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Creative Management: Disciplining the Neoliberal Worker

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
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Abstract

This integrated article dissertation examines some of the new managerial practices that have emerged to handle cognitive capitalism's ongoing need for creative, flexible labour power. The three articles included in this dissertation offer a glimpse into the widespread processes employed by management to regulate and discipline a workforce that must also be granted a degree of relative flexibility, creativity, and autonomy in order to be effective under post-Fordist conditions of production. The first chapter looks at the emergence of corporate improvisational training at the turn of the twenty-first century as an attempt to cultivate flexible and innovative workers, a move that ultimately succumbs to what Andre Spicer (2013) calls "organizational bullshit"—the deployment of cynical and self-serving discourse that functions to build confidence and legitimacy within workplaces where a clear sense of occupational purpose is lacking. Chapter two explores the recent trend of workplace mindfulness as a specific element of the now-prevalent 'wellness' discourses, which inevitably work to align workers' personal values with those of their employer. The final chapter involves an analysis of the working conditions of voice-over and motion capture actors in the video game industry and the processes of rationalization and neo-taylorization to which they are subjected.

Keywords

Labour, Management, Neoliberalism, Post-Fordism, Creativity, Motivation, Social Reproduction, Colinearisation, Taylorism, Improvisation, Google, Ford, Video Games, Acting, Bullshit

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1 Introduction

“Economics are the method; the object is to change the soul.”

Margaret Thatcher, Interview with the *Sunday Times*, (1981).

“The rationalized employment relationship misses out on a key value driver in the post-industrial economy: employee commitment and loyalty. As such, organizations ought to instill the workforce with strong sentimental attachments to the business enterprise.”

Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, *In Search of Excellence* (1984), p. 112.

These quotes by some early proponents of neoliberalism, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and two celebrated management gurus of the 1980s, illustrate the central tendency of post-Fordist labour dynamics – the putting to work of subjectivity itself through the creation and circulation of knowledge and affect. Although elements of subjectivity have always been mined for value by capitalism, the last few decades have seen an intensification of the exploitation of the intangible aspects of the self, such as creativity and emotion (Illouz, 2007). Perhaps the most widespread and contentious theoretical description of this new type of work dynamic is the Autonomist Marxist “post-workerist” or post-Operaismo concepts of immaterial labour (Lazzarato, 1996). Immaterial labour describes the “forms of labour in which the product is immaterial,” such as software programming, psychological counselling, or retail sales. It does not describe the nature of the labouring activity itself, as all forms of labour involve the material interaction of minds, bodies and spaces. Workers, particularly in North America and Europe but increasingly on a global scale, are moving away from functioning as mere “appendages of the machine” as described by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*; rather, capital attempts to put the soul to work (Berardi, 2009).

But, how are the shifting technological, economic and cultural developments of the current era impacting labour and management practices in particular? This project aims to address a gap in critical analyses of immaterial labour by focusing specifically on emerging management practices and new forms of work. Each of the three essays in this integrated-article dissertation explores different strategies for the regulation of immaterial labour – labour that must also be granted a degree of relative flexibility, creativity, and autonomy in order to be effective under post-Fordist conditions of production. These strategies include the adoption of theatrical improvisation exercises for employee training, workplace wellness programs designed to ameliorate the mental and physical demands of immaterial labour, and new forms of scientific management aimed at making digital actors more efficient. Such forms of creative management are far more prevalent in the tertiary and quaternary sectors, where workers are expected to interact with ideas, affects, and other people to a much greater degree than most occupations in primary and secondary industries.

The first essay looks at the emergence of corporate improvisational training at the turn of the twenty-first century as an attempt to cultivate flexible and innovative workers that ultimately succumbs to what Andre Spicer (Spicer, 2013) calls “organizational bullshit”: the deployment of cynical and self-serving discourse that functions to build confidence and legitimacy within workplaces where a clear sense of occupational purpose is lacking. The second essay explores the recent trend of workplace mindfulness meditation as a specific example of the now-prevalent worker “wellness” craze, which inevitably works to align workers' personal values with those of their employer. The final essay involves an analysis of the working conditions of voice-over and motion capture actors in the video game industry and the processes of rationalization and neo-taylorization to which they are subjected.

Countless scholars have written about the shift in the dynamics of capitalism since the 1970s, as the relatively stable Fordist labour arrangements of the post-war period began to disintegrate and were replaced by more ephemeral labour supply and consumption networks dispersed across the globe. This most recent stage of capitalism has been assigned a variety of labels: post-Fordism (Virno, 2004), cognitive capitalism (Fumagalli

& Lucarelli, 2007), transnational network capitalism (Fuchs, 2009), digital capitalism (Schiller, 1999), flexible accumulation (Harvey, 1989), communicative capitalism (Dean, 2009), and semiocapitalism (Berardi, 2009), to name only a few.

Although there remains much debate over the primary features of the current epoch of capitalism, there is generally a broad consensus that our contemporary period has been marked by the rapid compression of time and space due to advances in communication and transportation technologies. These technological changes have helped to drive, and in turn have been driven by, the informationalization and globalization of commodity production. These developments have resulted in wholesale changes in labour conditions, including increased flexibility and uncertainty as, increasingly, production lines are replaced with distributed networks of outsourced contractors. The post-Fordist trend of outsourcing has progressed beyond large-scale manufacturing into consumer services, with the emergence of companies such as Uber, TaskRabbit, AirBnB and other “disruptive” systems which aim to displace traditional employment relationships with webs of independent contractors left unprotected by employment regulations.

For the most part, this neoliberal restructuring of employment relationships is celebrated as empowering workers-cum-contractors with greater autonomy and flexibility, as it ostensibly offers workers more free time and the chance to “be their own boss.” Indeed, much of the current restructuring of employment relationships depends upon a workforce that no longer adheres to the once clear distinctions between work time and leisure time. The Amazon warehouse worker perpetually on-call, the online contractor continuously looking for the next gig, and the academic kept awake at night thinking about their latest project must treat every moment as potential work time. Marxists in the post-Operaismo tradition refer to this as the “social factory,” where the work of immaterial labourers continues even after leaving office or factory (Cleaver, 1979; Gill & Pratt, 2008; Thoburn, 2003).

This “factory without walls” breaks down barriers between labour time and non-labour time, as many forms of creative or immaterial labour can be performed anywhere – at the office, job site or at home. And yet, just as the private sphere becomes increasingly

colonized by work, employers are trying to imbue the workplace with features of social and domestic life. By providing access to perks and services previously relegated to the domestic or private sphere of social reproduction—childcare, intramural sports, leisure activities, wellness programs—management attempts not only to tie workers affectively to their employers, but also to normalize the conflation of work and leisure time (Cederström & Spicer, 2015). As Peter Fleming (2009) notes, “(e)ven though the ideology of a ‘frictionless capitalism’ has a good deal of popular currency, work is still generally considered formally troubling by many, involving a ‘lack of life’ that the corporation seeks to suture and exploit by co-opting the external and internal commons to provide a *life of sorts*.” (p. 75, emphasis in original).

The social factory, where the working day never ends, emerged simultaneously with the reconfiguration of the mass worker of the post-war era to the neoliberal “mass entrepreneur.” Effacing the legacy of antagonism between labour and capital, the new labouring subject of the mass entrepreneur implies a more democratic relationship involving the neoliberal ideal of autonomous workers selling their labour power to the highest bidder in a marketplace of equals (Dardot & Laval, 2009). It also contradicts decades of managerial practice that focused on molding workers into interchangeable parts in a linear work process machine. In contrast, what Luc Chiapello and Eve Boltanski (2007) refer to as the “new spirit of capitalism” relies upon the creative and affective capacities of self-motivated workers who freely allow themselves to be subsumed into the production process.

Artists have come to represent the entrepreneurial role model of the post-Fordist workplace: self-employed, inherently creative, comfortable with precarity, and intrinsically motivated to work for values beyond material needs or desires (Dardot & Laval, 2009; de Peuter, 2014; McRobbie, 2004; Ross, 2008). In many industries, management strives to inculcate an artistic sensibility in workers, particularly in the high tech and financial fields where creativity and innovation, required for the development of everything from iPhone apps to stock market derivatives, are highly prized. The threat here, from the perspective of capitalism, is that too much artistic autonomy can become counterproductive:

artistic productivity arises from the alliance between the artist's specific skills and the condition of coinciding with one's desire. And this is precisely the ideal formula which the neoliberal enterprise would like to reproduce on a large scale, evidently with the provision that each employee's 'own desire' must be aligned with the desire of the enterprise. But there comes a point when hierarchical relaxation, the better to give free rein to the creativity of the 'creatives', begins to contradict the very existence of the structure of capital. If, in order to give the best of their talents, these employees must be left to themselves, nothing can stop them from escaping should they find even the residual managerial supervision too onerous, and the appropriation of the fruits of their singular creativity too abusive (Lordon, 2014, p. 88).

The potential for creative labour's radical exodus from the strictures of capital is one of the central arguments made by the more optimistic strands of post-Operaismo thought (Hardt & Negri, 2001, 2005, 2011). However Fleming (2015) reminds us that we should not take management's claims of increasing worker autonomy at face value, as empirical studies of actual managerial practices tend to show increasing control and surveillance over workers in creative professions despite claims that they are being provided with more freedom. As Lordon (2014) observes,

Employees will not all become artists, thus capable of escaping through the communist line of flight. For the pre-eminent among them, the extension of their latitude, considered by capital itself to be in keeping with its new productive requisites, implies a firm adherence to the work of co-linearisation. Thus this 'autonomy', which a superficial reading of managerial literature took somewhat too quickly at face-value, is in fact the mask of a new servitude (p. 90).

Even those fortunate workers who are offered greater freedom will be expected to self-manage (Lopdrup-Hjorth, 2011). McRobbie (2004) describes how the neoliberal drive towards creative work environments results in "the incredible advantage of turning the individual into a willing workhorse, self-flagellating when the inspiration does not flow out onto the page" (p. 88). This condition is no doubt familiar to any academic faced with

a publication deadline. It is also indicative of Byung-Chul Han's (2015) thesis that we have shifted from the disciplinary society described by Foucault to an achievement society, which replaces disciplinary negativity with endless affirmations that proclaim "Nothing is impossible" (p. 11). While critics such as Hardt and Negri (2001, 2005) and Virno (2004) argue that biopolitical labour has the potential to be self-valorizing, opening up the possibility for labour to organize itself into cooperative networks autonomous of capitalist command, from the point of view of capitalism, the self-valorizing biopolitical subject is not a threat so much as an opportunity; for the most part, these workers are not radical singularities pointing the way to a new era of exodus from expropriation and capture.

This thesis will argue that, rather than opening up potential lines of flight from capital, creative workers have been refigured as entrepreneurial agents, independent contractors to be hired and fired as needed, yet even more dependent upon their employer for both a paycheque and the more esoteric wages of meaning and self-worth in the achievement society. What methods and techniques are deployed by management to cultivate worker creativity and self-motivation while ensuring that these forces remain tethered to the wheel of capitalist accumulation? By focusing on three distinct case studies of new modes of work and managerial techniques, this project will describe some of the attempts to channel and control this new figure of the enterprising worker.

The three essays in this dissertation are informed by a diversity of theories, including post-Operaismo Marxism, Foucauldian analyses of neoliberalism, critical management studies, and the sociology of labour. This conceptual work is supplemented with textual analysis of popular and academic management literature influenced by the methods of Spicer (2013), Fleming (2009), and Boltanski and Chiapello (2007). Essays one and three also incorporate original primary research in the form of qualitative semi-structured interviews with informants from labour and management. Further details about the interviewing process can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B.

The first essay examines one of the earlier attempts to promote organizational innovation and improve teamwork and lateral thinking, the use of improvisational theatre techniques.

Despite any hard evidence that playing improv games actually makes workers more productive, workplace improv training continues to be used in many organizations to this day. This chapter argues that its longevity comes not from its efficacy but because improv exercises function to legitimize the broader mission of Human Resources departments writ large: ensuring that employees are giving all they can to the corporation, even in an environment where the meaning of tasks might not be clear and workers are expected to be self-managing and self-motivated.

The second essay explores the more recent trend of mindfulness meditation propagated in the workplace by numerous American employers, most notably Google. Mindfulness meditation practice, originally developed from Buddhist meditation as a form of stress and pain relief, is only the latest in an array of wellness initiatives that are increasingly putting the mental and physical care of workers in the hands of employers. Workplace mindfulness is particularly insidious, however, in that it functions to align the goals of the employee with those of their employer, equating success at work with happiness in life. This chapter compares the use of mindfulness at Google with the Ford Motor Company's profit-sharing program during the early twentieth century, arguing that both initiatives implicate the employer in the social reproduction of labour power, linking the interests of labour and capital together.

The final essay takes a close look at an underexamined strata of artistic workers, voice-over and motion capture performers working in the video game industry. Largely non-unionized, game performers are subject to unique technological and managerial demands geared towards making the voice-over and motion capture recording process as time-efficient and cost-effective as possible. This chapter argues that these forms of management constitutes a form of neo-taylorization of performance work, with the ultimate goal being to automate the recording process entirely, thereby eliminating the need for actors all together.

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2 Corporative Improvisation: A Bullshitter's Guide to Organizational Innovation

In the 1990s several major corporations looking to train leaders to be more entrepreneurial and innovative came into contact with enterprising improvisational performers looking to supplement their income. The result was the emergence of workplace improvisation training. Improv actors would play theatre games with managers and employees, promising that they would help workers develop the skills necessary to become better leaders and teammates, more creative and more adaptable to the uncertainties of the market. Organizational Management scholars have since picked up on this trend, observing that improvisation has become a “strategic competence that supports 21st-century firms’ requirements for change, adaptability, responsiveness to the environment, loose boundaries, and minimal hierarchy” (Vera & Crossan, 2004, p. 727).

