

Progressive Narrative? How Aspirant UK Creatives Navigate Diversity Discourse

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1 Research Background

- This research contends that neoliberal promotion of representational diversity in the Contemporary Cultural Industries (CCI) fails to meaningfully address the material inequalities faced by marginalised groups within society.
- Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework, it argues that CCI gatekeepers engage in performative actions rather than implementing the substantive changes needed to make racial inequalities obsolete.
- The research includes fieldwork capturing the reflections of aspiring creatives without traditional forms of legitimated capital on the challenges and opportunities they anticipate in their post-graduation careers.

2 Method

The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodological approach is adopted, providing the study a vital opportunity to explore an underdeveloped perspective in locating meaning and context. Qualitative interviews are to be conducted with representative and defined groups who are indicative of the homogenous intake cohort for the CCI. Aspirant views and opinions on their perceptions and dis/engagement with the new spaces espoused by the CCI is sought.

3 Core References

Bourdieu, P. (2000 [1984]) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.

Saha, A. & van Lente, S. (2022) 'Diversity, media and racial capitalism: a case study on publishing.' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 45(16), pp.216-236. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2022.2032250>

Smith, J. A. Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009) *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. London: Sage Publications.

4 Hypotheses

It is the contention of this research that the representational changes across the CCI are aesthetic only, failing to enact meaningful inclusion and change.

This absence of meaningful inclusion is reflected within the institutions that produce the media artefacts – they are indicative of colourwashing, sophistry.

5 Results (Preliminary)

Researchers critically analysing minority employment within the CCI, such as Nava (2023: 912), have found that 'only 23.4% of creative economy jobs were filled by people from ethnic minority groups which is a marked under representation compared to 32.9% of jobs outside of the creative economy', signifying a pattern correlation, which continues a trend from over a decade earlier.

Clustering studies (Hesmondhalgh, 2013; BECTU, 2024) present a picture of a fracturing labour market of the CCI for minorities, which itself represents a paradox – increased representation in 'front of screen' roles, dialogically juxtaposed against a marked decline in 'behind the lens' employment opportunities.

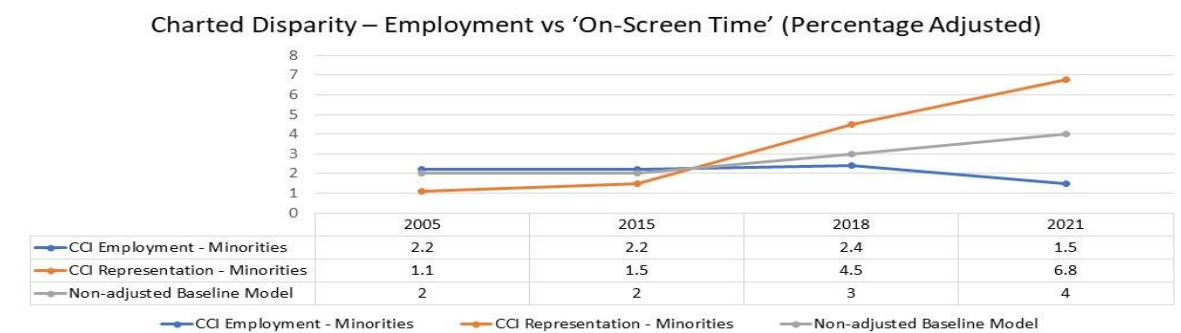


Figure 1.1: Graph – The Representational Inflation Paradox

A graphical representation of the relative decline in CCI employment for minorities versus the proliferation of minority representation across the CCI – as outputs.

6 Limitations

This research takes issue with a singular aspect of the CCI, in terms of employment into it at entry level. A possible future direction for post-doctoral study would be to look at decision makers within the CCI themselves. This would afford a broader understanding of power and agency operating within the cultural industries – a 'top/down' approach as a line of investigation.

7 Research Engagement

My research presents the field with a novel critical conceptualisation of the discourse of diversity and inclusion. In practical terms, the research addresses problems of policy within the cultural industries, related to questions of visibility. The research makes an important contribution to knowledge by providing empirical evidence related to representation, employment and opportunity.

My research maps to the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- #10 Reduce inequality within countries.
- #16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies.