”

that the chances of finding paid work with the *Post* were slim, this intern published an exposition calling to attention the negative aspects of her work experience there.

3.4. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have explored neoliberal discourse on work experience in Canada using the main principles of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. Fairclough's method contributes a way of understanding discourse as both formative and responsive, shaping and taking shape from the dominant assumptions at work in neoliberal ideology. As Britzman writes, every discourse "intones particular orientations, values, and interests, and constructs visions of authority, power, and knowledge."⁴⁰⁶ By interrogating neoliberal discourse on student cultural work, this chapter develops four main themes that lend substance to these intonations.

First, neoliberal advice literature mobilizes the value of individual responsibility to suggest that students treat exploitative and disempowering work experiences as an *investment* in future success. This discourse also suggests that the educational value of work depends on students' productivity as workers. Such a narrative of individual responsibility emphasizes the necessity of survival in the face of poor working conditions and suggests self-care as an avenue to professional success. Second, neoliberal discourse places student workers in a position of *initiation*, through a lexicalization that infantilizes them, demanding that they act like professionals while denying them the rights of real employees. Third, this advice literature sanctions a discursive *valorization* of work experience that takes for granted the benefit of work experience for students and conflates

⁴⁰⁶ Britzman, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*, 17.

it with pay. Valorization promotes an emancipation of practice from theory that can dissuade student workers from challenging hyper-exploitative conditions. Fourth, neoliberal discourse conceals fundamental antagonisms between labour and capital to suggest that a 'right fit' or 'perfect match' is possible, performing a discursive *alignment* of the student worker with her employer. Moreover, it often holds students responsible for finding work that they enjoy enough to withstand a lack of pay and poor labour conditions. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, several contradictions and inconsistencies surface in the neoliberal discourse I review: student workers' desire for monetary compensation, their conflicted relationship to responsibility and productivity, and the potential for resistance to capital inherent in student worker unrest. Ultimately, these cracks in neoliberal discourse point toward an investigation of counter-discourse that rejects these grounds for exploitation and disempowerment.

Chapter 4.

Making Student Labour Visible: Counter-Discourse on Work Experience

While the dominance of what I call a 'neoliberal discourse on work experience' authorizes exploitative and disempowering forms of student cultural work, this discourse also reveals and provokes instances of doubt, dissent, and a building sense of injustice. Such contradictions mark the struggle contained within all labour relations under capitalism. They also foreground and anticipate resistance. This chapter, like the last, explores discourse as a process through which meaning is negotiated, a site of struggle where ideological-discursive formations (IDFs) are both sanctioned and destabilized. Using the Faircloughian method of critical discourse analysis developed in the previous chapter, this chapter explores counter-discourses generated by labour organizations, advocacy groups, and student workers in Canada.

I identify four main strategies employed through counter-discourse, each of which disrupts one of the neoliberal assumptions explored in Chapter Three. First, fighting neoliberal narratives of individual responsibility, counter-discourse shifts responsibility for the conditions of student work on to employers, governments, educators, and broader communities, in some cases complicating notions of responsibility altogether. Second, counter-discourse challenges the denial of labour rights for students by affirming that students are also workers. Third, it combats the valorization of experience by acknowledging the material and emotional impacts of work experience on students and considering the benefits of 'inexperience'. Fourth, counter-discourse rejects the claim that student work arrangements are equally beneficial for both students and workers, drawing attention to systems of labour exploitation while calling for collective resistance. Put into

conversation with the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two, these discourses reveal four main interrelated avenues of dissent.

4.1. Methodology

Whereas Chapter Three examined the core themes of an interpretation grounded in neoliberal politics, here I examine counter-discourses that work to challenge and to neutralize the neoliberal assumptions. As in Chapter Three, I use Fairclough's three-dimensional framework to consider text and texture, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice in the context of advice literature on work experience.⁴⁰⁷ The generic category of "advice literature" used in Chapter Three worked well to describe a set of texts primarily written by and addressed to individuals. However, counter-discourse, while at times offering advice, must also concern itself with deconstruction, activism, and advocacy. Discourse with subversive goals is more often addressed to a collective audience than to an individual. In fact, these texts often carry with them critiques of individualized or disingenuous approaches to advice. Thus the dimension of discourse practice – including genre and order of discourse – merits further discussion in the context of this chapter.

4.1.1. Genre

In this chapter, I focus on the genre of *advocacy literature* instead of advice literature. When addressed to student workers and to their employers, advice literature takes up individualized narratives about student work. Its recommendations presume an individual actor capable of independently navigating neoliberal labour practices, or a

⁴⁰⁷ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, 87.

particular governing body with the power to change policy. For instance, the solutions put forward by Dave McKay, Andrew Coyne, Jesse Kline, and Fergus Hodgson are designed to extend, strengthen, or make sustainable the current structures for student work in Canada. Given its oppositional goals, the literature reviewed in this chapter forms a less consistent body of discourse than the one discussed in Chapter Three. For example, many of the sources I draw from here can still be categorized as advice literature in that, according to the generic definition provided in Chapter Three, they make concrete recommendations for shaping or working within systems of student labour in Canada. However, the way ‘advice’ is taken up here tends to be both individualizing and de-politicized, and as such does not adequately characterize counter-discourses aimed at making radical changes to prevailing structures. The term *advocacy literature* better reflects the adversarial and subversive goals of those counter-discourses that exceed the category of advice.

4.1.2. Order of Discourse

On the level of discourse practice, I described in Chapter Three the ways in which neoliberal discourse on work experience draws upon the “socially available resources”⁴⁰⁸ that make up the ideological underpinnings of neoliberal capitalism. For Fairclough, however, discursive practice is not only a means of producing and reproducing dominant ideological-discursive formations (IDFs); discourse is also a site where existing structures of thought are challenged and transformed.⁴⁰⁹ Fairclough writes,

Any instance of discursive practice can thus be interpreted in terms of its relationship to existing orders of discourse and discursive practices (is it broadly normative, reproducing them, or creative, contributing to their transformation?), as

⁴⁰⁸ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 10.

⁴⁰⁹ Fairclough, 95.

well as its relationship to existing social structures, ideologies and power relations.⁴¹⁰

While dominant IDF's work to "naturalize" ideologies, i.e. to win acceptance for them as non-ideological 'common sense,'⁴¹¹ this naturalization is rarely totalizing. For Fairclough, the dominance of an IDF is "constantly at risk through a shift in relations of power between forces."⁴¹² For example, while neoliberal ideology sets the tone for mainstream conversations about the value of work experience, its core assumptions are called into question by student workers and their advocates. These interventions raise issues of labour injustice and human rights violations to fuel critiques of work under capitalism more broadly. The forces that challenge these neoliberal assumptions produce what I refer to as 'counter-discourse,'⁴¹³ which in this case means discourse aimed at subverting the status quo for student cultural work in Canada. I organize the twenty instances of counter-discourse explored here according to the neoliberal assumption they challenge, whether by shifting responsibility, establishing the student as a worker, questioning the value of experience, or drawing out antagonisms between labour and capital.

Throughout this chapter, I apply the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two to show how critical philosophies of education and autonomist Marxist thought lend

⁴¹⁰ Fairclough, 95.

⁴¹¹ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, 27.

⁴¹² Fairclough, 41.

⁴¹³ The term 'counter-discourse' runs the risk of assuming that subversive narratives necessarily respond to, and therefore proceed from, neoliberal discourse. I must emphasize here that the stances produced through these counter-discourses also precede the neoliberal narrative; they draw from notions about learning, labour, and experience that are well-established in histories of critical thought. It is possible, therefore, to see neoliberal discourse as a response to what here is called 'counter-discourse.' I tackle neoliberal discourse first and an 'alternative' discourse on work experience afterward, for two main reasons: first, to make the argument that neoliberal structures for student work were once less contested and are now increasingly challenged; and second, because the counter-discourses I examine were produced more recently than much of the neoliberal discourse I review. Over the past decade in Canada, the voices of student workers and their advocates have been amplified in mainstream news by non-profit organization, unions, and student activists.

context to critique brought forth through counter-discourse. The ways in which student workers are 'lexicalized' in neoliberal discourse – as lazy, empty, immature, privileged, naïve, inexperienced, and ignorant – are waylaid by what Fairclough calls “alternative lexicalizations.”⁴¹⁴ In the examples explored here, alternative lexicalizations reveal student workers as producers of value who embody knowledge and capabilities that enter and exit the workplace along with them; as active agents who produce their experience through labour; as a group composed of many classes, genders, racial identities, ages, and abilities. Repositioned, the student worker emerges as a figure whose exploitation and disempowerment is also a site of struggle and resistance.

The example Fairclough uses in *Analysing Discourse* is pertinent to this analysis. He contends that a lexicon of 'youth' made up of terms such as “incorrigible, defiance, lack of responsibility, delinquency” belong to a “particular lexicalization of 'youth'” as a not-yet-valuable population, ill-disciplined and ill-adjusted to their social surroundings.⁴¹⁵ However, Fairclough writes, “the lexicon itself, as code, is only one among indefinitely many possible lexicalizations; one can easily create an 'anti-language' equivalent part of the lexicon - irrepressible for incorrigible, debunking for defiance, refusal to be sucked in by society for lack of responsibility.”⁴¹⁶ In this way, alternative lexicalizations are a product of the “divergent ideological positions”⁴¹⁷ brought into focus throughout this chapter.

⁴¹⁴ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, 34.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

4.1.3. Sources

The twenty sources of counter-discourses I take up here are generated by student worker activists, labour rights advocacy groups, and one labour union. Each source is published online in written form. In a few cases, they transcribe and thereby amplify oral accounts of dissent. In this section, I provide some context for each source and its author.

The Canadian Intern Association (CIA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public, facilitating law reform, promoting research, and encouraging media coverage on internships and youth employment issues in Canada.⁴¹⁸ In addition, they offer advice for interns on a case-by-case basis under the guidance of Toronto-based labour lawyer Andrew Langille.⁴¹⁹ The CIA's website hosts a "Wall of Shame" dedicated to calling out employers whose intern hiring practices are illegal or unethical. While there are no recent posts to date, founder Claire Seaborn noted in 2015, "Just threatening to a company that we'll put them on our Wall of Shame is enough to make them change their behaviour, or at least have a phone conversation about it."⁴²⁰

I also analyze the Canadian Intern Rights Guide, published by the Canadian Intern Association in March 2016. The guide is authored by executives and board members of the organization. It was produced with help from the CIA's "Labour Partners," including the Canadian Labour Congress and municipal labour councils throughout Canada, "Campus Partners," including the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and numerous post-secondary student unions at Canadian schools.⁴²¹ The guide is described as "an educational tool for interns and students across Canada to learn about their workplace

⁴¹⁸ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 4.

⁴¹⁹ Cohen, Nicole and Greig de Peuter, "Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada," *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 591.

⁴²⁰ Cohen and de Peuter, 590.

⁴²¹ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 4.

rights.”⁴²² However, it also aims to “assist employers and educators that supervise internship programs” and to “facilitate law reform” by spreading awareness of interns’ labour issues.⁴²³

Communication Workers of America (CWA) Canada represents workers in the communications industry, which it defines as “news services, digital media, radio, television, newspapers, print shops or mailing operations.”⁴²⁴ CWA Canada is the parent union of the Canadian Media Guild (CMG), whose freelance branch hosts CWA Canada Associate Members, a free membership program for “media students, volunteers, and precarious (intern, part-time, temporary) workers from across Canada.”⁴²⁵ Here I consider both CWA Canada’s “Policy on Equitable Use of Interns,” and its “Guidelines on Internships,” both of which draw upon existing collective agreements to establish standards for fair treatment of interns across the media industry.⁴²⁶ I also draw from the CWA Canada Intern Handbook, written by the CWA Canada Associate Members Steering Committee, and the CWA Media Works handbook, a guide to “labour rights and reporting” that includes a section for student workers.⁴²⁷ Finally, I include the steering committee’s

⁴²² Ibid, 9.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ “About CWA Canada,” CWA Canada • The Media Union, accessed August 23, 2017, <https://cwacanada.ca/cwa-canada-info/about-cwa-canada/>.

⁴²⁵ “Membership for Student, Volunteer and Precarious Media Workers,” CMG Freelance, April 29, 2014, <http://cmgfreelance.ca/en/cwacanadaassociatemembers/>.

⁴²⁶ “CWA Canada Guidelines on Internships,” CMG Freelance, May 17, 2016, <http://cmgfreelance.ca/en/cwa-canada-guidelines-on-internships/>.

⁴²⁷ Arshy Mann and Haseena Manek, *Media Works: A Labour Rights and Reporting Handbook* (Canadian University Press, 2015), <http://cmgfreelance.ca/en/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Media-Works-Handbook-2015.pdf>.

published response to the federal government-commissioned report on youth employment, released in May 2017.⁴²⁸

Cultural Workers Organize (CWO) is a research project that sheds light upon workers' struggles in arts, communication and cultural industries.⁴²⁹ Problematizing these labour markets' celebration of individualistic "coping strategies," CWO draws attention to the many ways in which cultural workers respond collectively to precarity.⁴³⁰ The project lends support to a labour movement that has had "difficulty adapting to the growth of flexible employment" in cultural fields.⁴³¹ I draw from an interview conducted in 2015 by CWO researchers Nicole Cohen and Greig de Peuter, who interview Andrew Langille; Claire Seaborn, founder and former president of the association; Josh Mandryk, labour lawyer and student labour rights advocate; and Ella Hendry, co-chair of Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams.⁴³² I also consider a 2012 article written by de Peuter, Cohen, and Enda Brophy, titled "Interns Unite" and published in *Briarpatch*, a magazine dedicated to critical political and cultural commentary.

Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams (SAUIS) is a group of students, youth, and labour activists who demand stronger enforcement of the existing Employment Standards Act for internships in Ontario.⁴³³ Headed by Josh Mandryk and Ella Hendry, the group has done workshops for college and university students, sometimes in partnership

⁴²⁸ CWA Canada Associate Member Steering Committee, "Student/Young Media Union Members Program Supports Recommendations of Youth Employment Report."

⁴²⁹ "About - Cultural Workers Organize," Cultural Workers Organize, accessed May 8, 2017, <https://culturalworkersorganize.org/about/>.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Cohen and de Peuter, "Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada," 598.

⁴³³ "About: Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams," Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams, accessed May 8, 2017, <https://payyourinterns.wordpress.com/>.

with CWA Canada's Associate Members program.⁴³⁴ The campaign is supported by post-secondary student associations such as the University of Toronto Student Union, as well as politicians including Andrew Cash, Laurin Liu, and Peggy Sattler, who have put forward private member's bills on the issue of student work.⁴³⁵ Here I draw from the campaign's Frequently Asked Questions page.

Internsheep was an advocacy campaign for young workers and interns active from 2011 to 2013 and established by former TalentEgg intern Carley Centen, whose mission was "to ensure that high-quality, meaningful internship opportunities are accessible to Canadian youth."⁴³⁶ The project was inspired by Centen's own frustration at "the lack of entry-level opportunity" in Canada, and at the lack of student worker organizing in the country, compared to the climate for dissent in the UK.⁴³⁷ The Internsheep website features several blog-style posts, two of which I explore in this chapter. The first, "Who Benefits from Un(der)paid Internships?" challenges the assumption that students profit from work experience more than their employers.⁴³⁸ The second, "York U Passes the Buck," publishes a response Centen received from York University in Toronto after she had inquired into its posting practices for unpaid internships.⁴³⁹

Continuing my exploration of *OPENWIDE Zine*, published by students in Western University's Faculty of Information and Media Studies (FIMS), I analyze an article titled

⁴³⁴ Cohen and de Peuter, "Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada," 593.

⁴³⁵ Cohen and de Peuter, 595.

⁴³⁶ "About," Internsheep, August 17, 2011, <https://internsheep.wordpress.com/about/>.

⁴³⁷ "About."

⁴³⁸ "Who Benefits from Un(der)paid Internships?," *Internsheep* (blog), October 7, 2011, <https://internsheep.wordpress.com/2011/10/07/who-benefits-from-underpaid-internships/>.

⁴³⁹ "York U Passes the Buck," *Internsheep* (blog), December 8, 2011, <https://internsheep.wordpress.com/2011/12/08/york-u-passes-the-buck/>.