This type of arts-based training incorporated developments in human resources dating back to the 1970s, when firms first began to address worker autonomy and creativity by appropriating activities from the leisure and cultural industries. At this time, so-called “team-building exercises” such as employee wilderness retreats and school-style sports days attempted to cultivate a “culture of fun” at work (Fleming, 2009), seeking to address concerns about autonomy and individuality that had emerged from the social unrest of the 1960s and its backlash to the conformist “organization man” stereotype of the previous decades (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007). The adoption of improvisational theatre as a workplace training technique in the 1990s and 2000s, however, marks a transitional period as post-Fordism increasingly comes to rely upon the affective and cognitive capacities of workers.

While workplace improv training claims to produce more flexible and innovative employees, it must also be read as symptomatic of some of the difficulties that have emerged from managerial efforts to deal with the neoliberal enterprising worker and the neoliberal workplace. After providing a brief history of arts-based management and a description of workplace improv, this essay will go on to argue that, as a managerial

response to neoliberal employment relations that encouraged workers to self-manage, improv training functions both to acclimatize workers to an insecure workplace and palliate management's anxieties about its own relevance. It will then argue that the continued use of improvisational training is paradigmatic of what Andre Spicer (2013) calls "organizational bullshit," the deployment of cynical and self-serving discourse that functions to build confidence and legitimacy within workplaces where a clear sense of occupational purpose or meaning is lacking. Learning improvisational techniques also encourages workers to deploy bullshit of their own, facilitating their ability to justify their existence in a neoliberal employment environment that increasingly looks for ways to abandon them in other more materially significant ways (Fleming, 2015). This analysis is informed by a critical reading of popular and academic management texts on the application of improvisational theatre techniques to the workplace drawn from a period ranging from the late 1990s to 2015. Supplementing this research are four short semi-structured interviews with improv consultants who have a background in theatrical or jazz improvisation.

2.1 Cynicism, Insecurity and the Mass Entrepreneur

Paolo Virno (1996) has mapped the way the neoliberal economy restructures employment relationships, from the stability of the Post-War Fordist compact to the precarity of flexible work arrangements. Workers face reduced unionization and labour protections, the growing use of short term contracts, and the expectation that they serve in internships and other forms of unpaid "aspirational labour" (Duffy, 2015). In the wake of this significant economic and social change, Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2009) and Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose (2008) have identified the *mass entrepreneur* as the central subject of neoliberalism. As neoliberalism is characterized by a fetishization of the market as the central organizing principle, workers are encouraged to see themselves as "entrepreneurs of the self" (Foucault, 2010, p. 226) who are in competition with one another, rather than as a unified class in an exploitative relationship with capital.

In those industries most reliant on immaterial labour, current managerial practices are likely informed by the Human Relations tradition led by Elton Mayo and Douglas McGregor. This perspective distinguished itself from the efficiency-oriented techniques

of scientific management by emphasizing workplace culture, communication, and social dynamics (McKenzie, 2001). From the standpoint of management, an entrepreneurial subject exhibits the flexibility, initiative, and work ethic most valued by post-Fordist production processes. Peter Drucker, one of the most influential management theorists of the twentieth century, describes management as a technology for the transformation of American society into an entrepreneurial society which is adaptable and in constant flux: “the entrepreneur always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an opportunity” (cited in Dardot & Laval, 2009, p. 139).

The figure of the mass entrepreneur also embodies another fundamental characteristic of neoliberalism: insecurity. The relatively stable labour-management relationships of the mid-twentieth century have disintegrated, replaced with precarious labour markets where jobs across all industries are under threat of being contracted out. According to Virno (2004), economic insecurity leads to a culture of nihilism and cynicism, which can be exploited by capital to generate value through the arbitrage of labour and financial markets. Once considered a negative affective by-product of the flux and rationalization of modernity, nihilism has “entered into production, has become a professional qualification, and has been put to work. Only one who is experienced in the haphazard changing nature of the forms of urban life knows how to behave in the just in time factories” (Virno, 2004, p. 86).

Given the widespread precarity of the contemporary labour market, nihilism and cynicism have become valuable skills for the contemporary worker. On the other side of the employment equation, management has also learned to stop worrying and love the uncertainty of the market, where nihilism as attitude and affect has become grist for the post-Fordist mill. For example, Crossan, White, Lane and Klus (1996), in their application of chaos theory to corporate strategic planning, discovered “a profound point that corporate executives need to internalize: beyond a certain point, increased knowledge of complex, dynamic systems does little to improve our ability to extend the horizon of predictability for those systems...We can know, but we cannot predict” (p. 21). These strategists warn that planning alone is insufficient; the good manager must always be ready to capitalize on unanticipated opportunities as they present themselves. They

position “improvisation as a potential link between the need to plan for the predictable and the ability to respond simultaneously to the unpredictable” (Crossan et al., 1996, p. 22).

Post-Fordism has transmuted nihilism into *opportunism*, and management scholarship now recognizes that most successful immaterial labourers exhibit the qualities of what Virno (1996) described as the contemporary cynicism of Post-Fordism, and Brian Holmes (2002) called “the flexible personality.” While free from much of the direct managerial surveillance of the salaried worker, the neoliberal contract worker, framed as an autonomous “self-enterprise,” is subject to “internalized self-monitoring” to ensure that the product of her labour fulfils the requirements of the client/employer (Dardot & Laval, 2009; Rose & Miller, 2008).

Ironically, an example of the entrepreneurial initiative so valued by neoliberal management can be seen in the first performers who transmuted their improv skills into forms of workplace training. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, most workplace improv was conducted by actors with little or no prior experience in corporate management apart from appearing in training videos. Perhaps the most intriguing irony of the improvisational training industry is the fact that it was largely organized, not by the corporate clients, or even management consultants, but rather by struggling actors. Indeed, the most lucrative improvisational brainstorming session of all may have occurred between the performers at The Second City in Chicago when they came up with the idea of marketing training services to corporations (Crossan, 1997b). Although The Second City had long served corporate clients by providing entertainment for company meetings, their communications division now focuses primarily on providing marketing and innovation training workshops.

As constant precarity has become a generalized condition, shared amongst millions of workers in call centers, service work, and manufacturing plants around the world, actors, who have long been amongst the most precarious of labourers, are finding work teaching their precarious comrades how to survive and thrive on uncertainty. Rather than organizing against these untenable labour conditions, performers at Second City and

elsewhere profit from them, and not just financially. One performer I spoke with who did some part-time training on the side relished the freedom he had teaching workplace improv, as he was the “expert” and given free rein to do almost whatever he wanted with corporate clients (Respondent “P,” 2011).

2.2 Arts-Based Management

The interest in applying concepts from musical and theatrical improvisation to the workplace accompanied a broader trend in the corporate appropriation of artistic pedagogy in the 1990s and 2000s. This artistic turn in management resonated with a growing interest at the time in creativity as economic driver. The emergence of what Peter Drucker (1969) called the “knowledge economy” drastically shaped perceptions of how companies should function, with business scholars and practitioners alike identifying information technology and workplace culture as key factors of financial success.

Richard Florida’s (2002) best-selling *The Rise of the Creative Class* introduced the idea that the diffused social creativity generated by artists and intellectuals in urban communities created fertile conditions for the types of innovative and vibrant start-ups that supposedly drive the new economy—the people and businesses we might now call “disruptors”.

In management literature, Arts Based Management (ABM) attempts to capture the creativity and passion of the artistic community to handle the challenges of the Post-Fordist economy:

Twenty-first century society yearns for a leadership of possibility, a leadership based more on hope, aspiration, and innovation than on the replication of historical patterns of constrained pragmatism. Luckily, such a leadership is possible today. For the first time in history, companies can work backward from their aspirations and imagination rather than forward from their past... Designing options worthy of implementation calls for levels of inspiration and passionate creativity that have been more the domain of artists and artistic processes than of most managers (Adler, 2006, p. 487).

ABM also legitimized artistic practices as laboratories for generating fresh ideas on managing labour. While Chiapello and Boltanski (2007) might describe this as capital's recuperation of the "artistic critique," ABM can also be seen to comprise a full-blown neoliberal justification for the arts and humanities in general. By the mid-2000s many corporate executives identified the artist as the ideal subject of Post-Fordist capitalism (McRobbie, 2004). The Harvard Business Review, somewhat hyperbolically, remarked "The MFA is the New MBA...An arts degree is now perhaps the hottest credential in the world of business" (Pink, 2004).

As performance, and acting in particular, became a prominent motif in post-Fordist management (see McKenzie, 2001), theatre as a whole became a primary source for ABM. Nissley, Taylor, and Houden (2004) describe a range of theatre-corporate interactions, from staff cabarets at Christmas parties and spectacular performances at annual meetings, to contracting the Globe Theatre to "discover how Shakespeare's wisdom might inform the practice of management" (p. 818) by the Cranfield University School of Management. There have even been several corporate adaptations of director Augusto Boal's "Theatre of the Oppressed" workshops. Based on Paolo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Boal intended these workshops to use theatrical exercises to teach radical politics, challenging the traditional monologic "theatre of the oppressor" through a "liberation of the spectator" into a "spec-actor" who becomes a participant in the performance (Stephen Gibb, 2004, p. 742).

It is no accident that ABM emerged simultaneously with the importance of emotional and affective labour in the economy (Illouz, 2008). ABM can be seen as part of the larger project of what Peter Fleming (2009) describes as "managed fun," which functions as a diversion from the primary goal of every corporate enterprise, the production and capture of surplus value from workers (p. 57). Proponents argue that ABM initiatives can cultivate teamwork and harmony in the work environment, help employees align their values and desires with those of the employer, and displace the inherent conflict between labour and capital. Nancy Adler (2011) advocates a "leadership artistry" that promises not only management efficacy but transcendence as well, "a leadership of possibility" that can ultimately lead to "a peaceful, prosperous planet" (p. 1).

Organizational theorist Peter B Vaill (1991) is less utopian than Adler, although he agrees that management is more art than science. Vaill argues that theatrical performativity is a better model for management, as science aims to reduce risk and variation, whereas the performing arts attempt to embrace and channel them. Using a theatrical metaphor for management helps organizations navigate what he calls “permanent white water,”—the complex and uncertain contemporary environment. In this model, managers are not scientists making observations and testing hypotheses, but, rather, performers playing with scenarios.

2.3 Workplace Improv

The use of theatrical improv games as training technique did not find its way into the repertoires of Human Resources (HR) consultants until the 1990s and was influenced by the work of management scholar Karl Weick’s (1993) theories of organizational improvisation. Weick suggests that the ideal twenty-first century organization should model itself on a jazz ensemble, eschewing rigid pre-scripted “scores” and a single conductor as leader, and emphasizing that employees collectively contribute to the planning and decision-making process at all levels. While initially intended to function more as a metaphor for the ways organizations handle restructuring, a number of popular and academic management texts have proceeded to draw a direct practical relationship between musical and theatrical improvisational practices and organizational management. Drawing upon Weick’s jazz analogy, several management scholars attempted to directly incorporate lessons from jazz performers into managerial practice (Hatch, 1999; Jackson, 1995; Kao, 1996; Meyer, Frost, & Weick, 1998; Zack, 2000). For these scholars, jazz offers a metaphor for balancing structural constraints with creative autonomy:

Improvisation is freedom within a structure. Think of jazz. Musicians improvise only when the groove is grooving. The structure is created first. The stronger the structure the more securely the freedom is grounded. Without the structure you do not have improvisation, you have anarchy or indulgence. Without the freedom you have suffocation (Jackson, 1995, p. 27).

Following the theatrical metaphors for understanding organizational dynamics introduced by Vaill (1991), however, theatrical improvisation soon came to surpass musical improv as a model in management literature. Vera and Crossan (2004) argue that theatrical improvisation is more applicable to a work setting than jazz:

The value-added of theatrical improvisation over jazz improvisation is its accessibility, transferability, and universality. The theatre metaphor is transparent and accessible because the elements upon which actors improvise are the same ones available to individuals in their day-to-day lives... The advantage of the theatre metaphor over the jazz one is that, because its raw materials are words instead of musical notes, people in organizations may relate to it better, which contributes to the ability to learn and transfer the skill (p. 728).

Theatrical improvisation has a parallel history to musical improvisation. While the roots of modern improvisational theatrical techniques go back to the Italian commedia dell'arte tradition of the Sixteenth Century at least, the contemporary form of improvisational exercises or "games" emerged in the mid-Twentieth Century (Frost & Yarrow, 1990). The fundamentals behind many of the improv techniques practiced in North America were developed most fully in the work of Viola Spolin. As drama supervisor in the Works Project Administration Recreational Project in Chicago between 1939 and 1941, Spolin developed a series of improvisational games designed to facilitate non-verbal communication and stimulate creative self-expression (Frost & Yarrow, 1990). These games were eventually compiled into one of the most significant books published on improvisation, *Improvisation for the Theatre* (Spolin, 1999). Spolin's ideas and the work of her son, Paul Sills, were the genesis of the Chicago School of improvisation founded in the Second City theatre, of which Sills was the original director.

