



# Introduction

Culture is good for you.

Culture will help keep you fit and healthy. Culture will bring communities together. Culture will improve your education<sup>1</sup> and get you higher wages during your career.<sup>2</sup> Culture will transform your village, town, or city for the better.<sup>3</sup> Culture is what makes countries successful. This is the message from governments,<sup>4</sup> as well as from arts and cultural organisations.<sup>5</sup>

Culture is an essential part of most people's lives.<sup>6</sup> Culture is watching a gripping television show or getting absorbed in the world of a video game. It is reading a book or writing a poem, going to see a band, discussing a film with friends. Culture is singing in a choir, acting on stage, or crafting a gift for the family.

These activities are just a few examples of culture. Culture captures what people make, what they participate in, and what they attend. Culture is a central part of what it means to be human.

This book explains why we need to be cautious about culture. We will demonstrate that culture is closely related to inequality in society.

Who produces culture reflects social inequality. The workforce in cultural occupations and cultural industries is highly unequal.<sup>7</sup> To ‘make it’ in a cultural job you need the sort of economic, social, and cultural resources that are not fairly shared within society.<sup>8</sup>

Who consumes culture reflects social inequality.<sup>9</sup> The audience attending artforms including theatre, classical music, opera, ballet, jazz, and exhibitions is a minority of the population.<sup>10</sup>

Participation has similar patterns. Painting, playing instruments, singing, dancing, writing, and performing are only done by a minority of the population.

The way we define culture reflects social inequality. What counts as culture, and what is excluded from the definition, is a site of long-standing debate.<sup>11</sup>

We know about attendance and participation from government surveys. These surveys contrast everyday activities, such as shopping, DIY, and listening to music, with formal cultural activity, such as attending a theatre or participating in a choir.<sup>12</sup>

Decisions in survey methods reflect that some cultural forms are given high social status, with considerable state funding and support. Other cultural forms are the preserve of commercial and community organisations. What counts as ‘high’ and ‘everyday’ culture reflects historical struggles over legitimacy.<sup>13</sup> What counts also reflects social inequalities associated with class, race, and gender.

These are just a few introductory examples of the relationship between culture and inequality. If producing, consuming, and even defining, culture is closely related to inequality, perhaps we should be asking whether culture is bad for you.

## Henna's story

To start to understand the relationship between inequality and culture we can hear from Henna. Henna was one of 237 creative and cultural workers we interviewed for the research and analysis presented in this book. Like the rest of our participants we've given her a pseudonym, so she could be honest and open in the interview. We were asking her about her career, and working life.

Henna was in her early thirties at the time of the interview. She is a South Asian woman from a middle-class background, living in London and working in film and television. As well as her middle-class origin, she had a degree from a very prestigious university.

To the outsider's eye she had every possible advantage to 'make it' in her chosen cultural career. Yet she was blunt about the reality of working life:

The UK film industry is not a meritocracy at all. It doesn't matter if you're intelligent or well-qualified or any of those things. What matters is who you know and who you've worked with. It's also massively to do with being a woman of colour ... They would much rather hire the White dude, and they feel more comfortable with the White dude, than the bolshy brown woman who seems to have done things that they don't feel comfortable with. Of course. That's just the reality of it.

Henna tells us some of our reasons why we've written this book, and why we've given it the provocative title of *Culture is bad for you*. She gives us the starting point for why we should question some of the 'good news' about culture.

Henna was a successful filmmaker, with an international reputation. She was candid and blunt about her experiences

in her cultural occupation. She reflected on the reasons that, despite her obvious talent and track record, she had not hit the same heights as some of her contemporaries.

‘Who you know and who you’ve worked with’ are how the labour market in film functions. The industry is risk-averse as a result of the huge costs of production (and of subsequent distribution and marketing), set against the uncertainty of success.

