

## Thesis abstract

# Improving labour outcomes in the creative industries: the role of creative workers' social network structure and organisational business acumen

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Abstract of a thesis for a Doctorate of Philosophy submitted to Southern Cross University, Lismore, Australia

Individuals who work in artistic, cultural and creative fields (henceforth creative workers) are increasingly conceptualised as a labour force. Under this conceptualisation, creative workers are seen to contribute positively to significant, national economic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product and innovation indices. However, a growing body of research indicates that, as a labour force, 'creative workers' experience particularly poor *labour outcomes*, insofar as they typically work longer hours, for relatively lower incomes, and have very little job security.

The theoretical concepts provided by the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm and Bourdieu's theories concerning social and cultural capital, and the field of cultural production, are used in this thesis to examine the impact of *organisational business acumen* and *social network structure* on the *labour outcomes* (*exploitation*, *labour precarity* and *earnings satisfaction*) of creative workers. The research adopts a mixed methods approach that encompasses an initial pilot case study using social network analysis, followed by an explanatory quantitative-qualitative design. The study is situated within an Australian context, and a total of three hundred people

were involved in the data collection for the sum of these three research phases.

Results from the quantitative and qualitative research indicate that *organisational business acumen* and *social network structure* significantly reduce the *labour precarity* of creative workers. In addition, *organisational business acumen* significantly reduces perceptions of *exploitation*, as well as enhances the *earnings satisfaction* of sampled creative workers.

This research is innovative and important in a number of ways. For practitioners, results from this thesis highlight the significance of both *social network structure* and *organisational business acumen* as resources that positively impact the *labour outcomes* of creative workers. For policy makers, the research encourages the development of new policy instruments to support the diffusion of *organisational business acumen* across the creative labour force, in order to enhance the efficiency of the creative sector. For theory, the research suggests that creative workers are no longer subject to a dichotomous 'arts' or 'market' mode of production, but compromise business practices and artistic pursuit to seek sustainable outcomes. For the

field of network analysis, the research offers new quantitative instruments (specifically catering for the context of the network-centric creative sector) to measure the impact of network structures on performance measures.

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