Second City soon became one of the premiere improvisational theatres in the country, earning a reputation as a proving ground for comedic performers who moved on to *Saturday Night Live* and Hollywood. As mentioned above, Second City was also at the forefront of adapting improv techniques to the workplace. One of the first major collaborations between management scholars and improvisational actors occurred in

1997, when the Richard Ivey school of Business at the University of Western Ontario partnered with The Second City comedy theatre in Toronto to develop a half-day workshop titled “Improvise to Innovate.” This workshop is based on a thirty-minute training video featuring Second City alumni Joe Flaherty (perhaps best remembered as SCTV’s Count Floyd), Jayne Eastwood, and ubiquitous Canadian improv performer Colin Mocherie. In the video, Second City actors play office workers coaxed into playing a number of improv games in order to help them cultivate a variety of teamwork and leadership skills.

The games featured in “Improvise to Innovate” are similar to those taught in other workplace improv training programs such as Kat Koppett’s (2001) *Training to Imagine*, Cherie Kerr and Julia Sweeny’s (1998) *When I Say This...Do You Mean That? Enhancing on the Job Communication Skills Using the Rules and the Tools of the Improv Comedy Player*, and Robert Lowe’s (2000) *Improvisation, Inc.: Harnessing Spontaneity to Engage People and Groups*. Due to their roots in Spolin’s games for children, improv games are usually very short and simple exercises. The simplicity of these games allows them to be easily tailored to fit any specific industry or workplace setting.

For example, many of workplace improv programs use the “One Word Story” exercise, where participants develop a story with each person supplying only a single word at a time in order to demonstrate how organizational strategy is built incrementally from the ideas of others. Another popular exercise is Spolin’s classic invisible ball game, where participants have to mime passing and receiving an invisible ball, modifying its speed, size and sound with each toss. This game ostensibly teaches trust, active listening, and the practice of making and accepting offers (in improv parlance, offers are actions or dialogue that advance a scene) (Koppett, 2001; Lowe, 2000). Widely considered “the only unbreakable rule in improvisational theatre” (Vera & Crossan, 2004, p. 139), making and accepting offers is a central component of the business case for improvisational training, working to advance a general culture of agreement.

2.4 Yes, and – Improv and the Culture of Agreement

In order to foster this culture of agreement, nearly all workplace improv programs teach the axiom of “Yes, and.” Leonard and Yorton (2015) describe this principle as “the secret sauce, the source code, the key that unlocks every door worth opening. It is the foundational tenet of improvisation that allows all the other improv tenets to exist” (p. 24). The concept of “Yes, and...” simply requires players to agree to any “offers” made during an improvisational activity and follow it up with an offer of their own, never refusing or “blocking” an offer. This prevents a scene from being derailed by a disagreement between two of the players; for example, if one actor addresses another as “Doctor,” and the second replies, “I’m not a doctor, I’m a pilot,” it can stall the performance.

The “Yes, and” principle has become shorthand for the type of collaboration necessary to improvise successfully with others. Improv coach Izzy Gesell (2005) describes “Yes, and...” as a “North Star” for improv performers, “a guiding light and a way to keep moving forward, even though the outcome of the journey is uncertain” (p. 5). For Tom Yorton, president of the corporate training division of the Second City comedy troupe, strictly adhering to the “Yes, and...” philosophy can

get people comfortable with the idea of being uncomfortable...In business we always want control, we always want to minimize the variables, control the outcomes, direct an outcome, and what we try to do is get people comfortable with another style choice they can make which is not to try to control everything but to try to yield control, just for a moment, to the possibility the other person is bringing (cited in Weinstein, 2006, p. 35).

Despite the widespread embrace of “Yes, and” in workplace improv literature however, practitioners suggest that it shouldn’t be taken as dogma. As one trainer told me, “‘Yes, and’ is full of shit... sometimes it’s good to block” (interview “R” citation). Researchers involved in the *Improvise to Innovate* workshop warn against the dangers of completely relinquishing control or embracing too much spontaneity in a corporate setting:

the spontaneous facet of improvisation tends to be overemphasized in the extant literature. When improvisation is restricted to the ability to ‘think on your feet,’ managers risk confusing improvisation with random moments of brilliance and conclude that either you have this ability or you do not. There is, however, much preparation and study behind effective improvisation (Vera & Crossan, 2005, p. 203).

This suggests that improv should not be used to provoke uncontrollable, spontaneous eruptions of chaotic creativity, but instead to strive for a “practiced spontaneity” (Gesell, 2005, p. 4) that “relies on rules and routines that are preestablished” (Vera & Crossan, 2005, p. 203). Practiced spontaneity is mastered by professional improvisers in Second City main stage performances and television shows like *Whose Line is it Anyway*, who often bring out stock characters and relationships and adapt them to fit audience suggestions. Improv training is not a free-for-all of uninhibited experimentation, as, even in improvisational theatre, clearly not ‘anything’ goes. All performance must be in the service of the scene.

For all its apparent expressive freedom then, improvisation may serve a disciplinary function—ironically providing a framework or “script” to guide an appropriate course of action for any given circumstance. Improvisation training also can serve a diagnostic function for management, identifying the optimal level of structure necessary to regulate an organization without restricting its flexibility:

Initially, we viewed improvisation as the exploration or feed-forward processes of organizational learning, but we soon came to realize that improvisation was a mechanism to manage the tensions between exploration and exploitation...improvisation calls for identifying the minimal constraints or rules that must be adhered to, rather than building layers of routines and systems that become ossified and are eventually tagged as ‘red tape’ (Vera & Crossan, 2005, p. 224).

Certainly immaterial labourers working in even relatively unregulated work environments are not free to express themselves unconditionally. Jason Read (2003)

describes how worker subjectivity, when under capitalist command, is organized under a series of “conceptual constellations” communicated through institutional training regimes, “embedded in the heads and minds of workers as little productive machines, without necessarily originating from them” (p. 131). The worker is no longer merely a “conscious organ” of the machine, but rather has her consciousness colonized by “little machines” - the programs and rules established by management. The structural logic of the firm, oriented towards efficiency and profitability, underlies all improvisational activity. The playful acceptance of “Yes...and” has its limits; the players must accept the underlying rules of the game, but are unable to alter them. And, crucially, the game only works if everyone plays; as Lazzarato (1996) reminds us, the immaterial labourer “*has to* speak, communicate, cooperate, and so forth. The ‘tone’ is that of the people who were in executive command under Taylorization; all that has changed is the content” (p. 135, emphasis in original).

According to Lazzarato, under post-Fordism the immaterial labourer is compelled to participate in the conversation, in the same way that, under Taylorism, manual workers are directed to work on the assembly line in a very specific fashion. However, just as the Fordist worker would come to suffer alienation and antagonism as a result of the demand that they perform manual labour under the mental command of management, the rise of the immaterial labourer in post-industrial economies can lead to alienation as well, as workers are required to “speak” even when they have nothing productive to say. Similarly, improvisational techniques impose demands on workers to see and speak with one another, to interact in a way that reinforces the underlying power relationship of capitalist and worker.

Whereas theatrical improv games might encourage the development of characters and plotlines, once taken into the instrumental arena of the workplace, the overriding logic of capital finds a way to exploit the social relationships they engender. Workplace improv reinforces the ideal qualities of the post-Fordist labourer, the entrepreneurial ethos of the self-managed worker. Indeed, one of the explicit goals of improvisational training is to get workers to manage themselves individually and collectively. Leonard and Yorton

(2015) cite Second City alum Harold Ramis' collaborative approach to directing as a guide to good leadership:

Most people think of directing as a control function. Really, at Second City, it's more of a facilitative function...being a facilitator and helping people recognize their best work, as opposed to telling them how to do it or how you see the show. Traditionally, we think the director takes a piece of material, interprets it, and then finds actors to fulfil his vision of it. That's not Second City. You have people who are constantly firing new ideas out. You help them catch the best ones and shape them and maybe see connections that they don't see, and give it a kind of polish (p. 210-211).

In this way, leadership in the improvisational mode is about "building strong ensembles" that rely upon the creative energy of participants to self-motivate and self-manage within an organizational culture of collaboration and agreement (Leonard & Yorton, 2015, p. 51). Yorton (2005) uses the axiom "bring a brick, not a cathedral" to highlight the necessity of individual contribution: "Bring a brick" suggests that every contribution matters, and it also implies obligation: Because your contribution matters, you are obliged to contribute—to bring something to the game" (p. 11). The suggestion that "your contribution matters" is a common refrain in Post-Fordist managerial discourse, reflecting both the entrepreneurial ethos of neoliberalism and the fantasy of work as a site of communal collaboration, albeit collaboration where the "cathedral" is designed for the veneration of capital accumulation, not the collective benefit of individual brick builders.

2.5 Management's Abandonment Ideology

A reading of management discourse by Frédéric Lordon (2014) suggest that employers want their workers to "fall in love" with them, even as they acknowledge that such a deployment of "joyful affects" is fundamentally undergirded by material dependence upon a steady paycheque. However, according to Fleming (2015), such interpretations take HR literature at face value and ignore the actual practices of layoffs, outsourcing, and workplace surveillance that suggest employers are more interested in cultivating fear and instability than affection. The 'faux love' elicited in employment relationships exists

alongside an underlying fear of losing one's job should this false affection be revealed as inauthentic. Thus, rather than focusing solely on making employees fall in love with their work, over the last several years, management has progressively conditioned workers to accept their inevitable abandonment by capital. According to this view, neoliberalism has been so successful at convincing people to embrace the toxic employment relationship of exploiter to exploited that HR's primary function has shifted from employee engagement and retention to "a preoccupation with deciding precisely when to *abandon* [employees]" (Fleming, 2015, p. 85).¹

The "abandonment ideology" of neoliberal management is evident in the disruptive character of many managerial initiatives, which have a tendency to restructure the work environment for reasons that are often unclear but ostensibly related to productivity and efficiency. Obvious examples of this abandonment ideology are the destruction of full-time jobs through outsourcing or automation. Other cases include the reconfiguration of employment relationships in ways that ignore traditional employer responsibilities, such as unpaid internships or the "independent contractors" of Uber, Upwork, and other pioneers of the on-demand, "sharing" economy.

Such destabilizing moves can be interpreted as having less to do with productivity gains than

communicat[ing] to the workforce that they are not really welcome, so do not get too comfortable... it not only puts workers permanently on guard (and thus encourages self-control) but also expresses to them the deep regret the firm feels for ever employing them in the first place. The resulting culture of sadness ironically rivets employees even more tightly to their exploitation: if their own

¹ Fleming (2015) acknowledges that retention is still a concern for most HR departments, "but only in the negative sense of calculating when the firm is able to accentuate its dialectical obverse and successfully instigate a culture of permanent non-retention" (p. 85).

employer despises them, then probably so does capitalist society as a whole. There is nowhere to escape (Fleming, 2015, p. 90).

Ironically, in the wake of the rise of the enterprising worker who is constantly self-disciplining and resigned to their exploitation, management itself suffers a kind of existential crisis. When labour self-regulates, managerial efforts are revealed as ultimately purposeless. This results in what Fleming calls “surplus regulation”, forms of discipline and control where management attempts to justify its own existence: “the excess sociality that allows the working class to meet its targets in a socio-economic structure defined by disarray is reflected in its class reversal – control not because it is functionally necessary, but for its own sake and self-assurance” (Fleming, 2015, p. 79).

One strategy that management employs to legitimate itself is the appropriation of familiar ideas and concepts from popular culture into a form of ‘popular management’ discourse. Stefano Harney (2005) calls this phenomenon “management as cliché.” Harney reads these clichés symptomatically, as attempts to find productive value in the realm of the popular. The use of cliché functions to legitimize management’s ability to capture value from the social cooperation of popular culture, and, simultaneously, distracts from management’s failure to objectively measure and regulate immaterial labour effectively.²

² The debates surrounding the crisis of value, involving the claim that immaterial labour cannot be objectively measured, have been well documented. According to Virno (2004) and Hardt & Negri (2001), as production becomes increasingly dependent upon social and technological networks that function both inside and outside of the wage relation, socially-necessary labour time vanishes altogether as an objective measure of surplus value. These claims have been challenged by George Caffentzis (2011), Max Henniger (2007), Steven Toms (2008), Massimo de Angelis & David Harvie (2009) for essentially abandoning the concept of necessarily labour time, if not the labour theory of value in its entirety. This essay simply acknowledges the difficulty of quantifying labour that exists in the form of ideas and affects. It may be impossible to track the exploitation of surplus value in a production process that valorises the intellectual and affective labour of workers who can’t simply shut off their brains when they punch out at the end of the work day (or even in their sleep; see Crary, 2014). However this inability to objectively measure labour power does not mean that capital has stopped trying to do so. Rather than accepting the impossibility of measuring value in an economy increasingly dependent upon extracting value from social reproduction, we accountants and analysts doubling down in their the efforts to measure the ineffable. Wherever there is management these days, which is to say in every workplace, there is a trend towards measurement and the production of metrics.

Improvisation, and ABM more generally, rely upon a set of familiar clichés about the cultural industries as reservoir of unbridled creativity. Common throughout the workplace improv literature are claims that it can enable right-brain thinking, teach how to accept failure, connect people with their intuition, and cultivate a culture of trust. These are well-worn tropes, not just in management literature but in self-help discourse more generally (Illouz, 2008; McGee, 2005). As one trainer interviewed for this chapter describes, he often found himself repeating the proposition that improv enabled workers to better “think outside the box,” despite his reluctance to use such a hackneyed and, in his words, “cheesy” cliché (Respondent “P,” 2011). Because the phrase offered a desirable yet amorphous outcome that is ultimately unverifiable, he claimed, it was the most effective way to convince an HR manager to hire his services. The trainer, the HR manager who hired him, and the participants could all go home after the workshop confident that something was achieved because there was no objective way of knowing or proving otherwise.