The issue of risk in the film industry is reflected in other cultural occupations. We may know a great deal about audience tastes, but we can never really be sure of what will be a hit. It is hard to be sure if investment in developing a new artist, a new musician, a new play, or a new novel will pay off.<sup>14</sup>

We would only get part of the explanation for Henna’s frustration if we focused on how the labour market functions.<sup>15</sup> Finding it difficult because of not knowing the right people, of not having key networks and social resources, is understandable in a field with very fast schedules. Time, in film as in many other industries, is money.

This wasn’t all that Henna told us. She told us her gender, and the colour of her skin, were given less value than those of her White, male colleagues. This was despite the claims by parts of the film industry, and by government policy, that film is open to any and all who are talented.<sup>16</sup>

This book tells the story of Henna’s observation that film, and much of the rest of culture, is not a meritocracy. It is not enough to be talented and hard-working to make it.

We will see how the workforce in cultural occupations is deeply unequal, with class, race, and gender constituting crucial axes of inequality. Film and television occupations are hostile to women; museums, galleries, and libraries are

marked by their Whiteness. Publishing is ‘posh’. The ‘poshness’ of specific cultural occupations, the absence of those from working-class origins, is not a new thing. It is a long-standing problem.

Inequalities in who works in cultural occupations are driven by several factors. Low and no pay are crucial in excluding those without financial resources from entering cultural jobs. At key points in careers, women face hidden, and not so hidden, discrimination. Childhood engagement in culture is important in getting a cultural career later in life. There are significant inequalities as people grow up. In many occupations the default image of a cultural worker, as Henna points out, is a White man from a middle-class background. People who are not part of that demographic group face substantial barriers to their success.

These are some examples of the dynamics that shape the sorts of culture we get. They shape the audience too. We will demonstrate how cultural consumption is highly unequal.

We sometimes think of culture as open to all. Government policy has made some museums free, and subsidised the cost of other artforms. Our analysis shows that engagement in many forms of government-supported culture are, at best, a minority concern. This is true whether we look at ticket sales or we survey people about what they attend.

Cultural production and cultural consumption are the two areas of focus for our story about culture and inequality. These two areas have seen a long-standing and rich set of research traditions and agendas associated with them.<sup>17</sup> We’re contributing new data and new analysis to this already extensive academic work.

## The *Panic!* project and partnership

Much of the new data and new analysis comes from two research projects. These were conducted by several academics, along with partners from the cultural sector. The focus of much of this work was raising awareness of what existing academic research was telling us about culture and inequality.

In 2015 Create London wanted to understand what they felt was a crisis for social mobility in the arts. Create's initial set of ideas created a research partnership. This brought Drs Sam Friedman, Daniel Laurison, Dave O'Brien, and Mark Taylor, along with support from Goldsmiths College, together with Create London and Barbican.<sup>18</sup> In the 2018 version Mark and Dave were joined by Dr Orian Brook, and Arts Emergency became a core partner with Barbican and Create London.<sup>19</sup> We were also lucky to work along with Drs Sara De Benedictis and Jordan Tchilingirian, Nikki Kane, and Bozena Wielgoszewska.

The 2015 project worked with the *Guardian* to survey cultural workers about their careers, as well as their values and attitudes. With help from trade unions and key individuals on social media we gathered 2,487 responses to that survey.

We then conducted interviews with 237 of those respondents, probing further elements of their cultural work and their cultural lives. We also used the interviews to double-check some of our survey findings.<sup>20</sup>

The survey and the interview fieldwork yielded massive amounts of fascinating data. The 2018 *Panic!* project reported on some of the findings.<sup>21</sup> It also allowed us to do more analysis of nationally representative datasets.

Using Census data and data from the government's Taking Part survey, which covers cultural activity in England, we were

able to report new findings about culture and inequality. We also drew on work with other academic collaborators,<sup>22</sup> presenting findings from the Labour Force Survey and from British Social Attitudes, and British Election Study survey data, as well as the original *Panic!* survey data.<sup>23</sup>

These elements were brought together in the industry and public facing report: *Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries*.<sup>24</sup> Along with the report, 2018 had an events and engagement programme driven by the arts partners, building on similar activities that took place in 2015.