“Letter to the Editor: Unpaid Internships,” published in direct response to “FIMS in the Field,” one of the sources from Chapter Three.⁴⁴⁰

I also consider a CBC report entitled “Bell accused of breaking labor law with unpaid interns.”⁴⁴¹ While written in the balanced style of news reporting that often reproduces existing power relations, this article nonetheless makes public student worker testimonials that are otherwise difficult to access. Reporter Kathy Tomlinson explores Jainna Patel’s decision to file a complaint against Bell Media after completing an unpaid internship in its Professional Management Program.⁴⁴² The case sparked a CBC *Go Public* page calling on other unpaid interns to share their experiences. *Go Public* is an “investigative news segment” through which the CBC offers to “tell your stories and hold the powers that be accountable.”⁴⁴³ I also draw from the *Go Public* page on unpaid internships, a fruitful source of counter-discourse produced by disenfranchised student workers.

Labour lawyer Andrew Langille describes his blog, *youth and work*, as a “website about youths, workplace law, economics, labour markets, education, and public policy.”⁴⁴⁴ I examine a post titled “Interrogating Work-Integrated Learning,” a transcription of the comments delivered by Langille to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.⁴⁴⁵ Langille draws attention to the issue of exploitative student work and situates it within the broader

⁴⁴⁰ “Letter to the Editor: Unpaid Internships,” *OPENWIDE Online*, October 20, 2013, <https://openwidedezine.com/2013/10/20/letter-to-the-editor-unpaid-internships/>.

⁴⁴¹ Tomlinson, “Bell Accused of Breaking Labour Law with Unpaid Interns.”

⁴⁴² Tomlinson.

⁴⁴³ “Go Public Inbox.”

⁴⁴⁴ Andrew Langille, “Interrogating Work-Integrated Learning | Youth and Work,” *Youth and Work* (blog), April 30, 2014, <http://www.youthandwork.ca/2014/04/interrogating-work-integrated-learning.html>.

⁴⁴⁵ Langille spoke in support of Peggy Sattler’s 2014 Private Member’s Bill 172, which proposed amendments to the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act that would clarify the definition of ‘work-integrated learning’ and establish an advisory committee to address issues of accessibility in student work.

context of “intergenerational inequality” in Canada.⁴⁴⁶

I also draw from an April 2013 Reddit thread that sparked wide-spread criticism of Vancouver-based social media company HootSuite’s labour practices. The thread, titled “Hootsuite is hiring unpaid Interns, this is illegal in BC,” is launched by a user who posted the BC Employment Standards Act alongside Hootsuite’s eight job postings for various unpaid roles, which violate these regulations.⁴⁴⁷

I then turn to student worker organizing in Québec, where the “comités unitaires sur le travail étudiant” (CUTE) forms several university-based chapters in Montréal and Québec City. Their current “campagne sur le travail étudiant” builds on the momentum of a recent victory for doctoral students in psychology, who won back-pay for their hospital placements after a decade-long period of sustained mobilization as well as a strike lasting over four months.⁴⁴⁸ The CUTE now continues to stage demonstrations and produces a vast amount of written material to mobilize all students in Québec to fight for wages.⁴⁴⁹ Here I reference a “questions et réponses” page they publish in online journal *Dissident.es* to address common concerns about the campaign. The page calls upon readers to “continue the debate in the public sphere,” whether they support the movement or are

⁴⁴⁶ Langille.

⁴⁴⁷ “Hootsuite Is Hiring Unpaid Interns, This Is Illegal in BC.,” *Reddit*, April 5, 2013, https://www.reddit.com/r/vancouver/comments/1bqyvtv/hootsuite_is_hiring_unpaid_interns_this_is/.

⁴⁴⁸ Montréal La Presse Canadienne, “Rémunération: Les Doctorants En Psychologie S’entendent Avec Québec | Santé,” *LaPresse.ca*, December 21, 2016, <http://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/sante/201612/21/01-5053477-remuneration-les-doctorants-en-psychologie-sentendent-avec-quebec.php>.

⁴⁴⁹ The CUTE advocates for pay not only for internships, but also for coursework. They argue that under capitalism, formal education implicates students in a kind of reproductive labour that adds value to their labour power.

“perplexed” by its doctrine.⁴⁵⁰ I also draw from an event page for a June 2016 founding assembly of the “Montréal coalition for paid internships.”⁴⁵¹

Finally, I discuss a related article in Québec-based feminist magazine *Françoise Stéréo*, in which Amélie Poirier and Camille Tremblay-Fournier write in support of the student worker movement from a Marxist feminist perspective. “La grève des stages est une grève des femmes” draws connections between the reproductive quality of student work, whereby young people train for the workforce, and the reproductive labour traditionally performed by women.⁴⁵² Perhaps in part because of the language and cultural barrier between French-speaking and English-speaking student activists in Canada, neither community references the other in the material reviewed here. While English-speaking advocates often commend European efforts for their contributions to the student labour movement,⁴⁵³ the arguably more radical statements made by organizers in Québec have not yet entered student worker consciousness in the rest of Canada.

⁴⁵⁰ CUTE, “Questions et Réponses – Campagne Sur Le Travail Étudiant – Dissident.es,” *Dissident.es* (blog), February 27, 2017, <https://dissident.es/questions-et-reponses-campagne-sur-le-travail-etudiant/>.

⁴⁵¹ CUTE, “Fondation Coalition Montréalaise Pour La Rémunération Des Stages,” Montréal Carpe Diem, June 3, 2016, <http://montreal.carpediem.cd/events/3548292-fondation-coalition-montr-alaise-pour-la-r-mun-ration-des-stages-at-uqam-universit-du-qu-bec-montr-al/?mode=modal>.

⁴⁵² Amélie Poirier and Camille Tremblay-Fournier, “La Grève Des Stages Est Une Grève Des Femmes - FRANCOISE STEREO,” May 23, 2017, <http://francoisestereo.com/greve-stages-greve-femmes/>.

⁴⁵³ de Peuter and Cohen, “Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada,” 592; “About,” August 17, 2011.

4.2. Counter-Discourse on Work Experience

4.2.1. Shifting Responsibility

The neoliberal notion of individual responsibility holds student workers accountable for the economic and emotional costs of their own training. This discourse presumes that harmful working conditions and highly exploitative compensation structures are necessary evils of entry-level work. It further posits that students must learn to thrive within these structures. Counter-discourses protest individualistic approaches that put the onus on student workers. Instead they insist that employers, educational institutions, governments, and collective action have a role to play in promoting the interests of individual workers, and ultimately, in establishing more just conditions for student labour in Canada. Perhaps most importantly, counter-discourse complicates notions of responsibility altogether and raises questions about whose labour is valued through neoliberal processes of cultural production.

Discourses that put the onus on employers to ameliorate conditions for student work call upon them to ensure basic standards for working conditions and worker protections, to offer educational support for student workers, and to provide remuneration for student labour.

CWA Canada's "Policy on Equitable Use of Interns" highlights problems of inequity in student work. For example, it notes, "historically marginalized communities are being shut out of media work due to their inability to engage in unpaid labour."⁴⁵⁴ CWA's policy appeals to industry leaders by connecting labour issues to quality in cultural production, as well as to the responsibility of media industries to meaningfully inform Canadian

⁴⁵⁴ "CWA Canada Policy on Equitable Use of Interns | CMG Freelance," CMG Freelance, April 17, 2015, <http://cmgfreelance.ca/en/cwa-canada-policy-on-equitable-use-of-interns/>.

citizens. It explains, “Paid internships would attract people from [underrepresented] marginalized groups, which would diversify and improve media coverage.”⁴⁵⁵ This doctrine appeals to young cultural workers on both legal and ethical terms, emphasizing that student workers should be covered by existing collective agreements, regardless of whether or not they qualify as employees by law.⁴⁵⁶ It proposes a set of standards for student worker collective agreements and calls upon employers to provide safe and supportive conditions for new workers.⁴⁵⁷

Calls for employers to ensure quality learning experiences often take root in a discourse of corporate social responsibility. The claim that employers have an ethical responsibility to educate student workers rests on two assumptions: first, that education is a form of compensation, and second, that employers can pay their debt to society by equipping young workers with the skills that will make them productive members of society. Such demands are made by Employment Standards Acts that exempt employers from compensation if the training they offer could reasonably be compared to that of a post-secondary vocational program. Organizations such as the CIA press further: “even if your unpaid internship program is legal, it may still be unethical, exploitative, and contrary to corporate social responsibility norms.”⁴⁵⁸ The CWA Intern Handbook recommends that employers offer mentorship and constructive feedback to help distinguish a “learning

⁴⁵⁵ “CWA Canada Policy on Equitable Use of Interns | CMG Freelance.”

⁴⁵⁶ “CWA Canada Policy on Equitable Use of Interns | CMG Freelance.”

⁴⁵⁷ According to CWA Canada, a collective agreement should address the scope of student workers’ duties, highlighting training, expected work hours, length of contract, and “avenues for recourse” in case issues arise. It also advises employers to provide mentorship plans, safety and anti-harassment training, and appropriate acknowledgement for students’ work. (Ibid).

⁴⁵⁸ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 45.

opportunity” from an opportunity for “free work.”⁴⁵⁹

Discourses that call upon employers to compensate their student workers affirm that student work creates value for employers and should be compensated as such. The Canadian Intern Association’s Wall of Shame calls attention to job postings listed by several cultural industry employers, including Rogers TV, Reader’s Digest Media, and, famously, HootSuite.⁴⁶⁰ Each Wall of Shame post quotes the job description in question and assesses it according to the applicable labour law, ultimately determining that the employer has a legal and ethical responsibility to pay their student workers. Such discourse often designates wages for student workers as a cost of training new workers; the CIA notes, “Employers reap the benefits of the training they provide to their workers. Job-specific training is a cost that should be borne by employers.”⁴⁶¹ However, based on the exemptions set out by provincial Employment Standards Acts (ESA) in Ontario and British Columbia, employers are not legally required to compensate workers in training programs, as long as the program fulfills certain requirements.⁴⁶²

While in theory this policy sets up significant legal barriers to hiring unpaid interns, the vague scope of these guidelines is a poor match for corporate cost-cutting imperatives,

⁴⁵⁹ CWA Canada Associate Member Steering Committee, *CWA Canada Intern Handbook* (CWA Canada, 2016), 6.

⁴⁶⁰ “Wall of Shame,” Canadian Intern Association, May 31, 2016, <http://internassociation.ca/category/shame/>.

⁴⁶¹ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 46.

⁴⁶² The student exemption excludes workers from ESA coverage during academic internships, practica and co-op placements. The professional exemption covers work placements in designated fields such as nursing, medicine, and law. Finally, the trainee exemption excludes “persons receiving training from an employer” under six specific conditions, such as the trainee deriving benefit from the work, and the trainee not replacing a paid employee. (*The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 46).

and provincial governments often fail to enforce these regulations.⁴⁶³ Given the shortcomings of legislative restrictions for student work, the CIA guide recommends that employers take ethics into account when determining intern pay structures.⁴⁶⁴ However, Josh Mandryk argues that employers cannot be relied upon to evaluate the legality of their own employment practices; “instead, the onus should be on an employer to get approval for an unpaid internship before they do it.”⁴⁶⁵ While primarily placing blame on employers, this provocation also holds regulatory bodies responsible for picking up employers’ slack.

Discourses that call upon governments and regulatory bodies primarily demand changes to legislation, stronger enforcement of existing legislation, government-funded research, and funding to support student workers.

Calls for legislative change target provincial ESAs as well as the *Canada Labour Code*. For example, the CUTE draws attention to a labour standards review in Québec by reminding students, “It is precisely a clause in this legislation that allows employers not to pay interns the minimum wage!”⁴⁶⁶ This kind of discourse strategically aims to mobilize activism around established processes of legislative review. The CIA recommends that provincial governments eliminate trainee exemptions for jobs “not formally linked to academic study.”⁴⁶⁷ For work that is linked to academic study, the CIA recommends extending “basic workplace protections” to student workers, including occupational health and safety protection.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶³ “Letter to the Editor,” October 20, 2013.

⁴⁶⁴ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 45.

⁴⁶⁵ Cohen and de Peuter, “Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada,” 588.

⁴⁶⁶ CUTE, “Fondation Coalition Montréalaise Pour La Rémunération Des Stages.”

⁴⁶⁷ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 48.

⁴⁶⁸ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 49.

More recent policy advocacy has targeted the 2017 federal youth employment panel's recommendations. For example, while CWA Canada commends the panel's recommendation to eliminate unpaid internships outside of academic programs, their associate members also recommend the elimination of unpaid internships that are part of academic or post-secondary programs.⁴⁶⁹ Academic internships, while theoretically offering a kind of compensation for students' labour, still pose problems of financial accessibility, especially as they often require student workers to pay tuition.⁴⁷⁰ CWA Canada's associate members committee also echoes recommendations that the labour code increase rights and protections for workers in "non-standard positions;" they strategically suggest that this will foster young workers' respect for labour laws in the long run.⁴⁷¹

Criticism of governments' enforcement strategies often accompanies a demand for better oversight of work placement programs – a task that should not be the responsibility of students themselves, nor their schools or employers. Challenging the neoliberal discourse that calls upon students to stand up for themselves, Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams insists, "Enforcing the law is the Ontario government's responsibility – not the responsibility of vulnerable young workers."⁴⁷² Co-chair Ella Hendry notes that institutions have demonstrated an inability to ensure that academic internships actually "have pedagogical value."⁴⁷³ Such discrepancy, for Hendry, points to the need for "external

⁴⁶⁹ CWA Canada Associate Member Steering Committee, "Student/Young Media Union Members Program Supports Recommendations of Youth Employment Report."

⁴⁷⁰ CWA Canada Associate Member Steering Committee.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² "FAQ about Unpaid Internships," Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams, October 1, 2013, <https://payyourinterns.wordpress.com/about/>.

⁴⁷³ Cohen and de Peuter, 589.

oversight of academic internships by the Ministry of Labour.”⁴⁷⁴ After all, there is little incentive for schools to be discerning about the internships they offer, given the structural lack of funding for post-secondary institutions in Canada and the neoliberal pressure they face to churn out employable graduates.⁴⁷⁵

For the Canadian Intern Association, which hears directly from student workers, reports of employers taking advantage of inexpensive labour reveal a need to strengthen “compliance and enforcement strategies.”⁴⁷⁶ The CIA Guide recommends “expanded investigations of employers’ practices” in response to complaints, “more frequent inspection blitzes,” and a “formalized system of anonymous and third party complaints.”⁴⁷⁷ Recommendations regarding enforcement presume that governing bodies can and should advocate on behalf of the rights of student workers, regardless of the economic restrictions legislation may place on employers.

Academics and advocacy groups alike have pointed to a lack of sustained research, and therefore data, about student work in Canada.⁴⁷⁸ The Canadian Intern Association aims to hold the Liberals accountable to the commitment they made during the 2015 election to collect more information on the issue of student work.⁴⁷⁹ Internsheep suggests that government agencies partner with academics, employers, employment specialists, and student workers themselves to produce “evidence-based policy targeted at youth.”⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 49.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ William Webb, “Ontario Interns Fight Back: Modes of Resistance Against Unpaid Internships,” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 583; “Who Benefits from Un(der)paid Internships?”

⁴⁷⁹ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 50.

⁴⁸⁰ “Who Benefits from Un(der)paid Internships?”

While a collaborative approach to research suggested by such partnerships seems like a necessary step to improving policy, calls for partnered research neglect the power dynamics that pervade the problem of student work. The interests of employer-generated versus student worker-generated data collection, for example, would be fraught with antagonisms. Nonetheless, these discourses hold governments responsible for ensuring that the research generated will help educate the public about conditions for student work.⁴⁸¹

Discourses that call upon educational institutions to take more responsibility for student labour justice emphasize that the institution should act either as a gatekeeper to prevent predatory employers from exploiting students, or as a source of support and empowerment for student workers by educating them about their worth and labour rights.

For many advocates, the academic exception for internships means that the institution must take responsibility for providing “quality, meaningful, and accessible opportunities to their students.”⁴⁸² CWA Canada’s Intern Handbook notes that while unpaid interns are not covered by employment standards, the intern’s school is responsible for ensuring that an internship is “safe, fair, meaningful and meets the criteria set out by [an academic program].”⁴⁸³ The handbook adds that an internship coordinator should be student workers’ first point of contact if they feel their labour rights have been violated.⁴⁸⁴ For the Canadian Intern Association, oversight of student work placements should be a collaborative pursuit, undertaken both by academic institutions and governing

⁴⁸¹ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 50.

⁴⁸² “Who Benefits from Un(der)paid Internships?”