While there have been several attempts to quantify the value of improvisational training, none have been successful in establishing a causal relationship between improv and increased performance. Ken Kamoche, Joao Viera da Cunha and Miguel Pina e Cunha (2002) document the cumbersome attempts to measure “organizational improvisation” as a hard metric. Examples include workers self-evaluating the amount of ad-libbing from a strict plan on a semantic differential scale, to a more quantitative measurement of “reinvention” where researchers “literally count the number of variations around what was planned for, or to use a jazz metaphor, the number of notes played by the musicians that were not a part of the original score of the song” (Kamoche et al., 2002, p. 107). One workplace improv consultant uses a psychological profiling tool, the Attentional and Interpersonal Style Inventory (TAIS) to measure the efficacy of improv training on awareness and analytical skills (Respondent “R,” 2011). Second City’s *Improvise to Innovate* workshop concludes with a similar, although less intensive, self-evaluation that measures how the improv exercises improved participants’ leadership, teamwork, and organizational culture on a scale of one to five.

Unfortunately for improv advocates, none of these attempts have managed to provide measurable evidence of the efficacy of improvisational techniques in improving organizational flexibility or innovation. As one former improv trainer told me, he is under greater pressure in his current role as artistic director of a theatre to hit measurable objectives, such as bookings and box office receipts. For Harney (2005), these failed attempts to account for immaterial labour lead directly to the kinds of clichéd “bullshit” management discourse that workplace improv both reflects and generates.

2.6 Improv as Management Bullshit

The emergence of workplace improv during the late 1990s during the height of optimism about the “weightless” economy offered a sense of purpose to both the participants and HR administrators who found themselves increasingly irrelevant within the growing abandonment culture of neoliberal workplaces (Fleming, 2015; Hanlon, 2007). It also is oddly appropriate that workplace improv would depend upon the labour of actors and musicians, who have an important social value but often no job. Such partnerships between management and the arts are generally seen as a “win-win” (another cliché) by all parties, infusing business with creativity and bringing economic legitimacy and revenue into the arts community.

But what if workplace improv is, like so many other management fads and fashions, simply a cynical exercise in justifying HR budgets without any real contribution to productivity or accumulation? Furthermore, what if improv actually produces detrimental effects by encouraging workers to make hasty and uninformed decisions under the aegis of creativity and spontaneity? After all, improv was initially designed to facilitate the artistic practices of character development and storytelling, not to improve organizational efficacy.

Much critical analysis of the capitalist command of immaterial labour suggests all worker subjectivity serves as grist for capital accumulation. What such analyses often overlook, however, is the vast amount of unproductive, or even counter-productive, activity that takes place in the workplace. This includes what Roland Paulson (2014) has called “empty labour” – work time idleness such as napping or browsing Facebook. Recent

examinations of the underrepresented unproductive labour in modern organizations recognize that not all immaterial labour necessarily advances capitalist accumulation (Burda, Genadek, & Hamermesh, 2016; McNulty & Marks, 2016; Vardi & Weitz, 2016); they argue that the post-Fordist compulsion towards collaboration and self-management is not necessarily more productive than more hierarchical forms of management:

Think of many of the meetings that people suffer through – they are frequently hours of empty talk. More ‘serious’ discourses in organisations often have an ephemeral character as well. Think of strategy discourse – although it is treated with great reverence, it is often fleeting, interchangeable, relatively meaningless and very ineffective. Similar things can be said about statements of organisational values which often seem to jumble together a whole set of nice sounding generic words like ‘quality’, ‘service’, ‘value’ and so on with little effect (Spicer, 2013, p. 656).

Spicer characterizes much of this empty talk as “organizational bullshit,” building upon Harry Frankfurt’s (2005) well known philosophical treatise *On Bullshit*. Frankfurt argues that ‘bullshit’ is not lying, in that it has no relationship or interest in the truth; the bullshitter generates misleading and deceptive language in order to advance their own interests. The objective is not to obscure the truth but to communicate in any case, without regard to truth at all: “It is impossible for someone to lie unless he thinks he knows the truth. Producing bullshit requires no such conviction” (Frankfurt, 2005, p. 54). Frankfurt describes a bullshit session as a milieu for trying new ideas without suffering any expectation that you are saying things that you really believe. This certainly describes familiar territory for anyone dealing with corporate administration. Bullshit also relies more upon creativity and imagination than lying does:

the mode of creativity upon which it [bullshit] relies is less analytical and less deliberative than that which is mobilized in lying. It is more expansive and independent, with more spacious opportunities for improvisation, color, and imaginative play. This is less a matter of craft than of art. Hence the familiar notion of the bullshit artist (Frankfurt, 2005, p. 56).

It seems clear that bullshit is the natural outcome of a mode of production characterized by the figure of the immaterial labourer who “*has to express*” herself, even if she doesn’t know what she is meant to be talking about (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 135). The compulsion to be “innovative” or “creative” at work would clearly generate bullshit from those workers who may have no innovative thoughts that day, but may not feel comfortable to admit it:

Bullshit is unavoidable whenever circumstances require someone to talk without knowing what he is talking about. Thus the production of bullshit is stimulated whenever a person’s obligations or opportunities to speak about some topic are more excessive than his knowledge of the facts that are relevant to that topic (Frankfurt, 2005, p. 55).

Spicer (2013) identifies many of the traits of bullshit in various forms of organizational discourse, noting that bullshit proliferates in situations where people feel that their role is not clearly defined or lacking in social value. Workers attempt to fill this “existential void” with bullshit in order to justify their existence in the organization to themselves as much as to their bosses and colleagues. The major problem with organizational bullshit, from the perspective of management, is that it does nothing to address a business’ fundamental mandate to capture value from labour. It helps the members of the organization feel like they are contributing something productive while at the same time ignoring their central objective. To obscure this, organizational bullshit deploys the “strategic ambiguity” of “broad words like ‘excellence’, ‘quality’ and ‘innovation’... words that could mean almost anything to anybody” (Spicer, 2013, p. 661). Given the lack of definitional clarity for such ambiguous terms, it becomes impossible to measure or evaluate them by any meaningful criteria.

The literature on workplace improvisation is littered with examples of strategic ambiguity. The purported benefits of improv are comprised of buzzwords (or clichés) lacking any clear meaning. Michael Gold (cited in Laver, 2014) cites the most common benefits of improv through the quaint acronym of APRIL: Autonomy, Passion, Risk, Innovation, and Listening. Similarly, Second City identifies seven elements of improv that will produce more effective leaders and team players: Yes, and; Ensemble; Co-

creation; Authenticity; Failure; Follow the Follower; and Listening. The combination of these elements is summed up with a short analogy: “practising improvisation is like yoga for your professional development—a solid, strengthening workout that improves emotional intelligence, teaches you to pivot out of tight and uncomfortable spaces, and helps you become both a more compelling leader and a more collaborative follower” (Leonard & Yorton, 2015, pp. 3–4).

Despite these claims, the measurable impact of improv training on organizational efficacy is not mentioned anywhere in the popular or academic literature. The most thorough study of the impact of improv training to organizational dynamics found claims that is able to bring “strategic renewal” via “organizational learning,” but without providing specific evidence of how these fuzzy concepts actually contribute to the bottom line (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999, p. 522). Even if improv activities have some sort of effect on teamwork and creativity, most training isn’t conducted with enough sustained effort to be effective. As one trainer told me, “improv is a muscle. The more you work it, the stronger it gets” (Respondent “P,” 2011). Yet one study that interviewed several arts-based consultants found that it was rare for any trainer to spend more than six hours training a client (Laver, 2014). Workplace improv training has caché as a novelty act, but clearly is not seen to be valuable enough to be integrated into a long-term training program. And yet, in another sense, novelty is precisely what makes improv valuable as a workplace technique; departure from convention gives the impression that management is at least trying to do something creative and different, or, to use yet another cliché, “shake things up.”

Workplace improv involves the production of organizational bullshit in two ways: as a motivational and “leadership” tool offering to legitimize the existence of HR departments and their training budgets, and as a technique that enables workers to more readily produce bullshit organizational discourse of their own. Since a key characteristic of organizational bullshit is its dynamism, “assiduously avoiding any clear commitment to a particular discourse and continually shifting between different terms in a vague and often baseless fashion” (Spicer, 2013, p. 661), the bullshitter is able to sidestep further inquiry or possible criticism of their position.

Many of the central tenants of improv cited by management literature are valuable skills for the production of organizational bullshit. The building of trust between participants, encouraging acceptance of all ideas without reservation, developing spontaneity and risk-taking: all of these facets of improv that help develop performative skills also encourage an organizational culture where talk for the sake of talk is not only tolerated but embraced. Maxims such as “yes, and” and “follow the follower” suggest that all contributions are equally valuable and should be free from judgement so that “one can feel free to fail...and fail with confidence” (Leonard & Yorton, 2015, pp. 159–160).

Although there is some merit in activities that help people get over the “fear of looking stupid” (Marren, 2008), a focus on generating bullshit also can lead to “brittle” organizations, where relationships become increasingly transactional and ephemeral, breaking down once the advantages gained from the transaction begin to decay (Spicer, 2013, p. 664). For example, the immediate aftermath of improv training can lead to more creative communication amongst participants. Without sustained engagement with improv practice or clear strategies for how to capitalize on this new form of communication, however, the organization could end up merely repeating improv clichés rather than translating them into long-term business improvements (Respondent “P,” 2011). Then again, given Fleming’s theory that management looks to perpetually destabilize workers and inure them to their precarious working conditions, perhaps inculcating a sense of insecurity and emptiness at work is the ultimate goal of improv training and other forms of organizational bullshit after all.

2.7 The Future of Organizational Bullshit is in Science, Not Arts: Evidence Based Management

Today, there is mounting evidence that the heyday of workplace improv and ABM might be coming to an end. Big Data analytics and networked “disruptive” technologies are the current managerial buzzwords. So-called “evidenced-based management” (EBM) represents a shift in management decision-making away from ABM and other scholarly approaches emphasizing behavioural or socio-cultural theory toward hard numbers and empirical evidence (Learmonth, 2008). Given the roots of “evidenced-based”

methodology in medicine, it is unsurprising that the first scholarly work in EBM came from the Health Care sector (Rousseau, 2006; Walshe & Rundall, 2001).

EBM gained traction with management scholars and practitioners as quantitative methodologies began to permeate the culture with the rise of “big data” and predictive analytics, and the concomitant view that hard metrics can serve as a panacea for all manner of organizational ills, from global terrorism (Akhgar et al., 2015) to failing professional baseball teams (Lewis, 2004). EBM is deeply hostile to “management fads” and the culture of corporate gurus, relying instead on empirical research with observable outcomes (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006). EBM offers a completely different approach from ABM, which, as we have seen, advocated for a “leadership of possibility, a leadership based more on hope, aspiration, and innovation than on the replication of historical patterns of constrained pragmatism” (Adler, 2006, p. 487).

The desire to make decisions based on the objective accounts of scientific experimentation or statistical “big data”, however, mirrors neoliberal rationality, which asserts, among other things, that states should be managed like businesses, allocating resources based upon quantitative indicators of qualitative conditions like health, education, and employment (Dardot & Laval, 2009). If individuals or nations have access to enough empirical data, the theory goes, they will inevitably make rational and “responsible” decisions about the distribution of resources and structure of society. Yet no quantitative methodology can claim to be a purely “objective” measure of social forces. As Wendy Espeland and Mitchell Stevens (2008) argue, metrics are performative, in that they have a propensity to produce what they claim to measure, authorizing certain quantitative representations over others.

For example, a study of Twitter and Foursquare data from the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy privileged the activities of Manhattan residents over those of other boroughs. The increased usage of mobile devices in Manhattan gave the impression that it was the area most impacted by the hurricane, while in reality it was one of the least affected (Crawford, 2013). Big data analytics often have social assumptions baked into them in ways that reproduce the biases and inequities of the culture it is claiming to ‘analyse’.

Even some organizational theory scholars acknowledge the impracticality of quantifying aspects of complex employment relationships, such as managerial legitimacy or performance efficacy (Davis, 2015). Of course, the objectivity and accuracy of managerial metrics is fundamentally irrelevant, however. These metrics are performative and disciplinary in that they produce a kind of reactivity in those who are measured, guiding the form and practice of the entrepreneurial subject's self-discipline (Espeland & Sauder, 2007). Worried about the annual performance review, the "360" report, or the peer evaluation, we adjust our conduct accordingly.

These forms of external measure, however, are supplemented with efforts by individuals to self-measure. With the rise of the "quantified self" movement – the self-evaluation of productivity using online tools that track everything from fitness activity to time spent procrastinating—managerial metrics become internalized and self-governing (Moore & Robinson, 2015). Workers no longer wait for their bosses to tell them when they aren't measuring up, they actively seek out new ways to quantify as much of their life as possible. From steps walked to words written, minutes wasted on Facebook, or calories ingested during lunch hour, the hyper-vigilant self-quantifier monitors and consumes reams of data in order to improve her efficiency.

In this respect, the data-driven manager also is increasingly becoming redundant; the neoliberal self-quantifying worker is better able to measure and maximize their productivity than any foreman or manager. There is no direct, measurable, relationship between an immaterial labourer's time spent working in MS Excel and their impact on the bottom line of their employer; indeed the "cultures of fun" theory of organizational efficacy would suggest that chatting with co-workers on Facebook would be indirectly "productive" as it encourages workplace communication and thus contributes to a positive corporate culture. Rather than inaugurating an entirely different form of management discipline then, EBM-based metrics can be seen as just another dimension of bullshit managerialism.