*Culture is bad for you* is the third phase of these working relationships and that investigation into inequality and culture. *Panic!* showed how there was still a strong interest in our analysis, and we were keen to bring the stories from our interviewees into public debates. The *Panic!* project, and the book, reflects our contribution, but also some of the limitations of our expertise.

Orian worked in the cultural sector before training as a geographer: she has looked at mobility, broadly defined, and culture. Mark is a specialist in patterns of cultural consumption, primarily focused on class, race, gender, and education. Dave has written extensively about government policy on culture, as well as focusing on an intersectional approach to class issues in cultural jobs.

As a result, the book does not cover every axis of social inequality. Much more research is needed on, for example, the impact of disability in the creative workforce and in arts audiences, or the experience of LGBT+ individuals and communities. These are not areas in which any of us are experts, and it would have been inappropriate to claim such expertise. We are hopeful this book is a contribution to developing scholarship in those areas, as well as the more general study of inequality in society.

## Thinking about inequality

Inequality is now an important subject for academic research. Much of this has been driven by economists and sociologists.<sup>25</sup> That work has tended not to look at cultural and creative industries. Cultural and media studies have done extensive research on the subject. We're aiming to situate our analysis between these fields.

There is extensive, and highly politicised, debate about the nature and extent of inequality.<sup>26</sup> This includes the extent of inequality *within* countries, as well as *between* countries.<sup>27</sup>

In the UK, along with countries such as the United States and France, the focus of research has been on inequality between the very 'top' of society and the rest of the population. The core argument here is that wealth inequalities are becoming greater. This is because profits from financial resources are outstripping growth in other areas of the economy, such as wages. This means that those who already have financial assets are getting richer faster than the rest of society.<sup>28</sup>

The setting for these economic changes is a decade of reduced levels of overall economic growth and reduced levels of government spending following the financial crisis of 2008. Just as the richest at the top of society are getting richer, social support for the poorest has been reduced.<sup>29</sup>

Economic inequality is only one part of the story. There are various other forms of division reflecting our unequal society.<sup>30</sup> We can see this in research showing the persistence of gender and racial discrimination, along with prejudice against other types of minorities.<sup>31</sup> Inequality is also, in the UK and elsewhere, seen in geographic divides, for example between London and the rest of England.<sup>32</sup>



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We can think of these examples as social inequalities. These social divisions are linked to other sorts of resources beyond financial assets. These can include social networks and social connections.<sup>33</sup> Crucially, they have a cultural dimension. These sorts of inequalities are about what is valued and what is given worth.<sup>34</sup> This is the first part of our connection between inequality and the study of cultural production and consumption.

Social inequalities sit alongside economic inequalities. They also interact and intersect with each other. A useful example is the gender or racial pay gap.<sup>35</sup> We know women and people of colour are likely to receive lower rates of pay than their White and male colleagues, even where they are doing the same jobs. This reinforces their lower economic position, as well as reflecting a range of social prejudices.<sup>36</sup>

This example connects us to culture. Inequality reflects what is, and what is not, given value in society. This can be about financial assets or forms of labour. A good example is the way domestic work and childcare have low economic and social status, as compared with senior management positions.

What is valued in society is a much broader category than just economic assets. What is valued is much broader than objects too. What is valued includes people and social groups, as much as it does money. We can see this in how particular groups of people are afforded social status and social positions, while others struggle.<sup>37</sup>

The obvious contemporary example is found in the way immigration is discussed in contemporary politics. Immigrants are often demonised by contemporary media. Governments are keen to separate those with value to society and those they stigmatise<sup>38</sup> as ‘not useful’. These divisions can be seen

in discussions of people living in poverty, with long-standing discursive differentiation between deserving, respectable, and undeserving.<sup>39</sup>

This construction of worth and value is, at its heart, a cultural process.<sup>40</sup> It is highly dependent on culture, understood in a broad anthropological sense. It is also, in contemporary society, dependent on culture in a more narrow sense.