⁴⁸³ CWA Canada Associate Member Steering Committee, *CWA Canada Intern Handbook*, 10.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

bodies.⁴⁸⁵

The CIA guide also recommends that academic institutions submit annual reports on the internship programs they offer in order to track students' progress and relay their feedback.⁴⁸⁶ Warning against relying on government funding to “subsidize payrolls for employers,” the CIA advises governments to focus on preventative measures instead, for example by funding schools to teach students about their labour rights.⁴⁸⁷ Doug Tewksbury argues that media literacy curricula in particular must teach students how to identify exploitative conditions in media industries, and how to organize against them “through educational, political, and personal efforts.”⁴⁸⁸ His analysis echoes the perspectives brought forward by Paolo Freire, Henry Giroux, and Deborah Britzman, who highlight the political potential of an active, reflective approach to learning.⁴⁸⁹

Internsheep points out that Canadian universities have thus far been complicit in the exploitation of student workers. Universities legitimize unpaid work periods as an integral step to launching a career instead of encouraging students to be aware of the legality or ethics of their working conditions.⁴⁹⁰ While academic institutions often fail students in this arena, the campus is nonetheless a “decisive institutional link in the unpaid labour chain,” write de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, and therefore a “strategic site for organizing.”⁴⁹¹ Because “past, current, and future” student workers all congregate in the space of the

⁴⁸⁵ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 49.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁸ Doug Tewksbury, “Educating the Precariat: Intern Labour and a Renewed Approach to Media Literacy Education,” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 529.

⁴⁸⁹ See Chapter Two, pages 16-20.

⁴⁹⁰ “York U Passes the Buck.”

⁴⁹¹ Greig de Peuter, Nicole Cohen, and Enda Brophy, “Interns Unite!,” *Briarpatch Magazine*, November 9, 2012, <https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/interns-unite-you-have-nothing-to-lose-literally>.

school,⁴⁹² it is fertile ground for commiserative and dissenting attitudes toward student work.

Many of the discourses examined in this chapter acknowledge that the exploitation and disempowerment of student workers is a systemic problem, with no simple cause nor solution. Discourses that complicate the notion of responsibility do so by problematizing the issue of choice and communicating the need for a collective response to student labour issues.

Tewksbury notes that much discourse on student work assumes as backdrop “an idealized meritocracy where individual hard work and perseverance is the formula for a prosperous future.”⁴⁹³ As discussed in Chapter Three, these narratives imply that to participate in work-integrated learning is an individual choice. However, as Corrigan writes, “that choice may be illusory,” as long as internships are perceived as a necessary step on the path to media and cultural work.⁴⁹⁴ The very notion that work experience must precede paid work means that students cannot simply choose not to participate in unpaid labour: “If experience and exposure are what interns are ‘paid’ in, and their long-run subsistence as creatives necessitates acquisition of these resources, then we can see their unpaid or under-paid labour as the product of coercion.”⁴⁹⁵

The CWA’s Media Works Handbook reassures unpaid interns that they cannot be blamed for having ‘chosen’ to work without pay:

All work has value and all media workers deserve to be paid fairly for their work. However, there are some circumstances where one might willingly choose to do

⁴⁹² de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy.

⁴⁹³ Tewksbury, “Educating the Precariat: Intern Labour and a Renewed Approach to Media Literacy Education,” 529.

⁴⁹⁴ Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels,” 343.

⁴⁹⁵ Corrigan, 344.

an unpaid internship. If you need the experience and you have the means to support yourself, *then* it's your choice [emphasis added]. The worker who is doing an unpaid internship isn't at any fault—it's the employer that's breaking the law.⁴⁹⁶

Such acknowledgement detracts from individualizing narratives about choice while also encouraging workers who can afford to work without pay that their labour power should be valued anyway. Crucially, the CWA's statement strives to normalize dissent despite a culture in which, De Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy write, "no matter how distasteful their quasi-job, few interns would jeopardize the bait (graduating to full-time, a glowing reference) or annihilate their reputation for being 'agreeable' by speaking out."⁴⁹⁷ Mandryk suggests that the majority of interns who know they are being treated illegally or unfairly neglect to file complaints with the Ministry of Labour because of the damage it could do to their reputation in a desirable industry.⁴⁹⁸

When individuals seek advice from advocacy organizations, the actions they can take without incurring personal risk are limited. As Claire Seaborn notes, student worker issues are hard to publicize when, understandably, few who have had prototypically negative experiences want to talk to the media.⁴⁹⁹ Even when individuals are willing to make their stories public, individual stories can only provide a limited understanding of the problem.⁵⁰⁰ If student work is addressed on an individual level, each case fades out of public consciousness after its moment in the spotlight; it stands in for, but conceals, the

⁴⁹⁶ Mann and Manek, *Media Works: A Labour Rights and Reporting Handbook*, 20.

⁴⁹⁷ de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, "Interns Unite!"

⁴⁹⁸ Josh Mandryk, "Intern Inspection Blitz Statistics Highlight Failure of Complaints-Based Enforcement Model," Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams, September 30, 2014, <https://payyourinterns.wordpress.com/2014/09/30/intern-inspection-blitz-statistics-highlight-failure-of-complaints-based-enforcement-model/>.

⁴⁹⁹ Cohen and de Peuter, "Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada," 598.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

complexity and magnitude of the issue. For this reason, Seaborn divulges, “I often skirt the question about my own internships, because I would prefer to be a representative of the issue at large. I don’t want to be an anecdote.”⁵⁰¹

The question of who is able to bring their own case forward is also ripe for discussion. In 2011, Eric Glatt, a 46-year-old white male unpaid intern on the set of the movie *Black Swan*, filed a class-action lawsuit against Fox Searchlight Pictures for back-pay and damages. Alexander Footman and Eden Antalik were also named amongst an “unspecified number of other interns” covered by the claim.⁵⁰² The settlement reached in 2016 stated that Glatt would receive \$7,500, Footman \$6,000, and Antalik \$3,500.⁵⁰³ Glatt, the eldest and least vulnerable with a finance career already under his belt,⁵⁰⁴ spearheaded the initiative. It is likewise significant that Antalik, a younger woman, was last to put her name forward. In this way, barriers to self-advocacy take shape along lines of gender, age, and race, and economic security. Because Jainna Patel of the 2013 Bell complaint is a woman of colour, Seaborn notes, “it’s important that she’s able to speak out about the issue.”⁵⁰⁵

The counter-discourses I examine rarely abandon narratives of individual responsibility altogether. At their most sophisticated, they impress the need for individual action on behalf of a wider collective, while trying to mobilize those not directly

⁵⁰¹ Cohen and de Peuter, 598.

⁵⁰² Daniel Miller, “Fox Unpaid Intern Case Is Drawing to a Close with Proposed Settlement,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/cotown/la-et-ct-fox-interns-legal-case-20160712-snap-story.html>.

⁵⁰³ Miller.

⁵⁰⁴ Henry Barnes and agencies, “Fox Set to Pay out to Unpaid Interns after Reaching Settlement on Black Swan Case,” *The Guardian*, July 13, 2016, sec. Film, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/jul/13/fox-payout-unpaid-interns-settlement-black-swan-case>.

⁵⁰⁵ Cohen and de Peuter, “Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada,” 598.

disadvantaged by student work. While petitioning primarily for legal reform, the Canadian Intern Association also makes individualized suggestions, for example, that student workers clarify the terms of their employment with their employers, budget effectively during their work terms, keep records of the tasks they perform, and stay in touch with colleagues.⁵⁰⁶ In this case, suggestions directed at individual workers are not without subversive potential. For example, the Canadian Intern Association asks students to consider whether their workplace rights were respected and “whether to enforce those rights that were not respected,”⁵⁰⁷ inspiring student workers to fight back or to seek support from advocacy organizations in the face of injustice.

Counter-discourses occasionally hold student workers accountable as a group. Internsheep insists, the exploitation of student work is a systemic problem: “How do you address a systemic problem? You fight back. Students need to realize – before they graduate and realize their dim prospects [in the job market] – that they have the power to change this.”⁵⁰⁸ For Internsheep, this realization points toward students’ responsibility to engage in activism: “If even half the energy that goes into asking for tuition fee decreases went into this issue, we could have a movement up before the end of the year.”⁵⁰⁹ In this way, complicating responsibility involves a turn toward collective action.

In most cases, counter-discourse socializes responsibility in terms of collaboration. The Canadian Intern Association and Internsheep both emphasize a need for collaboration between interns, educational institutions, government agencies, and

⁵⁰⁶ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 31.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁸ “York U Passes the Buck.”

⁵⁰⁹ “York U Passes the Buck.”

employers.⁵¹⁰ For the CIA, government-initiated inspection blitzes should actively involve “student organizations, postsecondary institutions, and not-for-profit organizations” as collaborators for ensuring that internships are legal and beneficial to students.⁵¹¹ Langille explains that because students and young workers have little recourse to the enforcement of their rights, “the wider community” is implicated in their struggle.⁵¹²

4.2.2. Situating Students as Workers

To combat the neoliberal notion that student workers do not merit the same treatment and pay as workers in standard employment relationships, counter-discourse often affirms that student workers perform the same tasks for which other workers are paid, that student labour profits employers, and that student workers are adults who must be able to shoulder the costs of their own subsistence.

According to Andrew Langille and the Canadian Intern Association, instances of companies replacing paid employees with unpaid interns are well-documented.⁵¹³ Often an employer’s motive for hiring interns can be traced back to cutting labour costs. Thomas Corrigan writes, “some internship supervisors admit that an important, if not primary, impetus for taking on interns is to get ‘free labour’ or ‘extra hands’ to relieve their individual or organizational workloads.”⁵¹⁴ However, even if employers can demonstrate that their student hiring practices have not impacted their need for full-time employees, they have no logical reason to exclude student workers from the pay and protections they would earn

⁵¹⁰ “Who Benefits from Un(der)paid Internships?”

⁵¹¹ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 49.

⁵¹² Langille, “Interrogating Work-Integrated Learning | Youth and Work.”

⁵¹³ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 31, 48.

⁵¹⁴ Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels,” 344.

as real workers. The CIA explains this by re-framing the issue with non-academic internships, in which, they note, entry-level staff are in fact misclassified as ‘interns’.⁵¹⁵

According to Marxist theory, training for labour is part of the cost, and therefore the value, of labour power.⁵¹⁶ Both the CWA and the CIA insist that training is part of the labour process and that as such, all work “as part of training or as a precursor to employment” should be compensated and covered by employment standards.⁵¹⁷ Patel’s testimony of her experience at Bell corroborates this claim. Of her unpaid program at Bell, she tells the CBC: “It felt like I was sitting in an office as an employee, doing regular work’.”⁵¹⁸ The CUTE draws explicitly on Marxist labour theory to position the student as a worker. Their “questions et réponses” page points out that the student’s training, her education, is a product of her own labour, measurable by the extent to which her labour power can be valued by an employer.⁵¹⁹ The CUTE’s analysis also recalls Roggero’s conceptualization of the student worker as a source of living knowledge. They note that the majority of the work that goes into preparing students for productive work “comes from the student herself,” and that “it is therefore the student who produces value, measurable among other things in the labor market by the salary granted to graduates versus that of non-graduates.”⁵²⁰ Because it is the student who works to make her labour power more valuable for employers, the CUTE conclude that the student, always in training for the

⁵¹⁵ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 2.

⁵¹⁶ Marx, *Capital*, I:276.

⁵¹⁷ CWA Canada also advocates for the elimination of the academic exception, noting that academic credit is not appropriate compensation for student labour. “CWA Canada Policy on Equitable Use of Interns | CMG Freelance.”

⁵¹⁸ Tomlinson, “Bell Accused of Breaking Labour Law with Unpaid Interns.”

⁵¹⁹ CUTE, “Questions et Réponses – Campagne Sur Le Travail Étudiant – Dissident.es.”

⁵²⁰ CUTE.

workforce, is necessarily also a worker.

The devaluation of student labour is often justified through its infantilization in neoliberal discourse. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, the failure to acknowledge students as workers often rests on the stereotype of interns and other probationary workers as youth who are not yet economically independent. Counter-discourses refute the assumption that student workers can simply depend on their parents for subsistence, and the related assumption that those who participate in unpaid work experience programs can afford to do so. Crucially, they also affirm that many interns in vulnerable positions are older and, far from being dependents themselves, are supporting families of their own.

For de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, internships “supply a lesson in ageism;” they write, ‘paying your dues’ is a lazy cliché rather than an ethical argument for why it’s acceptable for young people to donate their labour.”⁵²¹ The CUTE note that the invisibility of student labour, and the extent to which the intern is a target of workplace scorn, can in part be attributed to their treatment in mainstream discourse as “spoiled babies.”⁵²² Even among young people, many internships are funded by debt. Moreover, as Ella Hendry argues in an interview for Cultural Workers Organize, “it’s a misconception that interns are all young and privileged.”⁵²³ Langille points out that many interns are not entering the workforce for the first time; they might be looking for a career shift to a field in which they have little experience, [or] new immigrants who have trouble finding paid and full-time

⁵²¹ de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, “Interns Unite!”

⁵²² CUTE, “Questions et Réponses – Campagne Sur Le Travail Étudiant – Dissident.es.”

⁵²³ Cohen and de Peuter, “Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada,” 597.

contracts.⁵²⁴⁵²⁵ A CBC *Go Public* respondent reports, “Not only the young people get burned – I was 45 when I completed the first year of [my unpaid practicum placement].”⁵²⁶

Contrary to the notion that those who work for experience do so in acceptance of a fair deal, Seaborn notes that many people who consent to obviously exploitative work arrangements are frantically seeking a way into the paid job market. She says of the Canadian Intern Association, “The people who email us are usually desperately looking for work experience and would of course prefer to be paid. Many feel that internships are the only way they can get the job they want.”⁵²⁷ In this way, the notion of unpaid work experience as a rite of passage fails not only young people but also those who face racism, sexism, and many other intersecting axes of oppression. Seaborn explains that many of the emails received by the CIA are from “older workers, immigrants, and people of colour,” as well as from “young mothers re-entering the workforce” or immigrants to Canada who have been exploited.”⁵²⁸ Counter-discourse hereby combats need-based arguments that assume student workers are still dependents. It further raises the concern that those who are deemed undeserving of pay or stable working conditions under capitalism are those who need this support the most.

Not every source I use here tackles the topic of student cultural work in particular, but those that do often address the importance of valuing cultural production. As Corrigan points out, cultural work and student work are devalued on similar grounds. Both cultural workers and student workers are expected to develop a passionate relationship to work

⁵²⁴ Anqi Shen, “Experience or Exploitation?,” *Story Board* (blog), October 24, 2012, <http://www.thestoryboard.ca/experience-or-exploitation-conference-ramps-up-debate-on-unpaid-internships/>.

⁵²⁵ Cohen and de Peuter, “Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada,” 597.

⁵²⁶ “Go Public Inbox.”

⁵²⁷ Cohen and de Peuter, “Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada,” 597.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*

that exceeds their relationship to the wage. While the work of cultural production is cast as a labour of love, student workers are similarly expected to feel grateful for the opportunity and to benefit from extra-monetary returns.⁵²⁹ As previously noted, both are devoted to their work as a means of gaining “experience and exposure,” which they hope will eventually result in better working conditions.⁵³⁰ For this reason, Seaborn points out, “when unpaid interns do revenue-generating work in the arts, media, and culture, corporations are cashing in on young workers’ passions.”⁵³¹ Counter-discourse exposes the absurdity of the passionate work narrative: “‘Just because [someone] likes to design, doesn’t mean they shouldn’t be getting paid,’ says Seaborn.”⁵³²

CWA Canada holds that the devaluation of cultural work through student work placements results in a “downward pressure on wages” for the entire industry.⁵³³ Widespread acceptance that “some workers must work for free” poses problems for the future of work in cultural industries,⁵³⁴ especially since young workers who enter the industry through hyper-exploitative arrangements might expect those who follow them to suffer the same conditions. As the largest union for communication workers in Canada, the CWA also speaks to the importance of valuing cultural production as a means of fostering participatory democracy. As previously noted, its policy on the use of interns highlights a need for accessible jobs in the media industry in order to foster a diverse and critical landscape for media consumption.

⁵²⁹ Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels.”

⁵³⁰ Corrigan, 342.

⁵³¹ de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, “Interns Unite!”

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ “CWA Canada Policy on Equitable Use of Interns | CMG Freelance.”

