

**Stocksy United:
A case study of co-operation in the cultural
industries**

**by
Seamus Bright Grayer**

B.A. (Communication), Simon Fraser University, 2017

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

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

© Seamus Bright Grayer 2020
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Spring 2020

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: Seamus Bright Grayer

Degree: Master of Arts (Communication)

Title: Stocksy United: A case study of co-operation in the cultural industries

Examining Committee:

Chair: Frédéric Lesage
Associate Professor

Enda Brophy
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor

Kendra Strauss
Supervisor
Associate Professor
Geography

Alessandro Delfanti
Examiner
Assistant Professor
Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology
University of Toronto

Date Defended/Approved: January 24, 2020

Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

- a. human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics

or

- b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University

or has conducted the research

- c. as a co-investigator, collaborator, or research assistant in a research project approved in advance.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed with the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

Update Spring 2016

Abstract

This thesis examines Stocksy United, a stock photography platform co-operative, as a case study of worker resistance and self-organization in the cultural industries. Drawing on interviews with 12 Stocksy United members, it explores the meanings the co-operative's artists assign to their work in order to better understand the possibilities of co-operation for a cultural workforce. I argue that Stocksy United represents a significant example of how the co-operative model offers an alternative for precarious workers in the cultural industries, affording them community, autonomy, and fairness on the job. However, it is also a model that illustrates the ambivalences of co-operatives, including a tendency for the degeneration of the co-operative ethic, tensions around participation and gender, and the reproduction of capitalist logics. It concludes by arguing that co-operatives are a valuable yet insufficient answer to the challenges faced by precarious cultural workers.

Keywords: Co-operatives; cultural work; Stocksy United; stock photography;
cultural industries

To my grandparents,
(all of them).

Acknowledgements

First, my deep gratitude to every Stocksy member I spoke to, on whose wisdom and generosity this work relies. Thanks to Michelle Sadler, for her invaluable help throughout this process; Margaret Vincent, for her incredible knowledge of Stocksy and the co-operative model; and Mike Cook, for letting me sit down and explain myself.

Next, I thank Enda Brophy for asking a wandering student who had just completed a fourth-year course in labour and communication if he would like “to do more work in this area.” Without his encouragement, care, and friendship this thesis would look much, much different (and would possibly not exist!). I would also like to thank Kendra Strauss, who came on at a later stage but had a disproportionately positive effect on its outcome. The methodology chapter is dedicated to you. Thank you as well to Alessandro Delfanti for graciously taking the time to examine my work.

Massive thanks to my family, especially my parents Vicki and Patrick, who have nurtured my desire to learn, never let me feel anything but loved, and “instilled middle-class values of education,” to paraphrase my dad. Similarly, to my stepparents Vandana and Grimm, and my sisters Allara and Georgia. Special thanks to my grandmother Inessa for rightly insisting that we are family, and to my aunts Beth and Jane and my cousin Oliver for hosting me while I was doing research in Victoria. Also, to my late cat Phobos, who did not live to see the completion of this project but was (literally) by my side for its majority.

I am thankful for all my friends, too many to name, but especially to Ben Anderson for all his insight, help, and acting as my *de facto* third supervisor. Also to my old roommates Tyson, Kate, Derek, and Nathan, for being quiet earlier than they would have liked so I could get up early to study; Jake for sharing his experience of grad school and for letting me bounce ideas off him; Luke for starting and ending grad school with me; and Mario and Elvy for keeping me grounded in the local co-operative movement. More thanks to my friends at the Teaching Support Staff Union, again too many to name, but especially to Yi Chien and the Solidarity & Social Justice Committee.

Finally, to Katherine, for her unwavering support and partnership before, throughout, and after my time in school. I love you!

Table of Contents

Approval	ii
Ethics Statement	iii
Abstract	iv
Dedication	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1.1. Key concepts & themes	3
1.1.1. Stock photography	3
1.1.2. The cultural industries	5
1.1.3. Cultural work	6
1.1.4. Co-operatives	9
1.2. Chapter overview	10
Chapter 2. Theorizing Alternatives of Cultural Work and Co-operation	12
2.1. Co-operative politics	13
2.2. J.K. Gibson-Graham: Capitalocentrism & community economies	16
2.3. Autonomism	19
2.4. Autonomist theories of cultural work	22
2.5. Co-operatives in cultural industries	25
2.6. Conclusion	28
Chapter 3. Methodology	30
3.1. Methods	31
3.2. Case study: Stocksy United	32
3.3. Study details	33
3.4. Coding & analysis	35
3.4.1. Community	35
3.4.2. Autonomy	36
3.5. Conclusion	37
Chapter 4. Community at Stocksy	38
4.1. A note on “community”	40
4.2. Community	41
4.2.1. Community in Stocksy spaces	42
4.2.2. Community outside and around Stocksy	44
4.2.3. Gender and other internal tensions	46
4.2.4. Community/exclusivity tensions	48
4.3. Conclusion & discussion	51
Chapter 5. Autonomy at Stocksy	57
5.1. Difference: “Apples and oranges”	58

5.2.	Independence: “A whole bunch of small businesses”	63
5.3.	Flexibility: “You get out what you put in”	68
5.4.	Conclusion & discussion.....	74
Chapter 6.	Conclusion	79
6.1.	A theory of cultural co-operation.....	81
6.2.	Lessons & recommendations	82
6.3.	Concluding thoughts	84
References	87

Chapter 1. Introduction

In the final months of 2018, New Brunswick-based photographer Michael Stemm posted a video to his social media accounts detailing his experience with the digital stock photography agency Shutterstock (Michael Stemm, 2018). Looking into a camera set up in his combined office-bedroom, Stemm tells the story of how he found his picture of a snowy New Brunswick bridge being printed on calendars, blankets, and cards, before being sold at a local Walmart. Hinting at some of the tensions of working in the stock photography industry, he describes his initial reaction: “I was like ‘wow, that’s my picture!’, but it would have been awesome if I actually had something to do with it.” As it turns out, Stemm had uploaded this image to Shutterstock earlier in the year, it was licensed by a souvenir company in Newfoundland who then went on to print 500,000 copies of his image. When he checked his Shutterstock account balance, his payout was a total of \$1.88 USD. “[I feel I’m] being taken advantage of,” says Stemm, “the small guy who makes the time, effort to take the picture and upload, and now it’s being exploited by big companies” (In Lau, 2018, para. 12).

This case is emblematic of the struggles of photographers trying to make a living in the stock photography industry. Stock artists’ labour is marked by profound inequalities of payment, information, and control between them and the agencies they work for. While selling stock can be lucrative for some (Schleichkorn, 2007, p. 351), for others like Michael Stemm it means the impersonal sale of their art and work for low sums, with little to no attribution, and an overall lack of transparency. Stock is subject to many of the same dynamics that characterize cultural work more broadly, including precariousness, isolation, a lack of benefits, and gender inequalities (Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010; McRobbie, 2002). Further compounding these issues, the proliferation of digital photography has made it easier than ever to take high quality pictures and upload them online – swelling the numbers of willing photographers and creating a race-to-the-bottom which has seen the establishment of agencies giving away stock imagery for free, such as the Montréal-based Unsplash. It is in this context that collective solutions to the problems faced by photographers are sorely needed.

As a means of exploring examples of organized responses, this thesis focuses on the co-operative stock photography agency Stocksy United (henceforth “Stocksy”) as

a case study of co-operation among cultural workers. Explained in their own words as “a stock photo agency providing royalty-free licenses on exclusive photos via an online marketplace that provides sustainable careers to photographers through co-ownership, profit sharing, and transparent business practices” (Silva & Wettlaufer, 2016, p. 78), Stocksy has become hugely successful in the worlds of co-operatives and stock photography alike. It was established in 2012 by founders of the Calgary agency iStock who were unhappy with how that agency’s artists were treated after it was sold to the corporate giant Getty Images.¹ With a mandate to pay artists well and boasting the highest artist royalty rates in the industry – ranging from 50% to 75% compared to the industry standard 20% to 30% (Zhang, 2013b, para. 6) – Stocksy is a response to trends of precarization in cultural work (de Peuter, 2014b; Morgan, Wood, & Nelligan, 2013; Sandoval, 2016a) and the specific patterns of exploitation in the stock photography industry as exemplified by the Michael Stemm case.

I argue that Stocksy represents a significant example of how the co-operative model can be shaped to offer an alternative for precarious workers in photography, the cultural industries, and beyond. However, it is also a model that illustrates the tensions of co-operatives, including a tendency for the degeneration of the co-operative ethic, ambivalences around participation and gender, and the internalization of start-up capitalist logics. Using the case study of Stocksy, this research explores the perceptions and meanings the co-operative’s artist-workers have of their work. Inspired by the workers’ inquiry, a methodology that prioritizes “understanding the exploitation of workers from their own perspective” so that they are empowered as “the only people who can describe their own conditions [...] and as the only ones who can transform them” (Woodcock, 2014, p. 496), it will focus on interviews with twelve Stocksy members, including artist-workers and headquarters staff, to better understand the challenges, potentials, and possibilities of the co-operative form. Drawing upon critical theories of cultural work, autonomist Marxism, feminist critiques of political economy, and co-operative studies, it approaches co-operatives as an avenue for a cultural

¹ In a *Fast Company* profile of the company, the situation is described by Stocksy and iStock co-founder Bruce Livingstone: “It’s hard for me to criticize their corporation,’ Livingstone says. ‘They’re responsible to their shareholders. They have to keep making profits and keep having growth. I totally get it. I don’t fault them for that.’ But within his photographer network, it seemed like what started as a friendly business had grown up to become a monster” (Kessler, 2013, para. 3).

workforce to reclaim agency and autonomy at work. Though not without its challenges, the co-operative represents an instance of autonomy for the cultural worker and a chance to reconfigure work from below.

1.1. Key concepts & themes

1.1.1. Stock photography

Defined most simply as “pictures for rent,” the stock photography industry has become central not just to photography as a whole, but to visual communication in a larger sense “as a form of currency that funds advertising, textbooks, real-estate pamphlets, greetings cards, in-flight magazines, book covers, posters and annual reports” (Miller, 1994 para. 1–2). Stock photographs are images pooled together by an agency that are then licensed out to buyers and profits are divided between the agency and the photographer to whom the image belongs. With market researchers projecting over \$4 billion (US) in global revenues by 2023 (Research and Markets, 2018), stock photography has become one of the dominant means of accessing graphic content for industries like advertising, publishing, and web design. This growth has meant, on the one hand, that stock now occupies a significant niche in cultural meaning making, and, on the other hand, these industries are relying more than ever on stock photography instead of employing in-house photographers.

While the first instances of stock photography practice can be traced to the 1920s, it was only later in the 20th century that the industry developed into a more established form. Thanks in part to cheaper and more widely available photographic equipment, stock photographers became more prominent 1970s and 1980s, before the technological shifts of the internet and digital photography helped stock to grow to new heights in the 1990s. Information storage capacity boomed, enabling stock agencies to store vast archives of photographic content and license it out remotely via the web. These trends enabled large players like Getty Images and Shutterstock – which boast \$800 million and \$633.6 million USD in annual revenues, respectively² – to amass

² By contrast, Stocksy’s revenues were \$7.9 million USD as of 2015, with \$4.3 million of that being paid out to members in royalties (Cortese, 2016, para. 20). More currently, Stocksy CEO Mike Cook puts Stocksy’s 2018 revenue at \$11-12 million USD (Personal communication, October 1, 2019).

millions of photographs, huge revenues, and establish stock photography as one of the biggest, yet still largely invisible, artistic markets in the world.

Not only did the advance of digital and photographic technology mean that corporate agencies could establish dominance in the field, but so too did it open the door for a new kind of agency. Here, digital-only “microstock” agencies have sprung up to challenge the dominance of the established “macro” firms and shift the meanings of the stock genre. Appearing in the early 2000s, these companies presented a new business model predicated on many smaller transactions versus the traditional macro approach which involved royalties for an image with set restrictions on use. The contributors to online microstock agencies are much more varied than traditional stock companies, including many amateurs who provide their images for additional income. Some of the main players in the microstock world are the Adobe-owned Fotolia, New York-based Shutterstock, and Calgary’s iStock (formerly iStockphoto). The latter, as noted above, began as an online community of photographers before it was converted into a for-profit business, was acquired by Getty Images in February of 2006 (Covell & Laursen, 2011, p. 215).

Many of the changes to iStock after its acquisition were unpopular with its artists,³ and brought new attention to the ways that photographers were treated at stock agencies. Paul Frosh (2001) points out that, in theory, the stock photography system is designed to satisfy agencies, clients, and photographers alike: “The photographer bears the production costs of the image but does not incur significant marketing and distribution costs, and can expect a steady income from repeated sales of the same image without relinquishing copyright” (p. 628). However, this is mediated by the speculative nature of stock work in which “photographers do not get paid until someone uses an image-usage license” (Schleichkorn, 2007, p. 351). The stock industry’s growth has had consequences for workers in other areas of photography as well. For example, magazines and publishing houses once employed staff photographers before they “gradually eliminated these positions in favor of freelance photographers who could sell

³ These include including discontinuing a system that let photographers to earn more money on extended licenses (Kessler, 2013, para. 2) and a case where iStock licensed 5,000 images to Google, for which the artists received a one-time payment of \$12 USD (Zhang, 2013a). The latter saw the dismissal of Sean Locke, one of iStock’s top photographers, who is now at Stocksy and calls Getty “venture capitalist fodder” (Locke, 2013 para. 6).

their outtakes” at stock agencies (Lupton & Miller, 1996, p. 128). In other words, it costs less to keep photographers on the payroll if a company uses the stock supplied by freelancers on a contingent basis. In an industry where the average photographer payout is around 20%-30% of an image’s sale (Zhang, 2013b), it is often up to whichever photographer is able to produce a volume of material sufficient to earn a living. While iStock is not the only cause of precarious conditions for stock photographers, its buyout and subsequent changes underscored the deep problems of the industry.

1.1.2. The cultural industries

Definitions of cultural industries are widely debated among those studying and working within them. One of the most widely-cited origins of this discussion came from the Frankfurt School’s Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer (2001) who used the term “culture industry” to denote the ways that culture has merged with capitalist industry, “having energetically executed the previously clumsy transposition of art into the sphere of consumption” (p. 135). Later thinkers, while recognizing the power of capital in the creation of cultural texts, argued that culture is an ever-changing site of struggle that is much more intricate than Horkheimer & Adorno’s bleak view of the perversion of supposedly “pure” works of art (Miège, 1989). In turn, this latter period of the late 1980s saw a shift from the “culture industry” to the “cultural industries” as a means of addressing the “complex, ambivalent and contested” realities of cultural production (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 25).

Later in the 20th century, in a trendy mutation of cultural industries discourse, the “creative industries” emerged as a new way – or a new spin on an old way – of thinking about the relationship between creative and economic activity. In this paradigm, “creativity” is positioned as the motor of modern economies, no longer peripheral to traditional industrial production. In the most prominent example of this policy, the Tony Blair UK government’s Department of Culture, Media, and Sport (1998) defined creative industries as “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.” Richard Florida’s 2002 book *The Rise of the Creative Class* popularized these ideas further, arguing that “the great ongoing changes of our time” are powered by “the rise of human creativity as the defining feature of

economic life” (2014, p. 15). Though creative class discourse was widely and rightly criticized⁴ for fuelling gentrification and inequality, among other issues (see, for example, Peck, 2005), they were nonetheless influential in shaping urban and creative industries policies which overlooked the “dark side” (Kong, 2014, p. 602) of these sectors, leading to inappropriate policy and confounding a clear picture of cultural industries and the workplace struggles therein.

Accepting that the so-called ‘creative industries’ are but a “political rebranding of the cultural industries” (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 2), this thesis follows David Hesmondhalgh (2013) in defining the cultural industries as “those institutions [...] that are most directly involved in the production of social meaning” (p. 16). These include film, music, publishing, video games, advertising, photography, and graphic design, among others. While acknowledging that lists of what included as a cultural (or creative) industry can vary wildly (Galloway & Dunlop, 2007), here we are concerned with those cultural industries that are “*centrally* involved with the production of artefacts that are *primarily* composed of symbols” (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 20, emphasis in original). Cultural industries as a term is employed for two main reasons. First, in accordance with Adorno & Horkheimer, it is useful for its connections to the political economy of communication, retaining its “critical edge,” and remaining “resistant to the ideological slant of creative industry discourse” (Cohen, 2016, p. 251). Second, using “cultural” over “creative” allows one to recognize the “symbolic power” (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008, pp. 101–102) afforded by these industries’ placement in the overall media landscape. In other words, this use helps us recognize how important cultural industries are in the broader meaning-making of society. Therefore, the production of cultural workers gives them a power unique to themselves and complicating an analysis of cultural work.

1.1.3. Cultural work

While great attention has been paid to cultural/creative industries policies and lawmaking, historically less has been paid to the labour that sustains them. A partial

⁴ More recently Florida’ (2017) himself has acknowledged the harms of creative class thinking on urban policy, including the “vexing challenges” of gentrification, inequality, and unaffordability.

explanation of this gap is found when Dan Schiller (1996) points to the historical emergence of ideas of 'communication' where it was "free to demarcate humankind's cast and multifarious potential for symbolic interaction" while "'labor' contracted [...] around a sharply constricted range of human effort" – in other words, physical toil and waged work (p. x). Echoing cultural industries policy, the categories of communication ("head") and labour ("hand") came to be seen as separate without identifying how the two interact in complex ways. Catherine McKercher & Vincent Mosco (2006) invoke Dallas Smythe when they call labour the "blind spot of western communication studies" (p. 493), while Tiziana Terranova (2004) called it "a question which has become marginal for media studies as compared with questions of ownership [...] and consumption" (p. 76). Writing later, Mosco (2014) connects this tendency with the field of communication focus on media, messages, and audiences – none of which have paid enough attention to the work required to form these spheres, nor do scholars properly "address the various forms of laboring" or the representation of workers (p. 230). While recognizing that the early 2000s onward has seen many more efforts to bridge this gap and questions of labour have earned a more prominent place in communication studies, a smaller subset of this has focused on an analysis of resistance and collective organization (Brophy, de Peuter, & Cohen, 2015; de Peuter, 2014a).

This thesis makes a contribution to this growing literature on cultural work by focusing on this strand of cultural worker self-organization. Drawing from the above definition of cultural industries, this project defines 'cultural work' as the labour that sustains those industries or, in other words, "the work directed at producing the informational or affective content that define cultural commodities" (Sarjeant, 2018, p. 5). If the cultural industries hold a privileged place in our societies' symbolic meaning making, the labour that sustains them is of great consequence. While noting the deep diversity of labour among (Dyer-Witheford, 2015) and within (Sullivan, 2007) the many cultural industries, this study will pay special attention to the white-collar labour of stock photographers.

Narratives of cultural work are often framed as a liberating, autonomous, and exciting "new" way of building a career. For example, Charles Leadbeater & Kate Oakley (1999) used the moniker "the Independents" to denote a class of people that "provide [a] model of how work and production is likely to change in the future in other sectors" (p. 13):

These new Independents are often producers, designers, retailers and promoters all at the same time. They do not fit into neat categories. The Independents thrive on informal networks through which they organise work, often employing friends and former classmates. [...] They want to make their own way in the market. They have few tangible assets other than a couple of computers. They usually work from home or from nondescript and often run-down work-shops. Their main assets are their creativity, skill, ingenuity and imagination. (p. 11)

This passage reveals the thinking that characterizes cultural workers as autonomous, carefree, social, rebellious, and under-resourced. Cultural workers are encouraged to “do what you love” (Sandoval, 2018; Tokumitsu, 2015) thereby forging passionate and romantic associations with their work that ultimately serve to cover up exploitation in the workplace (Arvidsson, Malossi, & Naro, 2010; Cohen, 2012). When placed as “Independents,” cultural workers are ideal neoliberal subjects – governed remotely and responsible for themselves while crumbling social protections elide blame.

This independent positioning of cultural workers stands in stark contrast to their lived realities. Although cultural work is highly varied, studies of white-collar cultural workers in so-called Western countries have revealed a few consistent tendencies and trends that characterize its labour. For one, despite discourses of “freedom” and “flexibility,” Hesmondhalgh & Baker (2010) found the experiences of cultural workers to be “at best highly ambivalent” (p. 4), including detrimental mental health effects, difficulty separating work and pleasure, isolation, and demanding social obligations. There is a tendency for competition among workers, many of whom are independent, creating a general over-supply of workers and a lack of solidarity (Miège, 1989, p. 87). Further, based on their reading of the literature Gill & Pratt (2008) point to a few “relatively stable features of this kind of work,” including

[A] preponderance of temporary, intermittent and precarious jobs; long hours and bulimic patterns of working; the collapse or erasure of the boundaries between work and play; poor pay; high levels of mobility; passionate attachment to the work and to the identity of creative labourer [...] an attitudinal mindset that is a blend of bohemianism and entrepreneurialism; informal work environments and distinctive forms of sociality; and profound experiences of insecurity and anxiety about finding work, earning enough money and ‘keeping up’ in rapidly changing fields. (p. 14)

Other studies have found that the cultural industries are rife with exclusion and exploitation based on gender, race, ability, and class, among others (Boulton, 2015;

Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013; Taylor & O'Brien, 2017). The exciting, liberating, and free connotations that are attached to cultural work often obscure its exploitative realities as well as the ways these occupations are constructed as precarious. In light of this, the question becomes how we can ensure “a better quality of working life for [cultural] workers, and sustainable jobs, rather than ones that vanish as capital moves on from one entrepreneurial venture to another” (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 257; see also: de Peuter, 2010; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Ross, 2009).

1.1.4. Co-operatives

Starting with a search for practical alternatives and ways of improving cultural work, co-operatives emerge as one possible avenue for this project. Arguing for clearer definitions of the word ‘co-operative’, Melissa Hoover (2016) calls them “values-based businesses that operate for member benefits, that are owned and controlled by the people who do business for them” (p. 108). These virtues of common ownership and collective democratic control are crucial, theoretically separating co-operatives from individualized profit-making and the dominance of a privileged class. Or, put slightly differently, “[t]hose who use an enterprise should be those who own and govern it” (Schneider, 2018, pp. 12–13). Approaches to co-operation are varied but, because the case study of this project, Stocksy United, has multiple classes of members that relate to the co-operative in different ways – also known as a *multi-stakeholder co-operative* – three kinds are particularly relevant here: worker co-operatives, producer co-operatives, and platform co-operatives.

One of the more extensively studied forms of co-operation, a worker co-operative is an enterprise jointly owned and operated by its workers. This can manifest in a variety of ways but in an ideal worker co-operative, decisions are made democratically, ownership is collective, and, in the absence of shareholders, surplus income is used to pay members and injected back into the co-operative (Berry & Bell, 2018, p. 382). In many ways “a response, at once antagonistic and accommodative, to capitalism” (de Peuter & Dyer-Witford, 2010, p. 32), the worker co-operative holds clear promise for those looking to build their own worker power and challenge the wage labour relationship, while on the other hand slotting nicely into neoliberal discourses of self-help and responsibility (Sandoval, 2016b).

Related to worker co-operatives through a shared consideration of labour are producer co-operatives, which oversee the combination of independent producers for the sake of pooling together costs, risk, and services. Sometimes called a marketing co-operative, “the members are independent producers and the cooperative helps them access markets to sell products at a fair price” (Hoover, 2016, p. 109). There is much in common between producer and worker co-operatives as both are concerned with their members’ work, whether independently produced and pooled together in the former or governed and undertaken collectively as in the latter. However, the main difference between the two models is need: for a worker co-operative the need is work, whereas for a producer co-operative the need is access. In the view of its Vice President of Legal and Governance, Margaret Vincent, Stocksy is mainly a producer co-operative as its artist-workers do a similar pooling of photographic content (personal communication, February 5, 2019).

Third, Stocksy is also considered a platform co-operative. Championed most notably by Trebor Scholz & Nathan Schneider, platform co-operativism is a recent strand of the co-operative movement that focuses on the possibilities of co-operation online and common ownership of what we use on the Internet. “[A] model of social organization based on the understanding that it is hard to substantially change what you don’t own” (Scholz, 2016, p. 23), platform co-operatives are owned and democratically governed by their members, accessed through a digital platform, and funded through means other than venture capital. If platform co-operativism is a movement to achieve “shared governance and shared ownership of the Internet’s levers of power” (Scholz & Schneider, 2016, p. 12), Stocksy United is an ideal case; an instance where the platform’s users all own a stake and have a say in its running, all while being commercially viable, one of the most challenging and ambivalent necessities of co-operation (de Peuter & Dyer-Witthof, 2010, p. 35).

1.2. Chapter overview

In chapter 2 I outline the theoretical foundation for this study, beginning with an examination of the literature on co-operative politics, including critiques from Karl Marx and Rosa Luxemburg. I then move on to the work of the feminist economic geographer J.K. Gibson-Graham, whose theorizing provides helpful avenues through which to consider the potential of co-operatives. Further, her reading of the Basque co-operative

Mondragón highlights similar possibilities. I then move on to accounts of autonomist Marxism and their analyses of cultural work. Specifically, I examine their concepts of *precarity*, *passionate work*, and *the social factory* as having special relevance to studies of cultural co-operation. I conclude with a brief overview of some of the studies focusing on co-operatives in the cultural industries, specifically the work of Marisol Sandoval, to pinpoint some of the ways they are specifically applicable to cultural workers.

In chapter 3 I outline the methodology that informs this study. Specifically, I draw from the workers' inquiry framework which views knowledge as coming from below; in other words, it is workers who have the foremost authority to explain, interpret, and change their own circumstances. From here I detail my use of methods, including interviews and case study which are commonly used in the workers' inquiry. I then provide details of this specific study before moving on to an explanation of my approach to themes and coding, including the two organizing themes that emerged from my interviews with Stocksy members: *community* and *autonomy*.

In chapter 4 I proceed to explore the theme of community, which draws out the ways that Stocksy members relate to the co-operative, its staff, and each other. In many ways, these communities can be profoundly helpful, with many reporting friendship, mutual support, and networks of solidarity. However, the community at Stocksy also contains several key tensions, including imbalances of gender on the Stocksy forums as well as member hierarchies along the lines of age, experience, and artistic style. In chapter 5 I consider the second main theme, *autonomy*, through an exploration of three sub-themes: *difference*, *independence*, and *flexibility*. Difference speaks to the ways that Stocksy and its members separate themselves from other co-operatives, enterprises, and markets; independence considers the freelance nature of Stocksy artists; and flexibility borrows a popular buzzword for modern working arrangements to analyze how Stocksy members enjoy and are challenged by the amount of flexibility afforded to them by the platform.

Finally, chapter 6 concludes by reflecting on the political potential of co-operatives as well as their applicability to a precarious cultural workforce. It also lays out some lessons, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2. Theorizing Alternatives of Cultural Work and Co-operation

In his inaugural address to the First International Working Men's Association, Karl Marx spoke of a "[great] victory of the political economy of labor over the political economy of property" (1864, para. 11) won through worker co-operation. To him, co-operators had shown that large-scale production is possible "without the existence of a class of masters employing a class of hands," and that "the means of labor need not be monopolized as a means of dominion over [...] the laboring man himself" (para. 11). Eventually, what he called "associated labor plying its toil with a willing hand, a ready mind, and a joyous heart" (para. 11) would replace the necessity for hired labour.

After his initial optimism about the possibilities of co-operatives Marx proceeded to tread carefully between hope and concern, forecasting the ambivalences that have dogged the movement to the present day. His primary issue with co-operatives – shared by many others after him – concerned their existence within the overarching capitalist system; in other words, while co-operatives may be "excellent in principle and however useful in practice" they are not a viable solution if they are restricted by their limited numbers and local ambitions (Marx, 1864, para. 12). Writing later, he elaborated: "Restricted [...] to the dwarfish forms into which individual wage slaves can elaborate it by their private efforts, the co-operative system will never transform capitalist society" (1866, para. 33). While the free association of co-operators is inspirational, a more sober assessment leads Marx to question their place in a revolutionary project of the proletariat. The question now becomes: is it possible for the co-operative movement to further a broader anti-capitalist struggle? If so, how can they exceed "dwarfish forms" and bring about lasting change for their members and beyond?

Inspired by Marx's optimism and motivated by his critiques, this chapter works towards a theory of co-operativism that proposes the model as an answer to trends of precarization and flexibilization that have been intensified in the era of post-Fordism. To do this, I examine the literature on co-operative politics as they have been developed through the critiques of Marx, Luxemburg, and others. Next, I provide a discussion of J.K. Gibson-Graham's (1996, 2006) analysis of the Basque manufacturing co-operative Mondragón and her concepts of *capitalocentrism* and *community economies*, which

together spell out the possibilities of co-operatives as an alternative economic form. Then, I explore the growing body of literature that applies autonomist Marxist theory to analyze cultural work, highlighting three core concepts – *precarity*, *passionate work*, and the *social factory* – that are especially relevant to a study of cultural co-operatives. Each of these traditions, I argue, helps to explore the contested dynamics of co-operation through their shared interest in alternatives to and within the labour/capital relationship. Finally, I consider the specific relevance of workplace co-operation to a cultural labour force. Ultimately, I argue that co-operatives present an important, albeit ambivalent, possibility of creating autonomous spaces for expanding worker power in cultural occupations.

2.1. Co-operative politics

The values of autonomy and independence have been enshrined in the co-operative movement since the very beginning. At its founding in 1844, the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers – the English consumer co-operative credited with laying the basis for modern co-operation – outlined seven principles to guide the emerging co-operative movement. These now include: 1) voluntary and open membership; 2) democratic member control; 3) member economic participation; 4) autonomy and independence; 5) education, training, and information; 6) co-operation among co-operatives; and 7) concern for community (International Co-operative Alliance [ICA], 2015). This fourth principle, originally “political and religious neutrality,” was established to ensure the separation of co-operatives from the hegemonic powers of the moment, notably the state and church. Over time, as the co-operative principles have been modified to suit the changing movement, the principle has been adapted to its modern form: “Autonomy and independence,” which ensures “the integrity of a co-operative as an autonomous and independent organisation [that] rests on the co-operative values of self-help, self-responsibility and democracy” (ICA, 2015, p. 45).

While autonomy and independence are often desirable, the underside of this potential is an ambivalence towards political outcomes. In other words, for every radical co-operative operating within and against capitalism there is another that functions no differently than a competitive and unequal capitalist enterprise, just as Marx feared. In this vein, de Peuter & Dyer-Witford (2010) call co-operatives a “deeply ambivalent organizational form” (p. 43) that “can be seen as a response, at once antagonistic and

accommodative, to capitalism” (p. 32). Indeed, it is not difficult to see the ways that co-operative ideals match nicely with the spirit of neoliberal capitalism, easily catering to those celebrating entrepreneurship and self-reliance (Sandoval, 2016a). This capacity for co-optation was apparent to an early critic of co-operatives, Rosa Luxemburg (1973) who noted how

The workers forming a co-operative in the field of production are thus faced with the contradictory necessity of governing themselves with the utmost absolutism. They are obliged to take toward themselves the role of capitalist entrepreneur – a contradiction that accounts for the usual failure of production co-operatives which either become pure capitalist enterprises or, if the workers’ interests continue to predominate, end by dissolving. (p. 41)

Indeed, the possibility of co-optation by market forces presents an important challenge for a radical co-operative movement. Having established this much, the question becomes “how co-ops navigate the contradictions they are confronted with” in order to “do justice to their alternative potentials” (Sandoval, 2016b, p. 68).

Beyond these ambivalences, one of the most hopeful elements of worker co-operatives is how they contribute to building new working subjectivities. In other words, they open up the possibility that work can be organized differently as “a space to begin to collectively envision, create and demand work structures beyond exploitation” (Sandoval, 2016a, p. 67). This belief in the power of affirmative working experiences harkens back to early writings of Marx, who argued that “[p]ositive collective experiences can help overcome workers’ alienation from their own human nature, their colleagues, their products, and society more widely” (In Ozarow & Croucher, 2014, p. 992). Case studies of worker control have found that it offers “transformatory potential as a sustainable alternative production model that fosters new non-capitalist subjectivities among workers involved” (Ozarow & Croucher, 2014, p. 993; see also Burgmann, Jureidini, & Burgmann, 2014) and enables the reimagining of work as “free” rather than “coerced” (p. 1000).⁵ Co-operatives, by tapping into this reconceptualization of work, are

⁵ This is demonstrated by the words of an Australian worker whose experiences in a worker-reclaimed factory completely disillusioned her view of wage labour: “I don’t want a bridge between my wages and the product. The company is the middle-man and you can’t see any profits unless it is a co-operative and therefore, for me, there is no incentive to work for [my previous employer] or any other company” (In Burgmann et al., 2014, p. 194).

capable of laying the groundwork for future radical struggles in the movement away from capitalism.

The drive to seek alternatives to market relationships resonates in many ways with movements aimed at building forward-facing institutions using the materials available in the present. Feminist activists termed this “prefigurative” politics to denote “the commitment to develop counter-institutions that would anticipate the desired society of the future” (Breines, in Ferree & Hess, 2004, p. 374). Put simply, this means that building the society you want within smaller units will help bring forth a gradual shift towards that society at a larger scale, akin to the Industrial Workers of the World’s slogan, “the frame of the new in the shell of the old” (Lause, 2003, p. 347). Prefigurative politics are not merely an isolated survival tactic whereby a small group of determined people make life better for themselves alone—true prefigurative politics also challenge and make demands of the current system while simultaneously addressing present needs that are being neglected. Similarly, Kathi Weeks (2011) argues for the relevance of demands to feminist politics, pointing out that they function both as a *perspective* that makes problems visible through the process of demanding (pp. 128–129) and as a *provocation* that announces, expands, and performs collective power (pp. 131–139). In other words, demands, along with prefigurative politics, are ways to address current struggles while pushing forward to a larger goal. It is hoped that “by dramatizing the failures of the system” people can cause “points of strain [...] where human needs are denied” (Hayden, in Ferree & Hess, 1994, p. 374). In this way, prefigurative institutions address peoples’ pressing needs and, in the process, shine a light on society’s failure to do so, questioning the legitimacy of that system and moving us towards something new.

One of the most important aspects of the political co-operative vision relates to their need for networks of solidarity among different co-operatives. Considering them in the context of the “circulation of the commons,” de Peuter & Dyer-Witford (2010) emphasize the relevance of “connecting eco-social, labour, and networked commons to reinforce and enable one another, creating a circuit in which the common goods and services produced by associations at one point in the circuit provide inputs and resources for associations at another” (pp. 45–46). Relying on a conception of co-operatives as a form of *labour commons* – in other words, “the democratized organization of productive and reproductive work” – the authors think of them as “cells building a larger commonwealth metabolism” (de Peuter & Dyer-Witford, 2010, p. 45).

But once again, it is crucial to note that co-operatives alone are not enough: “Furthering the radical potential of these labour commons initiatives, rather than reducing them to modest forms compatible with capitalism, depends [...] on worker coops becoming part of a broader movement” (de Peuter & Dyer-Witthford, 2010, p. 48). Co-operatives, through their emphasis on the shared, are an excellent contributor to the circulation of commons ideals that suggest feasible and desirable alternatives to the capitalist economy.

2.2. J.K. Gibson-Graham: Capitalocentrism & community economies

A similar search for the possibilities of the common and alternative modes of reconceptualizing the economy has been key to the work of J.K. Gibson-Graham. Writing in the 1990s and 2000s, the joint persona of feminist economic geographers Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson paid significant attention to alternative economic solutions through a feminist-Marxist lens. Her body of work focused largely the role of people in economic configurations and how we can exert agency over the processes that affect our lives, practicing resistance at the individual and community level as a way of prefiguring broader change. Her first book *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (1996) was influential in re-thinking Marxism with the hopeful message that “our economy is what we (discursively and practically) make it” (2006, p. xxii). The follow-up, *A Postcapitalist Politics* (2006) is decidedly more instrumental, outlining her “politics of economic possibility” (2006, p. xxxiii). The emphasis of this work is strategy and preparedness, prioritizing being “ready with strategies for confronting what forcefully pushes back against the discursive imaginings and practical enactments we associate with building a different economy” (2006, p. xxii). Through these two main texts, Gibson-Graham proposed a political project which draws on two interrelated concepts become especially relevant to a theory of co-operativism: *capitalocentrism* and *community economies*.

The first concept, *capitalocentrism*, is defined as an economic discourse that privileges capitalism and “assigns lesser value to all other processes of producing and distributing goods and services by identifying them *in relation* to capitalism as the same as, the opposite of, a complement to, or contained within” (2006, p. 56, emphasis in original). Originating as a critique of Marxist political economies wherein everything of

significance is considered on the terms of capitalism, Gibson-Graham tried to conceive of ways of breaking this stranglehold and recognizing the great variety of economic practices that take place within, around, and against capitalism – including the largely ignored category of unpaid work.⁶ By questioning this dominant conception of capitalism, Gibson-Graham argued, we can challenge its hegemony thereby opening up moments of possibility and destabilization in order to “delegitimize and displace” the “ways in which capitalism is known” (Gibson-Graham, 1996, pp. 4–5). While not abandoning practical tactics of resistance, Gibson-Graham’s aim was to provoke people to seek out and create new imaginaries that question the authority of capitalism as *the* economic system.

The second concept, *community economies*, explores resistance to capitalocentrism through economic practices that prioritize questions of surplus, consumption, commons, and necessity through an ethical lens (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 101). Asking herself how it came to be that capitalist labour relations came “to be seen as the only ‘normal’ forms of work, exchange, and business organization,” she wondered how the economy became an outside force that elides influence from regular people (2006, p. 53). Questions like these had her seeking out moments of resistance, subversion, and economic difference, finding many instances of “community economies” that were described as offering a vision of the economy that challenges capitalocentrism. Those “[m]ovements that are resocializing economic relations provide us with many opportunities to identify sites where ethical economic decisions can be made around recognized forms of interdependence, and where we can begin to perform economy in new ways” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 81). This idea inspired a tradition of research that indicates how non-capitalist practices shape people in ways contrary to capitalism’s logics (Meehan & Strauss, 2015; see also Morrow & Dombroski, 2015). The politics outlined by Gibson-Graham “treat the *existing* situation as a (problematic) resource for projects of *becoming*, a place from which to build something more desirable in the future” (2006, p. 98, emphasis in original). It is from here that the co-operative model, as

⁶ Notably, Gibson-Graham diverged from social reproduction feminists who, in their view, “reinscribed the binary of the social and the economic without rescuing (women’s) unpaid labour from its subordinate status” and “seeking to commodify social reproduction rather than resisting equivalence with wage labor” (Meehan & Strauss, 2015, p. 10).

a kind of organization that is fundamentally rooted in the old but with hope for the new, becomes relevant to Gibson-Graham's postcapitalist politics.

Gibson-Graham dedicated an entire chapter of *A Postcapitalist Politics* to a case study of what is perhaps the world's best-known co-operative, Mondragón. Founded in the Basque region of Spain during World War II, Mondragón has grown into an enormous player in European trade, boasting over 75,000 employees and over 100 distinct co-operatives under the Mondragón umbrella. Taking "an ethical rather than a structural vision of economic determination" (p. 103) in their reading of Mondragón, Gibson-Graham (2006) argued that the Basque co-operators "were displacing the structural and essentialist visions that have militated against economic experimentation and the exercise of economic freedom" (p. 105). She commended Mondragón's "ethical practices" such as restrictions on pay differentials,⁷ co-operator-determined allocation of profits, environmental and technological commitments, and self-management governance structure (pp. 111–124). While she acknowledged the challenges faced by the co-operative – including the degeneration of co-operative principles that has come with global expansion – she argued that it is held to "a requirement of near-perfection" and

Its failures and shortcomings are often read as inherent weaknesses of the cooperative form rather than reversible errors, and are frequently taken as evidence of the impossibility of establishing a truly noncapitalist intentional economy in a system dominated by global capitalism. (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 102)

In this sense, Mondragón demonstrates many of the ambivalences of the co-operative model – on the one hand a promising project of ethical decision-making and worker control, and on the other a fraught experiment that faces strong capitalist headwinds.

⁷ At the time of Gibson-Graham's writing, the differential between the highest and lowest paid Mondragón co-operator was 6 to 1. Mondragon has increased the cap on managerial salaries to 9 times the lowest paid member – still a far cry from the American CEO to lowest paid workers differential of 331:1 in the USA and 127:1 in Spain (Kasmir, 2016, p. 54). It is worth noting, however, that there has been a proliferation of foreign subsidiaries since Mondragón expanded to global markets in the early 1990s. While pay scales differ from context to context (Bretos, Errasti & Marcuello, 2017, p. 83), "These firms are not worker-owned and their employees do not have the rights or privileges of co-op members" (Kasmir, 2016, p. 55). In other words, the ratio is 9:1 for Mondragón *members*, not each *employee* of their global workforce.

To Gibson-Graham (2006), “Mondragón’s greatest achievement could be seen as the construction of communal subjects via methods that operate on a range of material, social, cultural, and spiritual levels, but especially through the experience of ethical decision making around issues of individualism and collectivity” (p. 125). I take Gibson-Graham’s analysis of Mondragón as a starting point through which to explore the politics of co-operation and community economies. What her analysis provides is not a wholesale acceptance of everything the co-operative form brings to the table, but rather a willingness to read them for the possibilities they offer in creating alternative and autonomous forms of economy.

2.3. Autonomism

Autonomism – also known as Italian workerism, autonomist Marxism, or post-*operaismo* – has been an influential strand of Marxism in the 21st century. This theoretical tradition has its roots in the Italian workerist movements of the 1960s and 70s, which faced suppression and exile at the hands of the Italian government. Writers such as Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Silvia Federici, Paolo Virno, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Mario Tronti, and Franco “Bifo” Berardi have continued to refine autonomist ideas into the 1990s, where they spread their thinking to new communication technologies and the possibilities contained therein.

Generally, the autonomist strand marks a break with orthodox Marxist analysis which, in the autonomists’ view, gives priority to capitalist domination. According to Berardi (2009), autonomism “overturned” the popular version of Marxism of that time, leading to a new perspective where “the working class is no longer conceived as a passive object of alienation, but instead as the active subject of a refusal capable of building a community starting out from its estrangement from the interests of capitalistic society” (p. 23). This leads autonomists to seek out instances of working class refusal and self-organization as the moments where people exert their autonomy. Most fundamentally, autonomist theory springs from the observation that while capital will always need workers, workers do not necessarily need capital (Dyer-Witford, 1999; Tronti, 2019). This reinforces a sense of difference between the working classes and the capitalist machine, where the former always has the capacity to carve out spaces of separation and independence – a potential it seizes upon with some frequency.

While the genesis of autonomist thought can be traced back to Mario Tronti's 1966 book *Workers and Capital* (2019) which outlined the radical Italian conflicts of the Fordist mid-20th century, more recent work has expanded on his ideas to interpret autonomism through the shift to post-Fordism. These later developments are famously inspired by a section from Marx's *Grundrisse* (1973) called the "Fragment on Machines," wherein he argued that capitalism will eventually see the rise of a phase where living labour is no longer the central "governing unity" (p. 615) of production. Instead, he described how

Labour appears, rather, merely as a conscious organ, scattered among the individual living workers at numerous points of the mechanical system; subsumed under the total process of the machinery itself, as itself only a link of the system whose unity exists not in the living workers, but rather in the living (active) machinery, which confronts his individual, insignificant doings as a mighty organism. (p. 615)

In the autonomist analysis, this vision is not a dystopian nightmare where people become mere components of the machine, rather, from here they derive the concept of the "general intellect" to denote "the ensemble of knowledges which constitute the epicentre of social production" (Virno, 1996, p. 266). While Marx spoke of the embodiment of labour's skill and knowledge in physical machines, the autonomists remove machinery from the equation and take this as the accumulation of people's collective knowledge. Indeed, in a thesis Paolo Virno deemed "not very 'marxist,'" Marx considered how, "abstract knowledge [...] tends to become, precisely by virtue of its autonomy from production, nothing less than the principal productive force" (Virno, 1996, p. 265). For Virno and the autonomists more broadly, this passage in Marx presages the paramount importance of human knowledge in the production process that is achieved under post-Fordism, as well as the potential independence of this force from capitalist valorization.

Later in the "Fragment on Machines," Marx envisioned a stage where capital may no longer need labour as the sole source of value. He speculates that, "as soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure" (1973, p. 625). In this situation, "the direct input of labour to production is merely incidental" (Wright, 2005, para. 18) because the general intellect of human creative knowledge has already been captured within machines. To illustrate this, Dyer-Witheford, Kjosen, & Steinhoff (2019) offer the

example of Internet translation tools that give us “the ability to instantly, if roughly, understand phrases in dozens of languages – if they access Google Translate via the web or a smartphone app” (p. 63). Here, the sum knowledge of language and artificial intelligence – the general intellect – has been bound up online and put to work.

However, while capital cuts down the necessity for “labour in the direct form,” it does not altogether eliminate it. The subsequent autonomist concept of *immaterial labour* which “is defined as the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity” (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 132), is the result of and contributor to the general intellect more broadly through the labour that builds our collective knowledge. It can also take the form of direct wage labour, such as in the case of video game testers or content moderators. While immaterial labour has always existed in capitalism (and was first sketched by Marx in *Capital*), work that produces intangible products such as information, culture, knowledge, or even human relationships becomes increasingly important to the creation of value in the era of post-Fordist capitalism, or what Berardi (2009) would call “Semio-capitalism” (p. 21). Immaterial labour was later taken up by Hardt & Negri (2000) who deemed it a wholesale “change in the quality and nature of labor itself” (p. 273), towards both an increasing extension of work into our subjectivities and lives, as well as a shift in the nature of work to become more and more informational or informationally mediated. In this paradigm, while the manual labour of the body remains present, it is the cognitive capacities of workers that become more important factor in production (Berardi, 2007).

The concept of immaterial labour owes a great debt to feminist autonomist writers who have demonstrated how unacknowledged productive activity becomes incorporated under capitalism. Led by figures such as Silvia Federici, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, and Selma James, this thread has expanded the autonomist *oeuvre* through a consideration of gender and other forms of non-waged labour. For example, in Dalla Costa & James’ *Women and the Subversion of the Community* (1975), the authors vindicate the important productive role of the housewife, whose labour is unrecognized but contained within and essential to the wage earned by their husbands. Further, this work has helped conceptualize the ways that affective desires such as passion and love have been integrated into capitalist accumulation through reproductive work (Federici, 2006). The feminist autonomists have been an important component of the autonomist tradition which has been accused of paying too little attention to concerns of sex and

gender (McRobbie, 2016) and prone to claiming ground-breaking changes⁸ in areas where women have been toiling for generations (Jarrett, 2015; Vosko, 2000).

On a broad level, autonomist theory points to moments of resistance that reveal schisms within capitalism for working people to act on. It underscores the perennial potential for the independence of labour from capital and encourages us to seek out alternatives to a system that can seem so invincible. Concepts like immaterial labour and reproductive work are useful in conceiving of cultural work – whose workers produce some of the most ‘immaterial’ of products. The autonomist feminists’ critiques of women’s work and the autonomist tradition remain crucial and relevant in the context of the immaterial labour of cultural, communication, and ‘knowledge’ industries where “popular assumptions about cultural workers’ passionate relationships to their labour echo the patriarchal mechanisms used to disqualify feminized labour as real work” (Rodino-Colocino & Beberick, in Sarjeant, 2018, p. 49). At the strategic level, searching for moments of resistance is important in identifying which forms of struggle are working and which are not. Finally, the potency and analytic potential of autonomist thought is evidenced by the rich literature on cultural work it has inspired.

2.4. Autonomist theories of cultural work

Through the late 20th and early 21st centuries, those outside of Italy who were studying the immaterial products of arts, culture, knowledge, and communication became increasingly interested in applying the writings of autonomists, partially due to the centrality these authors assign to knowledge, culture and communication within post-Fordist capitalism. Hardt & Negri (2000) emphasize the role of communication and network infrastructure in the reorganization of capital into a new mode of “tertiary production” that involves informational and knowledge work as the hegemonic form of labour (p. 280). This comfortable fit between autonomist thinking and studies of cultural labour have led to a rich literature of work that connects them. What unites these writers

⁸ The autonomists can be rightly accused of over-eager search for moments of resistance. For example, in a section called “Nothing Will Ever Be the Same: Ten Theses on the Financial Crisis” edited by Andrea Fumagalli & Sandro Mezzadra (2010), the argument is made that the insolvency crisis in mortgages expresses the contradictions of contemporary capitalism through “social components” that exert their autonomy resulting in “the irremediable instability of contemporary capitalism” (pp. 243–244) – leaving one to wonder about the true political potential of such a case.

is a common drive to begin from an analysis of resistance and the hunt for alternative spaces of worker independence and self-organization. While these cases are contested and often imperfect, they nonetheless present examples of the autonomy seized by cultural workers which serve as political projects to build on. Three concepts highlighted by the autonomists are most relevant to a study of cultural co-operation: *precarity*, *passionate work* and the bleeding of work (capitalist wage relations) and society (the “community” previously excluded from analyses of work), the combination of which some autonomists label *the social factory*.