This is culture understood as the products of artistic and media practices. These can be state-funded, commercial, or more commonly a mixture of both. They can be fully professional, where everyone involved is being paid for their work, or they can capture the everyday activities of individuals and communities. Our cultural and creative industries, our media and arts occupations and institutions, are central to how value is afforded to individuals, communities, and even entire societies.

This is where we are focusing our attention. Inequality should not be conceived merely as an issue of income or even wealth. It is a cultural issue. We're going to focus on this cultural issue by looking at cultural production and cultural consumption.

Cultural production and cultural consumption shape what gets valued and given worth in society. In turn, what is given value and worth can challenge and change inequality. Or what is valued may reinforce and uphold the status quo.

### **What is a cultural job anyway?**

We're going to analyse inequality in cultural production and consumption by looking at cultural and creative industries. Our focus is on a specific set of jobs within those industries. We're interested in cultural occupations.

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Let's think about culture first. One view is that everyone, every day, is involved in making culture.<sup>41</sup> This understanding of cultural production is grounded in an *anthropological* view of culture. Here culture is the sets of signs and symbols, languages, everyday practices and activities, that constitute the social world.

This approach was refined and developed by cultural studies scholars. This intellectual project sought to destabilise and challenge hierarchies of high, legitimate, or elite culture. Cultural studies sought to include many of the practices of everyday life in our definition of legitimate culture. The contested cultural status of television<sup>42</sup> and the social importance of objects such as the Sony Walkman<sup>43</sup> are two useful historical examples.

This approach to the production and creation of culture is important. The academic tradition that was contesting cultural hierarchies was also the academic tradition that took seriously the idea that culture was an economic, or business and industrial, activity. Cultural producers were workers who make a contribution to the economy, in the same way as manufacturing, health care, or financial services.<sup>44</sup> In addition to being sources of jobs and growth in and of themselves, artistic and cultural organisations were seen as providing development and ideas for the wider economy.

That view of cultural production has a long, detailed, and keenly contested history. In government policies, especially in British and American cities, cultural activity came to be seen as an economic activity that could replace other, declining, industries.<sup>45</sup>

We can see the rise of creative industries is in these government policy approaches, along with academic work on economic measurement and classification. 'Creative industries' is a term that is quite familiar today.

It has not always been this way. Even now there are lively debates. These include debates over what constitutes a creative industry, if we should prefer the term cultural industries, and if the creative economy is distinct from cultural and creative industries.<sup>46</sup>

The category of creative industries is constituted by businesses and organisations, as well as jobs and occupations. It is important to note that *industries* and *occupations* are different categories.

Many uses of ‘creative industries’ tend to mix these two categories together, into a broad conception of the term. The categories of *occupations*, for example being an author and an actor, are usually intertwined with categories of *industries*, for example working in a bookshop or as an usher in the theatre.

The intertwining of *industry* and *occupation* initially seems to make sense. To give another intuitive example, jobs in cultural *industries* might be attractive to those seeking cultural *occupations*. We can think of the popular cliché of the aspiring author working in a bookshop, or the aspiring curator invigilating at exhibitions. The level of detailed subject or field knowledge that is part of entry to cultural occupations can make these staff excellent and outstanding retail workers. These examples also give clues as to the importance of making distinctions between *occupations* and *industries*.

*Occupations* refer to the sorts of activities or tasks people do in their jobs. *Industries* refer to what organisations or businesses do, for example the goods they make or the services they provide.

One of the key areas of research on creative industries has been how to define or demarcate these two categories. It is especially difficult where specific *occupations* are not solely based in specific *industries*. One example is actors, who work across film, television, radio, and theatre, as well as in

advertising, education, and other areas of corporate life, such as training activities.

Government and some academics draw a distinction between three different groups in the creative economy.<sup>47</sup> First are creative occupations working *in* creative industries. This is where we can find actors working in theatre and in film and television, or writers working in publishing.

Then there are creative occupations working *outside* of the creative industries. The most obvious example would be those with artistic occupations working within corporate businesses on things like branding and logos.