2.8 Conclusion: From Improv to Gamification

One of the key arguments for an improvisational sensibility in the workplace is the claim that management is unable to foresee the future: “We can know, but we cannot predict” (Crossan et al., 1996, p. 21). Yet in recent years the rise of big data and predictive analytics promise otherwise, as the idealized worker shifts from the cynical flexible personality described by Virno and Holmes to the “anticipatory subject” of big data (Hearn, 2017). Improv training persists in an era dominated by the hard metrics and algorithmic rationality of EBM in part because it represents itself as harmless to workers. At best, it helps workers become more creative and collaborative; at worst, it is merely pointless bullshit that has few apparent negative effects for employees who don’t mind goofing off a little at work. It is no doubt easier to get workers on board with fun theatrical exercises than with some new efficiency tracking metric.

Arguably, the most important impact of corporate improv is its role legitimizing games and play as workplace training techniques. Improvisation may be seen to function as a ludic representation of neoliberal power, defining the boundaries of activity within which immaterial labour is able to express itself. Rather than following the architectural cartography of the disciplinary panopticon, improv is a playful space, composed of games and rules rather than isolated chambers and sightlines. Indeed, these workplace improv games, introduced in the 1990s, presage the recent rise of gamification techniques in the workplace, particularly the category of organizational gameplay that Andersen (2009) calls “social creation games”. These are distinguished from competitive games like sales competitions and training/simulation games, like roleplaying, for customer service reps, in that they are geared towards more intangible skill development such as teamwork, creativity, and self-esteem. The first organizational social creation games were icebreakers introduced in the 1980s—scavenger hunts or paintball outings that would fall under the broad definition of “team-building events.”

Today’s forms of gamification, particularly when integrated into social media or other networked technologies, offers employers with a wealth of data about worker behaviour, while cloaking this surveillance under the aegis of “managed fun” and team-building (Dale, 2014; Mollick & Rothbard, 2014; Penenberg, 2013). Workplace gamification

could be seen as an attempt to move away from the inefficacy of organizational bullshit while retaining its innocuousness resulting in the ultimate synthesis of data-driven EBM with the playfulness of theatrical improvisation.

Each of these managerial initiatives—improv training, big data quantification, gamification—are symptomatic of the constantly shifting relationship between management and immaterial labourers. Employers no longer seek to merely monitor and control labour, nor even to make labour sympathize with management, but rather to make workers fear abandonment in order to acclimatize them to the current destabilized and precarious economic environment (Fleming, 2015). Yet this strategy obscures management's own anxieties about being replaced by the very systems they employ to justify their own existence, for what does the improvisational, gamified worker informed by big data need with a manager?

2.9 References

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3 Mindful Management: Organizing Social Reproduction and Collinearity at Ford and Google

Mindfulness meditation has recently become the latest fad to hit the six billion dollar workplace wellness industry (Mattke et al., 2013). Drawing from an established history in self-help literature, where mindfulness is applied to improve everything from eating habits to parenting to sex, advocates of mindfulness meditation promise workers increased focus, reduced stress, and improved productivity. Some companies, such as Green Mountain Coffee and Oprah's Harpo Productions, make daily mindfulness exercises mandatory for employees. Some programs are even able to show that they have real impact on companies' bottom lines. Aetna Insurance, for example, estimates that its extensive mindfulness offerings for employees, including mindfulness-based stress reduction and mindful eating workshops, have reduced its health care costs by seven percent and improved productivity by \$3000 per employee (Gelles, 2016, p. 177).

An early proponent of workplace mindfulness mediation, Google's in-house meditation program "Search Inside Yourself" (SIY) has been running since 2007. SIY has spawned a best-selling book (Tan, 2012), and the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute offers regular mindfulness seminars in various cities around the world. The SIY program was created by software engineer turned Human Resources (HR) guru Chade-Meng Tan, whose official title is "Jolly Good Fellow." After initially gaining public attention for amassing a large collection of photographs with world leaders and celebrities, Tan (2012) claims to draw from his engineering background to employ what he describes as a "systems approach" to mindfulness, integrating traditional meditation practices with developments in neuroscience and HR to "upgrade the operating efficiency of our brains" (p. 49).

Google's *SIY* program has been in the vanguard of the meditation wellness trend, establishing mindfulness as a legitimate training tool for the tech industry. In-house mindfulness programs are now standard fare at most large Silicon Valley employers, including Adobe, Cisco, eBay, Facebook, Intel, LinkedIn, and Twitter (Gelles, 2016).

The embrace of mindfulness meditation techniques by high-tech employers, however, clearly reveals fundamental contradictions in the workplaces of our digitally networked society. While the requirement for workers in the tech industry to be creative, collaborative, and in constant communication with one another now represents the new model of labour for workers in every industry, the intensity of these forms of immaterial labour are clearly unsustainable in the long term. Tsianos and Papadopoulous (2006) enumerate some of the psychological and emotional consequences of working under a production regime that generates value from cognitive and affective labour, including feelings of vulnerability, hyperactivity, unsettledness and affective exhaustion. In addition, this labour relies upon an army of “material” labourers, often from the Global south, who are likely not offered the benefits of corporate wellness initiatives.

Mindfulness provides a mechanism for achieving what Frederic Lordon (2014) calls “collinearity,” the alignment of the values and objectives of the employer with the desires of the employee – an alignment that is indispensable to the maintenance of contemporary, neoliberal forms of work. By applying Spinoza’s question of why people fight for their servitude as if for salvation to the neoliberal employment relationship, Lordon asks why workers today act to further their own exploitation by capital. He employs Spinoza’s theory of the “conatus,” or the drive that animates and motivates individuals to act upon desire, to understand why workers subject themselves to the domination of their employer by investing in neoliberal ideologies of individualism and self-motivation, thereby furthering their subordination.

The principle factor behind collinearity in capitalism is money, which, at its most fundamental level, allows us to satisfy our basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing. Fordism was primarily about using the wage as a mechanism to ensure the loyalty of workers, who had no other way to provide for themselves other than by selling their labour power. Neoliberalism expands workers’ reliance upon the employee/employer relationship from the Fordist satisfaction of base desires to a more insidious activation of a conatus that attaches meaning directly to work itself, where expectations shift from “money can buy you happiness” to an ethos of “do what you love.”

These new forms of management that strive for collinearity still draw from Fordist techniques of pacifying worker militancy, however. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Ford Motor Company functioned to align workers with the well-being of the company by instituting a profit-sharing program, popularly known as the five dollar wage. This dramatic increase in wages enabled workers to afford consumer comforts that facilitated the social reproduction of labour power, strengthening the bonds between workers and their employers. Mindfulness programs at Google and other tech companies fulfill a similar role, providing a tool that not only ameliorates some of the affective demands of high tech work but also encouraging employees to see work as a primary site of personal fulfillment.

While mindfulness meditation practices have emerged against the backdrop of rising stress levels related to cognitive labour, the demands of new technology and prescriptive forms of social connectedness, and proliferating forms of worker surveillance and self-surveillance, in this chapter, I argue that any ameliorative effects of mindfulness are secondary; its primary role is to organize workers' desire, thus enabling the alignment of the values of workers with those of their employer.³ I will attempt to show how wellness initiatives like workplace mindfulness meditation are only the most recent attempt by capital to regulate the motivational force of labour power. By comparing Google's use of mindfulness with the Ford Motor Company's (FMC) five-dollar day wage and its Sociological Department's regulation of workers' home life in the 1910s, I argue that both projects attempted to take over certain functions of social reproduction with the aim of aligning the values and desires of workers with those of capital.

FMC and Google are highly relevant case studies, because each company occupies a dominant position in the paradigmatic industry of their day. During the heyday of FMC in the early twentieth century, Henry Ford was celebrated as a paragon of the Protestant

³ In making this argument I do not intend to dispute the efficacy of mindfulness practices in dealing with most, although certainly not all, of the social and psychological conditions it claims to address; indeed the extant clinical research suggests that regular meditation is an effective preventative practice and treatment for a number of conditions (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004; Khoury et al., 2013).

work ethic, combining industriousness with a deep paternal concern for his workers and community (Weber, 1958). Not only was FMC a key factor in the transformation of American industry and culture from agricultural backwater to global superpower, but Ford was celebrated for his philanthropic efforts targeting everything from geopolitical conflict to the supposed “moral decay” of families (Watts, 2006).

Today, Google is considered the most successful Internet company by far, and its workplace culture is celebrated as making it one of the best places to work (Gillett, 2016; “Google (Alphabet),” 2016; Raymundo, 2014). Both companies have pioneered new strategies to align their workers’ desires with the objectives of the organization. In the case of FMC, this process occurred indirectly, by providing higher wages to workers to give them greater access to consumer goods. At Google, the process is far more direct; the company offers employees the promise of self-actualization through meaningful work.

3.1 The Sociological Department and Profit Sharing at Ford

While Samuel Marquis did not have a whimsical job title like Google’s “Jolly Good Fellow” Chade-Meng Tan, he fulfilled a similar function in Ford Motor Company’s (FMC) Highland Park factory in the early 20th Century. An Episcopalian minister, Marquis had been Henry Ford’s personal confessor prior to becoming the head of the company’s Sociological Department in 1915 (Loizides, 2011). Founded in 1913 at Ford’s insistence by John R. Lee, the Sociological Department, later renamed the Educational Department to avoid the invasiveness and investigatory connotations of the first name, is recognized as a precursor to contemporary Human Resources departments. Marquis writes that, under the guidance of Lee, “the department put a soul into the company” (cited in Bryan, 1993, p. 207).

The mandate of the Sociological Department was to explore ways to increase productivity by meticulously studying the interactions of workers with management, one another, and even within their families. Lee began a comprehensive series of investigations, employing a team of over one hundred investigators who observed and interviewed workers both on the shop floor and at home. The survey of workers’

domestic lives was exhaustive, including their “personal habits, the fitness of their families’ housing, and neighborhood surroundings” (Loizides & Sonnad, 2004, p. 3). By 1914 Lee had identified a list of the five “chief causes of dissatisfaction and unrest among employees”:

1. Long Hours
2. Low Wages
3. “Bad housing conditions, wrong home influences, domestic trouble, etc.”
4. “Unsanitary and undesirable shop conditions”
5. “Unintelligent handling of the men on the part of the foremen and superintendents”

(Lee cited in Meyer, 1981, pp. 100–101).

Lee attempted several reforms to address these concerns, including creating a table of standardized wages tied to specific skills, and reducing the autonomy of factory foremen and superintendents, particularly their ability to fire and hire workers without consulting upper management (Meyer, 1981). It was Henry Ford himself, however, who was responsible for the most famous initiative of the Sociological Department: the profit sharing program that came to be known as the Five Dollar Day.⁴ Announced in January 1914, Ford’s profit sharing plan effectively doubled the average wage of \$2.40 a day for industrial auto workers in Detroit.

Ford believed that profit sharing would not only increase productivity, but would also develop personal character and ultimately strengthen the social fabric of the nation: “When a man gets a higher wage he will not only be a better workman, but he will be a better man and will carry the influence home to his family” (cited in Loizides & Sonnad, 2004, p. 11). Ford employee pamphlets distinguished its profit sharing program from the more conventional industrial betterment programs which spent a portion of profits on “gymnasiums, lunch rooms, swimming pools, etc...FOR the men...Mr. Ford’s idea is to give his employees the profits in money in their pay envelopes. This is spending money

⁴ Like so much that is attributed directly to Henry Ford himself, this may be apocryphal

THROUGH the men” (cited in Meyer, 1981, p. 114). This argument in favour of “putting money back in your pocket” rather than providing centralized services will be familiar to anyone who has encountered the neoliberal rationalization for the dismantling of the welfare state since the era of Thatcher and Reagan. Not unlike current political agendas that restrict social programs to those who meet a certain standard of neoliberal accountability, such as the reoccurring proposals to drug test welfare recipients, Ford’s profit sharing plan placed strict lifestyle conditions on workers.

The five dollar day was divided into a basic wage of about \$2.70 a day and a profit sharing portion, which varied depending on the worker’s role, but was guaranteed to maintain a minimum of five dollars total wage per day (Loizides & Sonnad, 2004). The basic wage was paid out automatically, but to qualify for the profit sharing portion, workers had to meet the standards of efficiency and domestic accountability set by the Sociological Department. Lee had established protocols for determining worker efficiency standards prior to the introduction of the profit sharing plan, which were similar to those developed by Fredrick Taylor at the Bethlehem Steel Factory.⁵ When Lee left the Sociological Department in 1915, Samuel Marquis stepped in and refined the domestic standards required for eligibility for profit sharing. These standards were designed to promote “sobriety, thrift, steadiness, and industriousness” in young workers and educate them “in the manner of thrift, sobriety, and better living generally” (Ford company pamphlets cited in Meyer, 1981, p. 115).

The profit-sharing plan was designed to reward:

(1) male employees 22 and over who had “good habits” (thrift, temperance, etc.) and who took good care of their families if married and (2) men under 22, as well as women of any age, if they were the sole supporters of dependents. Initially, the plan excluded married men who were either not living with or who did not take

⁵ There are several claims that Ford adamantly denied ever being influenced by Taylorism, but like much of Ford’s life, this is disputed.

care of their families; single men under 22 with no dependents; and women with no dependents (Loizides & Sonnad, 2004, p. 2).