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

4.2.3. Questioning the Value of Work Experience

In the face of discourses that posit work experience as a substitute for wages, counter-discourse demonstrates that experience and material compensation are not mutually exclusive. In response to the neoliberal valorization of work experience, which makes claims for its unequivocal educational value, counter-discourses draw attention to the more harmful side of work experience through student worker testimonies. These discourses also venture that ‘inexperience’ can be beneficial, both because students’ labour power is valuable for employers and because it provides fertile ground for critique. Finally, counter-discourse combats the assumption that practical experience overshadows theoretical, classroom-based education or makes this kind of learning irrelevant.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the suggestion that work experience can supplant the wage requires clarification of the kinds of experiences that are valuable. While dominant discourse and legislation set standards for determining which experiences are educational, the same sources also insist that unpaid student workers should not replace those in paid roles. These guidelines appear contradictory, as student workers report learning the most useful skills and having the most fulfilling experiences while performing work that might otherwise be done by a regular employee.⁵³⁵ Nonetheless, counter-discourses often demonstrate the absurdity of the notion that an educational experience with work makes pay superfluous. As one media student writes in *OPENWIDE*, “It is abjectly false that work experience needs to be unpaid. After all, paying jobs are work experience.”⁵³⁶ Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams reminds us, “unpaid internships are no more likely than paid internships or entry level jobs to provide young

⁵³⁵ Examples from Chapter Three included pitching news stories and writing advertising copy.

⁵³⁶ “Letter to the Editor: Unpaid Internships,” *OPENWIDE Online* (blog), October 20, 2013, <https://openwidedzine.com/2013/10/20/letter-to-the-editor-unpaid-internships/>.

workers with valuable experience.”⁵³⁷

A comment on the HootSuite scandal Reddit thread recounts employment advice from a past professor: “If they’re not paying you, it’s because they don’t care enough about quality to hire someone expensive. If they don’t care about quality then the job is just irrelevant. If your job is irrelevant, you’re not learning anything useful.”⁵³⁸ Here we see a wholesale rejection of the notion that a fulfilling learning experience can replace pay. However, the idea that unpaid interns are exempt from quality control – while perhaps stated facetiously in this case – is ignorant of the kinds of expectations employers have of student workers, as we see throughout neoliberal discourse on work experience. While tasks assigned to interns may seem menial or designed to make work, the purpose of work experience programs is for students to learn while also generating value for an employer. The term ‘work experience’ itself points to this dual focus.

Neoliberal discourse on work experience also relies on the assumption that this experience is virtually always beneficial for student workers. As Corrigan points out, the argument for internships as a means of enhancing students’ employability or skill level “presumes that interns are learning something.”⁵³⁹ Of course, learning is not necessarily undermined by those experiences deemed unsuccessful by student workers, their employers, or their supervisors. Similarly, student workers note that discovering what kinds of work they do not enjoy (and therefore, according to the neoliberal logic, are ‘not a good fit’ for them) is just as important as finding a field they are passionate about. In this way, Martin Jay writes, “whether a ‘fall’ from innocence or a gain of new wisdom, an

⁵³⁷ “FAQ about Unpaid Internships.”

⁵³⁸ rastilin, “Hootsuite Is Hiring Unpaid Interns, This Is Illegal in BC.”

⁵³⁹ Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels,” 344.

enrichment of life or a bitter lesson in its follies,” experience is productive; it “comes from having survived risks and learned something from the encounter.”⁵⁴⁰

While we might try to adjudicate change or even learning, benefit is more difficult to measure. Legislative attempts to dictate that unpaid work experience must be beneficial for the intern⁵⁴¹ serve as a reminder that benefit is not inherent in experience. Counter-discourses are full of powerful assertions that experiences are not always educational, at least not in the way they are advertised. In order to file her suit against Bell, Patel testified that she “didn’t learn or benefit from” its work experience program at all.⁵⁴² Several other former Bell interns recall performing an eclectic range of tasks superfluous to their learning goals: writing an employer’s MBA application, accompanying him on daily walks, calling around for wine recommendations, and washing the office dishes.⁵⁴³

Corrigan explains that employers express “concern about assigning important work to interns with limited experience” and are therefore more likely to assign menial tasks.⁵⁴⁴ In this way, the richness of work experience itself declines in relation to an employer’s valuation of her student worker’s labour power. Interns who are presumed incompetent⁵⁴⁵ are barred from challenging experiences and therefore from the chance to demonstrate their worth. On top of all this, work experience programs in media industries

⁵⁴⁰ Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*, 10.

⁵⁴¹ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 18.

⁵⁴² Tomlinson, “Bell Accused of Breaking Labour Law with Unpaid Interns.”

⁵⁴³ “Go Public Inbox.”

⁵⁴⁴ Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels,” 345.

⁵⁴⁵ Corrigan, 344.

often fail to secure employment for young workers,⁵⁴⁶ which is perhaps the most tangible benefit a placement might offer. Ultimately, as Internsheep points out, the question of whether or not student workers are having ‘beneficial’ experiences is beside the point: regardless of the quality of education they offer, all internships present financial barriers to entry.⁵⁴⁷ Nonetheless, Centen contends, “illustrating to just what extent interns are being exploited” helps mobilize the public against under-paid student work.⁵⁴⁸

Not only does work experience often fail to benefit student workers, it also frequently exposes them to emotional, psychological, and physical abuse. While these risks are present in most labour arrangements, student workers are particularly vulnerable because of their subordinate position in the workplace hierarchy,⁵⁴⁹ because they must rely on reputation,⁵⁵⁰ and because, in the case of cultural industries, they are mostly women.⁵⁵¹ Seaborn notes that sexual harassment is understandably underreported by student workers, but that the Canadian Intern Association encounters these stories regularly.⁵⁵² Participants in Bell’s program describe a culture of fear and disempowerment, where student workers are “afraid to say no,” sometimes working until two or three ‘o clock in the morning.⁵⁵³ One *Go Public* respondent reports spending work time listening to their boss

⁵⁴⁶ Einstein, “Nothing for Money and Your Work for Free: Internships and the Marketing of Higher Education,” 480.

⁵⁴⁷ “Who Benefits from Un(der)paid Internships?”

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁹ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 13.

⁵⁵⁰ de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, “Interns Unite!”

⁵⁵¹ Shade and Jacobson, “Hungry for the Job: Gender, Unpaid Internships, and the Creative Industries,” 192.

⁵⁵² Cohen and de Peuter, “Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada,” 598.

⁵⁵³ “Go Public Inbox.”

chastise them about their lifestyle and social circle.⁵⁵⁴ Patel was manipulated by the director of Bell's Professional Management Program, Henry Mar, who, she tells the CBC, "tried to talk her into keeping quiet."⁵⁵⁵ Patel recounts standing her ground, even while being brought to tears by Mar's intimidation tactics.⁵⁵⁶ As we have seen, 'work experience' flattens a range of labour market encounters, many of which are emotionally damaging and which compound the already harmful material effects of precarious work.

Nonetheless, the vagueness of the term 'benefit' as it is used in neoliberal discourse makes room for alternative and subversive interpretations of what is beneficial for student workers. In counter-discourse, benefit has been rearticulated in terms of students' ability to recognize injustice and to fight for their rights as cultural producers. An assessment of benefit, therefore, inspires discussion about how best to equip student workers for resistance. Walter Benjamin's exploration of young people's relationship to experience, discussed in more depth in Chapter Two, is useful here as it politicizes the 'inexperienced' subject. In the case of the student worker, the tradition being handed down through *Erfahrung* is one of deeply embedded, and ever intensifying, systems of exploitation. Seeing the workplace from without the oppressive weight of its tradition, the 'inexperienced' student worker may be best equipped to recognize and to challenge unjust conditions for cultural work.

For one Bell intern who filed a complaint alongside Patel, the lesson gleaned from experience was not job training, but a more subversive education: "I didn't learn anything," he said. 'I learned not to trust corporations'.⁵⁵⁷ In this case, work experience provided a

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Tomlinson, "Bell Accused of Breaking Labour Law with Unpaid Interns."

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Tomlinson.

window into the labour conditions that could be expected in the corporate media world. The student's inexperience, in its encounter with an unfamiliar labour relationship, inspired disdain for, and resistance to, conditions which for many have become routine. Counter-discourses produced by labour unions and advocacy organizations are less likely to position inexperienced students as a subversive force. However, the CWA's intern guidebook reminds student workers, "you are bringing energy and new ideas to this company, and they are benefitting by getting to work with you."⁵⁵⁸ In this way, inexperience can be an asset for thriving within existing power structures as well as for challenging the status quo.

Experience alone does not constitute learning, Britzman argues; instead, it is made educational through the student worker's own process of interpretation.⁵⁵⁹ Counter-discourses also combat the valorization of experience by acknowledging the importance of critical theoretical learning. Shade and Jacobson divulge that the interns who participated in their study were "frustrated about how the current labour market and creative industries devalue education."⁵⁶⁰ One interviewee noted, "education shouldn't be discounted because you don't have actual work experience," arguing that course-based learning also constitutes hard work.⁵⁶¹ For Poirier and Tremblay-Fournier, the recognition of studies as work calls attention to the material relations of production behind the learning process. They admonish, "Student work does not occur naturally or by magic;" it is instead the result of productive activity that yields both "use value, for example knowledge and

⁵⁵⁸ CWA Canada Associate Member Steering Committee, *CWA Canada Intern Handbook*, 4.

⁵⁵⁹ Britzman, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*, 34.

⁵⁶⁰ Shade and Jacobson, "Hungry for the Job: Gender, Unpaid Internships, and the Creative Industries," 198.

⁵⁶¹ Shade and Jacobson, 198.

skills,” and exchange value, labour power for sale.⁵⁶² In this way, dissenting voices resist the valorization of experience by drawing attention to the role classroom-based education plays in preparing the student for work and adding value to her labour power.

4.2.4. Calling for Resistance

Despite the neoliberal discourse that aligns the interests of student labour and its employers, the student worker poses a problem for capital. While having long been a cultural producer, the student worker is relatively unaccustomed to formal labour relations. She may also be equipped with critical perspectives from a classroom-based education in communication or media studies that encourage her to challenge the organization of the cultural industry workplace. Counter-discourse emphasizes student worker skepticism and autonomy to explore possibilities for collective resistance. In order to do so, it aims to foster resistance on the individual level by encouraging students to advocate for themselves, highlights failure and disconnect in the relationships between student workers and their employers, engages in systemic critique, and builds solidarity to incite collective mobilization.

In Canada, support for student workers advocates primarily individualized forms of action. The guidebooks I examine aim to educate interns about their labour rights and to provide concrete suggestions for resistance on the individual level. Prioritizing student workers' comfort and wellbeing can come at the expense of radical collective resistance. However, these two strategies are not completely at odds with each other. Student work is an exclusionary space that fosters highly individualistic competition, complicating class divisions and posing problems for worker struggle and solidarity. For this reason, student

⁵⁶² Poirier and Tremblay-Fournier, “La Grève Des Stages Est Une Grève Des Femmes - FRANCOISE STEREO.”

worker movements must stay in tune with the sentiments of individual workers, especially those most apprehensive about confronting the status quo. Each work experience is different, and each a potential source of trauma, embarrassment or discretion for individual interns. Yet barriers to self-advocacy are high. Student workers are in tenuous positions and often do not have sufficient access to information about their labour rights, nor industry contacts who can offer support outside systems of evaluation.

A host of vulnerabilities shapes the individual student's experience with cultural work, and the counter-discourses most useful to them are often those that downplay antagonism in favour of a more employer-friendly approach. For example, the CWA's intern handbook advises, "Asking for a contract or putting the terms of your internship in writing is not only a smart idea, it is also professional [...] You can also put a positive spin on the email by also letting the employer know that you're looking forward to working with them."⁵⁶³ The guide acknowledges potential discomfort over asking for wages and recommends that if workers feel uncomfortable asking for minimum wage, they might begin by asking to have work-related expenses covered.⁵⁶⁴ The CWA Intern Handbook suggests that student cultural workers can maintain a degree of control over their products by keeping the work they produce,⁵⁶⁵ whether to add it to their own portfolio or repurpose it for another project. This suggestion not only emphasizes that student work is productive, but also reminds the student worker that her relationship with the products of her labour can transcend an employment relationship. In these cases, students can resist certain aspects of the capitalist labour process without putting themselves at risk.

The Canadian Intern Association also advocates for student worker rights on an

⁵⁶³ CWA Canada Associate Member Steering Committee, *CWA Canada Intern Handbook*, 14.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 20.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 15.

individual, case-by-case basis. The advice offered in their Intern Rights Guide aims to make students more resilient in the face of poor working conditions. They recommend setting clear expectations prior to the start of a work placement, maintaining detailed records during the placement, and staying in touch with important contacts when the placement is over.⁵⁶⁶ While much of this advice expands the realm of work-for-labour that students must perform in order to access work experience, it also equips them to defend their labour rights within the prevailing system. The guide ultimately recommends that students “consider whether [their] workplace rights were respected.”⁵⁶⁷ By drawing attention to issues of labour justice, advocacy organizations encourage student workers to connect their own experiences to larger problems that are reinforced by neoliberal discourse on work experience.

While individual survival strategies strategically neglect the fundamental antagonism between labour and capital, more radical counter-discourse combats the powerful insistence that capital and labour share common interests, and occasionally also rejects the importance of compromise. This is a complex endeavour for many of the organizations cited here, which approach student labour relations as a matter of bargaining or policy reform. Counter-discourses such as these still hold on to the notion that fair conditions for work experience can be achieved. As such, they often stop short of radical critiques of capitalist labour processes. These discourses can nonetheless point toward antagonisms between labour and capital. Such analysis takes shape through the acknowledgement of failures to make working arrangements beneficial for both students and employers, and through the fundamental disconnect these efforts expose.

⁵⁶⁶ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 31.

⁵⁶⁷ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 31.

One route to recognizing antagonism is to question the importance – and even the possibility – of a suitable match between student workers and employers. Of her experience coordinating practicum placements, Sandra Smeltzer writes, “careful and diplomatic maneuvering is sometimes needed to get the match right. In a select number of instances and for a range of reasons, I have not in fact succeeded in my matchmaking.”⁵⁶⁸ Smeltzer individualizes these failures and neglects to situate them within unequal power relations. Still, by drawing attention to the difficulty of finding a good fit, she problematizes the neoliberal insistence that a match is always possible. The CWA Guidelines on Internships state that while “in general, internships are of mutual interest to both intern and employer,” measures must be taken to ensure that internships are primarily “focused on the needs of the intern.”⁵⁶⁹ This statement departs from the usual ‘win-win’ discourse that, de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy note, “ignores the power relations under-pinning the internship system.”⁵⁷⁰

Failure is also recognized in discrepancies between the skills employers expect of student cultural workers and the actual goals of their academic disciplines. Smeltzer discloses,

interviewees pointed to [...] a disconnect they often see between what students study in their critical communications programs and what skills community partners expect students from these programs to possess. Understandably, organizations anticipate that communication interns will bring to the table hands-on public relations or marketing skills, or are able to build websites and/or manage social media campaigns.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁸ Smeltzer, “Interrogating Course-Related Public Interest Internships in Communications.,” 518.

⁵⁶⁹ “CWA Canada Guidelines on Internships.”

⁵⁷⁰ de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, “Interns Unite!”

⁵⁷¹ Smeltzer, “Interrogating Course-Related Public Interest Internships in Communications.,” 519.

The subtext here is that not only do university courses in communication studies often neglect to provide the tangible skills employers expect, but also that the critical tools they supply equip students to challenge the very processes of production around which cultural industries are organized. The ability to turn a critical eye on labour relations can spark antagonism in student workers' attitudes toward employers. One *Go Public* respondent declares, "As a person who applied for the Bell PMP program, I'm glad I wasn't accepted. [...] It appears they only selected the few people who would do all of this for free."⁵⁷² This statement reminds readers that poor working conditions often prevent placements from being a 'good fit.'

Counter-narratives occasionally extend this discourse on failure into the realm of systemic critique. Once student workers and their advocates are given the space to reflect upon or rebel against neoliberal student work culture, it is easier to see a 'bigger picture' problem. Reactions to the complexity or entrenchment of systemic issues often include discouragement and helplessness. Shade and Jacobson write,⁵⁷³

Despite their frustration, the interns did not blame the individual employers; rather they were frustrated by the capitalist system. One woman stated, 'I don't think it's fair, but I don't even know how one would begin to address this problem, because I think the problem resides at such a high level that it would require re-designing, I don't know, the entire economic infrastructure or something like that'.⁵⁷⁴

While connecting student worker exploitation to the broader economic system that

⁵⁷² "Go Public Inbox."