Finally, there are *non-creative and support jobs* in creative industries. This is where much of the confusion arises, for example retail occupations in museums and theatres, or cleaning and other sorts of semi-routine manual work in publishing or the music industry, as well as roles such as finance and accountancy within film and television.

The changing shape and nature of businesses means many of these ‘non-creative’ workers are in firms that are serving the creative industries. They are often no longer employed directly. The most recent government analysis of data on the UK economy in 2017 suggested these non-specialist occupations are around half of the employment in creative industries.<sup>48</sup>

These categories are very blurred in the lives of creative workers. For many of our interviewees, being a cultural worker was a vocation as much as a specific job or occupation.

We’re interested in cultural occupations because of their very direct and central role in making culture. We are also interested in them because they allow us to have a focus for our analysis. As we will see in later chapters, they help us to interpret social mobility data, data about attitudes and values, as well as to see

patterns in cultural consumption data. We're also linking our focus on cultural occupations to other, recent, studies of elite professional jobs.

For now, we're just going to think about the role of cultural occupations in making culture. As we noted earlier, inequality is bound up with the process of giving worth and value. This is a cultural process. Cultural occupations are the jobs at the centre of this process.

It is important to note that we're not saying everyday, anthropological, understandings of culture are irrelevant to the process of affording worth and value. Rather, we're highlighting the importance of formal cultural occupations within this broader anthropological view.

Cultural occupations shape which stories get told and which do not.<sup>49</sup> Which stories get told is a result of how cultural production is organised. Cultural consumption is a reflection, although not a direct result, of the organisation of cultural production.

One of the central elements of how cultural production is organised is who works in cultural occupations. This is not the only thing that matters, as funding, markets, technological change, and the overall political economy of culture are crucial too.

We'll see throughout this book that who works in cultural occupations reflects social inequalities. In turn, who works in cultural occupations shapes social inequalities too. The people who get to make and commission culture are not a diverse group. Certain groups are systematically excluded. The outcomes and products of cultural occupations are thus only a partial reflection and representation of our society.

Worse, the groups missing from cultural occupations are often misrepresented and caricatured, if they are seen at all. Women may only be the wives or mothers in male stories.

People of colour may be presented in clichéd and racist ways. Working-class origin individuals may only ever be one-dimensional, in contrast to the complexity and depth offered to middle-class representations.

### **Class and cultural occupations**

The last point, about representations of different social classes, prompts the final bit of ground-clearing before we can begin our analysis. Class is the central focus of inequality in this book. However, it is important to understand how we understand class.

The book adopts an intersectional approach<sup>50</sup> to social class. Throughout the book we'll try to think about how class intersects with other characteristics, primarily gender and ethnicity. Women and people of colour face barriers in addition to those associated with social class origin. As we'll see in Chapter 8, working-class origin women of colour face some of the highest barriers to success in cultural occupations.

As much as this book contributes to fields of sociology of culture, cultural policy, and creative industries, we are keen that class analysis, for example work on social mobility, takes seriously the need for an intersectional understanding.

'Class' is obviously a difficult and contested term.<sup>51</sup> This is especially so in Britain where it is one of the central axes around which society is divided and organised. It is important to individuals' and communities' identities, even where it is rejected or questioned.

This is not unique, as all societies have dividing lines around which they are structured and which shape individual and community identity. We can think of caste in India or race in the United States as good examples.

At the same time, class is a technical term used in academic research to understand how society is organised. If class is a complex subject for public discussion, it is equally difficult in academic work. There are disagreements over the definition, its boundaries, what ‘counts’ and what does not, for understanding class.

Even where there is agreement, for example that a useful way of understanding class is by looking at occupations in relation to the labour market, there are different traditions. Each uses different occupational schemes to equate to different, although often complimentary, analyses of society.

In addition to occupational approaches to class, there are traditions that seek to highlight cultural aspects of class. The most recent example of this approach is the BBC’s The Great British Class Survey<sup>52</sup> (GBCS) project and the subsequent discussions.<sup>53</sup>

The GBCS was a reminder of the importance of taking cultural and social resources into account when understanding class. This is in addition to, and not instead of, economic and occupational elements of class.