The stipulation that profit-sharing participants have non-working dependents is key to understanding the importance of the family in reproducing the labour power of workers. For factory workers to be at their most efficient, the analysts at the Sociological Department argued that they needed to have, what today we would call, a strong social support network at home. According to Marquis, “[w]e have made the discovery at Ford that the family is also the basis of right economic and industrial conditions. The welfare of the factory, no less than the welfare of the state and church, depends on the home. We therefore keep a close watch on the home (cited in Loizides, 2011, p. 20).

At its peak, this “close watch on the home” involved more than 200 inspectors. These inspectors investigated everyone who made less than \$200 a month to determine their eligibility for the profit sharing program, which comprised the entire workforce with the exception of high-level managers and supervisors (Meyer, 1981). Inspectors routinely interviewed workers and their families, conducted inspections at their homes, and then corroborated this data by consulting official sources such as immigration and citizenship documents and interviews with friends and neighbours (Loizides & Sonnad, 2004).

Interviews included questions about the financial situation of workers and their families, in particular the amount of savings they were keeping. Workers in debt were encouraged to liquidate “their obligations” and threatened with expulsion from the profit sharing program if they continued to exhibit “an atmosphere of extravagance of selfishness or any bent or trait that would be detrimental to good manhood” (Sociological Department letter, cited in Meyer, 1981, pp. 144–145). Workers were also scrutinized for their moral character, with investigators withholding approval from profit-sharing due to any number of bad habits ranging from gambling and drunkenness to an insufficiently tidy home. Some workers were even fired for renting out spare rooms to other workers, out of fear that such arrangements would compromise the family’s ability to support the reproduction of workers’ labour power (Meyer, 1981).

In addition to whatever moral concerns Marquis and Ford may have had concerning the welfare of the workers and their families, there was a definite economic incentive to ensuring a stable domestic situation for their labour force. Marquis believed that “nothing tends to lower a man’s efficiency more than wrong family relations...a man’s inefficiency and his disinclination to remain at work was usually due to trouble in his home which made it impossible for him to keep his mind on his work” (Loizides, 2011, p. 20). So, what were presented as concerns about the well-being of workers’ families also comprised a form of managerial discipline that facilitated the orderly reproduction of workers’ labour power. The five-dollar day ensured that the overwhelmingly male recipients earned a high enough wage to allow their wives to spend all of their available labour power working in the home. The Sociological Department inspectors ensured that domestic stresses were kept at a minimum so workers could remain focused and efficient on the shop floor.⁶ Martha May (1982) notes that Ford was one of the first industrialists to recognize the role women played in providing material and *affective* support to the reproduction of labour power:

Ford's family wage implicitly recognized the contribution of women's domestic labor to a stable and secure family life. In all likelihood, Ford believed that women's contribution was greatest in their emotional, nurturing, and motherly roles. This emphasis on psychological rather than material comfort parallels the arguments of many Progressive reformers, who saw the female emotional, affective role as a necessary aspect of family life which should be supported by adequate wages (p. 416).

Although the Sociological Department didn’t record any longitudinal data on the impact of their policies upon the domestic lives of workers, it did record a significant impact on worker retention. By 1913 labour turnover had reached a monthly average of 31.9% (Ford & Crowther, 1926). Carl Dassbach (1991) attributes this high turnover rate to the intensified labour process required by assembly line mass production necessary to keep up with high consumer demand for Ford automobiles. After the introduction of the five-

⁶ Not all participants in the profit-sharing program were men. Although women were initially ineligible for profit sharing, under pressure from feminists including Anna Howard Shaw and Jane Addams, Ford expanded the program to include unmarried women. However, only about ten percent of women employed at Ford Motor Company received a shared profit wage (May, 1982).

dollar day, however, turnover dropped significantly to only 1.4% (Ford & Crowther, 1926).

This reduction of turnover was the most important business effect of the five dollar wage and the efforts of Ford's Sociological Department. Both Ford and Marquis, however, maintained a sincere belief that they were not only making better workers but better citizens by cleaning up what they considered to be the vices of the working class. Beyond the walls of the Ford plants, others saw in the five dollar day and the domestic inspections that accompanied it the opportunity to improve production line efficiency and also positively impact the lives of workers; the profit sharing program was lauded by many contemporary American leftists, including Upton Sinclair and John Silas Reed (Roediger, 1988).

Unlike many contemporary corporate wellness programs that situate the mental and physical health of the population under the aegis of "individual responsibility," the "good habits" required by the Ford profit-sharing plan positioned the family as the central unit of investigation and moral discipline. Subsequent research confirmed Ford's insight linking domestic conditions with work. Elton Mayo's studies on Human Relations in the 1930s, for example, uncovered a direct continuity between the family and the workplace, noting that the family realm often was the site for the resolution of work conflicts (Illouz, 2007, p. 72). Mayo's work in the U.S., along with Charles Myers' research on industrial psychology in the U.K. (Rose & Miller, 2008), demonstrated formally what Ford and Marquis had understood implicitly: a healthy home life makes for a more productive, less contentious work environment.

However, many managers at Ford Motor Company argued that the Sociological Department's worker/family inspections were not necessary for the orderly reproduction of labour power. One manager even found that the demands of the inspectors interfered with workers' responsibilities in the factory: "So long as the [Sociological] department and [Samuel] Marquis did not interfere with production, it was none of my business what they did or how much they pried into employees' personal affairs. But when they began calling men away from their work during the day, plant foremen and superintendents

became so annoyed that I had to call a halt” (Meyer, 1981, p. 198). Due to concerns such as these, the Sociological Department was permanently closed during the recession of 1920, and all investigations into FMC workers’ lives away from the shop floor were ended.⁷

As advertising and the burgeoning consumer society blurred the boundaries between demands for luxury commodities and the material conditions required for the reproduction of labour power, social reproduction came to be framed as an issue of consumption (Kellner, 1983). Similarly, the advancements of the FMC Sociological Department, and later the Human Resources movement, recognized that, in order to increase productivity, management would have to treat workers as humans and recognize their complex affective and social desires. From the perspective of management, the distinction between the material needs and consumer desires of their workers becomes irrelevant; if higher wages and access to consumer comforts could stave off worker unrest, then these new consumer demands would become part of the socially necessary wage. Furthermore, with access to enough time-saving consumer goods to allow the wife to attend to reproductive labour, the attendant “moral problems” of the family would take care of themselves.

Arguably, it wasn’t the intervention of the inspectors who kept workers’ domestic life in order, but rather the five dollar wage itself that allowed for the unwaged labour of the wife to keep the social reproduction process running while the husband was in the factory. Additionally, although Ford initially believed that domestic concerns were the primary impediment to factory floor efficiency, he came to recognize the growing threat posed by the organized labour movement. It was in this arena of direct class struggle that the relatively high wages of the profit-sharing program were to have their most lasting impact. As Lordon (2014) notes, “[t]he supreme deftness of capitalism, in this respect decisively the product of the Fordist era, lay in using the expanded supply of things to

⁷ Marquis was dismayed with end of the paternalistic surveillance practices of the Sociological Department, believing he lost his crusade of moral uplift to “front men whose theory was that men are more profitable to an industry when driven than led, that fear is a greater incentive to work than loyalty” (cited in Meyer, 1981, p. 198).

buy and the stimulation of demand to provoke this reordering of desire, so that from then on the ‘image [of money] ... occupie[d] the mind of the multitude more than anything else’ (citing Spinoza, p. 28).

Workers were, and still are, willing to put up with the rigours and tedium of the assembly line system in exchange for a high enough wage to enjoy themselves in their leisure time. The FMC five dollar day bought off dissent by channeling desire out of the sphere of production and into consumption, so that “employment appears not only as the sole solution to the problem of material reproduction, but also all the more attractive the more the range of objects offered to the acquisitive appetite expands indefinitely. This joyful alienation through commodities goes so far that it is willing to take on a few sad affects” (London, 2014, p. 29).

3.2 From Working for a Living to Living to Work: the move from Fordism to Neoliberalism

FMC’s mastery of mass production techniques coupled with the drastic increase of wages and simultaneous high moral expectations of workers set the standard not only for the automotive industry but also for manufacturing more generally over the next sixty years. It was only after the Second World War and decades of labour unrest that that state began to take on the responsibility of providing benefits to the large segment of society responsible for the largely unrecognized work of social reproduction. By the 1970s, the welfare state was a fixture in most of the advanced capitalist nations of the global north. However the triumph of Keynesianism was short-lived. Neoliberal policy regimes like those first instituted in the late 1970s and 1980s in North America and the UK under the governments of Thatcher, Reagan, and Mulroney, began the process of dismantling the welfare state that developed over the prior fifty years (Harvey, 2007).

This reduction of social services was justified under an ideology of market efficiency and individualism, and the expectation that workers should be completely self-sufficient and able to handle the reproduction of their labour power autonomously (McGee, 2005). This self-sufficiency was intended to take place via traditional means, such as familial support, but, given the growing movement of women into the workplace, this increasingly shifted

to an expanded market of privatized social services; as Susan Braedley (2006) notes, “neo-liberal governance has increasingly shifted social reproduction to a reconstituted private sphere” (p. 229). During this period, contracted service providers such as nannies, maids, and sex workers comprised disproportionately of women from the global south, came to constitute an “international transfer of caretaking” (Parreñas, 2000, p. 560).

Only a relatively privileged class of women are able to take advantage of this “global care chain” (Hochschild, 2000), however, leaving most women struggling to earn enough income to justify the expense of contracting out childcare and other domestic work. Even those elite cognitive workers, such as Google employees, who are able to afford domestic labour suffer from the demands of a production process that seeks to extract as much value from their creative and emotional capacities as possible within, and beyond, the confines of the working day. It is within this context that we see capital taking up the mantle of social reproduction laid down by the neoliberal state, as more companies begin to offer the upper echelons of their labour force some of the benefits previously provided by the state. These efforts include such things as corporate “wellness” initiatives, including complementary meals, on-site childcare facilities, company exercise programs, and most recently, workplace mindfulness meditation practice (Cederström & Spicer, 2015).

The ideology of neoliberal individualism leads communities *away* from mutual support systems (such as familial or community care) that seek to make up for the privatisation of social reproduction (which could lead to organizing against the social relations that underpin this process). For David Harvey (2007), this is the key distinction of social reproduction today; it is infected with an ethos of consumerism and individualism rather than mutual support, replacing previous capitalist interventions into social reproduction, like that of the Ford Motor Company, which emphasized thrift, morality, and temperance within a context of familial support. Workplace mindfulness, and workplace wellness programs in general, result from the loss of the private sphere as a source of social reproduction (Illouz, 2008; Lasch, 1984; Wright, 2011). As the home is figured less and less as a place to reproduce our labour power, private services, such as health clubs,

therapy, and domestic care fill the void, and, for a lucky minority of workers, such services are provided by employers.

Yet the fortunate class of technical and creative workers who receive wellness benefits do so because of the particular costs of this type of labour. The consequence of overwork in the factory was the progressive deterioration of the physical body. But, as we have seen, the production of value in the tech companies that comprise cognitive capitalism depends upon putting the emotional and mental capacity of labour to work (Illouz, 2007; Lazzarato, 1996; Virno, 2004). In the cognitive factories of Silicon Valley, the mental strain of intensified work leads to what is colloquially referred to as “burnout,” but what might more clinically be classified as depression, anxiety, and other psychological conditions which are symptomatic of “the effects of exploitation on cognitive activity” (Berardi, 2009, p. 135).

Empirical studies on the affective demands of service workers (Wharton, 1993, 1999), managerial and clerical workers (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002), tech workers (Kunda, 1992), and university workers (Pugliesi, 1999) describe the emotional and psychological consequences of neoliberal workplace expectations. These workers commonly suffer from increased rates of anxiety and depression, and HR departments are becoming increasingly concerned with “presenteeism,” the practice of employees coming into work despite being physically or mentally ill (Gregg, 2011). The ultimate expression of the psychic damage of overwork is suicide, which Fleming (2015) argues is the predictable result of occupational failure for the “bio-proletariat”, a term which refers to those whose job comes to define their identity entirely (p. 51).

How have we come to be so inextricably tied to our occupations and accepting of their affective demands? Lordon argues that contemporary work arrangements entail new forms of motivation for workers beyond the wage and the access to fulfillment via consumption that it enables. Today he refers to workers engaged in an “an active and sometimes even joyful relation of collaboration” who “deliberately put all their energies into the service of capital” (Lordon, 2014, p. 30). These forms of intrinsic motivations are particularly prevalent in the technology and financial services industries, which value

self-motivated and entrepreneurial workers highly. For Lordon (2014), while consumerism is an “extrinsic” joyful affect, neoliberal interests must produce

affects that are intransitive rather than ceded to objects outside the activity of wage labour itself (as consumption goods are). Hence it is the activity [of labour] itself that must be reconstructed, both objectively and in the imagination, as a source of immediate joy. The desire to find employment should no longer be merely a mediated desire for the goods that wages circuitously permit buying, but an intrinsic desire for the activity for its own sake (p. 44).

Neoliberalism thus marks a shift from workers seeking to satisfy desire via the consumption of commodities to the production of “intrinsic joyful affects” associated with work itself (Lordon, 2014, p. 43). Boltanski and Chiapello (2007) chart how the demands for autonomy, creativity and authenticity by radical groups in the 1960s have been appropriated by employers deploying team-based project work that ostensibly value workers more as sources of individual expression than faceless corporate cogs. Tokumitsu (2014) identifies a crucial element of this cultural imperative to find intrinsic joy in work in the now trite declaration “Do What You Love”:

By keeping us focused on ourselves and our individual happiness, [Do What You Love] distracts us from the working conditions of others while validating our own choices and relieving us from obligations to all who labor, whether or not they love it. It is the secret handshake of the privileged and a worldview that disguises its elitism as noble self-betterment. According to this way of thinking, labor is not something one does for compensation, but an act of self-love. If profit doesn't happen to follow, it is because the worker's passion and determination were insufficient. Its real achievement is making workers believe their labor serves the self and not the marketplace.