First is the idea of *precarity*. As seen above, autonomists connect the subjective formations of contemporary capitalism, post-Fordist labour markets, and a regime of flexible accumulation with experiences of precariousness, in other words, workers’ own perceptions of the unstable nature of work and life (Sarjeant, 2018, p. 46). Pointing to its origins in the early 21st century among autonomist activists in Europe, de Peuter (2010) defines precarity as the “experiential, financial, and social insecurity exacerbated by the flexibilization of employment under conditions of post-Fordism” (p. iii). The concept has become a rallying cry for workers increasingly exposed to insecure and vulnerable forms of employment as capital modifies itself. Additionally, the concept is especially important for a cultural workforce for whom precariousness has long been a central factor in their lives. This has led to a view that places cultural workers as the ideal “role models” of a post-Fordist labour market, “exemplified by the conditions and propensities of those in nonstandard employment navigating the liquid labour markets of the vaunted ‘creative economy’” (de Peuter, 2014a, p. 264). The experiences of those in the cultural sector have long foreshadowed the gradual expansion of this flexibilized form of work throughout the economy more generally, which now demands that all workers be independent, willing to work for free, and able to produce tangible value from their immaterial production.

Second, *passionate work* denotes the many ways that cultural workers’ own desires are implicated in the post-Fordist production process, creating value while simultaneously inoculating the system against critiques of precarity. Unlike the Fordist factory, which saw a split between the disciplined, working body and the autonomous soul, under post-Fordist modes of production “the soul itself is put to work” (Berardi, 2009, pp. 115–116). In this sense, as people’s subjectivities become captured by capitalist valorization, passion for their work becomes directly productive, or what Gigi

Roggero (2011) calls an “excess of passion” that “allows one to accept the unacceptable” (p. 102). This line of thinking, as with much of the autonomist body of work owes much to the formulations of feminists whose work has spelled out the many complicated ways that passion and love interact with (re)productive activity (Dalla Costa & James, 1975). Discussing the feminization of labour under cognitive capitalism, Cristina Morini (2007) points out how this paradigm makes “the whole person productive” (p. 46) through the mobilization of our passions, desires, emotions, and relationships.

Third, the blurring of work and leisure time further heightens the incorporation of workers’ passions as well as the precarity identified by autonomist accounts of cultural work. As Brett Neilson & Mark Coté (2014) explain, precarity as a concept has seen applications in the ‘respective’ spheres of work and life, a debate which “points to a tendency for work to colonise more of life” (p. 3). Gill & Pratt (2008) label this autonomist concern, “temporality” (p. 17) – in other words, the gradual expansion of ‘work’ time (or space) into areas usually associated with ‘non-work.’ The term most often associated with this bleed is the *social factory*, first theorized by Mario Tronti (1962) to explain “‘the exclusive domination of the factory regime’ over the whole of society” (para. 22). While the social factory’s “silent constraint of the economic relations” on workers (Tronti, 1962, para. 22) was formulated to define the Fordist mode of production of the mid 20th century, it has enjoyed new prominence in the digital economy where technology has made workers ever visible and accessible. In a time where the separations between work and life, production and reproduction, and circulation and production are all seemingly overcome (Morini & Fumagalli, 2010, pp. 240–241), the regimes of valorization and production extend their reach beyond the factory, into what Dalla Costa & James (1975) would call “the community,” disrupting some of the theoretical isolation of “capitalist production in the times, spaces, and relations of waged labor” (Weeks, 2011, p. 121).

While some have pointed out that the novelty of widespread precarity and the social factory’s overtaking of life by work may be overstated (Jarrett, 2015, p. 51), they remain helpful conceptual tools to understand the challenges faced by those working in cultural industries. The autonomists’ concern with time “accord profoundly with the findings of research on cultural work,” namely that they are subject to extremely long hours and the challenges by feast-or-famine patterns of work that see alternations between intense work and periods without work at all (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 17).

Research has found that the uncertainty of work leads to a constant and exhausting “hustle” for work when you can get it, and difficulty maintaining a steady pattern of life (Cohen, 2016). A closer reading of applications of the social factory in cultural work point to some of the ambivalences of this work-life bleed. To return to Gill & Pratt (2008): “Long hours and the takeover of life by labour *may* be dictated by punishing hours and oppressive deadlines, and may be experienced as intensely exploitative, but they may also be the outcome of passionate engagement, creativity, and self-expression” (p. 18, emphasis in original).

The promise of the autonomist tendency ultimately lies in the optimism it places on resistance and struggle. These core concepts of the social factory, precarity, and passionate work combine to identify the unstable nature of capitalist domination, another edge of the sword that reveals a concomitant possibility of resistance. As Neilson & Coté (2014) put it, “[m]ovement between the particularity of work and the generality of life raises hope for building a common front of resistance between heterogeneous workforces and labouring subjects” (p. 3).⁹ Similarly, research into the class formations of media, communication, and cultural industries “recognizes those who work [in them] as active agents fully capable of organizing collectively to improve their conditions and of engaging in self-organized activity” (de Peuter, 2010, p. 19). This political promise extends even further to those in cultural and ‘knowledge’ industries, whose forms are: “not only [...] instruments of capitalist domination, but also as potential resources of anticapitalist struggle” (Dyer-Witheford, 1999, p. 64). The forces that shape cultural workers’ subjectivities, make their work and lives precarious, and expand the social factory to encompass every moment of their day also raise possibilities for political counter-organization.

2.5. Co-operatives in cultural industries

It is the shared drive of J.K. Gibson-Graham and the autonomists to examine moments of resistance within capitalism that motivates this study’s focus on co-operation as a means of organizing cultural work. If cultural work is isolated, precarious, and

⁹ The heterogeneity of these workforces has been problematic for conceptions of cultural/knowledge work that have a tendency to collapse significant distinctions between workers in the high-skill, ‘Western’ core and the manual, dangerous, and poorly compensated work typically found in the Global South (Dyer-Witheford, 2015; Neilson & Coté, 2014).

unequal, a model predicated on togetherness, stability, and fairness is at the very least something worth investigating. Moreover, following the autonomists' search for alternatives, the co-operative form presents a notable opening for those who practice the cognitive (Roggero, 2011), affective (Hardt & Negri, 2000), and immaterial (Lazzarato, 1996) forms of labour that are so important to autonomist thought. It is from here where we start to see some profound matches between the possibilities of co-operation and the struggles, needs, and strengths of a cultural workforce.

In a report for Co-operatives UK, Dave Boyle & Kate Oakley (2018) argue for the special relevance of worker co-operatives to those in the so-called creative industries. In the context of rising creative industry growth, a proliferation of small sized creative businesses, as well as disadvantages related to the intersection(s) of class, race, and gender (pp. 2–3), the authors note a neglect of questions of ownership in British creative industries policy (p. 2). They go on to list three main advantages of co-operatives in the creative sector versus other parts of the economy: human labour over capital investment, cultural workers' skills of self-management, and the match between creative industries' economic structure and the small groups of involved owners typical of a co-operative (pp. 8–9). This line of thinking is explored similarly but more critically in the work of Marisol Sandoval (2016a, 2016b, 2018). Noting the proliferation of questionable co-operative enterprises that are indistinguishable from their competitive capitalist counterparts, Sandoval calls for what she dubs “radical worker co-operatives” which, contrary to the structures of traditional or even employee owned firms, “are based on collective or common ownership and democratic decision-making” (2016a, p. 60). Her work draws attention to three main ways that co-operation is an especially appropriate response for precarious cultural workers.¹⁰

As we have seen, the first and most widely recognized problem in the cultural sector is precarity. To this, co-operatives offer “security in the sense that all members benefit equally from the wealth they are producing” (Sandoval, 2016a, p. 63). This offer, however, is constrained by the necessity of dependence on the market. On the one hand, co-operatives provide a space for cultural workers to reap the benefits of their labour, but those benefits only exist inasmuch as the co-op is viable. When “discussing

¹⁰ I note here that literature on co-operatives in cultural industries is limited, and this section will rely heavily on the work of Marisol Sandoval. This underscores the importance of further studies on cultural co-operation.

the potential of co-ops to address precarious labour it is important to acknowledge the structural insecurity of cultural industries and the precarity of capitalist markets in general that co-ops cannot escape” (Sandoval, 2016a, p. 64).

A second benefit of co-operation to cultural workers lies in its ability to forge relationships, community, and solidarity. As discussed in chapter 1, isolation and atomization are a key problem for cultural workers, especially freelancers, both in terms of mental health (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010) and the possibilities of labour organizing (Cohen, 2016). Co-operatives, by virtue of being collective organizations, are an outright response to these challenges. As Sandoval (2016a) puts it, “It is perhaps one of the most immediate benefits of co-ops that they can form a counterpoint to neoliberal individualisation and be a source for overcoming isolation and experiencing collectivity” (p. 65). For a workforce too often accustomed to extreme competition and working alone, this type of mutual support is a boon. That said, like with many things this is not a given by virtue of being a co-operative. Sandoval (2016a) continues: “The potential to challenge individualised cultural production is likely to be more powerful within politicised co-ops whose members are committed to co-operative ideals” (p. 65). Competition is rampant in cultural industries and, as the name implies, “[c]o-ops work in the opposite direction” (Sandoval, 2018, p. 126).

The last of the three main areas where co-ops can help cultural workers is in terms of addressing workplace inequality. The inequality and discrimination of the cultural industries is well documented (Boulton, 2015; Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013; Oakley et al., 2017) and manifests itself in many ways: Preferential hiring practices, importance of “connections,” compulsory socializing, inherent advantages of class, and more. With this in mind, the co-operative is promising since it

allows to envision different workplaces that offer every member opportunities for training and development, which combine flexible working hours with secure and regular pay, and ensure access to health insurance, sick pay, paid parental leave and child care. Such solidarity and co-operative organisational structures could help [in] making work in the cultural sector more accessible and diverse. (Sandoval, 2016a, p. 66)

Once again this is not guaranteed and is dependent on the co-operative’s ability to stay afloat. Though, like with isolation, Sandoval argues that the chances of promoting meaningful equality are strengthened by being “connected to broader political struggles”

(2016a, p. 67). Through their resistance to precarity, isolation, and inequality, co-operatives can provide a counter-narrative to the challenges of a cultural workforce.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has brought together several bodies of literature focused on practical applications of resistance within and against the capitalist economy. Beginning with a consideration of Marx and other critics of co-operatives before then moving on to a combination of theories from Gibson-Graham and the autonomist tradition, the chapter provides a useful means by which to consider the viability of co-operation for those working in cultural industries. Gibson-Graham and the autonomists' common concerns over contested working subjectivities, valuing of *micro* moments of struggle, and a shared refusal to center capitalism in their analyses are helpful in conceiving of an organizational form like co-operatives that can exist at once within and without capitalist labour relations. While co-operation may contain many ambivalences, it nonetheless represents a hopeful avenue for creating collective power and giving "practical declarations of the autonomy of labor from capital" (Burgmann, Jureidini, & Burgmann, 2014, p. 185).

While the combination of these theoretical traditions yields many similarities, there are a few places where they complement each other through difference. For example, some have argued that the autonomists overstate the monolithic nature of capital, whose "focus on the capital/labor contradiction ignores the competitive conflicts and fractures within capital itself" (Dyer-Witheford, 1999, p. 69), while others have claimed that they overstate the extent to which worker resistance takes place outside the boundaries of capital (Bonefeld, 1994). Helpfully, Gibson-Graham's work reveals the many ways that capitalism is fractured and divided, identifies the spaces where anti-capitalist economies find room to grow, and questions the unity of capital while highlighting the resistance that can be found within and without its reaches. Further, Gibson-Graham's theorizing is useful in their critique of the view, represented by some theories of social reproduction, "that production and social reproduction have [...] been represented as a binary, with wage labor as the central signifier and unpaid work as its domestic, gendered, unvalued 'other'" (In Meehan & Strauss, 2015, p. 3). In her view, it is this total and unified vision of capitalism that makes it so hard to overcome, and it is by creating a new discourse of economic plurality that recognizes the diversity of activity

that takes place within both production and reproduction so that a “noncapitalist construction becomes a ‘realistic’ present activity rather than a ludicrous or Utopian future goal” (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 263).

Both the autonomist tendency and Gibson-Graham’s writings reveal fissures where ambivalent economic formations, such as co-operatives, can constitute alternatives to the competition and atomization within post-Fordism. Further, while the products of cultural work are predominately intangible, that does not impede a materialist analysis of these industries. Put differently, while the hegemony of immaterial labour may be overstated, a conception of work being increasingly informational does not preclude a materialist consideration of the altogether inescapably material aspects of labour and production. Critics of autonomist analyses have made valid objections, but I argue that the excessive enthusiasm for tangible moments of resistance can be remedied by a more careful analysis which places them in context and truly considers their political potential. Ultimately, the profound messiness of everyday economic relations resonates with the theories set out in this chapter. As Gibson-Graham (1996) note in terms of the left’s grappling with capitalist domination: “Fearing implication with those in power, we become attached to guarding our purity rather than mucking around in everyday politics” (p. 6). By reckoning with the ambivalent and contested realities of co-operation we can start to see how the promises and compromises of the model manifest themselves for a cultural workforce, widening the horizon of resistance and struggle for the future. The following chapters consider Stocksy United as just this: an ambivalent but promising co-operative experiment that opens spaces for autonomy and worker power while enabling them to negotiate the whims of the precarious stock photography industry.

Chapter 3. Methodology

“We hope to meet in this work with the support of all workers in town and country who understand that they alone can describe with full knowledge the misfortunes from which they suffer, and that only they, and not saviors sent by Providence, can energetically apply the healing remedies for the social ills to which they are a prey.”

(Karl Marx, “A Workers’ Inquiry,” 1938 [1880])

Inspired by the autonomist research tradition laid out in chapter 2, this study draws from *workers’ inquiry*, a methodology designed to investigate labour with particular attention paid to the workers themselves. According to the editors of *Notes from Below* (2018), “[w]orker’s inquiry is an approach that combines knowledge production with organising” that “attempts to create useful knowledge about work, exploitation, class relations, and capitalism from the perspective of workers themselves” (para. 1). This attention to “workers themselves” is important because Marxist inquiry has historically been critiqued for falling into a one-sided focus on capital at the expense of labour, thus ignoring the worker as subject (Woodcock, 2014, p. 495). Therefore, “in order to re-emphasize the role of the worker in this argument there must be a focus on the ‘examination of workers’ actual struggles: their content, how they have developed, and where they are headed” (Cleaver, 2000). Motivated by Marx’s (1938) call for an inquiry of workers to understand the connections between worker knowledge and the overarching forces of capitalist society (Haider & Mohandesi, 2013), researchers in this framework should spend their time “understanding the exploitation of workers from their own perspective” so that they are empowered as “the only people who can describe their own conditions [...] and as the only ones who can transform them” (Woodcock, 2014, p. 496). In short, workers’ inquiry involves the input of labour’s perspective in research as a key pathway to understanding struggle at work.

Involving the perspectives of workers through workers’ inquiry is a helpful antidote to some of the pitfalls of autonomist thought. For one, a consideration of workers’ subjectivities must necessarily involve attention to how they view themselves and their work. The abstract theorizing of some autonomist writers can lead to an idealism divorced from social reality, avoiding a more rigorous “method of developing theory through a careful process of abstracting from studies of concrete social realities” that uses “concepts that are themselves socio-historically grounded” (Camfield, 2007, p.

48). Moreover, some of the phenomena emphasized by autonomists – such as the blurring of work and non-work time in the social factory – can be experienced as simultaneously pleasurable and challenging. This point leads Gill & Pratt (2008) to call for a closer relationship between autonomist theories and research on cultural work: “It seems to us that the *meanings* which cultural workers give to this should be central – and this is one area where a productive dialogue could be established between autonomism and sociological work on cultural labour” (p. 18, emphasis in original). This research is an effort to bridge this gap. By bringing into conversation the autonomist literature and a workers’ inquiry of a cultural co-operative, this project centres the perspectives of workers themselves as a way of grounding the sometimes-weightless autonomist body of theoretical literature.

3.1. Methods

First and foremost, this project approaches Stocksy as a case study through which to gather insights into cultural work and co-operative organization. Although a case study is not a method *per se*, it provides an approach to the overall research design where the case to be studied is used to explore broader trends or theories. As Aaltio & Heilmann (2010) explain, a “[c]ase study does not form only one method or set of methods, but is an approach or a research strategy” that can be used in various individual ways depending on the focus of the study and the theoretical background (p. 4). The theoretical and conceptual background is important in a case study as it provides the backdrop for analysis that allows “researchers to develop theories on prior phenomena by pointing out paradoxes, bringing forward new observations gained from the thorough analysis, and pointing out the varied relations between the individual cases and their environments” (Aaltio & Heilmann, 2010, p. 8). For the purposes of this thesis I employ single-case design, using Stocksy as a *critical* case that allows me to observe and extend ideas of cultural work and co-operatives (Norander & Brandhorst, 2017, p. 2). The primary concern with employing this method is the potential lack of generalizability. However, this concern is partially offset by placing Stocksy as a critical case: my purpose is not to make factual claims about all co-operatives based on data gathered at Stocksy, “[r]ather, the purpose is to make analytic or theoretical generalizations” (Norander & Brandhorst, 2017, p. 3) about the usefulness and applicability of the co-operative model across the cultural industries.

To pursue Stocksy as a critical case I will be drawing from the traditional methods employed by workers' inquiry, which primarily includes interviews with workers (Brophy, 2008, p. 118). Interviews are an excellent way of gathering information on how workers perceive events, situations, and workplace organization. Discussing a workers' inquiry into German call centres, Woodcock (2014) describes interviews as the second "stage" of a worker inquiry – following a "pre-inquiry" into the specifics of the workplace – which gathers workers' insights, opens the discussion for possibilities of struggle, and encourages the spread of worker inquiry as a method for future grassroots studies (p. 509). Further, interviews are revealing of the tensions between how work is perceived and how it is actually experienced. If cultural work is characterized by discourses of individual freedom, responsibility, and self-help (Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999) and co-operatives have a historic tension between theory and practice (Luxemburg, 1973), interviewing those involved and working in them becomes an important avenue through which to explore their realities and potentials. As with studies into the reproductive labour(s) of "life's work," a wider and deeper understanding of how work is changing must stem from knowing "more about the ways in which individuals make and understand themselves" and how these positions are made and remade through discourse and social practice (Mitchell, Marston, & Katz, 2003, pp. 417–418; see also Gibson-Graham, 1996). For co-operatives, this means paying attention to the different ways that workers perceive themselves and the various interconnected tasks that make up co-operative work.

3.2. Case study: Stocksy United

In the words of Stocksy co-founder Brianna Wettlaufer and board member Nuno Silva (2016),

Stocksy is a stock photo agency providing royalty-free licenses on exclusive photos via an online marketplace that provides sustainable careers to photographers through co-ownership, profit sharing, and transparent business practices. [...] Each member owns an equal voting share in the company. [...] Daily operations are managed by executive staff and employees in a flat decision-making structure to encourage ownership and enthusiasm for each individual's contributions. Our board includes directors from each class. Any member can propose resolutions. Annual general meetings are held to report, discuss, and vote on the business and strategy. (p. 78)

A multi-stakeholder platform co-operative,¹¹ Stocksy is made up of three classes of members, known as classes A, B, and C. Class A members (5 total) are advisors, those who contributed time, work, or capital¹² in the co-operative's early days. Class B members (28 total) are staff, those who work full-time for the platform, whether at headquarters or remotely (as is the case with many staff). Finally, Class C (1,124 total) members are the artists, who make up the large majority of Stocksy members. Many Class B members are also Class C members, – in other words, people who work for the co-operative's headquarters as well as contributing art – membership costs one American dollar, and all levels of contributors have the same level of democratic input (one member, one vote). Each class of member has representation on the co-operative's board, which includes at least two members from each class. Finally, despite its headquarters being in Victoria, BC, the majority of Stocksy's operations take place remotely, with contributors and staff located in dozens of countries worldwide. The co-operative's platform includes member forums, an internal resolution system where members can propose changes to the co-operative and they can be voted on,¹³ and the main photo feed where members' content is available for licensing via the internet. This global, networked structure becomes an important constituent of how the community of Stocksy plays out, both in creating opportunities and challenges.

3.3. Study details

Interviews for this project took place from February through March of 2019. In the early months of the year I spoke to 10 Stocksy United Class C members (artist-workers) as well as two Class B members: Stocksy's Vice President of Governance and Legal, Margaret Vincent, and Stocksy CEO Mike Cook, with whom I had a concluding conversation in October. I also toured Stocksy's Victoria headquarters in early 2019,

¹¹ As Margaret Vincent puts it: "It's funny, people always say, 'Well, which model are you?' And I think we're a few of them. We're a platform co-op in that sense of having the online governance. We're a multi-stakeholder co-op because we have multiple classes. I would say we're also mainly a producer co-op because it's our members who are producing the content that we then sell. Technically the staff are kind of more of a worker co-op but for the most part I think we focus largely on the role of the artists." (Personal communication, February 5, 2019)

¹² Only one current Class A member contributed financially to the co-operative.

¹³ After a resolution has been approved and voted on by the membership, if successful, it is brought to the board who is tasked with determining its viability. If it is deemed viable and will not negatively affect the co-operative as a whole, then the board approves it and the changes can be made.

meeting their office manager and some staff. Semi-structured interviews were held over internet teleconferencing software such as Skype, Google Hangouts, and Zoom. Members were recruited via a post from Vincent on Stocksy's member forums which asked for volunteers to talk to unnamed media or researchers about their experiences in the co-operative. Interested parties responded with their contact information, which was then forwarded to me. I requested a North American focus of contributors in order to align with my own geographic location, as well as the origin of the cultural industries literature that informs this project (largely North American and Western European). I recognize that the North American focus presents a limitation to this study and note that future research on Stocksy should examine its membership in other places where much different dynamics of cultural work play out. This kind of study would contribute to an important "ex-centric" perspective on cultural industries, which would decentre the supposed universality of Western thought and subvert theory that sees Western locations as superior (Alacovska & Gill, 2019; Waisbord & Mellado, 2014).

The nature of recruitment raises two main challenges for my data. First, because Stocksy headquarters forwarded the list of interested artists, they have a general idea of who I interviewed. While I was unable to speak to every artist on the list, this still raises questions about anonymity. However, since Stocksy contributors are all independent artists as well as co-owners, there would appear to be no chance of formal retribution if the artist were to say something provocative. Further protecting my participants, names and interviews have been de-identified and made confidential. Second, the voluntariness of recruitment could have affected the demographics of those involved. While some of this could be coincidental, the artists I spoke to were nearly all: American; white-identifying; middle-class; late adult or middle-aged; early adopters (i.e. joined in the early days of the co-operative); do not rely on Stocksy earnings for the majority of their income; and self-employed in some shape or form. While some of these traits could be typical of Stocksy's demographics in North America, others may relate to how participants were recruited. For example, early adopters may see Stocksy in a more positive light due to their long-term involvement and thus be more likely to willingly give time to discuss the platform. Conversely, a disgruntled member would presumably be less likely to do so.

3.4. Coding & analysis

To analyze the data collected at Stocksy I employed an inductive approach to qualitative data analysis, a coding strategy that follows broad themes emerging from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The inductive approach entails following the data from the bottom-up, moving from specific observations to more general theories (Liu & Maitlis, 2010, p. 2). Being inductive in my data analysis is a deliberate choice to align my research with the workers' inquiry framework that prioritizes knowledge generated from below, not imposed from above.

After the interviews with Stocksy members were transcribed, I used a qualitative coding strategy to search out themes. My understanding of themes is borrowed from Taylor & Bogdan, who define them as “units derived from patterns such as ‘conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings or folk sayings and proverbs’” (In Smith, 2015, p. 396). I proceeded to iteratively read through and code the interview transcripts three times with increasing levels of specificity, setting thematic parameters from the data, and then refining them more with each pass. This process let me outline concepts, make reflections on prior assumptions, and refine early notions of the study (Roulston, 2014, pp. 12–13). While this approach is a useful way of recognizing patterns in interview data, it can lead to a tendency to “merely [paraphrase] the data without actually developing an analytic narrative” (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gray, 2018, p. 694). Therefore, understanding that “[i]t is essential that the themes cohere around a central idea or concept” (Gray, 2018, p. 694), I broke the themes into two overarching concepts: *community* and *autonomy*.

3.4.1. Community

Co-operatives are, for the most part, firmly rooted in the community or communities in which their members operate. One of the recurring topics that arose from my conversations with Stocksy members was the relationships between their co-operative and the broad concept of community. They frequently referred to friendships made, mutual support networks built, and a feeling of belonging within the group. In recognition of the importance of community at the co-operative, this study approaches it in very general theoretical terms. The various uses of the term “community” has been

the source of academic debate, with some such as Vered Amit (2010) arguing for the term's "productive ambiguity":

Keeping the range of associational forms open allows us to pose community as a question of sociation to be investigated across a variety of circumstances and qualities rather than to be prematurely delivered as yet another attempt to provide an unpersuasive precision through definition. (p. 362)

Inspired by Amit's recognition of community as a "genus of concepts" (p. 358) rather than a stable construct, I approached community without much predetermined specificity. It therefore functions in my study as a term left open so as to encompass a wide variety of social activity that brings people together, ranging from "totalistic unified entity" to "looser forms of association" that "depend on superficial and transient bonds" (Winland, 2010, pp. 372–373).

