Women and Leadership in the Creative Industries – Call for Book Chapters

The creative industries are those 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' (Department of Culture, Media and Sports). This covers a broad range of sectors from architecture and design, film, television, video, radio and publishing, fine arts, music and the performing arts, software and computer gaming, advertising and crafts (United Nations, 2013). We adopt here a broad approach to the creative industries, recognising the value in exploring the similarities and distinct features of these industries which are characterized by contingent labour and competition, gendered power structures, and informal networks (Hennekam and Bennett 2017).

Leadership and management in the creative industries has been a matter of some concern in recent years. In the UK, challenges such as the pandemic, economic slowdown, high-profile instances of bullying, to a quiet leeching away of talent (especially diverse and experienced talent) from the creative industries has raised awareness of the need for leadership that is robust, creative and compassionate (e.g. Aust 2020; van Raalte and Wallis 2024). Diversity remains a concern across the creative and cultural sectors, but most particularly in the critical area of leadership where, notwithstanding the predominantly female profile of new entrants in many industry roles, women remain woefully under-represented in leadership positions. In July 2023, *Variety* reported a raft of women, and particularly women of colour, exiting leadership positions in the UK (Ravindran 2023), as well as in Hollywood (Davis 2023), while in September *The Media Leader* critiqued the gender ageism that, it claimed, is 'killing women's careers' and thus depriving the UK industries of both leadership and innovation (Kemp, 2023). The UK and US media are not unique in this respect, with similar concerns being raised in recent years across creative industries, and in countries as diverse as New Zealand (Molloy and Larner, 2013), Catalonia (Barrios & Villarroya, 2022) and Malaysia (Kamalul Ariffin abd Ibrahim, 2022).

Research into women in leadership positions across the wider economy has highlighted several factors that appear to disrupt the careers and prospects of female leaders, contributing to vertical as well as hierarchical segregation (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2015). Organisations in themselves are gendered with systems and practices that favour an ideal worker as 'unencumbered with caring responsibilities and ready to devote his life to the job' (Acker, 2006, p. 69). The gendered nature of organisations is built upon processes which allocate resources along various lines of inequality. Such ideal worker prototypes can be exacerbated within creative industries which is characterised by casualised labour, creating increased competition for scarce resources (Scharff, 2016), sexual harassment (Hennekam and Bennett 2017), and unsocial working hours (Banks & Milestone, 2011). Furthermore, progression within the creative industries relies on relevant social capital and networking practices which disadvantage women (Gill, 2002; Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013). Such contextual factors form part of the systemic barriers to advancing women's careers within the creative industries: an area which requires further analysis.

Turning from the organisational context to the experiences of women traversing these barriers, women leaders continue to be faced by additional challenges compared with

their male peers. These include receiving more limited opportunities compared to their male counterparts, as well as negotiating career breaks and caring responsibilities (Martin, Jerrard, and Wright 2020). Indeed, the impact of the motherhood penalty, in particular, on women's careers has recently been highlighted by the Nobel prize-winning work of the economist Claudia Goldin (Elsesser 2023). Notwithstanding the socially progressive values so often espoused, or at least projected, by the creative industries, employment conditions and hiring decisions are frequently regressive – chiefly because of a lack of regulation, a notable informality in business relationships, and a tendency to uncritically lionise the 'creative genius' which is often seen as driving both reputation and profit in creative organisations (Gregory 2009; Taylor and O'Brien 2017). Leadership, moreover, often manifests in different, more flexible ways than more formally hierarchical working environments, with creative leadership and organisational leadership not necessarily aligned. Given these conditions, the creative industries present some very particular opportunities and challenges for female leaders, besides a nuanced perspective on those encountered more generally across the wider economy.

Within this special issue, we want to address women's leadership in the creative industries, considering the broad definition of the term in an industrial ecosystem characterised by its dependence on freelance workers and micro-businesses alongside more traditional institutions. We also adopt an inclusive perspective on 'leadership' recognising that this is not limited to hierarchical roles (Dodd, 2012), or indeed to the 'heroic' model of individual leadership (Crevani et al 2007) but is subject to many definitions. We invite texts that will encompass routes into leadership and associated barriers as well as concepts of creative entrepreneurial, as well as institutional leadership. We particularly encourage interdisciplinary, intersectional and feminist approaches. Work submitted to the special issue can include, but is not restricted to, the following issues:

- How does 'leadership' manifest in the creative industries and what 'new forms' of leadership can we observe?
- How is women's progression impacted by divergent standards and opportunities, the myth of meritocracy and/or the image of the creative industries as being progressive?
- How do social capital and networks impact on women's careers within the creative industries?
- How does Joan Acker's concept of the 'ideal worker' operate and intersect with women's life stages in the creative industries?
- How do women experience sexism, sexual harassment and psychic safety within the creative industries?
- What mechanisms enable collective action and support for women within the creative industries?
- How do limiting narratives or realities of the 'glass ceiling' and 'glass cliffs' impact on women's careers within the creative industries?
- What are the experiences of women who do not yet identify as 'leaders' but who form part of an emerging pipeline, negotiating barriers along the way?

- What new knowledge can we gain from women's progression or indeed leadership approaches within the creative industries that can throw light on wider issues or be applied to other industries?

Chapters for this book will be 3500-5000 words (inclusive of notes and references) long and should be written in a style that is appropriate and accessible for readers from both academia and the creative industries sector.

If you would like to contribute to this output, please resubmit your updated abstract, biography and other details here by 30th December 2024

The deadline for full articles will be 1st May 2025.

As mentioned at the symposium the plan for the book is to interweave academic chapters with short, focused interviews with actual female leaders in creative industries. We intend to ask our interviewees about their own experiences in relation to some of the topics outlined in the CFP. Ideally, we would like to cover a broad range of disciplines. We would therefore be grateful for suggestions from colleagues of individuals we might target – including any for whom you can provide an introduction.