⁵⁷³ It should be noted that interviews quoted by Shade and Jacobson or by Smeltzer emerge from different practical contexts than many of the other discourses here. In this case, interviewees' recourse to systemic critique is likely related to the fact that they were talking to researchers.

⁵⁷⁴ Shade and Jacobson, "Hungry for the Job: Gender, Unpaid Internships, and the Creative Industries," 196.

structures all work, this intern indicates a feeling of powerlessness inimical to change.

Alternatively, however, systemic critique can inspire resistance and, in the long run, dedication to change. One media student takes issue with his internship coordinator's resignation to the "culture" of work placements: "Although often pervasive and seemingly 'natural'," he writes, "culture is fundamentally a construct, and, when deemed to be unfair, it must be challenged."⁵⁷⁵ Of student worker advocacy, Seaborn declares, "I don't think the battle's even gotten started. I'm only beginning to understand the breadth of issues that apply to interns, including human rights issues like discrimination and sexual harassment."⁵⁷⁶ By acknowledging the systemic character of the problem, counter-discourse recognizes that the oppression student workers face is fundamentally intersectional, bound up with structural racism, sexism, and classism, amidst countless other forms of oppression that continue to shape the Canadian labour market. Student worker organizing in Québec situates the student worker movement within the broader feminist movement for recognition of reproductive work, thereby connecting student workers' struggle to the similarly marginalized plights of "housewives, parents, sex workers and migrant workers."⁵⁷⁷ Ultimately, Langille points out, "underlying a lot of this discussion is a conception of equality" that highlights the fundamental contradictions of capitalism.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁵ "Letter to the Editor," October 20, 2013.

⁵⁷⁶ Cohen and de Peuter, "Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada," 590.

⁵⁷⁷ Poirier and Tremblay-Fournier, "La Grève Des Stages Est Une Grève Des Femmes - FRANCOISE STEREO."

⁵⁷⁸ Cohen and de Peuter, "Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada," 589.

Counter-discourses fight individualizing neoliberal narratives on student work to build solidarity amongst student workers. As the CUTE write, “critical solidarity makes us stronger.”⁵⁷⁹ Whether or not these discourses incite collective action directly, each helps to collectivize and politicize issues with student work. For example, the CWA and Canadian Intern Association combat worker isolation by focusing on community-building, thereby fostering solidarity amongst emerging cultural workers. The CWA Canada’s Associate Membership program is advertised as “a community dedicated to connecting student, volunteer and precarious (intern, temporary, part-time) media workers to each other.”⁵⁸⁰ On an optional basis, the program sets up student workers with mentors from within the same industry, but notably not the same employer. Having more experienced mentors who can help students navigate the industry outside of the worker-employer relationship advances the CWA’s goal of “building intergenerational solidarity” and, of course, “welcoming the next generation of workers and activists” into the union.⁵⁸¹ Beyond the scope of the CWA’s interests, intergenerational ties also address what Guy Standing calls “a weakened sense of ‘social memory’” amongst precarious workers.⁵⁸² In this way, the forging of relationships between new and seasoned cultural workers can help to foster “a code of ethics and a sense of meaning and stability, emotional and social,”⁵⁸³ that might encourage student workers to reflect on their role as workers.

By cultivating a sense of community amongst student workers, counter-discourse can also help facilitate a decline in loyalty to capital. The Patel case complainant who

⁵⁷⁹ CUTE, “Questions et Réponses – Campagne Sur Le Travail Étudiant – Dissident.es.”

⁵⁸⁰ “Membership for Student, Volunteer and Precarious Media Workers.”

⁵⁸¹ “CWA Canada Policy on Equitable Use of Interns | CMG Freelance.”

⁵⁸² Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, 23.

⁵⁸³ Standing, 23.

declares that Bell's program taught him not to trust corporations also testifies, "Anything I learned professionally was from the other interns."⁵⁸⁴ Many of the sources I list here provide forums through which student cultural workers can access accounts of each other's stories and realize that they are not alone in their complaints and convictions. CBC's *Go Public* page on internships elicited a host of supportive comments, either declaring solidarity with Patel or triangulating her claims. One respondent states, "I would be happy to speak anonymously about my experience and how I believe Bell and Henry Mar have broken several labour laws. In the time that I was there I knew dozens of interns (myself included) who were coerced to work well past 12am."⁵⁸⁵ The CIA's Intern Rights Guide entreats, "If you want to help protect people's rights to a fair wage and workplace protections, we encourage you to get involved."⁵⁸⁶ The CUTE, arguably the most subversive of the sources reviewed here, insists on being named as a collective in news media, so that individual members speak only on behalf of the CUTE as a whole.⁵⁸⁷ Whether for the purpose of filing an individual complaint or building a movement, counter-discourses connect student workers to each other and to avenues of recourse, encouraging a solidaristic approach to resistance.

4.3. Conclusions

In this chapter I have explored counter-discourses on work experience that challenge the assumptions central to neoliberal discourse. As Poirier and Tremblay-

⁵⁸⁴ Tomlinson, "Bell Accused of Breaking Labour Law with Unpaid Interns."

⁵⁸⁵ "Go Public Inbox."

⁵⁸⁶ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 44.

⁵⁸⁷ Julien Tardif, "Reconnaitre Le Travail Étudiant | Quartier Libre," *Quartier Libre*, November 2, 2016, <http://quartierlibre.ca/reconnaitre-le-travail-etudiant/>.

Fournier write, “Recognition of studies as work thus enables us to highlight the dynamism of the learning process: students are not empty jugs that fill without effort.”⁵⁸⁸ This analysis, alongside the many others explored here, helps us to position the student worker as a site of knowledge and resistance. Taking Fairclough’s approach to critical discourse analysis, I have demonstrated how the student worker is constructed through alternative lexicalizations. The discourses examined here position her as an autonomous figure who embodies the knowledge and labour power that she brings to – and takes from – the workplace.

This chapter has traced resistance to the neoliberal concept of work experience along four main lines of argument. First, counter-discourse shifts responsibility away from individual student workers and instead holds employers, governments, educational institutions, and communities accountable for achieving better conditions for student cultural work. Second, counter-discourse rejects the assumption that students are not yet ‘real’ workers, demonstrating that students’ labour should be paid and protected by the same rights to which more ‘experienced’ workers are entitled. Third, such discourse raises questions about the value of experience to argue that inexperience, too, is beneficial, both for the value of labour power and for the student worker’s ability to recognize labour injustice. Fourth, it draws attention to the disconnect between the interests of student workers and those of employers, highlighting failures in the existing structures for student work. These failures evoke the fundamental antagonism between labour and capital, and inspire both individual and collective resistance. Ultimately, this chapter has located the theoretical arguments established in Chapter Two within a discursive realm created by student workers and their advocates. It has also situated the neoliberal discourse explored

⁵⁸⁸ Poirier and Tremblay-Fournier, “La Grève Des Stages Est Une Grève Des Femmes - FRANCOISE STEREO.”

in Chapter Three within a climate of resistance that both foregrounds and responds to it.

Chapter 5.

Conclusion: Practicing Resistance

A year after Jainna Patel filed her complaint against Bell, a federal labour inspector recommended that the company pay Patel the full \$2,500 of back-pay she had requested.⁵⁸⁹ Bell objected on grounds that Patel had agreed to an unpaid contract, and ultimately the federal authorities rejected her claim.⁵⁹⁰ Patel appealed this decision,⁵⁹¹ but there have been no further updates on the case. Bell has since shut down the work experience program in question.⁵⁹² However, the problem of under-paid and disempowering student work in Canada is, like Patel's case, unsettled. Despite ongoing legal and activist interventions, student workers continue to suffer unpaid, under-paid and disempowering labour conditions – both in cultural industries and elsewhere. This thesis has investigated the dominant discourses and counter-discourses that make up, challenge, and revision the concept of work experience, which plays such a fundamental part in the power relations that mark entry into labour markets.

In Canada, students' resistance to poor labour conditions has primarily occupied the realm of discourse. Student workers and their advocates continue to challenge these

⁵⁸⁹ Leah Handanovic, "Subject: Canadian Labour Code, Part III," May 14, 2013, CBC News, <http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/716829-patel-complaintsunpaidinterns.html#document/p2>.

⁵⁹⁰ Marco Chown Oved, "Unpaid Intern's Claim for Wages Rejected | Toronto Star," *Toronto Star*, October 24, 2013, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/10/24/unpaid_interns_claim_for_wages_rejected.html.

⁵⁹¹ Marco Chown Oved, "Blitz Finds Nearly Half of Companies with Interns Break the Law," *Toronto Star*, September 30, 2014, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/09/30/blitz_finds_nearly_half_of_companies_with_interns_break_law.html.

⁵⁹² Zoe McKnight, "Bell Canada Cancels Massive Unpaid-Internship Program," *The Toronto Star*, August 12, 2014, sec. GTA, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/08/12/bell_canada_cancels_massive_unpaidinternship_program.html.

conditions and the neoliberal assumptions underlying them, by naming and shaming poor labour practices and calling for recognition of students' labour rights. I argue that these discursive struggles lay the foundation for concrete acts of resistance, and ultimately for radical change in the landscape of student work. In this concluding chapter, I highlight the main contributions of my thesis toward destabilizing dominant narratives and making way for an emergent politics of student work. I then explore four interrelated paths of resistance: policy change, education initiatives, union support, and direct action. Each of these strategies, I argue, is made possible by the circulation of counter-discourses explored in Chapter Four.

5.1. Work Experience and Discursive Struggle

To a growing body of research on student labour,⁵⁹³ this thesis has contributed a theoretical and empirical critique of the concept of work experience, and of its constitutive discourses. The thesis began by illustrating how the concept of work experience is shaped by neoliberalism, a social order and corresponding mode of regulation that privileges individual freedoms and responsibilities and strong private property rights, paired with a highly competitive and flexible labour market, regulated to maximize capital accumulation.⁵⁹⁴ Student work is located at the intersection of neoliberalism's effects on the university and on the labour market. In cultural industries, the low-paid and precarious

⁵⁹³ Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*; Neff and Arata, "The Competitive Privilege of Working for Free: Rethinking the Roles Interns Play in Communication Industries"; Frenette, "Making the Intern Economy"; de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, "Interrogating Internships: Unpaid Work, Creative Industries, and Higher Education"; Atfield and Couture, "An Investigation into the Status and Implications of Unpaid Internships in Ontario."

⁵⁹⁴ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 5.

positions characteristic of student work placements parallel the unstable conditions of employment predominantly faced by cultural workers throughout their careers.⁵⁹⁵ I argue that exploitative and disempowering conditions for student work are organized around a neoliberal concept of work experience, one that rests upon four key assumptions: that students are individually responsible for the material and emotional costs of their own training, that they occupy a liminal space between learning and labour, that experience can function as pay, and that student work is mutually beneficial for labour and capital.

This thesis has drawn from critical and radical philosophies of education as well as autonomist Marxist theory to rearticulate the concept of work experience as a site of struggle over knowledge production and labour power. Radical theories of education and experience problematize the assumed educational value of experience and instead advocate critical and reflective forms of pedagogy that emphasize the active role of students in producing knowledge through experience.⁵⁹⁶ They also posit learning as an emancipatory process capable of subverting power relations and challenging systemic modes of oppression.⁵⁹⁷ Autonomist Marxist thinkers draw attention to the ways in which the immateriality of much cultural work facilitates a blurring of lines between work and leisure.⁵⁹⁸ They explore how a ‘labour of love’ discourse hides the unequal power relations around which such work is organized.⁵⁹⁹ Autonomist analyses like the one contributed by Gigi Roggero consider how capital’s ongoing attempts to capture the living knowledge of

⁵⁹⁵ Corrigan, “Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels.”

⁵⁹⁶ Britzman, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*; Dewey, *Experience and Education*.

⁵⁹⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*.

⁵⁹⁸ Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labour”; Terranova, “Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy.”

⁵⁹⁹ Cohen, “Cultural Work as a Site of Struggle: Freelancers and Exploitation,” 145.

its workforce – without offering commensurate rights and securities in return – creates conditions of disloyalty and dissent amongst workers.⁶⁰⁰ Both critical philosophies of education and autonomist Marxism contribute to a rejection of the neoliberal concept of work experience by vindicating a productive role for the student in her relationship to knowledge, and by centering the role of knowledge production in contemporary power struggles.

The thesis then illustrated how the neoliberal *concept* of work experience shapes and is supported by neoliberal *discourse* on work experience. Based on the four main assumptions of this neoliberal concept, I identified four themes that pervade the advice literature produced by student workers, employers, and social commentators. First, the neoliberal discourse on work experience positions student work as an *investment* in students' future success, for which they are held individually responsible. Second, it describes work experience as a period of *initiation* during which students are not yet real workers and thus do not merit monetary nor emotional rewards for their labour. Third, neoliberal formulations perform a discursive *valorization* of experience that assumes it is inherently beneficial for student workers and can therefore supplant the wage. Fourth, neoliberal narratives attempt a discursive *alignment* of student workers' interests with those of their employers, thereby obscuring the fundamental antagonisms between labour and capital. It should be noted, however, that these discourses are not always coherent. Instances of doubt and resistance surface in the advice literature examined, exposing contradictions and weaknesses in its guiding logic.

The past decade has seen the striking insurgence of a wide array of counter-discourse on student work in Canada. This thesis has explored examples of advocacy

⁶⁰⁰ Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge*, 101.

literature that challenge the central tenets of neoliberal discourse on work experience. Each of the counter-discursive themes highlighted in Chapter Four opposes one of the neoliberal claims explored in Chapter Three. First, counter-discourse disarms narratives of investment and individual responsibility by holding employers, governments, schools, and communities accountable for supporting student workers. Second, counter-discourse argues that students are also necessarily workers, and should therefore be compensated for their labour. Third, it contests the benefits of work experience and challenges the neoliberal notion that experience can function as pay. Fourth, counter-discourse problematizes relationships between student workers and their employers and highlights feelings of disconnect as well as frequent failures to effectively ‘match’ labour with capital. Together, these discursive interventions destabilize dominant neoliberal narratives, inspire concrete action, and plant seeds for more radical change in the Canadian landscape. In what follows, I explore four main avenues of political action on student work, all of which emerge from and are supported by counter-discourse on work experience.

5.2. Policy Change

Much of the counter-discourse in Canada impresses the need for regulatory change and better enforcement of the laws surrounding student work. Policy, and more specifically its enforcement, are always a step behind workers’ struggle. The case of student workers in Canada is exemplary of this discrepancy. As de Peuter points out, policy change can be traced back to the “oppositional initiative” of interns themselves, whose mobilization has made student work “a high-profile subject” for policy-makers.⁶⁰¹ The counter-

⁶⁰¹ de Peuter, “Beyond the Model Worker: Surveying a Creative Precariat,” 269.

discourses produced by advocacy groups on student work have directly targeted federal and provincial policy-makers to demand wages for student workers, as well as better legal clarification surrounding the role of these workers and the rights and protections they are owed.

The hiring practices of provincially regulated employers, which for cultural industries include newspapers, magazines, publishers, and advertising or public relations agencies, are regulated by Employment Standards Acts (ESAs).⁶⁰² The Ontario *Employment Standards Act* implemented in 2000 exempts employers from paying minimum wages to students performing work as part of an academic program, and to trainees whose working conditions satisfy a six-part test.⁶⁰³ A similar exception-based system is outlined in the interpretation guidelines for the BC *Employment Standards Act*, which exclude students whose work placements are part of a degree program.⁶⁰⁴ In both provinces, this legislation came with wider reforms in the late 1990s and early 2000s, explicitly aimed at increasing flexibility in employment regulation.⁶⁰⁵ Thus while these restrictions ostensibly limit the extent to which student workers are exploited, they also work to establish a highly flexibilized and unpaid segment of the labour force, while implicating post-secondary institutions in its maintenance. Such reforms can be traced back to a project of neoliberal restructuring that labour economist David Fairey writes is “in conflict with enhancing the

⁶⁰² Mann and Manek, *Media Works: A Labour Rights and Reporting Handbook*, 7.

⁶⁰³ See Ministry of Labour Government of Ontario, “Are Unpaid Internships Legal in Ontario?,” Ontario Ministry of Labour, June 2011, <https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/internships.php>.

⁶⁰⁴ The Canadian Intern Association highlights this legislation province by province. See “What Is the Law?”