3.4.2. Autonomy

The other central theme that arose from my conversations can be labelled broadly as *autonomy*. This overarching theme represents the assembly of three smaller themes, which I have labelled *difference* (the degrees of separation between Stocksy and the market, Stocksy and other agencies, and Stocksy and other co-operatives), *independence* (the levels of separation afforded by the co-operative as well as the independent, freelance status of many of its members), and *flexibility* (a contemporary buzzword and ambivalent component of the autonomy given by freelance cultural work). Once again noting that it is important for themes to ascribe to an overarching narrative (Gray, 2018, p. 694), these sub-themes are gathered under the umbrella term *autonomy*.

Autonomy is conceived here as a state of potential that implies a power and possibility that resides in the hands of workers. In autonomist theorizing, autonomy is divorced from the individualism of libertarian visions and brought into a social relationship that focuses on the autonomy of classes, not individuals (Alcoff & Alcoff, 2015, p. 231). Here, the working proletariat is separate from the power of capital through agency and creativity (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 5), which regularly escapes capture. Autonomy is an inherent trait of the working class, who demonstrate their otherness from capital through moments of resistance and struggle. However, the autonomy promoted by autonomists is not restricted to the labour-capital relationship. As Dyer-Witthford

(1999) reminds us, on advancing this perspective the autonomists underline that their titular autonomy reflects both “labour’s fundamental otherness from capital and *also* the recognition of variety within labour” (p. 68, emphasis in original). In this study, I use the theme of autonomy to interpret the various elements of independence, flexibility, and difference that manifest for Stocksy members throughout their working lives.

3.5. Conclusion

Following the identification of the two organizing themes arising from an inductive my conversations with Stocksy members, the next two chapters are each devoted to one of the main themes. I recognize that thematic analysis brings with it a risk of “‘forcing data’ to fit preconceived hypotheses” (Roulston, 2014, p. 14). Therefore, I approach the themes loosely, as a means by which to interpret and make sense of the patterns that emerged in my conversations with Stocksy members, but not as an overriding narrative to be placed upon my data. It should also be noted that there is much overlap between themes, which speaks to the productive messiness of qualitative data. Over-simplifying the data with pre-determined coding categories can reduce the data in ways that are “simple and deterministic,” so it is by keeping the themes loose that I am able to “formulate new questions and levels of interpretation” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 30). In this spirit, the following chapter will consider one of the most open and interesting themes that arose from my discussions with Stocksy members: *community*.

Chapter 4. Community at Stocksy

“The sense of community and ownership felt by our members drives a greater level of passion into their work, resulting in inspired imagery of the highest quality.”

(“About Stocksy,” n.d.)

Stocksy United headquarters are located on the top floor of a heritage building in downtown Victoria, British Columbia. Organized as a worker co-operative within the Stocksy multi-stakeholder co-operative structure, it is here that many people from their editorial, content, and marketing teams work. The space is stylish and fits into many of the tropes of what Andrew Ross (2004) would call the ‘no collar’ workplace: open concept, exposed brick, hardwood floors, and meeting rooms with glass walls. In many ways, this layout is similar to the stereotypical start-up office, an implied communality brought about by a fully stocked shared kitchen, spaces for socializing, and an outside patio overlooking the city and the nearby ocean. However, the aesthetic similarities between the typical tech start-up and Stocksy are undercut by a core difference in operations. In other words, at Stocksy socialness and community are more than airy buzzwords aimed at maintaining productive employees. Rather, in such a co-operative, decisions are made democratically, ownership is shared and distributed, and the stakes are collective.

The co-operative philosophy is a counterweight against the rampant individualism of capitalist workplace relations, an assertion that working, owning, and decision-making together is fundamentally superior to working alone. Some of the earliest examples of modern co-operatives, such as Robert Owen’s experiments in New Lanark and the later Rochdale Pioneers, were established with an intense focus on the local, orienting their operations to suit not only the co-operators but the people around them (Hutchins, 1912). The newest co-operative principle, “Concern for Community,” is a testament to this history, establishing that “[c]o-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members” (ICA, 2015, p. 85). Being member-driven organizations, co-operatives “emerge from and are rooted in the communities in which they conduct their business operations,” are open to all community members, and have “a commitment to assist individuals in those communities to help themselves, in all aspects of life” (ICA, 2015, p. 85). The concern

for community is at the core of a co-operative and must be central to any discussion of their potential.

As we saw in chapter 2, the ideals of community and togetherness hold special promise for cultural workers for whom isolation and atomization are an occupational hazard (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010). On the one hand, research finds that the cultural industries produce profoundly individualized patterns of work, heightening the mental health effects of isolation, reinforcing gendered and racial exclusion as well as other forms of discrimination, and undermining working-class solidarity (Gill, 2014; Gill & Pratt, 2008; McRobbie, 2016; Sandoval, 2016a). On the other hand, these conditions can also be seen as opportunities for workers to exert autonomy and build new, resistant subjectivities (de Peuter, 2014a). Similar research into co-working has also found that the social connections enabled by such formations can “function as infrastructure for mutual aid” which hold potential “as a space for the development of strategies to address precarious work” (de Peuter, Cohen, & Saraco, 2017, p. 700). As previous writing on co-operatives in the cultural industries attests, they “thus might contribute to challenging individualisation of cultural sector work by mobilising the power of collectivity to resist precarious labour and create alternatives that help in rendering work more loveable for everyone” (Sandoval, 2018, p. 121).

It is here that Stocksy United enters as a case study through which to further explore these ideas of co-operation and cultural work. As the example of their headquarters suggests, Stocksy presents a demonstrated commitment to member socializing as well as its community more broadly. Their website states that the co-operative is run by “a passionate bunch [...] who love [their] community” (“About Us,” n.d.), while in other press they call community the “number one priority of the business” (Matthews, 2018, para. 6). Boasting a membership of 1,157 as of October 2019, the Stocksy community is large and creates both challenges and possibilities for the co-operative and its membership. This chapter will detail one of the biggest recurring themes of my study of Stocksy, *community*, a concept and practice which is at once a site of personal and professional value while presenting barriers to a harmonious vision of co-operation. As I found, the idea of community is often ambivalent, representing a mutually supportive network of peers, an antidote to the individualization of the neoliberal workplace, and the re-framing of economic decision-making in ethical terms, while at the same time creating hierarchies along the lines of experience and gender,

exclusive spaces, and limitations imposed by existing within a non-co-operative market economy.

4.1. A note on “community”

While the idea of community may be fundamental to the concept of co-operation, it is nonetheless unstable and negotiated. Despite its framing as “an object of warm-and-fuzzy ritual worship for politicians of all stripes, academics and the rapidly expanding new class of social commentators” (Morton, in Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 84), community remains “a fundamentally political concept” that is “saturated with power” and “continually contested” (Hoggett, 1997, p. 14). Indeed, others have pointed out that the idea of community commonly stands in for a great diversity of social relations (Amit, 2010) which means that it can act to illuminate as much as it obscures. In the context of Stocksy, community takes many forms, channels a great deal of power, and is at once one of the core reasons photographers enjoy their membership in the co-operative and one of the causes for tension on the platform.

As part of her project of postcapitalist politics, J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006) argued for the resocialization of the economy in political and ethical terms. Following Karl Marx and Jean-Luc Nancy, she made visible the interconnectedness of economic actors and highlighting the inherently social aspect of practicing economy (2006, p. 84). By separating economic relations from the cold rationality of orthodox economic theories and injecting it with ethics and a consideration of the social, she strove to bring these theories into a discourse of “community economy.” By “[a]rticulating the multiple, heterogeneous sites of struggle, such a discourse could resignify *all* economic transactions and relations, capitalist and non-capitalist, in terms of their sociality and interdependence, and their ethical participation in being-in-common as part of a ‘community economy’” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 97, emphasis in original). This vision of the economy is fundamentally open and continuously written by new ways of socializing and performing the economy. Here, community is a “call to becoming of something yet to be defined” (p. 99) that is made up of a huge variety of economic practices that bind us together. For Gibson-Graham, it is by doing and understanding the economy differently that we can start to recognize a way “out” from capitalism, challenging its dominance and offering hope of a new path forward.

The autonomist tendency is likewise eager to cast ideas of community and sociality as central to the project of working class emancipation.¹⁴ In contrast to, for example, anarchist thought to which they are often compared, the autonomists see autonomy as a profoundly social phenomenon (Alcoff & Alcoff, 2015). Inspired once again by *Grundrisse* (1973) wherein Marx pointed to the “illusion” where “the ties of personal dependence [...] are in fact exploded, ripped up; and individuals *seem* independent” (p. 94, emphasis in original), autonomists see both alienation and autonomy as “fundamentally social rather than individual experiences” (Staudenmaier, 2012, p. 281). Unlike the autonomy described by narratives that place cultural workers as independent masters of their own selves (Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999) or the libertarian anarchism that views individual people as autonomous actors (Berardi, 2009, p. 30), the autonomists instead favour a vision of autonomy where it is the exploited classes that are always potentially independent from the grips of capital. As such, the freedom espoused in this tradition “requires the positive reorganization of social relations and structures, even the conscious cultivation and development of certain political and social virtues and dispositions” (Alcoff & Alcoff, 2015, p. 231). It is an analysis of “positive reorganization” that motivates this study, seeking opportunities of resistance and autonomy among cultural workers that are so often subjected to precarious working conditions. The question then becomes, how do ideas of community fit into or complicate this project?

4.2. Community

The concept of community emerged early and often in my conversations with Stocksy members, whether it was that which takes place among the membership more broadly, with staff at headquarters, or in more personal relationships with others they

¹⁴ The idea of “community” is central to the analysis of many feminist autonomists, most notably the work of Mariarosa Dalla Costa & Selma James, whose book *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (1975) considers the place of female domestic labour as the linchpin of social organization outside the factory walls: “The community therefore is not an area of freedom and leisure auxiliary to the factory, where by chance there happen to be women who are degraded as the personal servants of men. The community is the other half of capitalist organization, the other area of hidden capitalist exploitation, *the other, hidden, source of surplus labor*” (James, 1975, p. 11, emphasis in original).

have met over the platform. From their answers, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the Stocksy 'community' is conceived differently by each artist, but in general they can be broken down into two interacting but distinct subsets: the community in Stocksy spaces and the community outside and around Stocksy. The former represents the community intentionally fostered by the co-operative itself, such as member meet-ups and other forums for member-to-member socializing, in-person or digitally mediated. The latter encompasses the community of artists as they mobilize and come together outside and around the Stocksy platform.

4.2.1. Community in Stocksy spaces

“To me, Stocksy is disproportionately important as a photographer [...] Meeting other photographers, establishing networks, knowing photographers in the area who are also on Stocksy, participating in forums, [it] all has brought a lot of value to me outside just the monetary income that I get from Stocksy.”

While monetary remuneration for artists is a central value at Stocksy, one of the most consistent findings from my conversations with members is the positive benefits of the official Stocksy community. As evidenced by the above quote, many photographers find significant value in the member interactions facilitated by Stocksy itself. The member quoted here does not rely on Stocksy for a large portion of their annual income (they estimate roughly 5%), but the co-op remains “disproportionately important” because of the rewards the community offers. Others reported an immediate and “great sense of camaraderie,” a feeling of caring “about my fellow contributors,” and a “fantastic community” on the platform. Much of this interaction takes place online through Stocksy’s dedicated forums where members can chat with each other about matters of the co-op, photography, the industry, or anything else they please. Stocksy also organizes in-person meet-ups where members in an area can come together to socialize – these were brought up as a positive feature of the co-op in many of my interviews. One artist reported making “lifelong friendships,” while many others were enthusiastic about the possibilities of knowing artists in dozens of countries around the world. As one member who travels frequently explains, “I feel like I can go anywhere in the world, almost, and have an emergency and then be able to reach out to Stocksy members and somebody will come rescue me. The sense of community is really strong.”

Beyond the interpersonal and social benefits of Stocksy are the professional rewards, which hold special relevance to a freelance cultural workforce accustomed to a lack of protection, training, or ongoing supports (Cohen, 2016) and for whom there is a requirement of constant maintenance of “employability” (Dardot & Laval, 2017, p. 265). One of the foremost examples of this benefit can be found in education, which takes place both on the forums and the meet-ups. Among such a large and diverse membership, contributors have a wide range of knowledge and seem happy to share with their fellows. As one artist tells me:

I exchange information, both in-person and on forums. I've met photographers in person, just calling them up and talking about photography, learning. Some of the photographers have been in this business for 20, 30, 40 years, so they know a lot. And also, I have photographers who email me or call me and they have a question about something they haven't experienced, they haven't come across so I give them advice.

While Stocksy artists operate as independent photographers on a day-to-day level, my interviews revealed a professional support system among the artists. Besides sharing knowledge, others talked about an exchange of professional opportunities and resources. For example, “when members have other jobs they can't do or work they know that someone else needs they do throw it out there,” while others will exchange gear, equipment, and insurance tips. In this way, Stocksy bridges the gap of knowledge between separate workers who need a shared context through which they can share jobs and other opportunities (Waters-Lynch & Potts, 2017). This feature is especially significant because elsewhere capitalist logic would dictate that these independent economic actors are in competition with one another. However, re-casting these relationships in a co-operative light demonstrates some of the ways that the co-operative ethos holds the possibility of subverting capitalist socioeconomic relations (Gradin, 2015) and fostering a mutual consideration in ethical terms (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Though some Stocksy members framed this mutual care as being directly productive,¹⁵ many

¹⁵ “[B]ecause their sales make me money too, with the profit-sharing and the dividends at the end of the year. So, there's just a different incentive to work for the good of the company versus just for the little bit you can get yourself.” This is reminiscent of some of the ‘co-operative advantage’ discourse that positions co-operatives as an excellent economic model because of their high capacity for employee buy-in (Co-operatives UK, n.d.) Another artist puts it more bluntly: “I contribute more to Stocksy because of that community feel.”

others celebrated this refreshing alternative to the cutthroat nature of freelance cultural work.

The final component of Stocksy community comes from headquarters and staff. In short, the Class B members who work for Stocksy – those who handle administration, editing, executive responsibilities, and so forth – appear to do a good job at making members feel recognized, heard, and included. One artist notes how it’s “amazing” that “everyone is kind of heard and acknowledged” on the online forums where people might raise an issue that is answered back to directly by a staff member. Others praised the personal touch of the staff who take time to get to know them personally, giving advice on submissions and helping with other artistic challenges. Most of the time this was framed in opposition to other stock photography agencies which, by contrast, are cold, impersonal, and not at all transparent:

But there’s no input [at other agencies]. Say, if I have a hard time uploading to [them] [...] it’s like “oh, this sucks,” and I have to Google an answer or try and find an answer in some kind of weird forum or something. I don’t feel like I can reach out to support and someone’s like, “oh hey, I see where you’re having trouble!” It’s like a totally different atmosphere.

This stands in direct contrast to the industry standard of stock photography as well as the imperatives of the platform economy more broadly, which is so often marked by extreme imbalances in information between worker and platform, or what Rosenblat & Stark (2016) call “information asymmetries.” While a smaller aspect of community than the others, the transparency and accessibility encouraged by the co-operative model is an important element of how Stocksy members perceive the co-operative’s benefits, especially in the context of other stock agencies.

4.2.2. Community outside and around Stocksy

“There are mobilizations on Facebook for different members. I think people will always naturally find out one another to do two things: I think the main thing is to help one another but it’s also a place to have a discussion and to vent without any judging. We all need a place to bitch, right? [...] So, there’s a lot of support, it’s just a good support system.”

Another significant place where community occurs in this case study is among Stocksy contributors in encounters that are independent from the co-operative’s headquarters, structures, and channels. While there is little question that much value is

found in Stocksy forums, meet-ups, and such, members also find themselves seeking out alternative spaces for support, solidarity, and friendship. The main place where this plays out is over the internet, on social media and other communication channels accessible by Stocksy's global membership. As shown in the quote above, these operate in similar ways to the official Stocksy communities, but the second function, a place to vent, understandably occurs more outside of those formal channels.

As I found out, many of the mobilizations of Stocksy members revolve around forms of identity. As one artist puts it, members are “mobilizing outside, [...] we're mobilizing by cultural groups or by ethnicity, we're doing it by language and also by gender.” In terms of mobilizing by cultural and ethnic groups, the firmest example shared with me came from Vincent, who explains how Chinese members have come together to support one another in the context of working on a North American platform. She points out that with members in dozens of countries around the globe, language differences are some of Stocksy's biggest hurdles as a group. To remedy some of the shortcomings, Chinese members have banded together in a “really solid group [...] who help each other translate and make sense of things and share their particular knowledge” (Vincent, personal communication, February 5, 2019). Though Stocksy tries to fill in these gaps in order to make participation in the co-operative more accessible,¹⁶ different communities of members are coming together outside of Stocksy to help one another and build community. While the Chinese member group was the only concrete example of mobilizations tied to geography or language raised in my interviews, others alluded to similar support groups for members in Eastern Europe and Thailand.

The other mobilizations taking place beyond, but nonetheless in relation to, the Stocksy platform relate to gender. For example, one member reports her involvement with a group called Click & Company, which started as a women-only group of photographers and has since grown into “a family of brands” for different branches of the photography industry, including a photo school, a magazine, and a group called Clickin

¹⁶ Vincent mentions a new effort of transcribing Stocksy's annual general meetings (AGMs) as an example of lowering the co-operative's barrier to participation: “I have a friend who is a co-op member who is hearing impaired. And when she joined we started transcribing the AGMs, which turns out to be an extensive and very, very long and tedious process. But it was really useful not just for someone who is hearing impaired and can't watch a video and sort of follow along, but for folks who didn't speak English as a primary language, to be able to read it as they watched, or translate the transcript” (Personal communication, February 5, 2019)

Moms for photographers who are also mothers. This Stocksy artist sees these kind of groups as an antidote to the “testosterone-driven” world of photography where many “male photographers don’t really love that women are becoming part of their marketplace.” In many of the same ways that other photographers are mobilizing for the sake of mutual support, Click & Company is, for this member, a place outside Stocksy where she can seek out a supportive community: “It’s just nice to have this place where a lot of women are going through a lot of the same things [...] trying to balance family and business, and teaching each other how to navigate those things.” This is notable since, as previous research notes, issues of gender, motherhood, and exclusion can be a significant challenge for co-operatives (Miller, 2012), self-directed workers (Luckman, 2015), and those working in cultural industries (Gill, 2002; McRobbie, 2016). This speaks to the importance of understanding work beyond paid labour, for by doing so we can “[undermine] the presumptive or inherent dominance of capitalist class relations” through recognizing the plurality of both labour and economy (Gibson-Graham, 1996, pp. 17–18).

4.2.3. Gender and other internal tensions

“I don’t think that Stocksy is different from anywhere else. I mean, we had a female CEO and everything but at the end of the day the more vocal people in the forums tend to be male. And that doesn’t mean the women don’t speak up but more often than not it’s the men and it’s a different communication style. So, if we’re like, ‘Okay, I’m just trying to figure out X. What do you think about X?’, it’s easier to communicate amongst ourselves as opposed to [going on the forums] and then we’ll get mansplained by a bunch of dudes who are like, ‘You’re doing it all wrong.’”

The mobilizations of members outside Stocksy must be set in the context of member power dynamics that play out over its communication channels. In a group of people as large as the Stocksy membership, differences and antagonisms are bound to proliferate. Despite a concerted drive for equality within the co-operative ethos, other research has found that co-operatives have the potential to reproduce inequalities of gender (Miller, 2012) and race (Meyers & Vallas, 2016). In similar research, Juliet Schor (2016) studied three separate platforms with similar values and orientation to the platform co-operative movement. It was found that “[r]ace, class, and gender inequalities are pervasive in these sites, at times even threatening their viability,” while a similar proliferation of cultural capital means that involved members come from backgrounds of

privilege (p. 40). In many ways, this can be attributed to the “egalitarian” framing of co-operatives which, while equal on paper, provide a vacuum where those enjoying existing forms of entrenched power are more likely to step in. As such, the question becomes how co-operatives are able to navigate and address these intersectional challenges.

One of the most significant findings of my conversations was a consistent reporting of gendered tensions on the forum. As the above quote testifies, the forums – which are the foremost spaces of communication amongst Stocksy members – reproduce a dynamic where some men dominate the conversation to the extent that many women feel unwelcome. Here, women have a hard time posting in the forums for fear of being shouted down by louder male voices and are often inclined to seek out what they are looking for elsewhere, whether in another online group or with their friends. Almost all of the women (and some of the men) I spoke to reported feeling this way about the forums, while the ones who did not also reported not posting there altogether, in a sort of “it’s not the place for me” sentiment. Most of the time this was reducible to two main factors. First, the nature of Stocksy’s international membership means that there are many people who must speak in a language that is not their primary one, most often English. The artists I spoke to unanimously explained this as a challenge of having members in so many countries. As one artist puts it, “those who don’t have perfect English, they can say things that they might not even mean. They might mean it one way but it might come across differently.”

The second factor – not exclusive to the first – is the gender dynamics between male and female members. Usually this was brought up in my conversations when I asked female artists if they post in the forums. When the answer was “no,” the follow-up was often illuminating:

It’s a good question. I think that there’s some gendered things, for sure. It’s tricky – in general, not just in Stocksy. I think that forums are a very aggressive place and, even though it’s not anonymous like in some other forums, people say things that they wouldn’t say in person. And there’s a language issue with Stocksy, being international, and so things get taken out of context. So, for me, it’s not a place that I share ideas. I’m pretty close with the people that work with Stocksy so if I have an issue I will contact the artist relations person or one of my other contacts there.

For a platform on which the forums are a key place for artists to share ideas and support, it is notable that this very active member says that it is not where they go to

share ideas.¹⁷ Further, the staff at Stocksy headquarters act as a workaround for some artists who have relationships with people there. When I asked whether Stocksy staff had addressed this gender dynamic, some said they were not sure, while another said that they “don’t think it’s for them to address, it’s a difference in communication style.” These problems, to paraphrase one artist I spoke to, are those of the internet more generally, not just Stocksy.

Aside from gender, there were other sets of Stocksy member hierarchies that emerged from my interviews, specifically to do with differences in age and experience as well as artistic style. Most of these arose in response to my question, “do you think there are any barriers to participation in Stocksy?” For one, many noted a dynamic whereby older, more experienced photographers assert more of a presence on the forums, leaving the others feeling like their contributions are less valuable. One photographer calls this “disparity” pretty “intimidating for some people” who feel like they “would like to participate in the forums but [...] don’t know what [they] have to say is valuable.” A similar point of difference among Stocksy members is in style. As noted earlier, Stocksy deals in a very particular type of imagery, a conscious attempt to “challenge the status quo of stock photos” (Silva & Wettlaufer, 2016, p. 78) which one artist I spoke to describes as “hipster.” A few of the artists I spoke to with a more “commercial” style felt that they were somewhat excluded from some of the Stocksy community happenings due to the style of their work. One artist explains: “So, I have a very commercial look to [my work] and Stocksy is not very commercial. I feel like sometimes the people that are creating this really outside-the-box-type imagery are really well catered to and maybe sometimes people who are creating more standard stuff [are not].”

4.2.4. Community/exclusivity tensions

“That’s a big struggle: People internally are worried about competition within their spectrum and people outside are mad, I think, because it seems like such a cool kids club. But we don’t feel like it’s a cool kids club!”

While the community inside Stocksy has both its rewards and challenges for members, for non-members outside the co-operative it can be an exclusive space.

¹⁷ Another woman laughs when I ask if she is active on the forums: “No, and I feel like that’s different than letting your voice be heard!”

Membership is approved based on a potential member's fit with the Stocksy catalogue, formal skill, and/or filling a gap in content that was previously left unfilled. For a 1,124-member co-operative that receives between 2,400 and 3,600 applications annually, there will necessarily be many people who are not permitted access to the benefits of Stocksy membership. This was confirmed in several of my interviews, where artists reported having friends or knowing about people that are not Stocksy members and are unhappy with their rejections. This creates the image of what was referred to as a "cool kids club," where those inside the Stocksy walls are seen as a fortunate few while the others are left disgruntled outside.