Another example of how our relationship with work has intensified and internalized can be seen in the shift of attitudes towards drinking on the job. Henry Ford was involved in the temperance movement and a major supporter of Prohibition, abhorring drinking not

only at work but also in society at large (Nye, 1979).⁸ Indeed, a major responsibility of the FMC Sociological Department home inspections was searching for signs of alcohol abuse. In contrast, nowadays we are seeing a return of drinking at work, particularly in industries with a high proportion of immaterial labour. Numerous recent press reports have revealed the sanctioned consumption of alcohol in financial, advertising, and tech companies (Flinn, 2011; Kane, 2015; Lockhart, 2012; Silverman, 2013). Many of the journalists covering the increase in workplace drinking reference a psychological study that correlates intoxication with improved creative problem solving (Jarosz, Colflesh, & Wiley, 2012). However a more plausible explanation is that drinking is a form of self-medication to sooth the negative affective demands of immaterial work. Drawing upon EP Thompson's accounts of working-class "Saint Monday" morning drinking binges to start off the factory work week, Fleming (2015) sees the return of workplace alcohol consumption as more than a nostalgic fad:

We should contest the corporate enclosure of this component of working-class praxis for a number of reasons. It hijacks a decisively incongruent modulation of temporal experience and seeks to smooth it out, rendering it felicitous with the self-same present of neoliberal rationality. Alcohol's minor modulation traces a line back to the rebellions against the factory, Saint Monday (and sometimes Saint Tuesday) and a constellation of non-capitalist images that are muted when they enter into the parlance of corporate socializing (p.64).

The practice of office imbibing is a combination of what Herbert Marcuse (Marcuse, 1964) called "repressive desublimation," relieving work stresses through consumption, which only perpetuates the system causing the stress, with more recent corporate team-building exercises that enhance the processes of what Ray Lewicki (1981) calls "organizational seduction". Office drinking is a form of collective therapy for the ills of

⁸ Ford believed that Prohibition made possible the reduction of the work week: "It will be generally granted that if men are to drink their families into poverty and themselves into degeneracy, the less spare time they have to devote to it the better. But this does not hold for the United States. We are ready for leisure. The prohibition law, through the greater part of the country, has made it possible for men and their families really to enjoy leisure. A day off is no longer a day drunk" (cited in Crowther, 1926, p. 615).

cognitive labour that also serves to tie workers more tightly to the interests of the company. These examples of perpetual overwork and the attempts to cope with its consequences point towards the possibility that neoliberal worker management strategies have been *too successful*; people are committing themselves so passionately to their work that, in addition to the obvious cost to their personal well-being, they ultimately reduce their productivity in the long term. It is under these new conditions of cognitive production, where people work themselves into illness or even death, that Buddhist mindfulness practices have emerged and come to be embraced by management; they allow workers to disengage long enough to recuperate. Under the all-encompassing grind of the social factory, mindfulness meditation promises the temporary escape that alcohol once offered, but under the command of management and with less potential for disruptive harassment or legal liability.

The rigours of the Fordist assembly line convinced managers that new steps were needed to ensure the proper reproduction of workers' labour power, leading to the profit-sharing program. Similarly, today's mindfulness meditation practices, along with other wellness initiatives, are figured as necessary interventions in order to allow for proper recuperation and release from the cognitive, affective and creative demands of contemporary forms of labour. In threads about working at Google on Glassdoor.com, an employer rating site, the most prominent critique of working conditions by Googlers is the expectation that they put in long hours. In HR parlance, Google employees have an unsustainable work-life balance. In fact, work life balance is the most commonly reported negative aspect of working at Google on Glassdoor. According to one employee:

Work/life balance. What balance? All those perks and benefits are an illusion. They keep you at work and they help you to be more productive. I've never met anybody at Google who actually [took] time off on weekends or on vacations. You may not hear management say, 'You have to work on weekends/vacations' but, they set the culture by doing so - and it inevitably trickles down (Khandelwal, 2015).

Google's response to concerns about too much work, and not enough life, is to

recommend that employees make their work the primary focus of their life. Executive Chairman and former CEO Eric Schmidt has repeatedly remarked on his dislike of the phrase “work-life balance,” which he considers a Fordist anachronism and an impediment to real success and happiness: “A successful life is not completely balanced. The great people push hard, they do interesting and unusual things. They follow their passion, they get excited. The term “balance” seems to me to be an industrial era term” (cited in Bergstein, 2014). Given this, it seems clear that workplace wellness initiatives, such as mindfulness, are not geared towards achieving balance at all, but rather toward enabling employers to push their workers harder.

3.3 Buddhist Mindfulness and Tech Industry Culture

The tech industry’s recent adoption of Buddhist influenced meditation is not a simple example of the corporate appropriation of a previously pristine cultural practice. In fact, the ancestors of Silicon Valley, the pioneers of personal computing, were already deeply engaged in Eastern religious practices, including both mindfulness and transcendental meditation, in the 1960s and 1970s. These practices were largely stripped of their cultural and historical context and adapted to fit the lifestyles and views of American “New Communalists” (Turner, 2006) and, later, the progenitors of what Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron (1996) call the “Californian Ideology.” The recent trend of workplace mindfulness, then, is not really new at all, but a re-inflection of an already technology-industry-adapted practice from another era, refined and redirected to keep those same business interests going into the future.

Mindfulness has become the preferred translation of the Buddhist term “sati,” which connotes remembrance, awareness, attention, and alertness (Wilson, 2014). Prior to the twentieth century, mindfulness meditation practice was unknown even as a concept to most lay-Buddhists. Meditation was only practiced by ordained monks and nuns, “as part of a much larger package of mutually supporting practices and beliefs, and ordinarily was associated with world renunciation and the pursuit of nirvana” (Wilson, 2014, p. 19).

While many Westerners travelling in Asia encountered Buddhist practices, it wasn’t until the 1960s that meditation became widely known in North America or Europe. The

popularization of mindfulness was due largely to the work of Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk and peace activist who published a series of books on meditation practice. In addition to the growing literature on meditation, spiritually curious North Americans and Europeans could experience the contemplative lifestyle of a Buddhist monk for a week or two at a meditation retreat, first held at or nearby actual monasteries in south-east Asia, and then increasingly in secluded rural areas closer to the participants' homes (Coleman, 2002).

Zen mindfulness was first embraced in the West by the members of the emerging counter-culture, receiving a boost in public consciousness after the publication of Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* in 1958. Its popularity spread throughout the 1960s with the establishment of a series of Californian Zen Centers in hippie hubs like San Francisco, Berkeley, and Los Angeles (Cusack, 2011). Many of the same young Americans who were experimenting with Eastern religious practices were also building some of the earliest hardware and software components of the precursors to the Internet. Steve Jobs studied with a Zen master for several years; some credit this experience with influencing the minimalist design of the iPod and its interface (Melby, 2012; Robinson, 2013). Fred Turner (2006) traces the roots of Silicon Valley's culture of technoutopian libertarianism to the development of personal computing in the counter-culture of the 1960's and 1970s. In particular, Turner identifies what he calls the "New Communalist" strain of countercultural activity as the incubator for the values of individualism and entrepreneurial experimentalism that have come to characterize the tech industry today.

Whereas their more overtly political cousins, the New Left, believed in radical action to redirect the social order, the New Communalists took a different approach, adopting a do-it-yourself ethos of optimistic technological determinism. They eschewed old fashioned political organizing in favour of embracing the emerging distributed computing networks that, at the time, primarily served the interests of the military industrial complex. By democratizing and repurposing these technologies, the New Communalists believed that they could create alternatives to conventional society through self-sufficient communities linked by computer networks; this was their vision for "a massive, geographically distributed, generational experiment" (Turner, 2006, p. 240).

The spores set loose by the experimental counterculture of the New Communalists have mutated into the current economic laboratory of venture capital and start-up culture, where financiers and entrepreneurs search for the elusive “unicorn” that will become the next Snapchat, YouTube, or Twitter. The hipster libertarianism of Silicon Valley descends from what Barbrook and Cameron (1996) have termed a “Californian Ideology,” which “promiscuously combines the free-wheeling spirit of the hippies and the entrepreneurial zeal of the yuppies...Information technologies, so the argument goes, empower the individual, enhance personal freedom, and radically reduce the power of the nation-state” (p. 45).

In an industrial environment that privileges innovation above all other values, it is not surprising that the 1970s’ high tech culture flirtation with mindfulness meditation would eventually become institutionalized. The scientific bone-fides provided by medical practitioners offer a justification for the descendants of the New Communalists to return to their mystical roots. For companies like Google that pride themselves on their philanthropic endeavours, a workplace mindfulness program represents more than just a way to keep workers motivated and reduce stress. According to “jolly good fellow” Tan (2012), “*Search Inside Yourself* started with a simple dream, and that dream is world peace” (p. 229). Clearly, this claim resonates with the tech industry’s early history; while the New Left was critical of the academic establishment’s complicity with the military industrial complex in the development of warfare technologies during the cold war, the New Communalists chose to embrace “the central faith of the military research world: that experimentation and the proper deployment of the right technologies could save the world” (Turner, 2006, p. 244).

In his study of the early years of self-help movements and literature, T. Jackson Lears (2013) argues that that these movements are defined by two key features – an individualistic approach to social problems and an embrace of scientism. This characterization certainly helps to explain the emergence of mindfulness alongside other self-help discourses during the 1970s. *Wired Magazine*, the unofficial journal of record for the techno-libertarian class, recently published a feature article on mindfulness practice in Silicon Valley. Subtitled “It’s not just about inner peace—it’s about getting

ahead,” this article exemplifies the “have your cake and eat it too” libertarian mindset exemplified by tech firms who believe that the road to a better world is paved with patents and profits (Shachtman, 2013).

Mindfulness meditation remained largely relegated to the cultural hinterland of spiritual retreats and New Age literature until the work of John Kabat-Zinn brought it into the scientific mainstream. With a Ph.D in Molecular Biology, Kabat-Zinn studied Buddhism with Thich Nhat Hanh and eventually founded the Cambridge Zen Center. In 1979, he started the Stress Reduction and Relaxation Program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, eventually developing a system of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). MBSR has been thoroughly studied and shown to have significant impact in reducing stress and anxiety, and mindfulness practice since has become an established technique for treating a number of psychological and physiological conditions (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Davidson et al., 2003; Fjorback, Arendt, Ørnbøl, Fink, & Walach, 2011; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004). Indeed, a widely reported study in *Nature* found that regular meditation can change the physical structure of the brain (Tang, Hölzel, & Posner, 2015).

With the endorsement of the medical establishment, mindfulness has recently experienced a wave of popularity, evidenced in burgeoning numbers of self-help books in nearly every sub-genre. There are books on mindful eating, mindful fitness, mindful parenting, and even mindful sex (see Wilson, 2014 for a survey of the many applications of mindfulness). Most of these books downplay the Buddhist underpinnings of meditation, particularly its original use as part of a larger practice of spiritual enlightenment and withdrawal from worldly attachments. Many of the current applications of mindfulness offer results in as little as a few minutes of meditation a day. In *Search Inside Yourself*, Tan (2012) suggests starting with what he calls “The Easier Way” of simply “sit[ting] without [an] agenda for two minutes” (p. 26).

In its new incarnation as self-help practice, mindfulness becomes another tool in an arsenal of therapeutic techniques for dealing with the psychic demands of everyday life. It joins the ranks of daily affirmations, cardiovascular exercise, psychotherapy, “beers

with the boys” and other coping mechanisms that offer us the ability to get through the day. Yet, in its original Buddhist context, mindfulness meditation

is presented as a strenuous, lifelong task, one that occurs within a framework of renunciation and detachment: the practitioner seeks to acquire eventually the bliss enjoyed in peaceful meditation, rather than to enjoy the activities of daily life via mindful attitudes . . . it was decidedly not a process of inhabiting the present moment so that one connects with the immanent wonder of the sacred (Wilson, 2014, pp. 21–22).

Buddhist mindfulness was intended as a way to detach from the material world, to rid oneself of attachments in a spiritual quest for nirvana, and in so doing developing a compassionate awareness of the suffering of others. Yet, in its encounter with what Eva Illouz (2007), drawing from Raymond Williams (1977), has called the “structure of feeling of the therapeutic ethos” that emerged in North America with the rise of the self-help movement in the 1970s, mindfulness becomes another means towards the pursuit of happiness and profit.

Unsurprisingly, many devotees and scholars of Buddhist mindfulness criticize the superficiality of what is sometimes derisively called “McMindfulness”. As Jeff Wilson (2014) observes, mindfulness in its contemporary Western guise is completely compatible with the status quo. Practicing a form of “mindful capitalism” that seeks harmony and enlightenment for (some) workers doesn’t require radical social change; the antagonism between classes, races, and other social groups will simply melt away once a critical mass of an enlightened vanguard develops enough compassion from sustained meditation practice (Wilson, 2014, p. 120). According to Richard Eskow (2012),

If “mindfulness” is to create genuine change in our society, it must involve being mindful of more than just our own need for comfort, good health, or serenity. It must entail being mindful of the social and economic forces that allow some to prosper while others struggle, forces that promote and perpetuate certain behaviors and thought patterns while discouraging or suppressing others. Without

that awareness, “mindfulness” will quickly descend into another luxury item that permits the few to ignore the impact of their behavior on others.