Where do cultural occupations fit into these debates over social class? Cultural occupations, at least those in the UK government’s definition, are almost always counted as professional and managerial jobs. They are what we would understand as ‘middle class’ occupations, as opposed to routine and manual work jobs that we might call working-class occupations.

It might seem strange to classify some cultural occupations as middle class. As we will see in Chapter 6, they can be very low paid and highly precarious. Yet they have a particular sort of social status. They also have the kinds of autonomy, along with occupational position in the labour market, that mark them out as middle-class jobs.



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Cultural occupations are therefore, like many other middle-class professions, highly desirable. They are ‘good’ jobs. This is in addition to their role in shaping an individual’s, a community’s, and society’s understanding of itself.

Cultural occupations are also important because they reflect another element of social inequality. This is the changing composition of the middle class.

In some of the literature we can see the argument that there is a difference or division within middle-class service jobs.<sup>54</sup> This is between technical and socio-cultural occupations.

Socio-cultural occupations include things like teaching and working in education, along with the sorts of cultural jobs we’re discussing in this book. The dividing lines are around politics, along with values and social attitudes.

Across France, Britain, and the United States, analysis of political behaviour suggests the rise of a new fraction of the middle class. This new fraction is liberal, open, and tolerant. It reflects the sort of attitudes and values we’re going to see from cultural workers in Chapter 3.<sup>55</sup>

At the same time, cultural and social theory has argued that we are seeing changes to what middle-class work is. Previously stable and secure middle-class professions may be becoming less secure and more precarious.<sup>56</sup> Cultural occupations are thought to be the leading examples of these sorts of changes, which may now be impacting more traditional professions.

So, we have the idea that a fraction of the middle class is distinct because of its values and attitudes. We also have the importance of cultural work as a potential ‘future’ for other middle-class jobs. There has also been a complimentary research tradition examining the sociology, and more particularly the economics, of artistic and cultural jobs. Finally, studying specific occupations

has been a long-standing part of the sociology of work. This sits alongside the importance of studying ‘micro classes’ in American research on how society is stratified and divided.<sup>57</sup>

We can think of our cultural occupations as a ‘micro class’, a fraction within the middle class. Part of the analysis in the book is showing what brings cultural occupations together, for example a vocational commitment to cultural work. It is also about showing how even a shared vocation, and a shared solidarity, can contribute to the replication of social inequality.

### **Key themes and the structure of the book**

We are going to begin the book by thinking about why culture is good for you. We’ll see how research and policy documents make a compelling case for the positive impacts of culture.

There is also a compelling case for the value of culture in itself. This value is separate from any social or economic benefits it may offer to individuals, communities, nations, and the world.

Starting with the value and importance of culture allows us to think about some of the key themes that will run throughout the book. Our first is how the shared experiences of cultural workers hide significant differences. These differences reflect and replicate social inequalities.

We will see this in our discussion of the value of culture. We’re using some of our middle-class origin interviewees to show how cultural workers are committed to the power and importance of culture in society. We use our middle-class origin interviewees because these are the social group that dominate most cultural occupations.

The dominance of those from the middle class is comprehensively demonstrated in Chapter 3. It analyses the labour

force for cultural occupations. It presents five years of data from the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Labour Force Survey (LFS). This shows how working-class origin people, people of colour, and in some cultural occupations, women, are absent from the workforce.

Chapter 3 also looks at how cultural occupations are held together, as well as being potentially closed. Using data on attitudes and values, as well as on social networks, we start to explain some of the inequalities we've seen in the labour force.

Cultural occupations are the most liberal, left-wing, and pro-welfare of any set of occupations, as well as being anti-Brexit. Survey data suggests the cultural workers in our research project recognise social inequality, but at the same time feel that talent and hard work explains success.

This commitment to meritocracy is at the root of our second theme. This is the way that cultural workers recognise structural inequalities in cultural occupations, as well as in society. The responsibility for these inequalities is, however, placed onto the individual. This is one reason why change is so difficult.