This factor results in Stocksy being an exclusive space within stock photography. While other agencies may have less restrictive acceptance processes that let in many more photographers, the flipside of this is, as we have seen, that they do not do as well at protecting and paying those people. Within the co-operative this exclusivity is justified in economic terms, in other words, by the highly competitive nature of the stock photography industry and the requirement to protect the members they have. As Margaret Vincent explains,

Part of the reason that Stocksy is successful is because of the high-quality of our content, which means that not everyone is able to produce that level of content. I wish we could take everybody, but it ultimately would dilute the product. This is a difficult topic that's come up over the years. [...] [If we let everybody in,] we'd have the same problems that we see in Getty and Shutterstock and iStock, which is so much content to wade through and a lot of stuff that doesn't sell and a lot of people not making any money. (Personal communication, February 5, 2019)

In order to maintain their business, Stocksy relies on an elite status in the market, meaning that they are known for high quality imagery and exclusivity of content (Schor, 2017). To remain attractive to clients it is necessary that they retain this special status, letting every applicant in would lower their quality of work and overwhelm their editing team. On the other hand, because many photographers have a stylistic niche – such as, for example, food, family, or nature photography – bringing in a large number of artists with a similar niche would lower sales and increase inter co-op competition. While Vincent tells me she wishes they could take everybody, the realities of existing in a competitive marketplace means that not everyone can have access to the benefits of co-operation.

On the artists' side, they have mixed feelings about this sense of exclusivity. It is worth noting again that the artists I spoke to all joined the co-operative fairly early on in Stocksy's existence (most of them joined within the first two years) so they will have a different perspective than an artist who is currently outside. That said, a few of them noted having difficulty getting accepted, such as one photographer whose commercial style meant that "it was a pretty tough club to break into." Another artist doubted that they would be accepted if they were to apply today, telling me that "it used to be more of an exclusive sort of club." When I would raise the idea of a "cool kids club" in later interviews they all reacted unanimously that they do not feel like "cool kids." While speaking from a point of privilege in terms of membership status, almost all of the photographers I spoke to seem to have gotten in early enough to avoid the more recent barriers to entry. But this raises some important questions: can a co-operative like Stocksy be scaled up enough to provide benefits for a larger group of photographers? How can co-operatives avoid such limitations placed on them by the market? Can this model be replicated for a co-operative for low wage workers with less elite status? (Schor, 2017)

In many ways, the questions of exclusivity mirror some of the concerns about co-operation in practice more broadly – in other words, a tendency to be insular, serving member needs at the expense of the communities around them (Duda, 2016). This is commonly viewed as a result of what is called the "degeneration thesis," a popular critique levied against co-operatives that claims that they, in the face of the context in which they operate, are doomed to stray from their ideals (Gibson-Graham, 2006, pp. 109–110). In the Rosa Luxemburg lineage of co-operative critiques, "isolated worker cooperatives cannot change the wider forces and relations of production that have developed under capitalism" and will ultimately "be subject to them" (Cornforth, 1995, p. 489). While the first co-operative principle may be "voluntary and open membership" (ICA, 2015),¹⁸ the 'pure' ideal of co-operation can come into conflict with the reality of existing within capitalist economic relations. In Stocksy's case, the restrictions on

¹⁸ Though she recognizes the struggles of non-members, Vincent believes Stocksy meets this principle: "I understand the co-op principle of voluntary and open membership to speak to a lack of discrimination – membership cannot be denied on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, etc. – but membership can have limitations. We require an application to ensure an artist will be able to succeed aesthetically with our collection. That's about ensuring a means to succeed within the co-op rather than being a discriminatory action." (Personal communication, February 5, 2019)

membership are a result of their competitive need to produce high-quality imagery as well as the limits on how many photographers can be meaningfully supported on the platform.

In one of the most significant examples of measures taken to address concerns of exclusivity as well as an instance of member mobilization, the co-operative's membership elected to remove the cap that limited the maximum number of artists that could join Stocksy. Though the co-operative would regularly review and even delete inactive member profiles, the cap meant that Stocksy would never exceed 1,000 contributors. In May of 2018, the membership passed a resolution to remove the cap, opening the potential for more members. From my discussions with members, this was a controversial move – some were cautious about increasing intra-co-op competition among members and generally diminishing the chances for them to make money if customers had a larger pool of options. Ultimately, the opposite view won. In the words of one member when asked about whether Stocksy should be kept small: “Oh, no, I think there are so many great photographers... It only gets stronger with a mixture of different backgrounds. Like immigration, the more immigrants you have the stronger a country you can be.” While there are limits on member size imposed by the nature of the stock photography market, the vote to remove the member cap can be read as an instance of member mobilization as well as what Gibson-Graham (2006) would call “ethical decision-making” (p. 125). Here, Stocksy members pushed to “privilege an ethical rather than a structural vision of economic determination” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 103) that, in a small way, help shape the co-operative in a way contrary to the economic rationality of capitalism (Morrow & Dombroski, 2015).

4.3. Conclusion & discussion

The many manifestations of “community” that arose from my conversations with Stocksy members points to both the possibilities and challenges of co-operation. It is clear that Stocksy members derive a remarkable amount of value from the forms of kinship that can be found at the co-operative and on the platform. Among artists, friendships are made, information is shared, and ties of solidarity are established to connect people all across the globe. Stocksy headquarters also does its part to help this mutualism along by facilitating these connections and involving a community-driven approach to the moderation and day-to-day management of the co-operative. At the end

of the day, it is salient that every artist I spoke to gave me an unequivocal “yes” when asked if they felt they were part of a community at Stocksy.

The connectedness of Stocksy artists and the community provided by the platform speak to a certain antidote to the isolation and atomization found in accounts of cultural work. Especially for cultural freelancers, who by definition are outside any ongoing working attachments to people or place, a sense of community holds great promise. “Self-employed” working arrangements place them “outside of traditional labour law and denies them the social benefits that are usually accessed through an employment relationship” (Dullroy, in Cohen, 2016, p. 9). Benefits as simple as having a network of supportive people to ask when you need advice, the sharing of work opportunities when an artist is too busy to take them themselves, or even just friendship can help to combat the mental health effects of isolation (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010) and give a worker roots where they might not otherwise have them. Further, de Peuter, Cohen & Saraco (2017) argue that, despite its ambivalences, the continued prominence of the term ‘community’ in spheres of cultural work “demonstrates that work continues to act as a basis of collective belonging, a dynamic with unique importance to individuals otherwise separated by labour flexibilization” (p. 695). On a larger ideological level, the community forged through co-operation that I notice at Stocksy is a direct answer to the individualizing logics of neoliberal capitalism. This system, “which emphasizes competitive individualism, self-sufficiency, itinerant work biographies, and entrepreneurialism” (Cohen, 2016, p. 131; see also: Sandoval, 2016a) is countered by a co-operative ethos of mutual support and interdependence, a critical task when considering the prospect of organizing cultural workers and injecting politics into the workplace.

Further, the forms of community I observe at Stocksy resonate in many ways with the concept of “community economies” elaborated by J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996, 2006). To her, drawing attention to the vast economic interdependence of people “is a step toward rendering them objects of politics and ethics,” to make the concept of “being-with” both explicit and integral to the “counterhegemonic project of ‘differently politicizing’ the economy” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 84). The interconnectedness of Stocksy artists is both abundantly clear as well as a point of tension between community and individualism. Many Stocksy members noted what they had in common with other members – what Gibson-Graham would call “economic being-with” – and how the

mutual success would benefit both themselves and the group at large. To return to the example of the member cap, one artist recounts their own growth from individual to group concern in the context of the vote to remove the cap:

I was initially dead set against it because part of what I liked about Stocksy was it was a tight, cohesive group and the more members you add, the more your income was going to be diluted as an individual contributor. [...] On the other hand, Stocksy as a whole, as a company, I realized had to grow. [...] So, you're kind of balancing the individual gain and loss with the company gain and loss, and in the end, I came around to thinking that it was more important for the growth of the company to extend that limit.

While this artist still frames their thinking in terms of company productivity, these thoughts reveal how Stocksy's practices are recasting their own community economy "as a site of decision, of ethical praxis" (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 87). Making choices democratically that affect each member makes clear the various ways that the membership is connected, and recasts economic decision-making as a social process *contra* the hard reasoning of orthodox economic theory.

While the positive aspects of Stocksy's community cannot be ignored, there were also some notable tensions that emerged from my conversations with members. As Jeremy Brent (1997) has indicated, community is "not a term suitable for use as an unequivocal slogan of redemption," itself always a site of contestation and conflict, while "any formation of community brings with it a whole range of further questions, difficulties and struggles" (p. 82). The insider/outsider splits of the "cool kids club" indicates some of these conflicts as well as the challenges of co-operation on a larger scale. As Isabelle Fremeaux (2005) reminds us, the term "community" has long had connotations of social exclusion and privilege (p. 267; see also Hoggett, 1997) and implies a certain division between those within and those without. In the Stocksy case, the positive communities formed are inaccessible to non-Stocksy members. Moreover, and as discussed above, these questions raise the concern of co-operative scale; in other words, can co-operatives get large enough to provide benefits for a group of workers beyond a small group of members? Past research has shown that co-operatives have difficulty holding true to their principles if they get too large and must compete on a larger scale (Bretos & Errasti, 2018; Errasti, Bretos, & Nunez, 2017; Gupta, 2014), and the Stocksy case indicates that these limits might be true for a cultural co-operative of this type.

In many ways, these limits are beyond Stocksy's control and do more to represent some of the challenges that face co-operation as a movement. Stocksy is limited in how many members they can take not because they do not want to, but rather that their solvency depends on their ability to retain a high-quality portfolio and make money for the members that are already in the co-op. However, as Sandoval (2016b) argues,

operating in a competitive capitalist economy is still precarious. Co-operatives are not perfect. They are limited by competitive market pressures and the need to generate a constant flow of income. [...] But these problems do not confirm the deficiency of co-ops, but, rather, the deficiency of capitalism. (pp. 109–110)

In this case, it is the competitive market that precludes a larger community at Stocksy, and it is only by addressing the larger, structural concerns of how our economy functions can we create more access. One of the ways co-operatives can address these challenges is by connecting to larger movements, struggles, and working-class efforts outside. In this vein, Sandoval (2016a, 2016b) argues for connecting co-operatives to larger struggles, in the same way that de Peuter & Dyer-Witthof (2010) place co-operatives as a form of "labour commons" that circulate and connect various other commons to one another, creating mutual strength through the provision of resources and association (pp. 45–46). These are but a few of the opportunities the co-operative movement has in addressing some of these systemic concerns that constrain their transformative potential.

Next, the presence of tensions and hierarchies among Stocksy members points to another kind of struggle amidst what is portrayed as a solid social element of the co-operative. When women report not feeling comfortable participating on the member forums, a key site where the social dimension of the co-operative operates, it indicates some of the ways that both co-operative structure and the concept of the community can reproduce some of the more pernicious elements of society. The women I spoke to were relatively unfazed by this because, as they told me, they had many other opportunities to seek out support and community around and outside the co-operative. Further, to the extent that it mirrors similar experiences of women participating in online forums and collective activities (Bear & Collier, 2016; Rodríguez-Darias & Aguilera-Ávila, 2018), Stocksy is not necessarily an outlier.

However, the gendered and other hierarchical tensions on Stocksy represent some of the ongoing challenges of platform co-operativism. Traditional co-operatives are intensely place-based, emerging from very specific cultural and historical moments – such as Mondragón (Gibson-Graham, 2006), Argentinian worker recovered-factories (Vieta, 2014), or other co-operative “hot spots” (Rowe, Peredo, Sullivan, & Restakis, 2018). On the other hand, while the freedom of the Internet allows platform co-operatives to be much more accessible, lower cost, and available, so too does it reduce the kind of social embeddedness enjoyed by traditional co-ops which was, according to Schor (2016), “crucial to their success”:

But platform co-operativism is coming from a different social space. If platform co-ops are to succeed without reproducing their own more privileged class, race, and gender homogeneousness, founders and early participants must be highly attuned to subtle social dynamics that valorize the practices and traits of dominant groups. Furthermore, they must stop those dynamics from developing. Practically speaking, achieving that probably means starting with a diverse group of founders and early participants[.] (p. 42)

While Stocksy has created a similar “social embeddedness” through various means, some key tensions of community remain. How can these tensions on the forums be navigated? Are they a characteristic of more widespread dynamics that manifest themselves on the Internet? How, beyond diversity, can they be addressed? In some ways, the grassroots communities of members work as a counterbalance to these concerns. However, the conflicting accounts of community within Stocksy point to some of the key problems of the co-operative model, including the fact that wage and opportunity-based equality do not themselves speak to social structures of power such as patriarchy.

The tensions of community at Stocksy are illustrative of the ambivalences of the co-operative model and any communities forged online. Understanding autonomy, alienation, and community as inherently social experiences allows us to recognize the ways that other people affect our senses of belonging to a group as large as the Stocksy membership. As one artist I spoke to points out, for stock photographers this kind of community “just doesn’t exist anywhere.” Following Amit (2010), it is worthwhile to keep the concept of “community” open to “leave ourselves as much room as possible for posing questions about the dynamics of coordination, interdependence and affect in mobilizing social relations” (p. 362). Like many aspects of co-operative structure, the

communities found at Stocksy resist closure, leaving us with more questions than answers. However, some of the ways that Stocksy operates casts economic decisions in terms of their community effects, letting considerations of alternative forms of work and sociality “shape the nature of income-generating activities and spaces” (Morrow & Dombroski, 2015, p. 88). Though not without its struggles and ambivalences, it is these that make co-operatives at once promising and worth investigating, a starting point for understand how to do things better in the future. Because

if we must necessarily ‘start where we are’ to build ethical economies, what is the usefulness of simply judging such practices for their divergence from certain values? It would seem more positive and practical to treat the *existing* situation as a (problematic) resource for projects of *becoming*, a place from which to build something more desirable in the future. (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 98 emphasis in original)

It is this prefigurative drive to make future work better in the here-and-now that co-operatives hold the most potential, and it is to the arrangements of work structures that we turn in the next chapter.

Chapter 5. **Autonomy at Stocksy**

At their simplest, and perhaps most optimistic, co-operatives can be called practical routes to worker autonomy. They represent a recognition that that labour relations as we know them are fundamentally skewed and matters of work would be better off in the hands of those directly involved. For example, a worker co-operative revolves around the understanding that the workers are the ones that produce value for an enterprise and it should be they – not a hierarchy of managers, investors, and bosses – that have control and reap the rewards. Historically, co-operatives most often emerge when the system has failed a group of people who then take it into their own hands to address the situation. Whether it is Québécois housing co-operatives in the wake of a collapsing housing market (Guenther, 2006) or small community credit unions springing up to provide financial services to those left without (Hosseini, 2014; Jones, 2008), co-operatives are well suited for communities to exert control over their own situation.

In the case of Stocksy, the co-operative’s founding was exactly this: an instance of separation from an industry that had been failing its workers for years. Getty Images’ purchase and subsequent overhaul of iStock demonstrated how little control photographers had over the platform that determines their livelihood – and perhaps more importantly, whose profits they determined. To Bruce Livingstone, Brianna Wettlaufer, and the other founders of Stocksy, the co-operative model was the best route to ensuring that the artists themselves had meaningful control over the agency they relied on. As one Stocksy artist tells me, the co-operative model

really drives the whole principle of being with Stocksy. Because other agencies start with good intentions, but so much can change – ownership can change, or they can be bought out. But just the fact that it’s a co-op model, none of that can happen. We can say, ‘No, we can’t be purchased by a third party without consent.’ It changes everything.

While the autonomy offered by the co-operative model is always a site of negotiation and uncertainty, it is nonetheless presents a hopeful bulwark against the shortcomings of the system in place, giving co-operators power in self-determination. Or, put differently, a co-operative is what Verity Burgmann et al. (2014) call “practical declarations of the autonomy of labour from capital” (p. 185).

Following a thematic analysis of my interview data (see chapter 3), this chapter considers the broad themes of what I will label *autonomy* that arose from my conversations with Stocksy members. Specifically, it uses the autonomist theoretical tradition described in chapter 2 to consider the levels of autonomy exerted by Stocksy members, the independence afforded by the platform, and how its members navigate a precarious cultural labour market. This can be broken down into three subsets: *difference* (the degrees of separation between Stocksy and the market, Stocksy and other agencies, and Stocksy and other co-operatives); *independence* (the levels of independence afforded by the co-operative as well as the independent, freelance status of many of its members); and *flexibility* (a contemporary buzzword and ambivalent component of the autonomy given by freelance cultural work).

5.1. Difference: “Apples and oranges”

One of the first things I noticed about Stocksy is how much they pride themselves on a profound sense of difference. My research consistently revealed feelings of difference from other co-operatives, from other stock agencies, and, by virtue of being a co-operative, from other more ‘traditional’ ways of doing business. A good example of this is found in an old slogan Stocksy had on their website which addressed their co-operative structure: “Think more artist respect and support, and less patchouli” – a clear effort to separate themselves from the traditional co-operative stereotype of food co-ops and other “hippie” enterprises.¹⁹ The theme of difference is useful for unpacking the autonomy offered by the platform in order to understand the ways that co-operatives are (or are not) different from other forms of enterprise – a consideration that is critical to their political potential.

The first and most explicit element of Stocksy’s difference is in relation to other stock photography agencies. As we saw in chapter 1, Stocksy was founded on a sense of doing stock differently – after iStock was bought by Getty in 2006, the founders took their payouts and went to establish a new kind of agency. They wanted to give their artists more power, voice, and care than the detached corporate atmosphere present at

¹⁹ Margaret Vincent is forthright about their resistance to this image: “You know, everybody thinks about hippies and co-ops, right? Or it’s just grocery stores and hippies living together. But I think that is something that we sort of try to fight against” (Personal communication, February 5, 2019).

the larger stock agencies. In this way, Stocksy is an explicit response to the trends of the stock photography industry and its structures of work. This sense of difference is promoted by the co-operative's headquarters and so too is it appreciated by members. As independent producers, no member is tied exclusively to Stocksy as the only place they submit their imagery,²⁰ so everybody I spoke to has at least some experience with another stock photography agency. Inevitably every conversation I had with Stocksy artists ended up touching on just how different the co-op was from the other agencies. In comparison Stocksy pays more, listens more, and does not treat you "like a tiny pawn" (Stocksy artist, personal communication). As one artist responded when I ask about the differences between agencies:

Yeah, it's comparing apples and oranges. With the other agencies, when you're initially signed with them they're like, "oh, welcome to the family! We're going to be really supportive and we'll help you plan shoots!" And all this happy-speak... It never happens. They just wanted your content, they'd edit it and get it up there; and then they'd change your contract and you'd make less money; and then you'd find out that they're doing special contracts with some people and you're selling a picture for a billboard [...] and you're making \$7.

As this quote attests, Stocksy exceeds other agencies in many categories that matter to members, including payment, voice, and transparency. One of the foremost things Stocksy has over other agencies is its pay structure, which deals out at least 50% of the proceeds to the artist, which is much higher than the industry average of 20-30% (Zhang, 2013b). More money may not be a revolutionary demand,²¹ but in an industry where it is increasingly hard to make a living, being paid a fair wage is a massive improvement over the alternative.

Beyond pay, the other noteworthy category where Stocksy exceeds other agencies is in terms of its staff's commitment to worker voice. As I found out through my interviews, the community feel of the co-operative headquarters helps to foster an

²⁰ Stocksy does have an exclusivity clause for photo shoots, however. If a member submits images from a photo/video shoot to Stocksy and some get accepted for sale on the platform, no other material from that shoot can be submitted to another agency. This is waived as soon as the artist decides to remove the content from the Stocksy marketplace.

²¹ According to the autonomist-feminist organizers of *les Comités Unitaires sur le Travail Étudiant* (CUTES), a network of student committees orchestrated a student strike of 40,000 Québécois students in 2019, "the wage is not a revolutionary demand but it's a good strategy to lead to reduced exploitation, making it visible" (In Sarjeant, Brophy, Bilodeau, & Halloran, 2019, para. 28; see also Weeks, 2011).

environment where members are comfortable getting in touch and asking for help. Whereas, according to one artist, “other stock agencies you send off your content, they accept it or they don’t accept it and they pay you whatever they feel like – and that’s your entire contact with the organization.” The clear lines of communication at Stocksy help the artists better understand how to succeed with the platform, make more sales, and know the direction the enterprise is heading in.²² As I was told, other agencies have a corporate, top-down structure, whereas the organization of a co-operative means that each member is equal and has a vote. In the words of one member and a stock industry veteran, “at Stocksy you’re a part of the process, the organization, the rule making.”

Indeed, many of these differences are results of Stocksy’s co-operative structure, a notable difference in an industry where co-operatives are mostly absent. When asked about Stocksy’s place in the stock photography business, Vincent says they are “positioned fairly uniquely” and that they “don’t really fit in the traditional categories” (Personal communication, February 5, 2019). Unsurprisingly, every member I spoke to recognizes this difference in organization between co-operative and non-co-operative businesses. While some reported being bigger proponents of the model than others, there was an understanding that the way Stocksy was organized was different and that this was a big part of the appeal to them in joining. In the words of an artist who was new to co-operatives, “I didn’t totally understand what that meant, I just knew that it was not like an iStockphoto or a Getty where it’s some big conglomerate and some guy is making all the money.” Similarly, when discussing other agencies, a different artist points out that when “they have shareholders they have to make money somehow so they keep trying to make income off of their artists in new ways, and that means the artist is making less and less.” While Stocksy members reported varying levels of politics in their experiences of co-operation this recognition of the model’s fundamental differences from capitalist labour relations demonstrates another facet of the sense of difference so integral to the co-operative’s ethic.

²² Knowing the co-operative’s direction is first and foremost critical for members to have a say in where it goes by discussing it at large and formulating and voting on resolutions. But one artist with children offers an anecdote that speaks to another reason this is important: “I heard recently about another company using images in a sensitive use, which Stocksy’s pretty good at making sure that they’re not used in like... My children would never be on an article endorsing a political candidate or selling drugs or something like that. But [a photographer I know at another agency] had found out that they had changed their sensitive use policy without ever informing the artists. They were used in ways that they were not happy with.”

The final theme of difference that I noted in my conversations was one of difference between Stocksy and other co-operatives. As discussed in chapter 1, Stocksy has a multi-stakeholder co-operative structure with different classes of members relating to the enterprise in different ways. Beyond the structure, however, Stocksy is different from other co-operatives in two main ways. First, Stocksy is “fairly unique in that [they] have a very wide, international membership, which is not typical” (Margaret Vincent, personal communication, February 5, 2019). The large reach of the co-operative is both a strength and challenge, but clearly separates Stocksy from other, more place-based co-operatives. Second, Stocksy’s structure means that it is held to certain standards to which it does not fit. For example, co-operatives are sometimes expected to have an ethos of equal payment, in other words, each member shares profits equally. At Stocksy, this is not the case, and workers are given payment based on their sales on the platform. Previous research (Schor, 2017) has found that this leads to a “winner-take-all market” where the distribution of income goes to a small group of people. Schor and her team found that the top nine Stocksy artists receive 26.5% of income, and the top 87 artists get 66.2%.²³ While this picture is clearly different from a vision of everything-shared-equally co-operativism, Stocksy’s artists are clear that this does not bother them. In the words of one member,

Look, we’re a product-worker co-op, we’re producing a product for sale. It’s very different from a different type of co-op where maybe that is the way it works because it’s based on the time and effort you’re putting in, not necessarily the money that you’re bringing into it, and that’s seen.

This sense of meritocracy is a common refrain at Stocksy, and will be returned to later in this chapter. For now, this quote points to the differences and intricacies of how Stocksy is organized, separately from other forms of co-operatives.²⁴ Their structure raises many unique challenges, and their model is in many ways incompatible with a typical vision of co-operation.

Alongside the reports of difference in my conversations with Stocksy members, I also came across a few notions that I classify as *indifference*. In other words, moments

²³ Schor goes on to point out that this configuration is more unequal than the income distribution in the United States.

²⁴ It is worth noting that Stocksy is not, as Schor (2017) and others have suggested, a worker co-operative. More radical worker co-operatives, by virtue of their egalitarian nature, should be held to a higher standard of equal remuneration (Gradin, 2015)

where members revealed to me some of the ways that, despite its perception of uniqueness and innovation, the co-operative is in reality very similar to other conventional forms of enterprise. For example, one artist I spoke to calls co-operatives “another way of doing things” and “another organization, another set-up that’s more collaborative in theory.” A different member had similar, albeit a bit more balanced, feelings: “It’s still a company that you’re dealing with at the end of the day but there’s a lot more involvement and a lot more sense of community.” This speaks to some of the ambivalences that characterize the “hybrid form” (Luxemburg, 1973, p. 41) of co-operation, at once harmonizing with and undermining the logics of capitalism where a co-operative is merely a business organized with more equality and whose capitalists are closer to production.

As we have seen in the introduction to this chapter, a sense of difference has been integral to the co-operative movement for quite some time. In this light, Stocksy’s own sense of difference is a continuation of decades-old discourses of co-operation. For example, research into perceptions of co-operatives (Puusa, Mönkkönen, & Varis, 2013) and co-operative discourse (Wiksell, 2017) has found that the characteristics of co-operatives are most often defined negatively, in other words, by what they are *not* in comparison to other forms of business. On the same note of separation, Vishwas Satgar (2007) goes as far as arguing “that cooperatives represent an alternative logic of accumulation and have the potential to challenge the structural dominance of transnational capital” (p. 75). This sense of difference at once helps separate co-operatives as a desirable alternative to ‘less ethical’ ways of doing business, while at the same time accommodating them to the existing marketplace. Much of the conversation around co-operatives centers the various dual natures of co-operatives, and the tensions between their similarity and difference with the global economy. The positive side of this dual nature must be at the fore, staking out clear resistance to neoliberal positioning (Wiksell, 2017) which has proven remarkably capable of incorporating critiques in order to sustain itself (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2018).

Drawing out some of the ways that Stocksy is positioned as different helps us understand some of the tensions of this hybrid form and the space it occupies between radical alternative and ‘slightly better capitalism.’ A critique of the stock photography industry is necessary as it represents a decades-old decline of cultural institutions at the hands of neoliberal reform, with its workers bearing the brunt of these changes (Peck &

Theodore, 2012). The subjective dimensions of Stocksy's difference play out amongst its members as well, some of whom described feeling "a little bit like a rebel" or a pronounced sense of pride in their ownership role.²⁵ Further, the separation between the co-operative and standard capitalist practices points to a certain "renegade persona" which emphasizes self-determination over systemic change (de Peuter, Cohen, & Saraco, 2017, p. 693). While Stocksy's emergence has changed stock photography in a few ways, it is yet to be seen whether the artist-first mentality will lead to lasting and widespread change in the stock photography industry. However, it does indicate a hope for co-ownership and, though deeply ambivalent, presents a "framework for economic democracy at odds with capitalist logics" (Dyer-Witthford & de Peuter, in de Peuter et al., 2017, p. 701). In the same way that the immaterial labourer's "refusals bring the fundamental antagonism between labour and capital into focus" (Brophy, 2017, p. 44), the difference exerted by the co-operative model helps us understand – in its own limited way – this core conflict of the labour-capital relationship.

5.2. Independence: "A whole bunch of small businesses"

The second theme of autonomy in my study of Stocksy, independence, features so heavily in contemporary discourses of work that it has become something of a fetish. With the degeneration of the Fordist social contract which saw a significant portion of employees undertaking long-term working relationships with the same employer until retirement, the entire workforce became increasingly engaged in temporary and precarious jobs that were previously dominated by women, leading to what has been called "a feminization of work" (Vosko, 2000, p. 3). Further, this period saw a flipping of the Taylorist approach to the labour process that broke production down into the tiniest fragmented parts (Braverman, 1974). According to the arguments of Alvin Toffler and other late 20th century prophets of the so-called knowledge economy, this era brought about the "dissolution of traditional hierarchies and command structures, and the introduction of new dimensions of autonomy and job satisfaction" (Dyer-Witthford, 1999,

²⁵ For example: "I'm super proud of Stocksy. I'm proud to be a member. I often say, 'I'm a part-owner in a stock agency.' I feel like I have an ownership role, I feel like I have a say, I feel like I have a vote, I feel like I help decide the path of where the agency goes. So, what I say is that I'm a photographer and then if somebody says, 'Oh, like Getty?' or whatever, I'll say, 'Oh, no, I'm a part-owner at an agency called Stocksy and they license photos but they're way cooler than Getty and the artists all own a piece of the business. So, instead of profits going back to a corporation, they go back to the artists.' And there's a lot of pride in that."

p. 29). Here, workers were positioned as independent actors, self-employed agents that were free to adapt themselves to any kind of job, “portfolio careers” (Fraser & Gold, 2001; McRobbie, 2002, p. 524) that were stitched together out of odd jobs and an assortment of tasks. While work is fragmentary, scholars have pointed out that it is also self-directed, and the worker is therefore “free” to choose to do whatever they wish – or what Nicole Cohen (2016) calls “the microautonomy of freelance work.”

If independence figures into much of the rhetoric that obscures the exploitative working conditions of freelancers, so too is it a central part of more critical analyses of the labour relationship and capitalist relations more broadly. As we saw in chapter 2, the autonomist tradition has focused on the moments of separation between labour and capital, and the ways those differences can always be (and often are) seized upon by workers. Further, the expansion of capitalist relations that are part-and-parcel of the individualism/independence axis help expand the sites of resistance and struggle well beyond the factory and into society at large as “the difference between production and reproduction and between work and nonwork becomes increasingly obscure” (Weeks, 2011, p. 142).

Moreover, independence factors strongly into the identity of co-operatives on a larger ideological level. As the fourth co-operative principle, “autonomy and independence” states: “The integrity of a co-operative as an autonomous and independent organization rests on the co-operative values of self-help, self-responsibility and democracy that have been central to co-operative identity since the emergence of sustainable co-operative enterprises in the 19th century” (ICA, 2015, p. 45). This principle speaks mostly to the status of co-operatives as independent organizations separate from larger bodies like corporations or the state. However, much less is outlined for the independence of co-operative members and their functioning on a day-to-day level. In a sense, the idea of co-operation is antithetical to independence, with much of the promise being in how it is able to bring dispersed people together for a common goal. But a key question provoked by this study asks: in a co-operative like Stocksy with a large number of geographically dispersed and relatively autonomous members, what does independence look like? How independent are they from each other? How independent are they from the co-operative itself? And how do Stocksy workers experience and perceive their own autonomy and independence in the context of their co-operative?

The first note to make here is that the majority of Stocksy members I spoke to are self-employed photographers. As one artist with a full-time photography studio puts it, “I’m a small business, I kind of see [Stocksy] as a whole bunch of small businesses. Like how Etsy kind of started, I guess, how you sort of owned your own business and you’re making the money.” This cellular view of the co-operative is characteristic of a producer co-operative wherein “the members are independent producers and the cooperative helps them access markets to sell products at a fair price” (Hoover, 2016, p. 109). Most Stocksy members own their own photography “company of one” (Lane, 2011) and shoot stock photography on the side, or they are a full-time freelancer who compiles a living through various income streams. Two are on contract at companies they used to freelance for and have now moved into a more permanent position but technically remain operators of their own business. As such, Stocksy members fall into a certain archetype of independent cultural workers (de Peuter, 2014a; McRobbie, 2016; Sandoval, 2016a). This independence manifests in a variety of ways – ranging from flexible schedules to a dearth of “non-work” time – but for now points to one of the recurring implications of independence I noticed in my conversations with Stocksy workers: precariousness.

While the portion of the membership I spoke to wields some social privilege, almost all of them expressed a sense of insecurity stemming from their self-employed status, indicating a “continuum” of precarious employment (Cranford, Vosko, & Zukewich, 2003, pp. 17–19). Taking precarity as the “experiential, financial, and social insecurity exacerbated by the flexibilization of employment under conditions of post-Fordism” (de Peuter, 2010, p. iii), it is clear that many Stocksy artists fall in this category. First, this emerges through precarity of income, in other words, constantly changing earnings and sources of work. Putting this simply, one artist tells me that “the thing about working for yourself [is that] you’re never 100% sure [...] where your next income is going to come from.” Many others spoke to this pattern in terms of ebbs and flows, or the feast-or-famine nature of freelance work. As one industry veteran tells me,

I’ve been freelance ever since I got out of university and I’ve never been full-time employed. [...] It’s something I’m used to, you know what I mean? You’re going to have busy times and you’re going to have slow times; I manage that without a problem.

This freelancer subjectivity is experienced variously by different artists in different

contexts, mirroring some of the research that has noted the nuanced ways that cultural workers perceive their own precariousness (Frenette & Ocejo, 2018). Some Stocksy members talked about enjoying being independent enough to have control over when they earn and when they can take time off (for example, working hard for a few months and then going travelling for an extended period), while others were a bit more cautious about their fluctuating income streams and expressed some anxiety about what would happen in case of an emergency or unexpected expense.

Besides pay, the other main topic of conversation regarding precariousness related to benefits, mainly health insurance. Because 9 of the 10 Stocksy artist-members I spoke to are living and working in the United States, a country without a universal medical system, health care is a prime concern. As one American artist replies when I ask about their employment situation: "I'm an independent contractor, so I pay for my own health insurance. I pay like \$500 a month for insurance, it's really expensive. Our country is a freaking disaster, health care-wise." Others talked about getting coverage from the United States' Affordable Care Act while some are covered thanks to their spouses and partners. Speaking to the latter situation, one female member calls it "a luxury I have that not a lot of people do" and that if she did not have her partner, "I would be paying for some form of health insurance, and as a woman I'd be really pissed off about it because it's like 4 times the amount of money here for us ladies because we have uteruses." Health insurance is clearly a concern for Stocksy's American membership and, as freelancers, they have little access to stable health care unless they pay for it out of pocket.

The intersection of gender and precarity is one that has been picked up on my many previous studies of labour and cultural work (Conor, Gill, & Taylor, 2015; Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013; Gill, 2002, 2014; Shade & Jacobson, 2015). In my research into Stocksy, besides health insurance and the disproportionate costs of health care for women, the other main area where gender and independence arose together was in the context of motherhood. Of the ten artists I spoke to, three women reported shooting for Stocksy while they had or still have young childcare responsibilities. While each of these mothers experience the interactions of Stocksy and motherhood differently, the cooperative and stock photography are both sites of independence in their own way. These can be broken down into two loose categories: financial and professional independence.

The first, financial independence, describes how Stocksy gives working mothers a chance to earn money independently from other factors in their lives. In Margaret Vincent's words: "we have a lot of moms of young kids who work with us and for them it's a chance to take the work that they're already producing and monetize rather than impinging on that" (Personal communication, February 5, 2019). This was backed up by the artists themselves, one of whom told me that she used the photography social media site Flickr and was approached by Getty Images to become a contributor for them. This member has a full-time job elsewhere, but worked less while her child was young and was "thrilled" by the prospect of Getty's offer "to pay me for what I was already doing and having fun with." Another Stocksy member, a stay-at-home mother, is more explicit about the kinds of financial independence afforded by the co-operative. As she puts it:

The reason I started licensing stock in the first place was because I wanted to have a little extra income that I didn't have to ask within the family [for]. Like, 'Hey, can I have a budget for this?' I wanted to have my own little secret stash at my discretion, so it's been very good to me in that regard.

While this mother is financially secure and holds relative privilege, Stocksy provides a route to make her own money that can be used at her personal "discretion." This signals a certain way that Stocksy enables her to reach a small degree of financial independence by photographing her family.

The second category of independence that arose from my conversations with Stocksy mothers was one of what I call professional independence. This is a much looser subset of the independence theme, but it captures the ways that Stocksy helps legitimize the photographic labour performed by mothers. Across industries and "regardless of the work they do, women with young children are in a weak position in the labour market" (Wajcman & Probert, in Luckman, 2015, p. 91). This is especially so in a cultural workforce that "is marked by stark and growing inequalities" of gender despite an ethos that celebrates openness, egalitarianism, and meritocracy" (Gill, 2014, p. 509). This reality was reinforced by my conversations with these Stocksy members, who felt excluded by the stock photography industry at large due to factors relating to their status as mothers.²⁶ Discussing her involvement in the mothers-only photography group Click &

²⁶ It is worth pointing out that motherhood is not the only site of exclusion for cultural workers more broadly. As Gill (2014) argues in the context of cultural work, "[w]hilst not disputing the significance of motherhood to women's career trajectories [...] the repeated focus on maternity is problematic and may close down other areas of potential investigation and critique" (p. 509).

Moms, one member explains how

There's a big stigma around [motherhood] and so it's nice to have a place where you can kind of talk about these issues that come with, first of all, motherhood and having a job and those things that women have always grappled with, but then also being female in a mostly male-driven marketplace and having those men be really not happy that we're sort of taking over.

Stocksy is but one piece of this growing involvement of women and mothers in the stock photography industry, a rise that has seen varying levels of acceptance in the co-operative and beyond.

As we have seen, these degrees of independence are at once challenging, liberating, and, to many, profoundly regular. As we saw in chapter 1, the history of the stock photography industry is one of degeneration as graphic industries shifted from relying on in-house photographers to favouring the plethora of (inexpensive) stock options. As such, stock photographers have, to an extent, always been largely freelance and independent. In fact, Margaret Vincent speculates that this fact is one of the big reasons Stocksy is able to function with such a large and dispersed membership:

I get a lot of questions when I give talks about the international membership and how we make that work, and I really strongly believe that part of the reason it works for Stocksy is that artists are used to being independent contractors. (Personal communication, February 5, 2019)

The fact that co-operation works because of the structural fragmentation of its members points to the relevance of the co-operative model for dispersed cultural workers while at the same time indicating some of the key challenges the model faces if people are used to working alone. Here, co-operation provides at once a hopeful antidote to some of the pitfalls of an independent freelance career while also demonstrating how entrenched atomization is in this sector – to the point that a collective organization like a co-operative must harness it for its success.

5.3. Flexibility: “You get out what you put in”

As with independence, the term ‘flexibility’ has enjoyed prominence as one of the foremost buzzwords of contemporary labour discourse. In the celebratory view, flexibility is the result of altered work flows, new employment relationships, high-technology

workplaces, and portfolio careers. It is a supposedly win-win situation that gives employers the freedom to pick and choose workers for each project while simultaneously empowering workers to 'freely' decide their own schedules and exert their independence. But while flexibility is everywhere in discussions of work, more critical accounts point out the more exploitative nature of flexibilization (Gray, 2004; Ross, 2009). In a turn that David Harvey (1989) dubs "flexible accumulation," capitalism opens itself up to new markets, labour processes, and patterns of consumption (p. 147), destabilizing Fordist modes of production in ways that are disastrous to organized labour and other protections for workers. Flexibility becomes a code word for stripped workplace protections, disembeddedness from social relationships, and precariousness that expands across a worker's entire life. Indeed, as de Peuter (2010) reminds us, "[i]n the language of economists, flexible employment arrangements may provide capital with elevated labour-market efficiencies, but it is working people themselves who carry the burden of flexibility," albeit one that is unequally distributed among lines of race, gender, and age (p. 12; see also Vosko, 2000). While 'flexibility' as a label is most often applied to the work itself under neoliberalism, the spoils of flexible arrangements most often fall to the employer who elides responsibility for contingent labour (Peck & Theodore, 2012, pp. 744–746). It is important to note, however, that experiences of flexibility vary widely, and the chance of being "flexible" at work can be desirable and in many ways enjoyed – making "flexibility" something of a double-edged sword (Cohen, 2016).

This high prevalence of the idea of flexibility in the modern labour market means that it is no surprise that it arose as a theme in my conversations with Stocksy members. In a sense, independence and flexibility are two sides of the same coin, so there was much overlap with the last theme. That said, flexibility manifests itself uniquely in a few key ways and itself is a big part of the culture at Stocksy in a way that merits individual consideration.

The first of two major areas where flexibility arose in my conversations with Stocksy members was in terms of their workdays. Following the autonomist tradition's identification of the "social factory" – in other words, the expansion of capitalist relations into all facets of social life so that society and factory are merged as one (Tronti, 1962) – as well as the workers' inquiry methodology, one of my questions asked my participants to describe an average workday. The most common response to this question can be summarized by the following:

There is no average workday! I can give you an average work month but I probably can't give you an average workday. I have a revolving group of clients who have their own schedules, so sometimes I'm working with this one or that one or whatever. At any point, I might be focused on a single client who has a tremendous amount of work, or I might have several clients who have several projects that I'm working on.

Others answered similarly: "Oh, it varies so much, I don't have an average workday to be honest," or "that's kind of hard because I go cyclical, in waves." The absence of a regular workday signals a flexibility of schedule, a key characteristic of freelancing. At any point Stocksy artists may be shooting, editing, working with clients, or working on other projects. For many this is complicated by competing interests, such as other jobs, clients, or other duties of life's work.

Flexible schedules are a common and ambivalent component of accounts of freelance and cultural work. For some the ability to set one's own schedule is a key motivator for choosing to be an independent worker. As Boltanski & Chiapello (2018) demonstrate, flexibility was a critical driver among management that sought to adapt the structure of emerging neoliberalism to answer the critiques waged against it from the Left throughout the 1960s and 70s. As the authors argue, capitalist firms' strategy since the 1980s was importantly one of flexibility, which "makes it possible to transfer the burden of market uncertainty onto wage-earners, but also subcontractors and other service providers" while implementing an organization of work that has them draw on a large pool of contractors to create "a labour force that is malleable in terms of employment, [...] working hours, or the duration of work" (pp. 217–218). These structural shifts surfaced in cultural industry and freelance discourse, which places flexibility of schedule as one of the biggest draws of a freelance lifestyle; in other words, the ability to pick and choose between work and leisure time at will.

As with many elements of cultural work, there is no unified impression of its features. For some, flexibility is a pleasurable escape from the drudgery of a 9-to-5 job,²⁷ while for others it represents the unwelcome infringement of work into "non-work" time. For an example of the former, one artist I spoke to has arranged their work life so that

²⁷ "So, ['work-life balance' is] really important to me. I moved back to be close to my family; I try to spend as much time with them as possible. And I do think that my current situation allows me a bit of flexibility in that area. So, yeah, that's a big part of why I wanted to work from home and why I didn't take a normal 9-to-5 job." (Stocksy member, personal communication).

long periods of intense work are broken up by long periods of travel. When asked if they enjoy that kind of rhythm they tell me, “Yeah, I mean, I can organize it however I want and so that’s how I’ve chosen to. So, I’m super happy with that situation.” Others mentioned Stocksy giving them the ability to pay their studio’s rent while being able to take summers off to travel with family, while one of the aforementioned mothers described their Stocksy income giving them the financial flexibility to pursue other artistic endeavours. This resonates with previous studies of freelance work that found similar experiences of freedom as being one of the primary benefits of such a working arrangement (Cohen, 2016, p. 127; Hesmondhalgh, 2013).

However, while there are clear benefits to the autonomous control over one’s own time, critics point out that there are usually important barriers to true freedom in this regard. In her survey of freelance journalists, Cohen (2016) found that “[p]aradoxically, while time is at the centre of many writers’ choice to work freelance and, importantly, is at the core of a desire for autonomy, it is experienced as a source of stress and anxiety in many ways that undermine the yearning for freedom from its binds” (p. 127). While a flexible schedule may be liberating in some respects, it also brings with it a general spread of work into non-work hours – or what Melissa Gregg (2011, 2014) calls “presence bleed.”

The expansion of work into life was a common feature of my interviews with Stocksy members. Like most freelancers, I heard stories of feeling always plugged in and on the clock, and a constant pressure to produce. As one artist tells me,

[I]t’s very hard because when you do stock photography it tends to blur the lines a lot. Because a lot of my images that I find sell the best are the ones that weren’t stock shoots, so they were just like off moments that I just happened to capture. And as time has gone on I’ve recognized more moments that are stock-worthy moments or I might think they’re stock-worthy moments. I feel like for stock photography you’re almost on all the time if you have your iPhone or something in your pocket, unless you have a planned shoot. So, it’s very difficult.

While the “blurring of lines” is a common refrain in accounts of cultural work, these words indicate a special intensity of this condition that comes with being a stock photographer. As the mention of their iPhone suggests, the ubiquity of photographic technology means that it is very difficult for a photographer to leave their camera – and therefore their work – behind in non-work time. For Stocksy members who have other streams of income,

stock photography occupies a supplementary role whereby they work their “day job” and then shoot stock in their free time. As one member puts it: “So, for a long time there was no work-life balance because I was trying to grow a [photography] business and then I would do Stocksy in my free time.” While some artists framed this “always shooting” mentality as a pleasurable by-product of being passionate about their work,²⁸ for many others it was a source of stress and anxiety.

The second major area where flexibility arose was in terms of contribution frequency for Stocksy. Many like that they can submit imagery to the platform whenever they want and are not penalized or shamed if they do not contribute. One member summarizes this as “you can get as involved as you want. But what I love about it is nobody knocks you if you don’t, and that’s okay.” Members confirmed to me that there is a correlation between how frequently you submit and how much money you make (provided the images are approved by the editorial team²⁹), leading to a “hustle” from the more active members who pull in a lot of the income while there is another segment of the membership who contribute infrequently. There is no standard for involvement in the co-operative, it is entirely up to the member to produce content at the rate they see fit – or are able to maintain.

Here, Stocksy affords a flexibility to its membership to make money on their own terms, a certain meritocratic ethos that mirrors some of the logics of start-up culture and the cultural industries. In my conversations, this theme arose when I would ask how members feel about how Stocksy distributes profits based on sales (versus a more egalitarian approach employed at many worker co-operatives). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Stocksy has faced criticism for this model that creates something akin to a “winner-take-all market” with enormous differences in income (Schor, 2017). Once again, the artists I spoke to unanimously reacted against this critique. In the words of

²⁸ One artist in particular reported the enjoyment they derive from having photography “always at the forefront of my mind”: “Yeah... I love it. I mean, I’m looking at everything through the lens of: ‘How can this be a beautiful photo?’ Or, ‘How can I save this?’” Importantly, this member has a full-time job so they do not rely on Stocksy for a large portion of their livelihood in the way other respondents in this study do.

²⁹ Stocksy cites its strict editorial standards as one of the ways it maintains its high level of quality that keeps the operation afloat. Separately, some members expressed frustration when their images get rejected, however it was balanced by a trust and understanding of headquarters and the editing team. In other research on Stocksy, Schor (2017) found similar tensions between artist rejection and editorial control.

one member: “You have 1,000 people, but if you have 300 who are working it, those 300 deserve to be getting money. The 700 who do jack shit don’t deserve a penny. You get out what you put in.”

On the one hand, the “you get out what you put in” mentality is justified as necessary for a co-op of Stocksy’s size with a huge variance in contributions. There are many absentee members of Stocksy who do not contribute (“The 700 who do jack shit”) while another subset of the membership are full-time stock photographers for whom “this is their income, this is their livelihood, this is the only way they make a dime and pay their bills [...] these people are busting their ass” (Stocksy member, personal communication). In this view, a more equitable distribution of the profits would drive away those hard-working contributors while the others got paid for the work performed by others. On the other hand, previous research suggests that allegedly meritocratic configurations of work reinforce existing patterns of social exclusion. For example, Angela McRobbie’s (2002, 2016) work points to the contradictions between the narratives of cultural work that situate them as open and accessible to everyone and the structural barriers that prevent access to those belonging to less privileged groups. Similarly, other research on the cultural industries has found that meritocratic attitudes are widespread where a “belief in an open and fluid occupational sector is set against the backdrop of broader social, public policy, and academic concerns about the nature of the cultural sector” (Taylor & O’Brien, 2017, p. 28). Indeed, the ostensible neutrality of cultural industries discourse obscures the very real challenges that people face in participating equally.

The question of meritocracy and “getting out what you put in” once again points to some of the ambivalences of the co-operative model. For one, it means that Stocksy members have a huge amount of flexibility in their working lives and are never pressured to contribute if their attention has been placed elsewhere. Though my interviews confirmed that higher member earnings are correlated with frequent contribution, the residual income from past shoots also gives members an ongoing income stream to support themselves when they are not working.³⁰ Further, Stocksy’s situation in a highly competitive marketplace means that it must do everything it can to retain its members

³⁰ For one member who owns their own photography business, this kind of residual earning was a key reason for joining: “I wanted an alternate form of revenue because in my business, I have to [work there] to make money, it’s not like I make a product and it sells, I constantly have to do it.”

and their high quality of imagery, which at the same time means reproducing some of the challenging aspects of start-up culture. For their part, Stocksy headquarters is doing what it can to help its members be more secure and independent. For example, Vincent tells me that there are frequent discussions about securing insurance for Stocksy members, though due to the large international membership it is a “massive project” that “hasn’t been manageable yet” (Personal communication, February 5, 2019). The relative newness and experimental nature of a co-operative like Stocksy means that ideas of flexibility are often present and continually negotiated.

The theme of flexibility at Stocksy further reminds us that the co-operative is subject to many of the whims and trends of the cultural labour market. Also, as demonstrated in relation to *independence*, experiences of flexibility are varied and can be simultaneously enjoyable and restrictive. For many of the Stocksy workers I spoke to, the flexibility the co-operative affords is a huge benefit to their professional and personal lives and enables them to choose their hours and organize their lives as they like. On the other hand, the state of the photography industry means that this flexibility – from Stocksy or other forms of work – can manifest itself as stress and a never-ending flow of work at the expense of leisure time. As Nicole Cohen (2016) aptly puts it, “[l]ike most aspects of freelancing, experiences of time, including long hours and a crunch to meet deadlines, are mediated by [...] feelings of choice” (p. 129). Choice is a powerful component of a freelance cultural career, empowering in so many ways while also individualizing and shifting the patterns and structures of work (McRobbie, 2016, ch. 1).

