

# Creative Class Civil Wars

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# Richard Florida

## *The Rise of the Creative Class*

- Economic, technological, and social changes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century driven by “the rise of human creativity as the key factor in our economy and society....for the first time, our economy is powered by creativity.”
- “The ability to create new forms [provides] the decisive source of competitive advantage....and has come to be the most highly prized commodity in our economy.”

—p5-6

# Richard Florida

## *The Rise of the Creative Class*

Members of the Creative Class:

- “engage in work whose function is ‘to create new forms’.” (38)
- Are an extension of “knowledge workers”:  
“Whereas members of the Working Class work mainly with their physical bodies, members of the Creative Class work mainly with their minds.” (37)
- United by distinctive work goals, tastes, and politics:
  - Desire a labor structure that stresses independence, autonomy (36)
  - Tend towards “tolerance” of immigrants, alternate sexualities (61)
  - Embrace “secular-rational” values (60)
  - Make non-conformity mainstream (61)

# Andrew Ross

## *Nice Work if You Can Get It*

Argues that what really unites “Creative Industries” labor force is an increasingly contingent labor force:

“the ethnographic evidence on knowledge and CI workplaces shows that sacrificial labor, market overexposure, and self-exploitation are still chronic on-the-job characteristics...In this respect, arguably the most instrumentally valuable aspect of the creative work traditions is the carryover of coping strategies, developed over centuries, to help practitioners endure a feast-or-famine economy in return for the promise of success and acclaim. The combination of this coping mentality with a production ethos of aesthetic perfectibility is a godsend for managers looking for employees capable of self-discipline under the most extreme job pressure. It is no surprise then that the “artist” has been seen as the new model worker for high-risk/high-reward employment.” (18-19).



# Andrew Ross

## *Nice Work if You Can Get It*

- “The preferred labor profile is more typical of the eponymous struggling artist, whose long-abiding vulnerability to occupational neglect is now magically transformed, under the new order of creativity, into a model of enterprising, risk-tolerant pluck.” (21)
- Notes the irony that “at the very least, the policy spotlight ought to present some new, long-term opportunities for creative workers accustomed to eking a makeshift living out of art, expression, design, or performance. So far, however, the kind of development embraced by policymakers seems guaranteed merely to elevate this traditionally unstable work profile into an inspirational model for youth looking to make an adventure out of their entry into the contingent labor force. If the creative industries become the ones to follow, all kinds of jobs may well look more and more like musicians’ gigs: nice work if you can get it.” (17)

# Imre Szeman, “Neoliberals Dressed in Black; or, the Traffic in Creativity”

Argues that Florida misrecognizes the relationship between the artist and the knowledge worker:

- “What is being carried over from artist to IT worker through the medium of creativity is the ‘cultural discount’ that has long accompanied artistic labour of all kinds.” (32)
- Although IT workers are far better compensated for their work than artists, the adoption of an artistic relation to their work effects a similar discount that benefits their employer—even if they believe that the primary benefits are theirs.....We are all artists now, which doesn’t mean a life of unfettered freedom and creativity. Rather, it means that if we’re lucky the labour of crunching code for long hours can be offset by no longer having to wear a tie to work and by getting to play with your colleagues at the corner foosball table once in awhile.” (32)

# Leslie Dreyer, Anti-Gentrification and Displacement Action April 2014



# Definitions of Creativity

Raymond Williams,

*Keywords: Vocabulary of Culture and Society*

“The word puts a necessary stress on originality and innovation, and when we remember the history we can see that these are not trivial claims...The difficulty arises when a word once intended, and often still intended, to embody a high and serious claim, becomes so conventional, as a description of certain general kinds of activity, that it is applied to practices for which, in the absence of the convention, nobody would think of making such claims. Thus any imitative or stereotyped literary work can be called, by convention, creative writing, and advertising copywriters officially describe themselves as creative.”





# Definitions of Creativity

- Prior to the Renaissance, only God can “create”
  - artists weren’t actually creative, merely imitative
- Idea of the artist as preeminent creative figure begins to emerge in the Renaissance
  - Still carries association with “the elect,” with an elite
- In 19<sup>th</sup> Cent, “creativity” used to differentiate *artist* from *artisan*
  - One has imaginative and intellectual transformative capacity as opposed to being merely a skilled laborer
  - Is the moment when “creativity” is used to make a class differentiation
  - Florida: “members of the Working Class work mainly with their physical bodies, members of the Creative Class work mainly with their minds” (37)

# Definitions of Creativity

## John Dewey

(US pragmatist philosopher; also head of the American Psychological Association, member of American Federation of Teachers)

- Creativity is the creation of “new forms”
  - i.e. innovation is crucial
  - Opens door to thinking about creativity outside of the arts
- Primary importance is as a way to protect citizens against authoritarian personality
  - i.e. key to healthy operation of democracy



# Definitions of Creativity

## J. P. Guilford

- Military psychologist during WWII (US Navy funds post-war research on creativity)
- Makes the scientific study of creativity a priority for research psychologists
  - Important for technological-economic reasons
    - “the enormous economic value of new ideas is generally recognized. One scientist or engineer discovers a new principle or develops a new process that revolutionizes an industry.”
  - Also crucial to winning the Cold War
    - On launch of Sputnik: “By all the expectations that should follow from our supposed scientific and technical superiority, such a thing should not have happened. We, not Russia, should have been the first to accomplish this historical event, which properly stirred the imagination and the admiration of the whole world.

# Definitions of Creativity

## J. P. Guilford

- Democratizes notions of creativity, but also removes it from the realm of art
- Creates “divergent thinking” tests
  - first quantitative method of assessment
  - Still used within the corporate world today
- Begins a tradition in creativity research wherein when psychologists want to define creativity, they will mention artists as people with creative practices, but almost never use them as a rationale *for why it might be important to understand what creativity is*

# Definitions of Creativity

Mark Runco

- Founds *Creativity Research Journal* in late 1980s
  - Conceptions of creativity too beholden to “the art bias”
    - “the misunderstanding of creativity that equates it with artistic talent. The result: only individuals with artistic talent are labeled creative.”

# Further Reading

## Neoliberalism

- David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.
- Wendy Brown, "Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy." *Theory and Event* 7:1, (2003).
- Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance, and Neoliberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Laura Nielsen and Patricia Ybarra (eds), *Neoliberalism and Global Theaters*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

# Further Reading

## Creativity

- *Creativity Research Journal* (1988-present)
- Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2001 and 2011)
- Robert J. Sternberg (ed), *Handbook of Creativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.
- Ken Robinson, Robinson, *All our Futures: Creativity, Culture, Education*
- Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman, "The Creativity Crisis." <http://www.newsweek.com/creativity-crisis-74665> posted 10 July 2010
- Imre Szeman, "Neoliberals Dressed in Black; or, the Traffic in Creativity." *ESC: English Studies in Canada*. 36:1 (March 2010); 15-36.