The other side to our analysis of inequality in production is inequality in consumption. Chapter 4 uses data from England to demonstrate that cultural consumption is highly unequal.

We will see that there is a minority of the population who are highly engaged cultural consumers. For the majority, *not* engaging in formal cultural activity is the norm. Almost every artform and cultural activity is marked by class and racial inequalities. There are also significant patterns of gender inequalities.

We contrast this with everyday forms of culture. In doing so we show the way that what counts, and what is valued, is a reflection of unequal cultural hierarchies.

Presenting the data on cultural consumption allows us to show another element of our cultural workers' shared experience. It also allows us to show another element of closure in cultural occupation.

Cultural workers are by far the most engaged of any occupational group. They are more culturally active than their middle-class professional colleagues. They are also totally unrepresentative of the patterns of cultural engagement in the working-class population.

The remaining chapters explain these inequalities by analysing key points in the life course of a cultural worker. They also continue the themes we've introduced earlier in the book.

Chapter 5 discusses the role of culture in our cultural workers' childhoods. It shows the role of individualisation of inequalities, along with the problem of *seemingly* shared experiences.

Many of the patterns of inequalities we've seen in production and consumption begin in childhood. We use survey and interview data to show how cultural resources, or cultural capital, are accumulated in childhood.

All of our interviewees highlighted the importance of culture when they were children. Looking at representative survey data from England we can see the importance of participation and encouragement in culture during cultural workers' childhoods.

This shared experience obscures the level of inequality in access to culture. Some of our workers grew up in homes that offered high levels of access to culture. Others were dependent on luck, perhaps having an encouraging teacher or access to local state-funded resources such as libraries or youth clubs.

The inequalities in access to culture profoundly shape how our cultural workers understood the possibility of a career in a cultural occupation. For some they were totally at home in

cultural occupations. For others it was a revelation later in life that culture was something they could do for a living.

Making a living in a cultural occupation is hard. We know from existing research that cultural occupations offer big rewards, but also offer major risks for individual workers. Chapter 6 analyses the problem of pay.

Unpaid labour seems to be endemic to cultural occupations. We show how even this shared experience of working for low or no pay is differentiated by class and by age.

For our younger middle-class respondents unpaid work could be an investment in their careers. It could also be a chance for creative development.

For those from working-class backgrounds unpaid work was an unaffordable luxury. It was associated with exploitation and frustrating dead ends.

The sense of shared experience and solidarity obscures the different experiences of different social class groups. Shared experience of unpaid work hides class inequality in cultural occupations.

Unpaid work also reflects how risks are divided in cultural occupations. The individual is expected to have the economic resources, the economic capital, to support their creative career. If they do not, then the system of cultural production will not help.

Differences in experience by class were one axis of stratification of unpaid work. The other is age.

Age is important to our story of inequality in lots of ways. In the case of pay, our older workers told us of very different support mechanisms when they were starting their careers. This social safety net seemed to take responsibility for some of the risks and uncertainties of the cultural labour market.

This might suggest that inequality in culture is a recent phenomenon. In Chapter 7 we show how cultural occupations have been unequal for a long time.

The chapter discusses the idea of social mobility in cultural jobs. It presents the first ever analysis of ONS's Longitudinal Study to show that cultural occupations were just as exclusive forty years ago as they are now.

Of course, there have been major social and economic changes since then. Changing and challenging inequality in our cultural occupations has been slow, and there seems to be little progress.

In the early 1980s the chances of someone from a working-class origin making it into a cultural occupation were much lower than the chances of someone from a middle-class origin. In current data we see those chances have remained at a similarly low level.

The broad patterns of social mobility, as shown in the quantitative analysis, reveal that cultural occupations have long-standing issues of inequality. These issues exist because of barriers like unpaid work, and closed social networks. They also exist because of more subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) forms of exclusion.

In Chapter 8 we analyse the experiences of those who are socially mobile into cultural occupations. We try to foreground the experiences of working-class origin women of colour. They are most likely to be absent from cultural occupations.