5.4. Conclusion & discussion

The line between precarity and autonomy is thin and easily crossed, meaning the “autonomous worker can always turn into the precarious worker” (Terranova, 2006, p. 33). Complicating this further are the ways that these experiences and subjectivities are understood as simultaneously autonomous and precarious to the extent that the two can become blurred. For, “[e]mployment situations that promise flexible schedules, a diversity of work, and the chance to be creative often come with trade-offs that include, among others, a lack of entitlements, uncertainty with regard to continuing paid work, and poor remuneration” (de Peuter, 2010, p. 37). The presence of themes flexibility, independence, and difference in the words of Stocksy members indicates at once an opportunity to understand the meanings that cultural workers attach to their own

experiences (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 19) as well as how they perceive and construct their work that can have wider ramifications on discourses of labour (Cockayne, 2016, p. 74). In the context of this study, the question then becomes how a co-operative like Stocksy is able to “form a testing ground for micro-level forms of social security aiming to improve the work conditions for independent workers in the creative industries” (Cnossen, 2018, p. 14).

From my conversations with its members, Stocksy as a co-operative does offer just this: small-scale solidarity and security for a flexible workforce accustomed to working alone. As we saw in chapter 3, the ties of community apparent at Stocksy reveals some of the promise of co-operation. Though not without its challenges, the co-operative form offers a chance for dispersed workers to come together as a unit and advance a common interest that benefits them all. As de Peuter, Cohen & Saraco (2017) argue in the related context of coworking spaces, the practices of mutual aid among otherwise independent workers can be “transformative” in coping with precariousness, exposing gaps in social services, and provide “spaces as a site on which to foster sustainable livelihoods and alternative economies” (p. 703). The mutual aid and ethical decision-making practiced at Stocksy points to a similar relevance among independent members, whose autonomy is at once enjoyable and troublesome.

In terms of autonomy, Stocksy does offer opportunity for its members to enjoy some of the benefits of independence and flexibility while shielding them from some of the pitfalls of precarity. As we have seen, Stocksy’s sense of difference helps us better understand how co-operatives function as an alternative, something that troubles the labour-capital relationship, brings an ethical praxis into the workplace, and prioritizes worker control and decision-making (de Peuter & Dyer-Witthford, 2010). The theme of independence describes how Stocksy members operate as individual freelancers in the cultural sector, enjoying the fruits of independence while navigating some of its pernicious challenges. Finally, the flexibility involved in Stocksy work represents the dual edge of the autonomous worker who is at once free to set their own schedule, but just as free to have their work take it over. These facets of autonomy combine to create a picture of co-operative stock photography production that is improved over that of the sole cultural workers, yet not without ambiguities relating to gender and the tensions of shared community.

Additionally, the Stocksy model holds a special relevance for mothers with childcare responsibilities, for whom independence can be both an empowering by-product of being able to shoot stock photography in the domestic space. The growing prominence of digital technologies at home, work, and beyond open new combinations of motherhood and work. Autonomist feminists have rightly asserted that motherhood, domestic labour, and (re)production have been critical to capitalist accumulation for a very long time (Dalla Costa & James, 1975; Federici, 2006, 2014; Fortunati, 1995; Jarrett, 2015). Critiquing orthodox Marxism's inattention to the gendered specifics of reproduction, these authors point out that reproductive labour³¹ is central to capitalist production and valorization – or, put most simply, “those who produce the producers of value must be themselves productive of that value” (Federici, 2019, p. 56). More recently, greater attention has been paid to the ways that domestic labour and more classic forms of waged work combine. For as the technologically-boasted social factory spreads frontiers of work across our lives it opens new forms of domestic labour that reconfigure the old. As Luckman (2015) argues, the concept of “mumpreneurialism” “furnishes us with a different picture of (mostly) women’s home-based labour, one featuring more economically, socially, culturally, and racially empowered women than those previously the focus of academic studies of home work practices” (pp. 96–97). While the experience of simultaneous production and reproduction encompassed by the “mumpreneur” can be a challenge,³² so too can it open up potential for “identity blurring, family role to work enrichment and work/life harmony” (Ekinsmyth, 2014, p. 1245). Indeed, for the Stocksy mothers I spoke to, the co-operative was a boon for different reasons, but ultimately favourable for valorizing the photographic work that they were already doing.

These experiences of, and reflections on, the autonomy afforded by the co-operative model further point to some of the subjective formations of freelance cultural

³¹ This view of reproduction is not limited to the body, however, and can encompass a wide range of labours including the affective and the emotional (Laslett & Brenner, 1989), and has been critiqued for its tendency to flatten the interests of (racially) diverse women (Glenn, 1992) as well as its tendency to split production into a binary of unpaid domestic versus waged labour (Gibson-Graham, 1996).

³² The opportunity to be challenged by the experience of “mumpreneurialism” is one that is often predicated on a great deal of existing security and privilege, as demonstrated by the examples above. Adding to the complexity of this category are its normative tendencies that help underline the values of childrearing and middle-class parenting. Other, less acceptable forms of “mumpreneurialism,” like sex workers who are also mothers, are frequently ignored.

work. The ways that Stocksy members position themselves – as members of a community, as independent freelancers, as self-employed businesses of one, as co-operators or co-owners – indicates how the immaterial labour of Stocksy artists helps to position their subjectivities as directly productive (Hearn, 2008, p. 207; Lazzarato, 1996). The subjectivity of co-operation is in a sense antagonistic towards the subjectivities produced by immaterial labour under capitalism, an antidote to individuality and precarity masked as flexibility. Another autonomist concern, precarity is similarly involved at Stocksy largely due to the nature of the stock photography industry whose workers overwhelmingly take on the characteristics of a precarious workforce. In this way, Stocksy is an answer to the neoliberal forces of stock photography that precarize the industry and isolate its workforce. While Stocksy artists face some of the challenges of precarious work and the meritocratic ethos can lead to a disproportionate division of earnings, the co-operative itself represents a space where they are able to access higher pay, mutual support, and a fair market for their work. Finally, the “temporality” of stock photography work means that it has the tendency to spread into other parts of “non-work” time (Gill & Pratt, 2008). While some of the members I spoke to earn enough to resist this, others noted the stress of the ever-expanding social factory, especially for labourers whose tools of production are always in their pockets.

It is critical to underscore that the cultural worker autonomy afforded by co-operation is not a substitute for other, more widespread changes in society. Because, while autonomy is often desirable, viewed differently the independence of this position slots nicely into the individual ethic of contemporary neoliberalism. For while the idea of a worker co-operative can appeal to “radical critics of capitalism,” so too does it attract “moderate reformers and can even be integrated into neoliberal discourses of entrepreneurship and individual responsibility” (Sandoval, 2016a, p. 58). For this reason, co-operatives alone cannot be the solution for cultural workers, they must be a part of a larger network of struggles. As de Peuter & Dyer-Witthford (2010) argue, advancing the potential of co-operatives depends “on worker coops becoming part of a broader movement [...] creating not just more work but rather workable alternatives to the dominant mode of production” (p. 48). Here, Stocksy presents a promising first step, prefiguring future possibilities by doing well by workers in the here-and-now. What is yet to be seen, however, is how this can connect to a “broader movement” of struggle.

To conclude, the experiences of autonomy of Stocksy members represents at once a continuation of discourses of flexible cultural work as well as a subversive answer to many of those same notions. To lean back again on a recurring term in this thesis, autonomy for Stocksy workers is in many ways ambivalent. However, it adds to the literature on cultural industries that experiences of work are never uniform and are understood differently across different sites and in different situations. But what Stocksy – and the co-operative model – represents is a hopeful alternative to some of the rhythms of cultural production. In other words, while it is faced with noteworthy challenges, they must be read alongside the positive and ethical offerings of the co-operative. Stocksy is able to exceed the existing capitalist stock photography industry in several important ways, and its ambivalences should not be read as fatal flaws of the co-operative system. Instead, let us look to build on the ways that co-operatives are able to simultaneously help precarious cultural workers and resist some of the pitfalls of the neoliberal workplace.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

“To this extent we do not say that achieving a wage is the revolution. We say, however, that it is a revolutionary strategy”

(Nicole Cox & Sylvia Federici, 1975, p. 14)

“PAY THE FUCKING ARTIST”

(T-Shirt in Stocksy’s Online Store, n.d.)

In her reading of the 1970s feminist movement of wages for housework, Kathi Weeks (2011) considers the importance of demands as a strategy. In examining this moment which saw women demanding payment for their domestic labour and in so doing highlighted the arbitrariness of the wage system and the divisions between productive and reproductive work under capitalism, Weeks takes issue with wages for housework for a few reasons – including but not limited to its antiquated political position and reification of gendered divisions of labour. However, she does see value in the practice of demanding, at once performative and provocative, aimed at goals not explicitly stated in the demand itself. In Weeks’ view, “the performative dimension is crucial: the demand for wages [for housework] was less about meeting existing needs than expanding them, less about the satisfaction of desire than its cultivation” (p. 135). Demanding is a practice of making visible and asserting that one is the kind of person who can make demands, leading Weeks to explain the demand for wages for housework as a “dual character,” in other words being “a reformist project with revolutionary aspirations” (p. 136).

Here Weeks touches on one of the foremost historical tensions of co-operatives, a movement in many ways on a separate, often less radical trajectory. Rosa Luxemburg’s (1973) aptly named book *Reform or Revolution* considered these two strategies in the context of the German social democratic party of her time, in which trade unions and co-operatives were being deliberated as possible revolutionary avenues. She was firmly against the reformist track, arguing ultimately that “[o]nly the hammer blow of revolution” can break down the capitalist wall (1973, p. 29). Reform is tantamount to “proposing to change the sea of capitalist bitterness into a sea of socialist sweetness by progressively pouring it into bottles of social reformist lemonade,” ultimately being “an idea that is merely more insipid but no less fantastic” (p. 29). The

debate is a familiar one: can we incrementally change capitalism for the better, or is a total overhaul the only thing that can rearrange the structures of power on a more equitable basis? Is Weeks' "dual character" of reform *and* revolution desirable, or even possible?

This thesis assigns a similar "dual character" to co-operatives: a prefigurative project that is reformist with potentially revolutionary suggestions. Writing elsewhere, Luxemburg (1925) argues that

There are not two different class struggles of the working class, an economic and a political one, but only one class struggle, which aims at one and the same time at the limitation of capitalist exploitation within bourgeois society, and at the abolition of exploitation together with bourgeois society itself. (p. 60)

Here, she notes the importance of limiting exploitation while simultaneously moving towards eliminating it. As I argue through the case study of Stocksy United, co-operatives are able to serve as a similar means through which to reduce exploitation of cultural workers, giving them voice, fair pay, and reducing the isolation that so often pairs with freelancing. While these benefits are tempered with some notable pitfalls – including the reproduction of social patterns of exclusion, significant stratifications in pay, and limitations imposed by a competitive market – it nonetheless suggests some of the ways that co-operatives are able to reduce exploitation in the here-and-now, affording us time and space to work towards something better.

In talking with me, one Stocksy member reflects on the politics of co-operatives and in so doing summarizes the place of Stocksy within a discussion of cultural work. As they put it:

In America where we are, a lot of workers don't make a fair wage, especially women, and that's not the case at Stocksy [...] There's a lot of wage disparity in America and so it does feel political. Like, 'You know what? I'm being treated equally.' It's sad that that's revolutionary in its own right, but I'm being treated as I should be and that's a novel idea.

Indeed, while it is disappointing that in their circumstances fair pay is "revolutionary," for a cultural workforce accustomed to little protections or respect, being paid well is actually a fairly radical development. Further, these words nicely encapsulate the ambivalence of Stocksy's politics: on the one hand, Stocksy's benefits in the context of the brutal stock photography industry represents a fairly novel and "revolutionary" proposition for

precarious stock photographers. On the other, it is unfortunate that something as basic as fairness at work can be considered so in the first place. While the ostensible revolution of getting fairly remunerated for your artistic labour is not as much of a “declaration of radical antagonism” (Weeks, 2011, p. 133) as the demand for wages for housework, it nonetheless indicates a similar position of co-operatives as practical, worker-driven experiments in fairness, voice, and democracy at work.

6.1. A theory of cultural co-operation

This thesis represents an effort to expand on the growing literature on collective resistance and co-operation in the cultural industries. It began by laying out a theoretical background that involves a combination of autonomist Marxist writings and the work of J.K. Gibson-Graham to build a theory of the co-operative model as a promising if ambivalent answer to trends of precarization and flexibilization that have intensified under post-Fordist capitalism. It places co-operatives as an important but fraught possibility of creating autonomous spaces for worker power, control, and subjectivity in the realm of cultural work.

Next, I charted the theme of “community” which arose early and often in my conversations with Stocksy members who overwhelmingly felt that they were a part of a community within the co-operative, whether it was within Stocksy forums or meet-ups, with other members outside of the co-operative, and with their staff co-members who work at or with headquarters. However, while community at Stocksy presented members with clear benefits, an antidote to the isolation of cultural freelancing, and a sense of “economic being-with” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 84), so too did tensions emerge around hierarchies of gender, age, experience, and artistic style. Most notably, there were concerns about the Stocksy forum and other co-operative spaces that are dominated by men, leading women to search for their community and solidarity through other networks. Finally, with a necessity for strict limits on acceptance to the co-operative, the community at Stocksy is a very exclusive space. While this can be justified by arguing for the continued existence of the co-operative – in other words, if they gave membership to every artist who applied, Stocksy would struggle to stay afloat – it nevertheless points to some concerns about the model and its ability to serve a larger group of people and withstand the pressures of existence in a non-co-operative market.

I then charted the various elements of what I call “autonomy” at Stocksy, which can be broken down into three subsets: difference, independence, and flexibility. These themes help us recognize the spectrum of autonomy enjoyed by members, at once empowering and ambivalent, in order to understand the possibilities and pitfalls of co-operation. Further drawing on work from autonomist Marxism and social reproduction theory, it considered the interactions between Stocksy’s operations and discourses of cultural work that place them as liberating, egalitarian, and novel, ultimately arguing that Stocksy both continues problematic discourses of cultural work while simultaneously undermining them. The degrees of autonomy are both enjoyed and empowering while also restricting and precarious, in what Cohen (2016) would call the “double-edged nature of freelance work” (p. 7). While freelancers in general enjoy a “microautonomy” (Cohen, 2016, p. 117) that straddles control and vulnerability, this study suggests that co-operatives present a widening of the former with a reduction in the latter, a simple “act of resistance and a refusal to accept that one person’s success depends on another’s failure” (Sandoval, 2018, p. 126).

6.2. Lessons & recommendations

In order to learn from Stocksy’s example and build on the co-operative movement, one of my concluding questions for members was if they had any advice for future co-operators in the cultural industries. Answers ranged, with some stressing the importance of having leadership to guide the group through the earliest stages, some saying that transparency was key and you need to involve as many people as you can to come together as a group, while others pointing to the usefulness of listening to your fellow co-operators: “I think that’s the one thing that really sets Stocksy apart is how much they listen to all of their contributors and how they act on the feedback that they have gotten. And not in a slow, ‘Yeah, we’ll get to that’ way, in a very immediate and thoughtful way.” Each of these points are replicable for a growing co-operative and should be involved from the beginning to involve more artists.

However, it is important to note that Stocksy began from a fortunate place in many respects. Its founders had already made significant money from their ownership of iStock when it was sold to Getty Images, and those same people enjoyed prominence in the stock photography sector that gave them an advantage in recruiting members for

their new co-operative – neither of which are easily available to a co-operator starting from scratch. The model itself is attractive, but Stocksy was, in the view of one member, “the perfect storm of all the elements”:

I think the magic ingredient, to be honest, in this case was having Bruce [Livingstone] and Brianna [Wettlaufer] who, a) were stock industry veterans, b) they were committed to a fair co-op policy, but c) to be quite frank, they were able to put in the seed money to make it happen. And without that seed money, I don't believe it could have ever happened. [...] So, I don't think that it's potentially repeatable in the stock photography business. Theoretically, it is, but it would be very, very difficult to do.

As with any enterprise, capital remains key to success no matter its model or politics. Funding has been a historical thorn in the side of the co-operative movement and the same challenge presents itself for worker-driven technologies – like platform co-operatives – that usually struggle to compete with the dominant capitalist tech firms because of a tendency toward monopoly and huge start-up costs (Brophy & Grayer, forthcoming). To remedy this, Astra Taylor (2016) argues for co-operatives that aim to “transform or reform the existing economic apparatus” (p. 235). In other words, to overcome barriers to funding and long-term survival, co-operatives must resist the urge to be insular and join in a global network of co-operatives and progressive enterprises with a common goal of overhauling the system (de Peuter & Dyer-Witford, 2010; Duda, 2016; Sandoval, 2016b).

A further challenge identified in the Stocksy case study is how to navigate tensions and social hierarchies among members. Specifically, new co-operatives should address differences among the membership from the outset so that the theoretically open co-operative model does not reproduce patterns of social exclusion. Implementing an understanding of diversity that “actively encourage[s] learning across demographic lines” can overcome the limits of a diverse membership and do justice to the participatory ideal of a co-operative (Meyers & Vallas, 2016, p. 123). As Schor (2016) points out, these issues are magnified for platform co-operatives whose members do not always share the same culture, therefore early co-operators must be “highly attuned to subtle social dynamics that valorize the practices and traits of dominant groups” in order to stop exclusion from developing (p. 42). These are very real challenges for a platform co-operative like Stocksy, and it will be interesting to see how they are navigated in the future. For now, we must take away that in a co-operation, commitments to equality and

justice must be intersectional (Collins & Bilge, 2016), taking into account the various and interlocking elements of identity that are at play within a large and diverse membership.

It should be noted again that this study has been a limited observation on Stocksy based on my conversations with 12 Stocksy members over the early months of 2019. It does not represent a full-scale survey of Stocksy members, nor is the sample indicative of the broader Stocksy membership beyond those I spoke to. While I do not claim to make factual statements on co-operatives based on my study, the work represents a limited and worker-driven investigation that explores theories of cultural co-operation. Noting that my sample was exclusively North American and white, future research in this area should investigate Stocksy's global workforce and the dynamics of co-operation and cultural work that play out on the platform among diverse contexts and people. While I did not have the opportunity to speak to a wider range of people, in light of the globalized nature of platforms and cultural work a global analysis with greater attention paid to cultural and racial dynamics would be worthwhile and important. In a similar way, a survey of later adopters of the Stocksy platform would generate some insights not provided by my study because of its focus on members who have been with the co-operative for a relatively long period of time.

6.3. Concluding thoughts

From my first interview with a Stocksy member in February 2019 to speaking to CEO Mike Cook in October of that same year, Stocksy's number of Class C artist-members rose from 1,036 to 1,124, an increase in membership that underscores two important points. First, it simply demonstrates that the co-operative is growing and new members are being brought in to expand the collection and membership, meaning that more people are able to access the benefits of this model of co-operation. As we have seen, in the stock photography industry that is so often characterized by a race to the bottom in terms of prices (and therefore artist payment), Stocksy's growth indicates that their model is succeeding despite strong headwinds. Second, it indicates that the membership's choice to lift the member cap – which I have framed, following J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006), as an instance of “economic being-in-common” (p. 84) whereby Stocksy members practice mutual economic interdependence – has been paying off. While Stocksy has some very real limits on growth based on their highly competitive

market and requirement to do right by the members they already have, their model is nonetheless finding space to bring more people in.

From an autonomist perspective, co-operatives can represent experiments in the separation of worker from capital. Opportunities of worker control express working class autonomy, indicating that “no matter how difficult or doomed the experiment, the desire to do without the boss is latent and capable of periodic realization” in a way that demonstrates that autonomy is always possible and answering “why labor aspires [to it], despite hardly ever attaining it” (Burgmann, Jureidini, & Burgmann, 2014, p. 99). As some have pointed out, the autonomy presented by a co-operative does not demonstrate a wholesale break from capital or existence within the system (Gindin, 2016). However, it does follow in many ways the autonomy sought by feminists demanding a wage for housework, in other words, “a condition of collective autonomy” that affords “freedom as the time and space for invention” (Weeks, 2011, p. 145). Stocksy gives its members fair payment and in so doing gives them a break from the conditions of the neoliberal labour market. In this or other co-operative circumstances, this could represent “the creation of social zones of human resistance” (Berardi, 2009, p. 220) to expand our autonomy and assert labour’s independence from capital. I argue that co-operatives are not revolutionary ends but they can represent revolutionary means – a “revolutionary strategy,” to borrow from Cox & Federici (1975, p. 14). This study suggests that a co-operative committed to equality and fairness can protect against some of the pitfalls of precarious work, including isolation, low pay, and unstable earnings. While these benefits are balanced by ambivalent qualities, they nonetheless represent ways that the economy is being acted on, paying attention to specific needs of people and communities instead of stumbling an overwhelming analysis of capitalist domination (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 264). In the words of the late socialist activist Grace Lee Boggs, we need to “Think about the people, not just the system,” because “[i]f you only look at the crimes of the system you aren’t looking at the people, and you won’t meet their needs” (In Schneider, 2018, p. 92). While it is important to keep an analysis of capitalism at the fore, an all-encompassing drive to do so neglects the people that need help the most. Co-operatives, as needs-based enterprises do just this, while at the same time keeping an eye on the future.

It bears repeating that every single member I spoke to for this research likes Stocksy a great deal and agreed it was a positive force in their lives. Therefore, in the spirit of workers' inquiry and prioritizing the voice of labour, I will conclude with the words of one of the Stocksy members I interviewed. Of all my conversations, of which several included no qualms at all,³³ this member offered the most critiques of the co-operative model. However, at the end of our interview they stopped me to qualify their words, encapsulating the hope that Stocksy presents for a precarious cultural workforce:

I just wanted to say that, like with everything, there's gripes and groans. But overall, Stocksy's a very, very positive thing, and in the stock industry it's a shining light, there's nothing else like it out there. I know there's tons of people clamouring to get into Stocksy because if you take away even everything else, it's just the overall fairness of the royalty model and the profit distribution. I don't want to overstate any of the negative things I said because everything has their negative components to it, and everything has different lifecycles. But compared to anything else out there, it's just way, way above it.

³³ In the words of one member: "I love Stocksy. I don't know if I'm a good interview because I don't really have anything bad to say! Like, I just feel so lucky to be a part of it. I really haven't had any bad experiences."

References

- Aaltio, I., & Heilmann, P. (2010). Case Study as a methodological approach. In A. Mills, G. Durepos, & E. Wiebe (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- About Us. (n.d.). *Stocksy United*. Retrieved from <https://www.stocksy.com/service/about/>
- Alacovska, A., & Gill, R. (2019). De-westernizing creative labour studies: The informality of creative work from an ex-centric perspective. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22(2), 195–212.
- Alcoff, L. M., & Alcoff, J. (2015). Autonomism in theory and practice. *Science & Society*, 79(2), 221–242.
- Amit, V. (2010). Community as “good to think with”: The productiveness of strategic Ambiguities. *Anthropologica*, 52(2), 357–363.
- Arvidsson, A., Malossi, G., & Naro, S. (2010). Passionate work? Labour conditions in the Milan fashion industry. *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14(3), 295–309.
- Bear, J. B., & Collier, B. (2016). Where are the women in Wikipedia? Understanding the different psychological experiences of men and women in Wikipedia. *Sex Roles; New York*, 74(5–6), 254–265.
- Berry, D., & Bell, M. P. (2018). Worker cooperatives: Alternative governance for caring and precarious work. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 37(4), 376–391.
- Berardi, F. (2007). Schizo-Economy (M. Goddard, Trans.). *SubStance*, 36(1), 76–85.
- Berardi, F. (2009). *The soul at work: From alienation to autonomy*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).
- Boltanski, L., & Chiapello, E. (2018). *The new spirit of capitalism* (Updated edition). New York, NY: Verso.
- Bonefeld, W. (1994). Human practice and perversion: Beyond autonomy and structure. *Common Sense*, (15), 43–52.
- Boulton, C. (2015). Under the cloak of whiteness: A circuit of culture analysis of opportunity hoarding and colour-blind racism inside US advertising internship programs. *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, 13(2), 390–403.
- Boyle, D., & Oakley, K. (2018). *Co-operatives in the creative industries*. Manchester: Co-operatives UK.