⁶⁰⁵ Ministry of Labour Government of Ontario, “Time For Change: Ontario’s Employment Standards Legislation” (Ontario Ministry of Labour, July 2000), <http://www.ontla.on.ca/library/repository/mon/ont/L/2000/00escpe.htm>; Fairey, “New Flexible Employment Standards Regulation in British Columbia,” 91.

workplace protection of vulnerable workers.”⁶⁰⁶ Nonetheless, updates to labour law in Ontario and BC are an improvement on the ESAs in other Canadian provinces that neglect to define student work. For progress to be made in the enforcement of students’ labour rights, basic definitions must be established.

If student workers are employed by a federally regulated employer – for cultural industries, this includes the CBC, CTV, and local radio stations – their employment relationships are governed by the *Canada Labour Code* (CLC).⁶⁰⁷ The CLC does not currently include any language specific to interns, but efforts have been made to address this in recent years. Put forward by NDP MPs Laurin Lui and Andrew Cash in 2015, Bill C-636 proposed a change to the CLC that would extend minimum wage regulation to those student workers not earning academic credit for their work.⁶⁰⁸ C-636 sought to specify the conditions under which pay could be withheld,⁶⁰⁹ thereby bringing federal legislation into line with Employment Standards Acts (ESA) in Ontario and BC. While this bill was quickly defeated,⁶¹⁰ the topic was broached again at a legislative level in the 2017 federal budget, which proposed the elimination of unpaid internships in federally regulated sectors “where the internships are not part of a formal educational program,” and agreed that even academic interns should be covered by standard labour protections such as maximum hours of work and holidays.⁶¹¹ In May 2017, a report delivered by the federal panel on youth employment also recommended that federally regulated sectors be held

⁶⁰⁶ Fairey, “New Flexible Employment Standards Regulation in British Columbia,” 96.

⁶⁰⁷ Mann and Manek, *Media Works: A Labour Rights and Reporting Handbook*, 7.

⁶⁰⁸ Laurin Lui, “Intern Protection Act,” Pub. L. No. C-636 (41-2), Canada Labour Code, accessed May 18, 2017, <http://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/41-2/bill/C-636/first-reading/page-24#1>.

⁶⁰⁹ Lui.

⁶¹⁰ Lui.

⁶¹¹ Department of Finance Government of Canada, “Budget 2017: Chapter 1 - Skills, Innovation and Middle Class Jobs,” Government of Canada, March 22, 2017, 64, <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2017/docs/plan/chap-01-en.html#Toc477707315>.

to the same regulation standards as provincially regulated sectors in Ontario and BC.⁶¹²

The Intern Protection Act is only one example of a policy proposal inspired by the lobbying efforts of student workers and their advocates.⁶¹³ Organizations such as the Canadian Intern Association persistently appeal to legislators for regulatory change that would limit the exploitation of student workers. More significant to the landscape of student work than the policy itself is the extent to which it has been enforced and brought to public consciousness. For example, it was not until the rise of intern activism and advocacy between 2010 and 2013 – the period during which the Canadian Intern Association, Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams, and Internsheep were founded, and when Patel filed her complaint against Bell – that the Ontario government released a fact sheet to clarify the legal dimensions of intern labour.⁶¹⁴ In 2014, the provincial government responded to the demands of advocates by cracking down on employers' use of interns in targeted sectors, including cultural industries such as advertising, public relations, and magazine publishing.⁶¹⁵ During this “enforcement blitz,” reprimanded and nervous employers alike shut down their unpaid internship programs, claiming they could not afford them under their current budgets.⁶¹⁶ Interns not enrolled in academic programs were let go from several prominent Toronto-based publications, including *The Walrus*, *Toronto Life*, *Flare* and *Chatelaine*.⁶¹⁷ This heightened period of public awareness and employer

⁶¹² CWA Canada Associate Member Steering Committee, “Student/Young Media Union Members Program Supports Recommendations of Youth Employment Report.”

⁶¹³ See Peggy Sattler’s Bill 22, the Greater Protection for Interns and Vulnerable Employees Act.

⁶¹⁴ Government of Ontario, “Are Unpaid Internships Legal in Ontario?”

⁶¹⁵ Chown Oved, “Blitz Finds Nearly Half of Companies with Interns Break the Law.”

⁶¹⁶ Zoe McKnight, “Unpaid Interns Dropped from Rogers-Owned Magazines,” *The Toronto Star*, April 3, 2014, sec. GTA, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/04/03/unpaid_interns_dropped_from_rogersowned_magazines.html.

⁶¹⁷ McKnight.

caution marked a significant win for Canada's student labour movement, and many of these companies have since re-opened internship programs that ostensibly comply with the law.⁶¹⁸

However, policy change and enforcement have not yet substantially improved student labour conditions in Canada. The limited potential of policy to affect change is thus far evident in the persistent use of students as inexpensive or unpaid labour in provinces like Ontario and BC. As previously noted, existing regulation does little to ensure that work experience benefits student workers, and in fact solidifies financial barriers to labour markets for academic interns facing tuition fees. As a result, organizations such as the Communication Workers of America (CWA) Canada have proposed more progressive policies surrounding student work, suggesting that in order to make work experience accessible, academic internships should be paid as well.⁶¹⁹ As demonstrated, the production of counter-discourse does have a significant impact on policy, and as such poses problems for neoliberal regulation of student work arrangements.

5.3. Education Initiatives

My research suggests that in Canada, education has emerged as the primary application for counter-discourse on work experience. The education initiatives used to inform student workers of their rights and to advocate better conditions for student labour

⁶¹⁸ Marco Chown Oved, "Walrus Unpaid Interns Are Back — with Pay," *The Toronto Star*, May 4, 2014, sec. GTA, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/05/04/walrus_unpaid_interns_are_back_with_pay.html; "Toronto Life: About Us," *Toronto Life* (blog), accessed January 8, 2018, <https://torontolife.com/about/>; "Job and Internship Opportunities," Flare, accessed January 8, 2018, <http://www.flare.com/about/job-and-internship-opportunities/>.

⁶¹⁹ CWA Canada Associate Member Steering Committee, "Student/Young Media Union Members Program Supports Recommendations of Youth Employment Report."

represent a sort of counter-education, as they offer teaching that opposes the often-disempowering lesson of work experience itself. Groups working toward better labour conditions for students spread awareness and rally support through public education initiatives and by putting pressure on educational institutions, who have begun to respond to these advocates' concerns.

The Canadian Intern Association (CIA), CWA Canada, Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams (SAUIS), Cultural Workers Organize (CWO), and the comités unitaires sur le travail étudiant (CUTE)⁶²⁰ have all directed their efforts primarily at education. The Canadian Intern Association has maintained an active public presence; both former president Claire Seaborn and affiliated labour lawyer Andrew Langille are frequently quoted in mainstream news on internships. The association also encourages student workers to speak to the media about their experiences in the workplace – anonymously or not – and to call attention to cases where they feel their rights have been violated.⁶²¹ In tandem with its presence in the academic community, CWO uses alternative media sources to draw attention to student cultural worker organizing and collective action.⁶²² It also holds public forums to address problems in student work.⁶²³ The CIA, SAUIS, CWA Canada, and the CUTE use social media to garner support for their campaigns and to make students aware of their labour rights. The CIA, CWA Canada, and SAUIS bring

⁶²⁰ The Canadian Intern Association (CIA): a not-for-profit organization that advocates for interns; Communication Workers of America (CWA) Canada: the Canadian branch of the CWA representing workers in the communications industry; Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams (SAUIS): an advocacy group of students, youth, and labour activists based in Ontario; the comités unitaires sur le travail étudiant (CUTE): a student collective made up of several chapters based at universities in Montréal and Québec City.

⁶²¹ de Peuter and Cohen, "Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada," 592.

⁶²² de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, "Interns Unite!"

⁶²³ de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy; "Interns, Connect! A Forum on Upsetting Unpaid Work," CULTURAL WORKERS ORGANIZE, September 3, 2015, <https://culturalworkersorganize.org/events-2/interns-connect/>.

educational initiatives to university and college campuses. The CIA encourages student unions to become Campus Partners, fostering solidarity with preexisting student groups.⁶²⁴ It also recommends that students build committees in partnership with campus career centres to “prevent the advertising of unpaid internships and to help inform students about their workplace rights.”⁶²⁵ CWA Canada and SAUIS deliver labour rights workshops in post-secondary classrooms.

Academic institutions themselves have a role to play in teaching students about their rights and encouraging critical engagement with labour issues in cultural industries.⁶²⁶ Likely spurred on by controversies and counter-discourse, some schools have also taken responsibility for guarding the rights of student workers. For example, SFU Communication provides a “Co-op Student Guide” outlining some of the legal rights of student workers and pointing co-op students toward relevant legislation.⁶²⁷ It has also committed against partnering with employers who only offer unpaid work. The Faculty of Information and Media Studies at Western promises to make “every effort” to ensure that internships only involve “relevant and growth-oriented work.”⁶²⁸ Yet as Sandra Smeltzer writes of her experience administrating a social justice-oriented practicum program, ensuring that placements are empowering and educational for students – and that their labour rights are respected – is itself a labour-intensive process.⁶²⁹ For the university to play a significant role in improving conditions for student work, institutions must dedicate

⁶²⁴ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 44.

⁶²⁵ *The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, 44.

⁶²⁶ Doug Tewksbury, “Educating the Precariat: Intern Labour and a Renewed Approach to Media Literacy Education,” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 526–32.

⁶²⁷ “The Co-Op Student Guide,” Work Integrated Learning - Simon Fraser University, accessed December 14, 2017, <https://www.sfu.ca/coop/students/guide/work-term.html>.

⁶²⁸ “Internships - Faculty of Information & Media Studies - Western University.”

⁶²⁹ Smeltzer, “Interrogating Course-Related Public Interest Internships in Communications.,” 517.

more resources to meaningfully support students in their work arrangements.

As Doug Tewksbury points out, academic institutions should also give students a platform for critical engagement with labour issues.⁶³⁰ For examples of the role such engagement plays in counter-education, we can look to the counter-discourse explored in Chapter Four, which highlights students' own critical reflections on their experiences in the workplace. By drawing attention to these moments of afterthought and critique, the student worker movement fosters the kind of counter-education described by critical theorists of education in Chapter Two.⁶³¹ Perhaps most significantly, however, educational institutions provide a space for student workers to come together in solidarity and to organize dissent.⁶³² It has long been a venue for rallies and protests, a tradition not totally suppressed – and indeed often inspired – by neoliberal restructuring.⁶³³

5.4. Union Support

Organizations that have arisen to advocate for student workers in Canada have often identified as 'associations' or 'collectives' instead of as 'unions', at least in part due to the popular image of unions as outdated and unaccommodating of precarious workers. As Guy Standing's research suggests, young workers often tend to see unions as

⁶³⁰ Tewksbury, "Educating the Precariat: Intern Labour and a Renewed Approach to Media Literacy Education."

⁶³¹ See Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; Dewey, *Experience and Education*; Britzman, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*.

⁶³² As Greig de Peuter writes, the university campus is place where "past, present, and prospective interns congregate for longer than the average placement." "Beyond the Model Worker: Surveying a Creative Precariat," 269.

⁶³³ See Mark Edelman Boren, "A Revolutionary Learning: Student Resistance/Student Power," in *Utopian Pedagogy: Radical Experiments Against Neoliberal Globalization*, ed. Mark Coté and Richard J. F. Day (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 76–92; Alain Savard, "Keeping the Student Strike Alive," *Jacobin*, September 2016, <http://jacobinmag.com/2016/09/quebec-student-strike-tuition-austerity-protests/>.

“protecting privileges of older employees, privileges they cannot anticipate for themselves.”⁶³⁴ Yet in response to both counter-discourse denouncing the inadequacy of current protections for student workers and the impacts of exploitative internship practices on workers of all stripes, some unions have begun to advocate for interns.⁶³⁵

Most notably in the landscape of Canadian cultural work, the Communication Workers of America (CWA) Canada’s Associate Members program offers free membership for student workers, alongside other precarious media workers who are otherwise excluded from union protection.⁶³⁶ CWA Canada also developed the first set of guidelines and policy on the equitable use of interns,⁶³⁷ much of which has been highlighted in this thesis. This initiative stems in part from the union’s interest in preventing cultural work from being “shifted to non-unionized workers,” which, it points out, “erodes worker bargaining power and further shifts the power imbalance in favour of the employer.”⁶³⁸ Moreover, the associate membership program aims to build “intergenerational solidarity” by “welcoming the next generation of workers and activists into its locals.”⁶³⁹ Among the program’s most significant contributions is the solidaristic approach to cultural work it fosters, and its encouragement of students to think of themselves as workers with enforceable labour rights.

⁶³⁴ Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, 78.

⁶³⁵ de Peuter, “Beyond the Model Worker: Surveying a Creative Precariat,” 269.

⁶³⁶ “About CWA Canada Associate Members,” CMG Freelance, September 19, 2014, <http://cmgfrelance.ca/en/about-cwa-canada-associate-members/>.

⁶³⁷ “CWA Canada Guidelines on Internships”; “CWA Canada Policy on Equitable Use of Interns | CMG Freelance.”

⁶³⁸ “CWA Canada Policy on Equitable Use of Interns | CMG Freelance.”

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*

Efforts are therefore underway to make unions more responsive to the needs of an increasingly precarious and casualized workforce.⁶⁴⁰ Nonetheless, membership programs such as the one offered by CWA Canada are unable to collectively bargain for the rights of student cultural workers, scattered as they are across multiple sectors and workplaces, and unionization in cultural industry workplaces has thus far yielded limited benefits for student workers. Errol Salamon points out that journalism interns at unionized newspapers and magazines in Canada experience varying conditions of pay and security.⁶⁴¹ For example, the *Toronto Sun* and *Maclean's*, both represented by the Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild (SONG), a local of Unifor, have collective agreements that facilitate the use of unpaid interns.⁶⁴² However, other unionized workplaces such as the *Globe and Mail* (organized by SONG) and the *Ottawa Citizen* (organized by the Ontario Newspaper Guild, a CWA-Canada local) pay interns at the union rates for entry-level workers.⁶⁴³ Similarly contested was the role of SONG in establishing an internship program at the *Toronto Star* to include “younger voices in the newsroom,” but at a pay rate low enough to free up more experienced journalists to tackle bigger stories.⁶⁴⁴ Perhaps as a result of these inconsistencies, Greig de Peuter writes, “most intern initiatives are cropping up at the margins of organised labour. Rather than in bargaining units, interns are converging in nimble collectives.”⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴⁰ Stephanie Ross et al., *Building a Better World: An Introduction to the Labour Movement in Canada*, 3rd ed. (Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2015).

⁶⁴¹ Errol Salamon, “(De)valuing Intern Labour: Journalism Internship Pay Rates and Collective Representation in Canada,” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 438–58.

⁶⁴² Salamon, 447.

⁶⁴³ Salamon, 448.

⁶⁴⁴ Salamon, 446.

⁶⁴⁵ de Peuter, “Beyond the Model Worker: Surveying a Creative Precariat,” 269.

5.5. Direct Action

Strategies for raising awareness and curtailing student labour exploitation in Canada have ranged from diplomatic policy proposals, such as those of the Canadian Intern Association, to public demonstrations of solidarity, such as the public protest organized by Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams in 2014.⁶⁴⁶ Within Canada, initiatives that connect the plight of student workers to broader struggles under capitalism are also more likely to be engaged in visible protest and demonstration. For example, the connections drawn by the CUTE between student labour and the devaluation of many forms of labour under capitalism seems to fuel their dedication to the tradition of direct action as a means of disrupting power systems.⁶⁴⁷ As I have suggested, a growing realm of counter-discourse produced across Canada creates the conditions for more direct action. I argue that the strength of this movement so far lies in the success of counter-discourse in making student work visible and exposing its exploitative aspects.

The CUTE organize direct and visible actions to resist the devaluation of student labour. For example, in 2016, doctoral students in psychology won remuneration from the Québec government for their hospital placements after a sustained period of mobilization that included a four-month strike.⁶⁴⁸ The CUTE are currently building on the momentum of these organizing efforts – and leveraging the solidarity they inspired – to plan a “general strike for pay of all placements.”⁶⁴⁹ We might, however, question the ability of its organizing

⁶⁴⁶ Tina Todaro, “Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams Pickets Ontario Budget Consultation,” *The Dialog* (blog), March 4, 2014, <http://dialognews.ca/2014/03/04/stop-unpaid-internship-scams-pickets-ontario-budget-consultation/>.

⁶⁴⁷ See CUTE, “Questions et Réponses – Campagne Sur Le Travail Étudiant – Dissident.es.”

