



STRATEGIC NATIONAL ARTS ALUMNI PROJECT

DataBrief

DataBrief provides arts educators and arts policy makers with highlights of SNAAP data and insights into the value of arts-school education. Contact us for more information.

Arts Graduates in a Changing Economy (part 3)

This DataBrief highlights some of the findings in a recent special issue of *American Behavioral Scientist* (ABS) titled "Arts Graduates in a Changing Economy." The [special issue](#) engages with SNAAP findings and themes discussed at the 2016 *3 Million Stories* conference, covering several topics of interest both to academics and the broader arts community: the cultures of arts schools; job outcomes after college; the geography of artistic work; creative identity; and the multiple conceptions of creativity.

Thanks to Alexandre Frenette for editing the ABS special issue as well as coordinating this DataBrief.

Cultural Capital: Arts Graduates, Spatial Inequality, and London's Impact on Cultural Labour Markets

Kate Oakley, Daniel Laurison, Dave O'Brien, Sam Friedman

Cities have long been the centers of production in the arts and culture; so much so that it's sometimes difficult to imagine artistic work taking place outside of the urban context. The city is traditionally where the artist goes to 'find' themselves artistically and to make it in their chosen field. In a contemporary sense, this often takes the form of urban boosterism, with cities across the globe competing to attract media and cultural workers in the belief that this will boost their economy. Central also to this idea is that notion of the city as a socially fluid place -- where people can move up (and down) the social ladder, and determine their own futures in a cosmopolitan and open space.

But [our recent paper](#) suggests that behind this image is a rather different reality. We looked at London -- an archetypal

‘creative city’ in many ways -- and found that while its cultural workforce is more ethnically diverse than others of parts of the UK, and less skewed by gender divides, class inequalities are deeper.



Across the UK, people from middle and upper middle class homes are over-represented in the cultural sector, but London seems to offer even less opportunity for working class kids. While around 45% of those working in the cultural sector in the UK come from families in professional or managerial employment, the figure in London is 60%. Those in the cultural sectors in London earn more than in the rest of the UK, which is hardly surprising, given the cost of living and particularly of rent, but earning also seems to depend on where people came from in the first place. Cultural workers from lower middle class or blue-collar families earn less, on average, than those from more privileged backgrounds, what we refer to as a ‘class pay gap’. But again, this gap is larger in London than elsewhere. Those from working-class backgrounds face a pay gap of, on average, nearly £6,500 (\$8,800) a year compared to those from higher professional and managerial backgrounds.

Table 3. The Makeup of the CCIs in London and the Rest of the United Kingdom.

	London	Rest of United Kingdom		Total
		Urban, not London	Not urban	
NS-SEC 1 parents, %	34.8	22.6	24.9	23
NS-SEC 2 parents, %	25.4	21.9	22.1	22
NS-SEC 3-5 parents, %	27.1	34.2	32.7	34
NS-SEC 6-8 parents, %	12.7	21.3	20.3	21
BAME, %	17.0	7.5	1.5	6
Whites, %	83.0	92.5	98.6	94
Men, %	60.5	69.9	63.0	68
Women, %	39.5	30.1	37.0	32
Age (average)	40.3	41.6	46.2	42.8
Earnings (average), £	46,481	37,674	44,107	39,089
Total, %	23			77
N	619			2,058

Note. CCI = cultural and creative industry; NS-SEC = National Statistics Socioeconomic Classification; BAME = Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic. Authors’ calculations from pooled United Kingdom’s Labour Force Survey Quarterly Data, 2013-2015.



Our findings suggest that there is a ‘London effect,’ therefore, but it is not the one that policymakers or city mayors are particularly keen to shout about. The cost of living in London, the concentration of ‘high end’ cultural jobs (national arts organizations and media companies) as well as sectors like advertising means that both ‘getting in’ and ‘getting on’ in the city’s cultural sectors is harder than elsewhere, with implications for the UK culturally, economically and even democratically.

This paper has been important to a major public engagement project in the UK. Working with arts organizations in London, Dave O’Brien and colleagues have authored a summary of key research papers on inequality in the cultural sector. You can read that report,

which includes new data visualizations [here](#) and learn more about the events and cultural commissions [here](#).

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Kate Oakley is Professor of Cultural Policy at the University of Leeds. Recent books include *Cultural Policy* with David Bell (Routledge, 2015) and *Culture, Economy and Politics: the case of New Labour, with* Hesmondhalgh, Lee and Nisbett (Palgrave, 2015). Details of current projects are here (www.cusp.ac.uk) and here (www.culturalworkersorganise.org).

Daniel Laurison is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Swarthmore College, and Associate Editor of the British Journal of Sociology. His work is on social class and inequality, on political campaigns, and on class and other inequalities in political participation, in both the UK and the US.

Dave O'Brien is Chancellor's Fellow in Cultural and Creative Industries at the University of Edinburgh. His research covers cultural policy, urban policy, public administration, cultural value, and creative industries. He is also the host of the [New Books in Critical Theory](#) podcast and his most recent book is *The Routledge Handbook of Global Cultural Policy*. More details of his current project, working with arts organizations on questions of inequality can be found here: <https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/event/panic-2018>.

Sam Friedman is Associate Professor in Sociology at the London School of Economics. His research focuses on issues of social class and inequality, and particularly the cultural dimensions of contemporary class division. He is the author of *Comedy and Distinction: The Cultural Currency of a 'Good' Sense of Humour* (Routledge, 2014).

SNAAP News

SNAAP's director, Sally Gaskill, recently announced her [retirement](#) from SNAAP and Indiana University on June 30, 2018. She says,

"SNAAP is in a great position to move into the next decade of leadership of arts research. It has been an enormous privilege to help guide SNAAP in its first ten years as we have become the gold standard for data on the educational experiences and career paths of artists in North America. The time is right for me to step back, and welcome new leadership to the organization. It's been an honor to work with the board of directors, and I look forward to learning about SNAAP's new accomplishments in the next decade."

The SNAAP National Advisory Board is transitioning to a fiduciary board of directors; a message from the board chair, Douglas Dempster outlines SNAAP's future plans [here](#).

SNAAP looks forward to entering its second decade of service to the field, with ongoing research and surveying of arts alumni.



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