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Braverman, H. (1974). *Labor and monopoly capital: The degradation of work in the twentieth century*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.
- Brent, J. (1997). Community Without Unity. In P. Hoggett (Ed.), *Contested communities: Experiences, struggles, policies* (pp. 68–83). Bristol: Policy Press.
- Bretos, I., Errasti, A., & Marcuello, C. (2018). Ownership, governance, and the diffusion of HRM practices in multinational worker cooperatives: Case-study evidence from the Mondragon group. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 28(1), 76–91.
- Brophy, E. (2008). *The organizations of immaterial labour: Knowledge worker resistance in post-Fordism* (Dissertation). Queen's, Kingston, ON.
- Brophy, E. (2017). *Language put to work: The making of the global call centre workforce*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brophy, E., Cohen, N. S., & de Peuter, G. (2015). Labor messaging: Autonomous communication in Creative Industries. In R. Maxwell (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Labor and Media* (pp. 315–326). London: Routledge.
- Brophy, E., & Grayer, S. B. (Forthcoming). Platform organizing: Tech worker mobilization and digital tools for labour recomposition. In T. Wolfson, C. Kumanyika, M. Rodino-Colocino, & B. Dolber (Eds.), *The gig economy: Workers and platforms*. Routledge.
- Burgmann, V., Jureidini, R., & Burgmann, M. (2014). Doing without the boss: Workers' control experiments in Australia in the 1970s. In I. Ness (Ed.), *New forms of worker organization: The syndicalist and autonomist restoration of class-struggle unionism* (pp. 184–204). Oakland, CA: PM Press.
- Camfield, D. (2007). The multitude and the kangaroo: A critique of Hardt and Negri's theory of immaterial labour. *Historical Materialism*, 15(2), 21–52.
- Cleaver, H. (2000). *Reading capital politically*. Edinburgh: AK Press.
- Cnossen, B. (2018). Creative work, self-organizing and autonomist potentiality: Snapshots taken from Amsterdam's art factories. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1–17.
- Cockayne, D. G. (2016). Sharing and neoliberal discourse: The economic function of sharing in the digital on-demand economy. *Geoforum*, 77, 73–82.
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

- Cohen, N. S. (2012). Cultural work as a site of struggle: Freelancers and exploitation. *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, 10(2), 141–155.
- Cohen, N. S. (2016). *Writers' rights: Freelance journalism in a digital age*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Collins, P. H., & Bilge, S. (2016). *Intersectionality*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
- Co-operatives UK. (n.d.). Co-operative advantage. Retrieved from: <https://www.uk.coop/coopadvantage>
- Conor, B., Gill, R., & Taylor, S. (Eds.). (2015). *Gender and creative labour*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Cornforth, C. (1995). Patterns of cooperative management: Beyond the degeneration thesis. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 16(4), 487–523.
- Cortese, A. (2016, July 20). A new wrinkle in the gig economy: Workers get most of the money. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/business/smallbusiness/a-new-wrinkle-in-the-gig-economy-workers-get-most-of-the-money.html>
- Covell, J. L., & Laursen, E. (2011). Getty Images, Inc. In D. Jacques & P. Kepos (Eds.), *International directory of company histories* (Vol. 121, pp. 211–217). Farmington Hills, MI: Gale.
- Cox, N., & Federici, S. (1975). *Counter-planning from the kitchen: Wages for housework, a perspective on capital and the left*. Bristol: Falling Wall Press.
- Cranford, C. J., Vosko, L. F., & Zukewich, N. (2003). Precarious employment in the Canadian labour market: A statistical portrait. *Just Labour*, 3.
- Dalla Costa, M., & James, S. (Eds.). (1975). *The power of women and the subversion of the community* (3rd ed). Bristol: Falling Wall Press.
- Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2017). *The new way of the world: On neoliberal society*. (G. Elliott, Trans.). Retrieved from <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=5177134>
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport. (1998). *Creative industries mapping Document*. Government of the United Kingdom. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-mapping-documents-1998>
- de Peuter, G. (2010). *The contested convergence of precarity and immaterial labour* (Thesis, Communication, Art & Technology: School of Communication). Retrieved from <http://summit.sfu.ca/item/11307>
- de Peuter, G. (2014a). Beyond the model worker: Surveying a creative precariat. *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 6(1), 263–284.

- de Peuter, G. (2014b). Confronting precarity in the Warhol economy. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 7(1), 31–47.
- de Peuter, G., Cohen, N. S., & Saraco, F. (2017). The ambivalence of coworking: On the politics of an emerging work practice. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 20(6), 687–706.
- de Peuter, G., & Dyer-Witheford, N. (2010). Commons and cooperatives. *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action*. Retrieved from <https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/affinities/article/view/6147A>
- Duda, J. (2016). Beyond luxury cooperativism. In *Ours to hack and to own: The rise of platform cooperativism, a new vision for the future of work and a fairer internet* (pp. 182–186). New York, NY: OR Books.
- Dyer-Witheford, N. (1999). *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and circuits of struggle in high technology capitalism*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Dyer-Witheford, N. (2001). Empire, immaterial Labor, the new combinations, and the global worker. *Rethinking Marxism*, 13(3–4), 70–80.
- Dyer-Witheford, N. (2015). *Cyber-proletariat: Global labour in the digital vortex*. London: Pluto Press.
- Dyer-Witheford, N., & de Peuter, G. (2009). *Games of empire: Global capitalism and video games*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Dyer-Witheford, N., Kjosen, A. M., & Steinhoff, J. (2019). *Inhuman power: Artificial intelligence and the future of capitalism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Eikhof, D. R., & Warhurst, C. (2013). The promised land? Why social inequalities are systemic in the creative industries. *Employee Relations*, 35(5), 495–508.
- Ekinsmyth, C. (2014). Mothers' business, work/life and the politics of 'mumpreneurship.' *Gender, Place & Culture*, 21(10), 1230–1248.
- Federici, S. (2006). *Precarious labor: A feminist viewpoint*. 9.
- Federici, S. (2014). *Caliban and the witch* (New edition). New York, NY: Autonomedia.
- Federici, S. (2019). Social reproduction theory. *Radical Philosophy*, 2(4), 55–57.
- Feree, M. M., & Hess, B. B. (2004). The feminist movement in the 20th century: Overviews. In J. Bomarito & J. W. Hunter (Eds.), *Feminism in Literature: A Gale Critical Companion* (Vol. 4, pp. 358–403). Farmington Hills, MI: Gale.
- Florida, R. L. (2014). *Rise of the creative class revisited*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Florida, R. L. (2017). *The new urban crisis: How our cities are increasing inequality, deepening segregation, and failing the middle class— and what we can do about it*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

- Fortunati, L. (1995). *The arcane of reproduction: Housework, prostitution, labor and capital*. (J. Fleming, Ed.; H. Creek, Trans.). New York, NY: Autonomedia.
- Fraser, J., & Gold, M. (2001). 'Portfolio workers': Autonomy and control amongst freelance translators. *Work, Employment and Society*, 15(4), 679–697.
- Fremeaux, I. (2005). New Labour's appropriation of the concept of community: A critique. *Community Development Journal*, 40(3), 265–274.
- Frenette, A., & Ocejo, R. E. (2018). Sustaining enchantment: How cultural workers manage precariousness and routine. *Race, Identity and Work*, 32, 35–60.
- Frosh, P. (2001). Inside the image factory: Stock photography and cultural production. *Media, Culture & Society*, 23(5), 625–646.
- Fumagalli, A., & Mezzadra, S. (Eds.). (2010). *Crisis in the global economy: Financial markets, social struggles, and new political scenarios*. Cambridge, MA: Semiotext(e).
- Galloway, S., & Dunlop, S. (2007). A critique of definitions of the cultural and creative industries in public policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 13(1), 17–31.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (1996). *The end of capitalism (As we knew it): A feminist critique of political economy*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2006). *A postcapitalist politics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gill, R. (2002). Cool, creative and egalitarian? Exploring gender in project-based new media work in Europe. *Information, Communication & Society*, 5(1), 70–89.
- Gill, R. (2014). Unspeakable inequalities: Post feminism, entrepreneurial subjectivity, and the repudiation of sexism among cultural workers. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 21(4), 509–528.
- Gill, R., & Pratt, A. (2008). In the social factory?: Immaterial labour, precariousness and cultural work. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25(7–8), 1–30.
- Glenn, E. N. (1992). From servitude to service work: Historical continuities in the racial division of paid reproductive labor. *Signs*, 18(1), 1–43.
- Gradin, S. (2015). Radical routes and alternative avenues: How cooperatives can be non-capitalist. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 47(2), 141–158.
- Gray, A. (2004). *Unsocial Europe: Social protection or flexploitation?* Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press.
- Gray, D. E. (2018). *Doing research in the real world* (4th edition). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Gregg, M. (2011). *Work's intimacy*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

- Gregg, M. (2014). Presence bleed: Performing professionalism online. In M. Banks, R. Gill, & S. Taylor (Eds.), *Theorizing cultural work: Labour, continuity and change in the cultural and creative industries*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Guenther, P. (2006). *Co-operative housing in Montréal: Criteria for success* (Masters Thesis). University of Calgary, Calgary.
- Gupta, C. (2014). The co-operative model as a 'living experiment in democracy.' *Journal of Co-Operative Organization and Management*, 2(2), 98–107.
- Haider, A., & Mohandesi, S. (2013, September 27). Workers' inquiry: A genealogy. *Viewpoint*.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Harvey, D. (1989). *The condition of postmodernity: An enquiry into the origins of cultural change*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Hearn, A. (2008). "Meat, Mask, Burden": Probing the contours of the branded "self." *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 8(2), 197–217.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. (2013). *The cultural industries* (3rd edition). London: SAGE.
- Hesmondhalgh, D., & Baker, S. (2008). Creative work and emotional labour in the television industry. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25(7–8), 97–118.
- Hesmondhalgh, D., & Baker, S. (2010). 'A very complicated version of freedom': Conditions and experiences of creative labour in three cultural industries. *Poetics*, 38(1), 4–20.
- Hesmondhalgh, D., & Baker, S. (2011). *Creative labour: Media work in three cultural industries*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hoggett, P. (1997). Contested Communities. In P. Hoggett (Ed.), *Contested communities: Experiences, struggles, policies* (pp. 3–17). Bristol: Policy Press.
- Hoover, M. (2016). What we mean when we say "cooperative." In T. Scholz & N. Schneider (Eds.), *Ours to hack and to own: The rise of platform cooperativism, a new vision for the future of work and a fairer internet* (pp. 108–112). New York, NY: OR Books.
- Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. W. (2001). *Dialectic of enlightenment* (J. Cumming, Trans.). New York, NY: Continuum.
- Hossein, C. S. (2014). Haiti's caisses populaires: Home-grown solutions to bring economic democracy. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 41(1), 42–59.
- Hutchins, B. L. (1912). *Robert Owen: Social reformer*. London: The Fabian Society.
- International Co-operative Alliance. (2015). The guidance notes on the co-operative principles. Retrieved from <https://www.ica.coop/en/media/library/research-and-reviews/guidance-notes-co-operative-principles>

- James, S. (1975). Introduction. In M. Dalla Costa & S. James, *The power of women and the subversion of the community* (3rd edition, pp. 5–20). Bristol: Falling Wall Press Ltd.
- Jarrett, K. (2015). *Feminism, labour and digital media: The digital housewife*. London: Routledge.
- Jones, P. A. (2008). From tackling poverty to achieving financial inclusion—The changing role of British credit unions in low income communities. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 37(6), 2141–2154.
- Kasmir, S. (2016). The Mondragon cooperatives and global capitalism: A critical analysis. *New Labor Forum*, 25(1), 52–59.
- Kessler, S. (2013, March 25). iStockphoto creator Bruce Livingstone takes a second stab at stock photos. *Fast Company*. Retrieved from <https://www.fastcompany.com/3007439/istockphoto-creator-bruce-livingstone-takes-second-stab-stock-photos>
- Kong, L. (2014). From cultural industries to creative industries and back? Towards clarifying theory and rethinking policy. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 15(4), 593–607.
- Lane, C. M. (2011). *A company of one: Insecurity, independence, and the new world of white-collar unemployment*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.
- Laslett, B., & Brenner, J. (1989). Gender and social reproduction: Historical perspectives. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 15, 381–404.
- Lau, R. (2018, December 21). Fredericton photographer learns tough lesson after submitting pic to stock photography site. *Global News Canada*.
- Lause, M. A. (2003). Industrial Workers of the World. In S. I. Kutler (Ed.), *Dictionary of American history* (pp. 345–349). Farmington Hills, MI: Gale.
- Lazzarato, M. (1996). Immaterial labor. In P. Virno & M. Hardt (Eds.), *Radical thought in Italy: A potential politics* (pp. 132–146). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Leadbeater, C., & Oakley, K. (1999). *The independents: Britain's new cultural entrepreneurs*. London: Demos.
- Lebowitz, M. A. (2003). *Beyond capital: Marx's political economy of the working class* (2nd edition). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Locke, S. (2013, March 25). Goodbye iStockphoto. Retrieved from: <http://www.seanlockephotography.com/2013/03/25/goodbye-istockphoto/>
- Luckman, S. (2015). *Craft and the creative economy*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Lupton, E., & Miller, J. A. (1996). *Design writing research: Writing on graphic design*. New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press.
- Luxemburg, R. (1925). *The mass strike, the political party and the trade unions* (P. Lavin, Trans.). Detroit, MI: Marxist Educational Society of Detroit.
- Luxemburg, R. (1973). *Reform or revolution* (Second edition). New York, NY: Pathfinder Press.
- Marx, K. (1864). *Inaugural address of the International Working Men's Association*. Retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1864/10/27.htm>
- Marx, K. (1866). *Instructions for the delegates of the provisional general council: The different questions*. Retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1866/08/instructions.htm>
- Marx, K. (1938). A workers' inquiry (E. O'Callaghan, Trans.). *New International*, 4(12), 379–381.
- Marx, K. (1973). *Grundrisse* (M. Nicolaus, Trans.). London: Penguin.
- Marx, K. (1990). *Capital volume I* (B. Fowkes, Trans.). London: Penguin.
- Matthews, D. (2018, May 31). With growth on the horizon, Stocksy United removes its membership cap. Retrieved from: <https://cooperativesfirst.com/blog/2018/05/31/with-growth-on-the-horizon-stocksy-united-removes-its-membership-cap/>
- McKercher, C., & Mosco, V. (2006). Editorial. *Canadian Journal of Communication; Toronto*, 31(3), 493–497.
- McRobbie, A. (2002). Clubs to companies: Notes on the decline of political culture in speeded up creative worlds. *Cultural Studies*, 16(4), 516–531.
- McRobbie, A. (2016). *Be creative: Making a living in the new culture industries*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Meehan, K., & Strauss, K. (2015). New frontiers in life's work. In K. Meehan & K. Strauss (Eds.), *Precarious worlds: Contested geographies of social reproduction* (pp. 1–22). Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Meyers, J. S. M., & Vallas, S. P. (2016). Diversity regimes in worker cooperatives: Workplace inequality under conditions of worker control. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 57(1), 98–128.
- Michael Stemm. (2018). *Walmarts Selling My Picture Without My Permission!* [Video file] Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWYCLzx5gxc>
- Miège, B. (1989). *The capitalization of cultural production*. New York, NY: International General.

- Miller, A. (1994). Pictures for rent. *Eye Magazine*, 4(14). Retrieved from <http://www.eyemagazine.com/feature/article/pictures-for-rent>
- Miller, G. R. (2012). "Gender trouble": Investigating gender and economic democracy in worker cooperatives in the United States. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 44(1), 8–22.
- Mitchell, K., Marston, S. A., & Katz, C. (2003). Introduction: Life's work: An introduction, review and critique. *Antipode*, 35(3), 415.
- Morgan, G., Wood, J., & Nelligan, P. (2013). Beyond the vocational fragments: Creative work, precarious labour and the idea of 'Flexploitation.' *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 24(3), 397–415.
- Morini, C. (2007). The feminization of labour in cognitive capitalism. *Feminist Review*, 87(1), 40–59.
- Morini, C., & Fumagalli, A. (2010). Life put to work: Towards a life theory of value. *Ephemera*, 10(3/4), 234–252.
- Morrow, O., & Dombroski, K. (2015). Enacting a postcapitalist politics through the sites and practices of life's work. In K. Meehan & K. Strauss (Eds.), *Precarious worlds: Contested geographies of social reproduction* (pp. 82–98). Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Mosco, V. (2014). Communication and cultural labor. In P. Smith (Ed.), *The renewal of cultural studies* (pp. 230–237). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Neilson, B., & Coté, M. (2014). Introduction: Are we all cultural workers now? *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 7(1), 2–11.
- Norander, S., & Brandhorst, J. (2017). Case study. In M. Allen (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of communication research methods* (pp. 117–119). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE
- Notes From Below. (2018). No politics without inquiry! (#1). Retrieved from: <http://www.notesfrombelow.org/issue/no-politics-without-inquiry>
- Oakley, K., Laurison, D., O'Brien, D., & Friedman, S. (2017). Cultural capital: Arts graduates, spatial inequality, and London's impact on cultural labor markets. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 61(12), 1510–1531.
- Ozarow, D., & Croucher, R. (2014). Workers' self-management, recovered companies and the sociology of work. *Sociology*, 48(5), 989–1006.
- Peck, J. (2005). Struggling with the creative class. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29(4), 740–770.
- Peck, J., & Theodore, N. (2012). Politicizing contingent work: Countering neoliberal labor market regulation... from the bottom up? *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 111(4), 741–761.

- Puusa, A., Mönkkönen, K., & Varis, A. (2013). Mission lost? Dilemmatic dual nature of co-operatives. *Journal of Co-Operative Organization and Management*, 1(1), 6–14.
- Research and Markets, R. and M. (2018). Stock images and videos market: Global outlook and forecast 2018-2023. Retrieved from <https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/4603488/stock-images-and-videos-market-global-outlook>
- Rodríguez-Darias, A. J., & Aguilera-Ávila, L. (2018). Gender-based harassment in cyberspace. The case of Pikara magazine. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 66, 63–69.
- Roggero, G. (2011). *The production of living knowledge: The crisis of the university and the transformation of labor in Europe and North America* (E. Brophy, Trans.). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Rosenblat, A., & Stark, L. (2016). Algorithmic labor and information asymmetries: A case study of Uber's drivers. *International Journal of Communication*, 10(0), 27.
- Ross, A. (2004). *No-collar: The humane workplace and its hidden costs* (Paperback edition). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Ross, A. (2009). *Nice work if you can get it: Life and labor in precarious times*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Roulston, K. (2014). Analysing interviews. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp. 297–312). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Rowe, J., Peredo, A. M., Sullivan, M., & Restakis, J. (2018). Policy supports for co-operative development: Learning from co-op hot spots. *Journal of Cooperative Studies*, 51(1).
- Sandoval, M. (2016a). Fighting precarity with co-operation?: Worker co-operatives in the cultural sector. *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics*, 88, 51–68.
- Sandoval, M. (2016b). What would Rosa do?: Co-operatives and radical politics. *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture*, 63(1), 98–111.
- Sandoval, M. (2018). From passionate labour to compassionate work: Cultural co-ops, do what you love and social change. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 21(2), 113–129.
- Sarjeant, E. A. (2018). *Practicing precarity: The contested politics of work experience in cultural industries* (Thesis, Communication, Art & Technology: School of Communication). Retrieved from <http://summit.sfu.ca/item/17994>
- Sarjeant, E., Brophy, E., Bilodeau, J., & Halloran, É. (2019, June 25). Autonomy among us: An interview with Quebec student strike organizers. *Viewpoint Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2019/06/25/autonomy-among-us-an-interview-with-quebec-student-strike-organizers/>

- Satgar, V. (2007). Cooperative development and labour solidarity: A neo-Gramscian perspective on the global struggle against neoliberalization. *Labour, Capital and Society*, 40(1/2), 56–79.
- Schiller, D. (1996). *Theorizing communication: A history*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Schleichkorn, H. (2007). Stock photography. In M. R. Peres (Ed.), *Focal encyclopedia of photography: Digital imaging, theory and applications, history, and science* (4th edition, pp. 350–353). Waltham, MA: Focal Press.
- Schneider, N. (2018). *Everything for everyone: The radical tradition that is shaping the next economy* (First Edition). New York, NY: Nation Books.
- Scholz, T. (2016). How platform cooperativism can unleash the network. In T. Scholz & N. Schneider (Eds.), *Ours to hack and to own: The rise of platform cooperativism, a new vision for the future of work and a fairer internet* (pp. 20–26). New York, NY: OR Books.
- Scholz, T., & Schneider, N. (2016). What This Is and Isn't About. In T. Scholz & N. Schneider (Eds.), *Ours to hack and to own: The rise of platform cooperativism, a new vision for the future of work and a fairer internet* (pp. 11–13). New York, NY: OR Books.
- Schor, J. B. (2017). *Disrupting stock photography: The case of Stocksy United*. Lecture presented at the Platform Co-operative Conference 2017. [Video file] Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/platformcoop17/09+Lecture+-+Juliet+Schor.mp4>
- Schor, J. B. (2016). Old Exclusion in Emergent Spaces. In T. Scholz & N. Schneider (Eds.), *Ours to hack and to own: The rise of platform cooperativism, a new vision for the future of work and a fairer internet* (pp. 38–42). New York, NY: OR Books.
- Shade, L. R., & Jacobson, J. (2015). Hungry for the job: Gender, unpaid internships, and the creative industries. *The Sociological Review*, 63(1), 188–205.
- Silva, N., & Wettlaufer, B. (2016). Stocksy United. In T. Scholz & N. Schneider (Eds.), *Ours to hack and to own: The rise of platform cooperativism, a new vision for the future of work and a fairer internet* (p. 78). New York, NY: OR Books.
- Staudenmaier, M. (2012). *Truth and revolution: A history of the Sojourner Truth Organization, 1969-1986*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.
- Stocksy United. (n.d.). Pay the Artist men's tee. Retrieved from: <https://merch.stocksy.com/products/pay-the-fucking-artist>
- Sullivan, J. L. (2007). Marketing creative labor: Hollywood “making of” documentary features. In C. McKercher & V. Mosco (Eds.), *Knowledge workers in the information society* (First paperback edition 2008). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

- Taylor, A. (2016). Non-cooperativism. In *Ours to hack and to own: The rise of platform cooperativism, a new vision for the future of work and a fairer internet* (pp. 233–237). New York, NY: OR Books.
- Taylor, M., & O'Brien, D. (2017). 'Culture is a meritocracy': Why creative workers' attitudes may reinforce social inequality. *Sociological Research Online*, 22(4), 27–47.
- Terranova, T. (2004). *Network culture: Politics for the information age*. London: Pluto Press.
- Terranova, T. (2006). Of sense and sensibility: Immaterial labour in open systems. In J. Krysa (Ed.), *Curating immateriality: The work of the curator in the age of network systems* (pp. 27–37). New York, NY: Autonomedia.
- Tokumitsu, M. (2015). *Do what you love: And other lies about success and happiness*. New York, NY: Regan Arts.
- Tronti, M. (1962). *Factory and society*. Retrieved from: <https://operaismoenglish.wordpress.com/2013/06/13/factory-and-society/>
- Tronti, M. (2019). *Workers and capital* (D. Broder, Trans.). Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books.
- Vieta, M. (2014). Learning in struggle: Argentina's new worker cooperatives as transformative learning organizations. *Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 69(1), 186–218.
- Virno, P. (1996). Notes on the "general intellect." In S. Makdisi, C. Casarino, & R. Karl (Eds.), *Marxism beyond Marxism*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Vosko, L. F. (2000). *Temporary work: The gendered rise of a precarious employment relationship*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Waisbord, S., & Mellado, C. (2014). De-westernizing communication studies: A reassessment. *Communication Theory*, 24(4), 361–372.
- Waters-Lynch, J., & Potts, J. (2017). The social economy of coworking spaces: A focal point model of coordination. *Review of Social Economy*, 75(4), 417–433.
- Weeks, K. (2011). *The problem with work: Feminism, Marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Wiksell, K. (2017). Campaigning for cooperatives as resistance to neoliberal capitalism. *Journal of Political Power*, 10(2), 236–254.
- Winland, D. (2010). Response to "Community as 'good to think with.'" *Anthropologica*, 52(2), 372–375.
- Woodcock, J. (2014). The workers' inquiry from Trotskyism to Operaismo: A political methodology for investigating the workplace. *Ephemera*, 14(1), 493–513.

- Wright, S. (2005). Reality check: Are we living in an immaterial world? *Mute*, 2(1). Retrieved from <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/reality-check-are-we-living-immaterial-world#>
- Zhang, M. (2013a, February 11). iStockphoto booting top photographer in wake of Getty/Google hoopla. Retrieved from: <https://petapixel.com/2013/02/11/istockphoto-booting-top-photographer-in-wake-of-gettygoogle-hoopla/>
- Zhang, M. (2013b, February 13). Stocksy is a new stock photo Co-op by the founder of iStockphoto. Retrieved from: <https://petapixel.com/2013/02/13/stocksy-is-a-new-stock-photo-co-op-by-the-founder-of-istockphoto/>