⁶⁴⁸ La Presse Canadienne, “Rémunération: Les Doctorants En Psychologie S’entendent Avec Québec | Santé.”

⁶⁴⁹ Poirier and Tremblay-Fournier, “La Grève Des Stages Est Une Grève Des Femmes - FRANCOISE STEREO.”

strategy to gain traction outside of Québec. The movement has thus far remained disconnected from efforts to organize student workers elsewhere in Canada.

Independent student worker collectives emerging in other parts of Canada have also struggled to form networks of scale. However, they have still showcased the role of counter-discourse in facilitating direct action. For example, in 2011, former Vancouver Fashion Week interns launched a blog called *Vancouver Fashion Weak* as a “forum for discussion” about the organization’s exploitation of students and recent graduates’ labour.⁶⁵⁰ Attention to these issues sparked a debate online and eventually led to staged protests at Vancouver Fashion Week events in 2014 and 2015.⁶⁵¹ Yet the campaign remained a primarily discursive form of protest against student labour conditions in the fashion industry alone.

From a practical organizational perspective, student worker activism is limited by the brevity of the period during which workers also identify as students. Once student activists graduate and, eventually, find some degree of security in their work, these initiatives tend to fade out.⁶⁵² Perhaps for this reason, many activist initiatives operate mainly online, and have focused primarily on the issue of wages. As demonstrated in this thesis, however, a lack of pay is not the only issue facing student workers, who suffer from many other dimensions of precarity as well as disempowering – even harmful – conditions of work. The wage-focused approach is also limited from a Marxist perspective, from which we might question how thoroughly the devaluation of work under capitalism can be addressed

⁶⁵⁰ “Vancouver Fashion Week SCAM ALERT,” *Vancouver Fashion Weak* (blog), 2011, <https://vancouverfashionweak.wordpress.com/tag/vancouver-fashion-week-intern/>.

⁶⁵¹ Vicki Duong, “VFW FW15 DAY 4: Protesters Take Vancouver Fashion Week A Second Time,” *Style by Fire* (blog), March 25, 2015, <http://www.stylebyfire.ca/2015/03/25/vfw-fw15-day-4-protesters-take-vancouver-fashion-week-a-second-time/>.

⁶⁵² Based on my own research, the Canadian Intern Association, Students Against Internship Scams, and Internsheep have all encountered this problem.

by simply securing better pay.

Nonetheless, a Marxist-feminist approach is instructive of the ways in which, as Poirier and Tremblay-Fournier write, demands for student wages bring invisible student labour out of “the informal and naturalized sphere” so that it “ceases to be taken for granted” and can become an object of “social struggle.”⁶⁵³ The CUTE draws powerful connections between their student strikes and activism surrounding the recognition of reproductive labour.⁶⁵⁴ Their approach echoes that of the international feminist Wages for Housework movement in the 1970s, which took women’s reproductive labour in the household as a fundamental site for mobilization against and beyond capitalism.⁶⁵⁵ For Silvia Federici, feminist autonomist co-founder of the movement, students are – like housewives – to be counted among the “large population of workers who appear to be outside the wage relation,” and whose labour nonetheless produces value and supports the capitalist system.⁶⁵⁶ In this context, the first goal of demands for wages and other discursive strategies enacted by student workers is to make discounted forms of work visible. This visibility is, Federici writes, “the most indispensable condition to begin to struggle against [work].”⁶⁵⁷ By taking up this thread, the Québec student movement strategically situates student worker struggles within feminist struggles for the recognition of all labour that is devalued under capitalism.⁶⁵⁸ Moreover, a marked shift in discourse on

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ Poirier and Tremblay-Fournier.

⁶⁵⁵ The movement was co-founded by Silvia Federici, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, and Selma James. Its key works include Federici’s “Wages Against Housework (1975),” in *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 15–22., as well as Dalla Costa and James’s *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1975).

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid, 8.

⁶⁵⁷ Federici, “Wages Against Housework (1975),” 19.

⁶⁵⁸ Poirier and Tremblay-Fournier, “La Grève Des Stages Est Une Grève Des Femmes - FRANCOISE STEREO.”

work experience throughout the country signals opportunities for more radical, agile, and student-led responses to labour injustice.

5.6. Concluding Thoughts

This thesis has revealed the concept of work experience as a discursive attempt to reconcile tensions existing at the intersection of learning and labour. Neoliberal discourse confers value upon work experience and encourages the student worker to learn from its virtues. At the same time, as I have argued, oppositional narratives both permeate and respond to neoliberal discourse, threatening its ideological underpinnings. Through the counter-discourses they produce and inspire, students negotiate their own troubled relationships to cultural work and emerge as key figures in contemporary labour politics. Critical philosophies of education and autonomist Marxism have provided a critical framework through which to explore how this work is constructed and to rearticulate work experience as a discursive site of struggle. Put into conversation with a range of discourse on work experience, these theoretical contributions vindicate the active, critical, and productive role of the student in both the learning process and the labour process. It is through the student labour process that experience, in the form of living knowledge, is produced and embodied in the hybrid subject of the student worker. By recognizing the power struggles that make up the student's relationship to work and experience, we can reveal the potential of student worker resistance to challenge capitalist power relations.

In Canada, this potential is only beginning to be realized at the level of direct action. Nonetheless, as this thesis has documented, discourse is increasingly shifting to question the central tenets of a neoliberal concept of work experience. In cases such as Patel's, concrete acts of resistance have brought exploitative conditions for student work to the

level of public concern. Patel and her fellow complainant envisioned their lines of flight as the beginning of a movement away from unpaid student work.⁶⁵⁹ Said Patel, “If every intern who you know came across an unpaid internship stepped away from it, I think it would be quite a different story’.”⁶⁶⁰ Counter-discourse makes the struggles that constitute student work increasingly visible, highlighting the potential for more significant material shifts. Radical change calls for a collective approach, built through solidarity between student workers and the myriad groups whose work is devalued under capitalism.

⁶⁵⁹ Tomlinson, “Bell Accused of Breaking Labour Law with Unpaid Interns.”

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

Bibliography

- “About.” *OPENWIDE Online* (blog), October 1, 2010. <https://openwidezine.com/about/>.
- “About.” Internsheep, August 17, 2011. <https://internsheep.wordpress.com/about/>.
- “About - Cultural Workers Organize.” Cultural Workers Organize. Accessed May 8, 2017. <https://culturalworkersorganize.org/about/>.
- “About CWA Canada.” CWA Canada • The Media Union. Accessed August 23, 2017. <https://cwacanada.ca/cwa-canada-info/about-cwa-canada/>.
- “About CWA Canada Associate Members.” CMG Freelance, September 19, 2014. <http://cmgfreelance.ca/en/about-cwa-canada-associate-members/>.
- “About: Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams.” Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams. Accessed May 8, 2017. <https://payyourinterns.wordpress.com/>.
- “About Us.” The Editors’ Weekly, November 24, 2012. http://blog.editors.ca/?page_id=174.
- “About Us - TalentEgg.” Accessed December 2, 2016. <http://talentegg.ca/about-us>.
- Attfield, James, and Isabelle Couture. “An Investigation into the Status and Implications of Unpaid Internships in Ontario.” University of Victoria, 2014. http://internassociation.ca/tempcia/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Attfield_James_and_Couture_Isabelle_MPA_2014.pdf.
- “Author: Andrew Coyne.” National Post. Accessed February 9, 2017. <http://www.nationalpost.com/index.html>.
- Barnes, Henry, and agencies. “Fox Set to Pay out to Unpaid Interns after Reaching Settlement on Black Swan Case.” *The Guardian*, July 13, 2016, sec. Film. <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/jul/13/fox-payout-unpaid-interns-settlement-black-swan-case>.
- Benjamin, Walter. “Experience.” In *Early Writings 1910-1917*, translated by Howard Eland. London: Belknap Press, 2011.
- “Bringing Life to Learning at Ontario Universities: Experiential Learning Report.” Toronto: Council of Ontario Universities, March 26, 2014.
- Britzman, Deborah P. *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*. Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- Brophy, Enda. “Labouring to Learn: Lineaments of the Creative-Academic Complex in Vancouver.” *Line*, no. About Academia (2013): 106–11.

- . *Language Put to Work: The Making of the Global Call Centre Workforce. Dynamics of Virtual Work*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- Brophy, Enda, and Myka Tucker-Abramson. "Struggling Universities: Simon Fraser University and the Crisis of Canadian Public Education." *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 28, no. October 2012 (2012): 21–40.
- Caton, Hilary. "Survival Tips for Interns." *My CBC* (blog), February 29, 2009. <http://cbrcblog.com/people/survival-tips-for-interns/?lang=en>.
- Cauley, Brian. "Dos And Don'ts Of Post-Grad Internships." *TalentEgg Career Incubator* (blog). Accessed January 7, 2017. <http://talentegg.ca/incubator/2009/04/15/dos-and-donts-of-post-grad-internships/>.
- Chong, Ip lam. "Negotiating Educated Subjectivity: Intern Labour and Higher Education in Hong Kong." *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015).
- Chown Oved, Marco. "Blitz Finds Nearly Half of Companies with Interns Break the Law." *Toronto Star*, September 30, 2014. https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/09/30/blitz_finds_nearly_half_of_companies_with_interns_break_law.html.
- . "Unpaid Intern's Claim for Wages Rejected | Toronto Star." *Toronto Star*, October 24, 2013. https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/10/24/unpaid_interns_claim_for_wages_rejected.html.
- . "Walrus Unpaid Interns Are Back — with Pay." *The Toronto Star*, May 4, 2014, sec. GTA. https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/05/04/walrus_unpaid_interns_are_back_with_pay.html.
- Cohen, Nicole S. "Cultural Work as a Site of Struggle: Freelancers and Exploitation." *tripleC* 10, no. 2 (2012): 141–55.
- . *Writers' Rights: Freelance Journalism in a Digital Age*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016.
- "Communiqué - Communication Co-Op." Our Learning Community - SFU. Accessed February 15, 2017. <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blogs/communique>.
- Corrigan, Thomas F. "Media and Cultural Industries Internships: A Thematic Review and Digital Labour Parallels." *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 336–50.
- Coté, Mark, and Jennifer Pybus. "Learning to Immaterial Labour 2.0: Facebook and Social Networks." In *Cognitive Capitalism, Education, and Digital Labor*, edited by Michael A. Peters and Ergin Bulut. New York: Peter Lang, 2011.
- Coyne, Andrew. "Andrew Coyne: If Unpaid Internships Are Exploitation, Why Don't the Kids Just Stay Home?" *National Post* (blog), September 18, 2013.

- <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/andrew-coyne-if-unpaid-internships-are-exploitation-why-dont-the-kids-just-stay-home>.
- Craig, Paul. "Letter to the Editor: Unpaid Internships." *OPENWIDE Online* (blog), October 20, 2013. <https://openwidezine.com/2013/10/20/letter-to-the-editor-unpaid-internships/>.
- . "Letter to the Editor: Unpaid Internships." *OPENWIDE Online* (blog), October 20, 2013. <https://openwidezine.com/2013/10/20/letter-to-the-editor-unpaid-internships/>.
- CUTE. "Fondation Coalition Montréalaise Pour La Rémunération Des Stages." Montreal Carpe Diem, June 3, 2016. <http://montreal.carpediem.cd/events/3548292-fondation-coalition-montr-alaise-pour-la-r-mun-ration-des-stages-at-uqam-universit-du-qu-bec-montr-al/?mode=modal>.
- . "Questions et Réponses – Campagne Sur Le Travail Étudiant – Dissident.es." *Dissident.es* (blog), February 27, 2017. <https://dissident.es/questions-et-reponses-campagne-sur-le-travail-etudiant/>.
- CWA Canada Associate Member Steering Committee. *CWA Canada Intern Handbook*. CWA Canada, 2016.
- . "Student/Young Media Union Members Program Supports Recommendations of Youth Employment Report." CMG Freelance, June 19, 2017. <http://cmgfrelance.ca/en/studentyoung-media-union-members-program-supports-recommendations-of-youth-employment-report/>.
- "CWA Canada Guidelines on Internships." CMG Freelance, May 17, 2016. <http://cmgfrelance.ca/en/cwa-canada-guidelines-on-internships/>.
- "CWA Canada Policy on Equitable Use of Interns | CMG Freelance." CMG Freelance, April 17, 2015. <http://cmgfrelance.ca/en/cwa-canada-policy-on-equitable-use-of-interns/>.
- Dalla Costa, Mariarosa, and Selma James. *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*. Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1975.
- Dewey, John. *Experience and Education*. New York: Touchstone, 1997.
- Duong, Vicki. "VFW FW15 DAY 4: Protesters Take Vancouver Fashion Week A Second Time." *Style by Fire* (blog), March 25, 2015. <http://www.stylebyfire.ca/2015/03/25/vfw-fw15-day-4-protesters-take-vancouver-fashion-week-a-second-time/>.
- Dyer-Witford, Nick. *Cyber-Proletariat*. London: Pluto Press, 2015.
- . "Teaching and Tear Gas: The University in the Era of General Intellect." In *Utopian Pedagogy: Radical Experiments Against Neoliberal Globalization*, edited by Mark Coté and Richard J. F. Day, 43–63. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.

- Edelman Boren, Mark. "A Revolutionary Learning: Student Resistance/Student Power." In *Utopian Pedagogy: Radical Experiments Against Neoliberal Globalization*, edited by Mark Coté and Richard J. F. Day, 76–92. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.
- Einstein, Mara. "Nothing for Money and Your Work for Free: Internships and the Marketing of Higher Education." *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 471–85.
- Fairclough, Norman. *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- . *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman, 1995.
- . "The Dialectics of Discourse." *Textus* XIV, no. 2 (2001): 231–42.
- Fairey, David B. "New Flexible Employment Standards Regulation in British Columbia." *Journal of Law and Social Policy* 21 (2007): 91–113.
- "FAQ about Unpaid Internships." Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams, October 1, 2013. <https://payyourinterns.wordpress.com/about/>.
- Federici, Silvia. "Introduction." In *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, 5–12. Oakland: PM Press, 2012.
- . "Wages Against Housework (1975)." In *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, 15–22. Oakland: PM Press, 2012.
- "Fergus Hodgson." Fraser Institute. Accessed February 11, 2017. <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/profile/fergus-hodgson>.
- "Find a Career You Love." Looksharp. Accessed February 13, 2017. <https://www.looksharp.com/>.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.
- "Framework for Planning and Funding of Enrolment." Toronto: Council of Ontario Universities, June 10, 2010. <http://cou.on.ca/papers/framework-for-planning-and-funding-of-enrolment/>.
- "Fraser Institute." Fraser Institute. Accessed February 11, 2017. <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/>.
- Fraser, Nancy. "From Discipline to Flexibilization? Rereading Foucault in the Shadow of Globalization." *Constellations* 10, no. 2 (2003).
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by M Bergman Ramos. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

- Frenette, Alexandre. "Making the Intern Economy: Role and Career Challenges of the Music Industry Intern." *Work and Occupations* 40, no. 4 (November 1, 2013): 364–97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888413504098>.
- Furey, Kelly. "5 Career Lessons I Learned From Stepping Outside My Comfort Zone | SFU OLC." *Our Learning Community, SFU* (blog), November 29, 2016. <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/communique/5-career-lessons-i-learned-stepping-outside-my-comfort-zone>.
- . "5 Ways to Maximize Your Co-Op Experience." *Our Learning Community, SFU* (blog), July 31, 2014. <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/communique/5-ways-maximize-your-co-op-experience>.
- . "The Secret to Securing Your First Co-Op Term: A Reflection On My First Co-Op Search And How I Landed My Dream Placement | SFU OLC." *Our Learning Community, SFU* (blog), June 7, 2014. <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/communique/secret-securing-your-first-co-op-term-reflection-my-first-co-op-search-and-how-i-land>.
- Garvey, Kyla. "FIMS Graduate on National Post Internship." *OPENWIDE Online* (blog), November 27, 2013. <https://openwidedzine.com/2013/11/26/fims-graduate-on-national-post-internship/>.
- Gill, Rosalind, and Andy Pratt. "In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work." *Theory, Culture and Society* 25, no. 1 (2008): 1–30.
- Giroux, Henry. "Critical Pedagogy, Paulo Freire, and the Courage to Be Political," 2015. https://www.academia.edu/15689086/Critical_Pedagogy_Paulo_Friere_and_the_Courage_to_be_Political.
- "Go Public Inbox: Unpaid Interns Speak out." CBC News, June 24, 2013. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/go-public-inbox-unpaid-interns-speak-out-1.1347934>.
- Government of Canada, Department of Finance. "Budget 2017: Chapter 1 - Skills, Innovation and Middle Class Jobs." Government of Canada, March 22, 2017. <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2017/docs/plan/chap-01-en.html#Toc477707315>.
- Government of Ontario, Ministry of Labour. "Are Unpaid Internships Legal in Ontario?" Ontario Ministry of Labour, June 2011. <https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/internships.php>.
- . "Time For Change: Ontario's Employment Standards Legislation." Ontario Ministry of Labour, July 2000. <http://www.ontla.on.ca/library/repository/mon/ont/L/2000/00escpe.htm>.
- Handanovic, Leah. "Subject: Canadian Labour Code, Part III," May 14, 2013. CBC News. <http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/716829-patel-complaintsunpaidinterns.html#document/p2>.

- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. USA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- . *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin Press, 2004.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- . *A Companion to Marx's Capital*. London: Verso, 2010.
- Hesmondhalgh, David. *The Cultural Industries*. 2nd ed. London: Sage, 2007.
- Hodgson, Fergus. "Canada's Opposition to Unpaid Internships Hurts the Unskilled." Fraser Institute Blog, February 23, 2016. <http://bit.ly/20TeE8T>.
- "Home - Co-Operative Education - Simon Fraser University." Work Integrated Learning - Simon Fraser University. Accessed February 15, 2017. <http://www.sfu.ca/coop/programs/cmns/home.html>.
- Hunter, Justine. "HootSuite to Review Unpaid Intern Policy after Barrage of Criticism." *The Globe and Mail*, April 7, 2013. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/hootsuite-to-review-unpaid-intern-policy-after-barrage-of-criticism/article10839746/>.
- Huws, Ursula. "Expression and Expropriation: The Dialectics of Autonomy and Control in Creative Labour." In *Labour in the Global Digital Economy: The Cybertariat Comes of Age*, 101–25. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014.
- Icely, Kate. "DISPATCHES 3: An Intern's Survival Guide." *The Editors' Weekly* (blog), May 1, 2013. <http://blog.editors.ca/?p=803>.
- . "DISPATCHES 4: What's an Intern Worth?" *The Editors' Weekly* (blog), May 28, 2013. <http://blog.editors.ca/?p=893>.
- . "DISPATCHES from an Editorial Intern." *The Editors' Weekly* (blog), March 5, 2013. <http://blog.editors.ca/?p=573>.
- "Interns, Connect! A Forum on Upsetting Unpaid Work." CULTURAL WORKERS ORGANIZE, September 3, 2015. <https://culturalworkersorganize.org/events-2/interns-connect/>.
- "Internships - Faculty of Information & Media Studies - Western University." Western - Faculty of Information and Media Studies. Accessed February 22, 2017. http://www.fims.uwo.ca/programs/undergraduate_programs/experience_more_be_more/internships.html.
- "Interpretation Guidelines Manual British Columbia Employment Standards Act and Regulations." Government of British Columbia, 2017. <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/igm/esa-definitions/esa-def-work>.

- Janks, Hilary. "Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 18, no. 3 (1997).
- Jay, Martin. *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005.
- "Job and Internship Opportunities." Flare. Accessed January 8, 2018. <http://www.flare.com/about/job-and-internship-opportunities/>.
- Kershaw, Jenai, and Madeline Marmor. "Intern, Uninterrupted." *OPENWIDE*, October 2013.
- Kline, Jesse. "Jesse Kline: Let Interns Work for Free." *National Post*, June 18, 2013. <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/jesse-kline-let-interns-work-for-free>.
- La Presse Canadienne, Montréal. "Rémunération: Les Doctorants En Psychologie S'entendent Avec Québec | Santé." *LaPresse.ca*, December 21, 2016. <http://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/sante/201612/21/01-5053477-remuneration-les-doctorants-en-psychologie-sentendent-avec-quebec.php>.
- Langille, Andrew. "Interrogating Work-Integrated Learning | Youth and Work." *Youth and Work* (blog), April 30, 2014. <http://www.youthandwork.ca/2014/04/interrogating-work-integrated-learning.html>.
- Lazzarato, Maurizio. "Immaterial Labour." In *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, edited by Paolo Virno and Michael Hardy. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Leoncio, Pauline. "Alumni Spotlight: Laurie Dawkins | SFU OLC," September 7, 2016. <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/where-are-they-now/alumni-spotlight-laurie-dawkins>.
- Leung, Fiona. "A Fish on Land: Adjusting to a Company's Work Culture | SFU OLC." *Communique* (blog), March 20, 2015. http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/communique/fish-land-adjusting-company%E2%80%99s-work-culture?page=22&quicktabs_1=0.
- Loschiavo, Kristina. "Advice From A Former MuchMusic Intern." *TalentEgg Career Incubator* (blog), July 22, 2009. <http://talentegg.ca/incubator/2009/07/22/twenty-something-advice-from-a-former-muchmusic-intern/>.
- . "Canadian Media Internships: Glitz, Glamour or Gopher?" *TalentEgg Career Incubator* (blog), June 2, 2009. <http://talentegg.ca/incubator/2009/06/02/canadian-media-internships-glitz-glamour-or-gopher/>.
- Lui, Laurin. Intern Protection Act, Pub. L. No. C-636 (41-2), Canada Labour Code. Accessed May 18, 2017. <http://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/41-2/bill/C-636/first-reading/page-24#1>.
- Mandryk, Josh. "Intern Inspection Blitz Statistics Highlight Failure of Complaints-Based Enforcement Model." *Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams*, September 30,

2014. <https://payyourinterns.wordpress.com/2014/09/30/intern-inspection-blitz-statistics-highlight-failure-of-complaints-based-enforcement-model/>.
- Mann, Arshy, and Haseena Manek. *Media Works: A Labour Rights and Reporting Handbook*. Canadian University Press, 2015. <http://cmgfreelance.ca/en/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Media-Works-Handbook-2015.pdf>.
- Marmor, Madeline, Sarah Stockall, and Kevin Chao. "FIMS in the Field." *OPENWIDE*, September 2013.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital*. Vol. I. London: Penguin Books, 1976.
- McKay, Dave. "Experiential Learning, Agile Employees: Getting Our Students on the Right Path." *The Globe and Mail*, May 3, 2016. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-commentary/experiential-learning-agile-employees-getting-our-students-on-the-right-path/article29825807/>.
- McKnight, Zoe. "Bell Canada Cancels Massive Unpaid-Internship Program." *The Toronto Star*, August 12, 2014, sec. GTA. https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/08/12/bell_canada_cancels_massive_unpaidinternship_program.html.
- . "Unpaid Interns Dropped from Rogers-Owned Magazines." *The Toronto Star*, April 3, 2014, sec. GTA. https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/04/03/unpaid_interns_dropped_from_rogersowned_magazines.html.
- McRobbie, Angela. *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016.
- "Media & the Public Interest - Faculty of Information & Media Studies - Western University." Western - Faculty of Information and Media Studies. Accessed February 22, 2017. http://www.fims.uwo.ca/programs/undergraduate_programs/media_the_public_interest/.
- "Membership for Student, Volunteer and Precarious Media Workers." CMG Freelance, April 29, 2014. <http://cmgfreelance.ca/en/cwacanadaassociatemembers/>.
- Millar, Erin. "The Expectation Gap: Students' and Universities' Roles in Preparing for Life after Grad." *The Globe and Mail*, October 21, 2014. <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/the-expectation-gap-students-and-universities-roles-in-preparing-for-life-after-grad/article21187004/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&page=all>.
- Miller, Daniel. "Fox Unpaid Intern Case Is Drawing to a Close with Proposed Settlement." *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 2016. <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/cotown/la-et-ct-fox-interns-legal-case-20160712-snap-story.html>.

- Morawetz, Kate. "Internships Are the Way to Get Your Foot in the Entertainment Industry's Door." *TalentEgg Career Incubator* (blog). Accessed November 17, 2016. <http://talentegg.ca/incubator/2009/06/29/internships-are-the-only-way-to-get-your-foot-in-the-entertainment-industrys-door/>.
- Neff, Gina, and Giovanni Arata. "The Competitive Privilege of Working for Free: Rethinking the Roles Interns Play in Communication Industries," 2007. http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/8/3/9/6/page_s183960/p183960-1.php.
- Negri, Antonio. *Marx beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*. Edited by Jim Fleming. Translated by Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan, and Maurizio Viano. South Hadley: Bergin & Garvey, 1984.
- Oakley, Kate. "Making Workers: Higher Education and the Cultural Industries Workplace." In *Cultural Work and Higher Education*, edited by Daniel Ashton and Caitriona Noonan, 25–44. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Olson, Dave. "Rockstar Training School – Tips for Managing and Inspiring Interns." *Looksharp Blog* (blog), August 16, 2011. <https://www.looksharp.com/blog/hootsuite-managing-and-inspiring-interns>.
- Perez, Sarah. "InternMatch Raises \$1.2 Million To Expand Beyond Internships To Include Paying Jobs, Is Thinking About Rebranding." *TechCrunch* (blog), January 16, 2013. <http://social.techcrunch.com/2013/01/16/internmatch-raises-1-2-million-to-expand-beyond-internships-to-include-paying-jobs-is-thinking-about-rebranding/>.
- Perlin, Ross. *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*. Brooklyn: Verso, 2011.
- Peuter, Greig de. "Beyond the Model Worker: Surveying a Creative Precariat." *Culture Unbound* 6 (2014).
- Peuter, Greig de, Nicole Cohen, and Enda Brophy. "Interns Unite!" *Briarpatch Magazine*, November 9, 2012. <https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/interns-unite-you-have-nothing-to-lose-literally>.
- Peuter, Greig de, and Nicole S. Cohen. "Challenging Intern Nation: A Roundtable with Intern Labour Activists in Canada." *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 587–98.
- Peuter, Greig de, Nicole S. Cohen, and Enda Brophy. "Interrogating Internships: Unpaid Work, Creative Industries, and Higher Education." *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 329–35.
- Poirier, Amélie, and Camille Tremblay-Fournier. "La Grève Des Stages Est Une Grève Des Femmes - FRANCOISE STEREO," May 23, 2017. <http://francoisestereo.com/greve-stages-greve-femmes/>.

- Rancière, Jacques. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Translated by Kristin Ross. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- rastilin. "Hootsuite Is Hiring Unpaid Interns, This Is Illegal in BC." *Reddit*, April 8, 2013. https://www.reddit.com/r/vancouver/comments/1bqytv/hootsuite_is_hiring_unpaid_interns_this_is/.
- Rodino-Colocino, Michelle, and Stephanie N. Beberick. "'You Kind of Have to Bite the Bullet and Do Bitch Work': How Internships Teach Students to Unthink Exploitation in Public Relations." *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 486–500.
- Roggero, Gigi. *The Production of Living Knowledge: The Crisis of the University and the Transformation of Labor in Europe and North America*. Translated by Enda Brophy. Philadelphia, US: Temple University Press, 2011. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10489050>.
- Ross, Andrew. "Theorizing Cultural Work: An Interview with the Editors." In *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, Continuity and Change in the Cultural and Creative Industries*, edited by Mark Banks, Rosalind Gill, and Stephanie Taylor. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013.
- Ross, Stephanie, Larry Savage, Errol Black, and Jim Silver. *Building a Better World: An Introduction to the Labour Movement in Canada*. 3rd ed. Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2015.
- Sagan, Aleksandra. "Unpaid Intern Hell: Overtime, Tuition Fees." *CBC News*, September 10, 2013. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/unpaid-intern-hell-overtime-tuition-fees-1.1699105>.
- Salamon, Errol. "(De)valuing Intern Labour: Journalism Internship Pay Rates and Collective Representation in Canada." *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 438–58.
- Savard, Alain. "Keeping the Student Strike Alive." *Jacobin*, September 2016. <http://jacobinmag.com/2016/09/quebec-student-strike-tuition-austerity-protests/>.
- Schwartz, Madeleine. "Opportunity Costs: The True Price of Internships." *Dissent Magazine*, 2013. <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/opportunity-costs-the-true-price-of-internships>.
- Sears, Alan, and James Cairns. "Austerity U: Preparing Students for Precarious Lives." *New Socialist Webzine*, January 24, 2014. <http://newsocialist.org/austerity-u-preparing-students-for-precarious-lives/>.
- Shade, Leslie Regan, and Jenna Jacobson. "Hungry for the Job: Gender, Unpaid Internships, and the Creative Industries." *The Sociological Review* 63, no. S1 (2015): 188–205.
- Shaker, Erika, and David Macdonald. "What's the Difference?: Taking Stock of Provincial Tuition Fee Policies." Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, September 2015.

- https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2015/09/Whats_the_Difference.pdf.
- Shen, Anqi. "Experience or Exploitation?" *Story Board* (blog), October 24, 2012. <http://www.thestoryboard.ca/experience-or-exploitation-conference-ramps-up-debate-on-unpaid-internships/>.
- Smeltzer, Sandra. "Interrogating Course-Related Public Interest Internships in Communications." *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 509–25.
- Standing, Guy. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury, 2011.
- Stannard, Mack. "Co-Op Reflection: A Summer at CBC | SFU OLC." *Communique* (blog), November 3, 2016. <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/communique/mack-stannard>.
- Stirling, Ashley, Gretchen Kerr, Jenessa Banwell, Ellen MacPherson, and Amanda Heron. "A Practical Guide for Work-Integrated Learning." Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2016. http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/HEQCO_WIL_Guide_ENG_ACC.pdf.
- Tardif, Julien. "Reconnaitre Le Travail Étudiant | Quartier Libre." *Quartier Libre*, November 2, 2016. <http://quartierlibre.ca/reconnaitre-le-travail-etudiant/>.
- Terranova, Tiziana. "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy." *Social Text* 18, no. 2 (2000): 33–58.
- Tewksbury, Doug. "Educating the Precariat: Intern Labour and a Renewed Approach to Media Literacy Education." *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 526–32.
- The Canadian Intern Rights Guide*. Canadian Intern Association, 2016. http://www.scsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CanadianInternRightsGuide_FINAL_Digital.pdf.
- "The Co-Op Student Guide." Work Integrated Learning - Simon Fraser University. Accessed December 14, 2017. <https://www.sfu.ca/coop/students/guide/work-term.html>.
- Todaro, Tina. "Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams Pickets Ontario Budget Consultation." *The Dialog* (blog), March 4, 2014. <http://dialognews.ca/2014/03/04/stop-unpaid-internship-scams-pickets-ontario-budget-consultation/>.
- Tokumitsu, Miya. *Do What You Love: And Other Lies About Success and Happiness*. New York: Regan Arts, 2015.
- Tomlinson, Kathy. "Bell Accused of Breaking Labour Law with Unpaid Interns." *CBC News*, June 24, 2013. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/bell-accused-of-breaking-labour-law-with-unpaid-interns-1.1356277>.

- “Toronto Life: About Us.” *Toronto Life* (blog). Accessed January 8, 2018.
<https://torontolife.com/about/>.
- “Vancouver Fashion Week SCAM ALERT.” *Vancouver Fashion Week* (blog), 2011.
<https://vancouverfashionweek.wordpress.com/tag/vancouver-fashion-week-intern/>.
- Vosko, Leah. *Precarious Employment*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006.
- “Wall of Shame.” Canadian Intern Association, May 31, 2016.
<http://internassociation.ca/category/shame/>.
- Webb, William. “Ontario Interns Fight Back: Modes of Resistance Against Unpaid Internships.” *tripleC* 13, no. 2 (2015): 579–86.
- Weeks, Kathi. “The Refusal of Work as Demand and Perspective.” In *Resistance in Practice : The Philosophy of Antonio Negri*, 109–35. London: Pluto Press, 2005.
- “What Is the Law?” Canadian Intern Association, May 25, 2012.
<http://internassociation.ca/what-is-the-law/>.
- “Who Benefits from Un(der)paid Internships?” *Internsheep* (blog), October 7, 2011.
<https://internsheep.wordpress.com/2011/10/07/who-benefits-from-underpaid-internships/>.
- Wu, Charmaine. “5 Ways to Stay Motivated During An Extended Work Term.” *Our Learning Community, SFU* (blog), July 13, 2016.
<http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/communique/5-ways-stay-motivated-during-extended-work-term>.
- “York U Passes the Buck.” *Internsheep* (blog), December 8, 2011.
<https://internsheep.wordpress.com/2011/12/08/york-u-passes-the-buck/>.