By doing so, we show that cultural occupations have a 'somatic norm' of White, male, middle classness. Social mobility, along with diversity and inclusion, policies have not addressed this structural problem. Our individual workers still have to bear the burden of responsibility for cultural occupations' failure to welcome and support them.

We see this again when we look specifically at gender inequality. Chapter 9 presents new analysis of the ONS's Longitudinal Study. This shows the dynamics of gender inequality in the cultural labour force.

The decision to start a family is crucial to gender inequality. We lay bare the relentless hostility to women with caring responsibilities. This is especially important in accounting for gendered exclusions from the top of creative occupations.

Caregiving, much as unpaid work, cultural taste, or access to culture in childhood, obscures important inequalities. Class matters in who manages to overcome the barriers associated with cultural occupations' refusal to support women with children.

Sadly, we also see how our interviewees take responsibility for these structural problems onto themselves, as individuals. Again, this may account for why inequalities in cultural occupations seem to change so slowly.

Thinking about class also reminds us that parenting and caregiving is not the only explanation for gender inequalities. This point has been at the centre of the academic work in this area, but does not seem to be reflected in policy responses to inequality.

Our final substantive chapter reflects on the slow pace of change. It also provides a contrast to women's experiences highlighted in Chapters 8 and 9.

In Chapter 10 we hear from the 'somatic norm' of cultural occupations. These are men who are in senior positions within their organisations or artforms.

These men all have political and moral commitments to addressing the problems of inequality in the sector. They see the problem of inequality. In some cases they offer us detailed analyses of structural sexism, racism, and class-based forms of inequality.

Recognising the problem does not solve it. Our ‘senior’ men narrate their careers through luck and self-effacement. According to their stories, structural inequalities did not seem to help them become successful. This leaves them, in their own careers, unable to challenge or change these structural inequalities. This is despite their faith in the idea that culture is good for you.

We have focused on making this book an overview of culture and inequality. It is primarily written from a sociological standpoint. Sociology can do much to show the regular patterns of inequality in our cultural occupations. It can hopefully show the social mechanisms that help us to explain inequality in our cultural occupations.

Yet sociological study is only one part of the story. We are hopeful that this book will contribute well beyond sociology, particularly to those disciplines in the humanities that address both cultural objects and the future cultural workforce. The problem of social inequality, and how to address it, is not the preserve of one academic subject. It is also not the preserve of academia alone.

Our second hope for the book is that it will contribute to discussions within cultural occupations. We are hopeful that public and policy discourses will see clearly the problem of inequality in our cultural occupations. We are also hopeful that the solutions they devise will be mindful of the long-term and structural nature of the issues we have researched.

The conclusion to the book reflects on the prospects of success for these efforts to challenge and change inequality. We reflect on our four themes: the individualisation of risks; how shared experiences actually obscure structures of inequality; the reflexivity and self-awareness of our cultural workers; and the long-term nature of the problems.



This latter point suggests inequality is, and will continue to be, dynamic. It is not something that has one single solution. There will not be a magic bullet. As strategies emerge to address inequality, the powerful will adapt. They will adapt practically, as we see in our discussion of unpaid work and the development of cultural capital in childhood. They will also adapt discursively, as we see in senior men's 'inequality talk'.

To understand the dynamic nature of inequality we need to better theorise the relationship between inequality and culture. Developing the overall story presented in the book, we suggest the need to think about *weak* and *strong* theories of the relationship between culture and inequality. Both are valuable.

The former connects to the necessary project of incremental reform to make cultural production and cultural consumption open to all. The latter is more pessimistic about culture's role in reinforcing the unequal structures characteristic of our contemporary society.

Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that 'everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits'. At present we are a long way from that right being realised.

Cultural occupations must change. They must change if society is to freely enjoy the benefits of culture, and participate fully in cultural consumption and production. As our interviewees tell us in Chapter 2, cultural occupations are crucial to making the world a better place. At present cultural occupations are not doing this. They are, in fact, part of the mechanism by which society continues to be unequal. Culture is bad for you.