Slavoj Zizek (2001) has also observed how the Western appropriation of Buddhism has served to legitimize the competitive logic of capitalism:

The "Western Buddhist" meditative stance is arguably the most efficient way for us to fully participate in capitalist dynamics while retaining the appearance of mental sanity. If Max Weber were alive today, he would definitely write a second, supplementary, volume to his *Protestant Ethic*, entitled *The Taoist Ethic and the Spirit of Global Capitalism*...It enables you to fully participate in the frantic pace of the capitalist game while sustaining the perception that you are not really in it; that you are well aware of how worthless this spectacle is; and that what really matters to you is the peace of the inner Self to which you know you can always withdraw.

Zizek describes the role of Buddhist meditation as a therapeutic self-help practice that enables neoliberal subjects to cope with the affective demands of everyday life. However, what he fails to anticipate is the potential for mindfulness to be used to further ensconce workers into “full participation in the frantic pace of the capitalist game” as a central element of worker management practices. Workplace meditation techniques don’t offer a retreat into a protected self so much as they promise harmony between occupational goals and personal values.

3.4 Mindfulness at Google: Search Inside Yourself

Google is the preeminent tech company in the world, and arguably the most celebrated workplace in any industry. 84% of Google employees report a high level of job satisfaction, one of the highest in the Fortune 500, and Googlers on employer review site Glassdoor have rated the company 4.4 out of 5 (“Google Reviews,” 2016, “Top 10 Companies With the Least Loyal Employees,” n.d.). Because Google is perceived as such a great place to work, these workers are certainly amongst a privileged elite even within

Silicon Valley, and, arguably, the alignment of workers' values with those of the company is nearly total.

Google is an example of one of a few contemporary employers who is able to make most of its employees actually believe it "loves" them. Lordon (2015) compares this activity to the way a sex trade worker emulates affection for her clients who request a "girlfriend experience". Fleming (2015) likens employers more to an abusive boyfriend that professes love for us even as he abuses us. We keep coming back; it doesn't matter whether or not the "affection" is genuine or not because the relationship is fundamentally toxic. Regardless of its intentions, while Google is certainly not the only employer to spend lavishly on perks, it has been able to sustain a variety of benefits for so long because of its unchallenged market dominance. Despite its success, employee turnover has been an issue for Google. According to a recent analysis of over 50 million salary profiles by HR consulting firm Payscale, Google is ranked fourth lowest employer in terms of retention rates; the median tenure of a Google employee is only 1.1 years ("Top 10 Companies With the Least Loyal Employees," n.d.). Just as concerns about employee retention led to the profit-sharing program at Ford, Google is likely hoping that mindfulness workshops will entice workers to stay with the company longer.

Google maintain that its SIY mindfulness program is not just another perk, like spinning classes, gourmet meals and celebrity speakers. SIY's creator Chade Meng Tan (2012) is adamant that regular meditation produces better workers, who are not only more productive, but happier, more compassionate, and ultimately the best hope for the future of humanity and achieving world peace: "saving the world' is so hard and takes so much effort that if you strive hard to 'save the world,' it is not likely to be sustainable. Instead, it is more skillful to focus on developing inner peace, compassion, and aspiration." (p. 241).

Tan's interest in incorporating mindfulness practice for Google employees began as a project from his "20-percent time," a program Google adopted from 3M where a share of work time is dedicated to self-defined projects. Google touts its twenty-percent time program as responsible for such successes as Google Suggest and Google News, although

as Bernard Girard (2009) points out, this 20-percent time is less “free” than management suggests; there is “a lot of internal pressure to demonstrate progress with their personal projects, and employees that show little progress are seen as perhaps not being up to the Google standard” (p. 133).

SIY is not a mandatory program, but it is not unreasonable to assume that, like the company’s attitude towards 20% time, management will look favourably upon those who participate in Tan’s pet project. The program is certainly quite popular, with a long waiting list of six months on average (“SIYLI Public Programs,” n.d.). SIY focuses on cultivating three skills: attention, self-knowledge, and useful mental habits. Tan believes greater listening and attention skills, self-knowledge about capabilities and motivations, and the mental habits he advocates can result in addressing a number of common workplaces problems. Most of the issues identified, such as poor leadership and a lack of trust within teams, can be addressed simply by empathizing with others at work. Mindfulness enables people to “become more perceptive and receptive” to others’ perspectives, which enables, in turn, stronger leadership and teamwork qualities” (Tan, 2012, p. 182).

The most common form of workplace meditation is Kabat-Zinn’s mindfulness based stress reduction. Originally designed to treat chronic pain patients in a hospital environment, MBSR distils the complex traditions of Buddhist meditative practice into simple exercises (Kabat-Zinn, 1982). These exercises focus attention on various parts of the body and the environment, with the objective of heightening participants’ awareness of their emotional and physical state. Some of these exercises include body scanning (focusing attention of various parts of the body in turn) and guided imagery (envisioning an idealized scenario, such as making a perfect golf swing or giving a well-received office presentation).

In spite of the fact that it features mindfulness exercises identical to those in MBSR, SIY makes sure to distinguish itself from MBSR because, according to Tan, “[f]or high achievers, stress can be a badge of honour, and not many people will sign on for stress reduction, particularly those who need it the most. So I needed to go beyond stress

reduction. I wanted to help people find ways to align mindfulness practice with what they want to achieve in life” (cited in Chaskalson, 2011, p. 119). For many Googlers, feeling stressed is an indication that they are living up to their potential and demonstrating a commitment to their work - something that has come to be expected of successful employees. Indeed, stress has become so normalized amongst tech industry workers that their children are now suffering the consequences. Palo Alto area teens suffer from depression, anxiety, and suicide at rates over double the national average. Experts attribute this to “pressure to excel at multiple academic and extracurricular pursuits” and prolonged isolation from their parents—either because parents are always at work or because they expect their kids to keep busy with activities of their own (Rosin, 2015).

SIY can be seen to function as a sort of affective release valve, forcing workers to turn off their brains in order to recuperate from the mental demands of creative labour. However, Google does not frame mindfulness as merely taking a break, as this would contradict their culture of competition and creative entrepreneurialism. After all, winners don’t have time to relax and don’t need to take a break because they love what they do and are committed to changing the world. As a result, instead of a wellness initiative, SIY is positioned as a personal development program, “to help you optimize yourself and function at an even higher level than you are already capable of” (Tan, 2012, p. 17). It is not about teaching people how to cope with cognitive labour then, which would imply weakness, but rather about how to excel in a high performance environment and as a tool to help workers discover what exactly it is they want to achieve at work.

In practice, SIY mindfulness practice functions as a colinearisation machine, asking workers to search inside themselves to find aspects of their relationship with work that are out of alignment and work with management to address them; it promises to help workers reach a place where “your work will become a source of your happiness” (Tan, 2012, p. 139). Indeed, Tan introduces the concept of alignment as one of the key objectives of SIY, allowing participants to “[align] our work with our values and higher purpose” in order to maintain motivation (p. 133). Drawing from Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s (1988) concept of “flow,” Tan (2012) suggests that aligning ourselves with our work through mindfulness can help us achieve a “state of peak

performance...being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost" (p. 135).

In order to provide a scientific justification for the performance-enhancing qualities of mindfulness, SIY draws from research on Emotional Intelligence (EI). Linking mindfulness with Emotional Intelligence allows SIY to leverage the legitimacy of scholarship that demonstrates emotional intelligence's impact on work performance (Law, Wong, Huang, & Li, 2007; Law, Wong, & Song, 2004; O'Boyle, Humphrey, Pollack, Hawver, & Story, 2011).⁹ EI was popularized through the work of Daniel Goleman, who, after Kabat Zinn, has been the most significant influence on the mainstreaming of mindfulness.¹⁰ Goleman travelled to India as a psychology graduate student to study the impact of meditation on stress reactivity, starting out as a student of a Hindu guru and later becoming more influenced by Asian and Western Buddhist practitioners in northern India (Wilson, 2014, p. 80). By the 1990s he had written the best-selling book *Emotional Intelligence*, which promoted the mindfulness practices of Kabat-Zinn as an effective technique for cultivating this difficult to measure competency.¹¹

⁹ There is some disagreement amongst organizational psychologists on just how significant emotional intelligence is as a measure for job performance. Clarke (2006), Lindebaum (2009), and Joseph & Newman (2010) discuss the difficulty of training workers to be more emotionally intelligent; Fineman (2004) challenges the notion that the complexity of human emotion can be quantified; and Zeidner et. al. (2004) observe that emotional intelligence may be more hype than substance: "the ratio of hyperbole to hard evidence is high, with over-reliance in the literature on expert opinion, anecdote, case studies, and unpublished proprietary surveys" (p. 371)

¹⁰ Tan establishes his mindfulness credentials in his 2012 book *Search Inside Yourself* by featuring introductions from both Kabat-Zinn and Goleman.

¹¹ Although Goleman is credited with popularizing the concept in the 1990s, work on "Emotional Intelligence" began in the 1980s, perhaps not coincidentally emerging concurrently with work in Women's and Queer studies examining the role of emotionality in social movements (see Gould, 2002; Hochschild, 1983; Morgen, 1983).

According to Goleman, emotional intelligence is a measure of an individual's ability to "sense, understand, value and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, trust, creativity and influence" (Goleman, 1995, p. 3). Goleman developed formal instruments to classify emotional behavior, and a number of consulting firms, such as Moodmetric and People Metrics, have devised techniques to measure emotional intelligence quantitatively, similar to IQ testing. Some of these tests include the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory and the Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test ("Emotional Intelligence Measures," n.d.).

The tracking and analysis of countless performance metrics is central to Google's managerial philosophy (Bock, 2015; "Google Reviews," 2016; Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014). This obsession with metrics, combined with Tan's engineering background has influenced SIY's implementation of mindfulness. Adopting a systems approach to mindfulness, Tan's (2012) pithy summary of the primary objective of his program is simple: "Optimize Thyself" (p. 17). He examines the problems of the colinearisation of the Google workforce from a systems perspective, not a clinical or spiritual one. In this respect he is not unlike another famous engineer-turned HR guru, Frederick Taylor, who wrote in his introduction to *Principles of Scientific Management* (1915) that "in the past the man has been first; in the future the system must be first" (p. 2). Tan's development of the SIY mindfulness program sets its goal as wellness for the workplace culture of Google as a whole rather than for individual workers; one Google HR manager describes "business as a 'machine made out of people' and mindfulness as 'WD-40' for the company, lubricating the rough spots among driven Googlers" (cited in Bock, 2015, p. 214). These "rough spots" are never explicitly clarified in Tan's work, which focuses more on generalities about cognitive work rather than specific personnel problems at Google.

Many of the strategies that Tan outlines simply rehash established management principles, using mindfulness as a novel technique to implement them. Suggestions to write down your ideal future, embrace failure as a learning experience, trust others to bring out the best in them, and put yourself in the shoes of those you work with will be familiar to anyone who has read a self-help book or attended a motivational seminar at

any point in the last thirty years. Yet what distinguishes the SIY program is its combination of well-honed HR techniques with the popular spiritual trend of mindfulness meditation, which is underpinned and burnished by Google's reputation as an innovative workplace paradise. Mindfulness, as adopted by Google, represents another manifestation of what Evengy Morozov (2013) calls "technological solutionism," the abstraction of "all complex social situations either as neatly defined problems with definite, computable solutions or as transparent and self-evident processes that can be easily optimized—if only the right algorithms are in place" (p. 5). Tan's engineer-as-guru appropriation of meditation recasts this spiritual practice into an HR technology. If you're suffering from burnout or technological overexposure, mindfulness meditation functions as "a mental app" for that (Tan, 2012, p. viii).

Although never explicitly labeled as such, Ford Motor Company had a very elegant solution for the problem of burnout or work life balance that would be the envy of most tech industry workers today. The five-dollar day introduced in 1914 included a reduction in the working day from nine to eight hours, and in 1922 the workweek was reduced from six to five days. Ford believed that increased leisure time for his workforce would increase productivity and stimulate consumption, as long as this freedom was tempered by the disciplinary gaze of Sociological Department inspectors.

Unlike FMC, however, Google doesn't seem to care what its workers do at home, other than preferring that they never go home at all.¹² While the domestic lives of employees are generally free from scrutiny, Google *is* interested in what workers do in their leisure time, preferring employees who exhibit the clichéd "work hard, play hard" commonly attributed to high achievers. For example, one Googler expressed frustration with the homogeneity of his colleagues, specifically the estimated one hundred triathletes he met in the three years at the company (Khandelwal, 2015)..

¹² Some Googlers don't even have a home away from work, preferring to sleep at the Googleplex rather than pay the extravagant costs of the Bay area housing market (Kulwin, 2015).

Though Google executives Eric Schmidt and Jonathan Rosenberg (2014) recognize the potential for workers to suffer from burnout, they insist that this occurs not because of overwork but rather due to “a mismatch between people and their jobs” (pp. 52).¹³ In SIY, Tan suggests mindfulness as a means for workers to identify what type of job would best suit their values and preferences. Meditation practice is employed to identify what type of work people find most fulfilling, but it is specifically directed towards *work* rather than other aspects of life. Here lies a fundamental contradiction of corporate mindfulness: traditional Buddhist mindfulness was about ridding oneself of attachments, yet SIY is designed to increase worker retention by aligning their values and desires with organizational objectives. Is there any greater attachment today than one’s job, particularly if you work at Google?

While the FMC Sociological Department recognized that workers’ home life was a necessary sanctuary to recuperate from the monotony and rigours of factory work, today’s employers want to colonize as much of their workers’ waking life as possible, particularly those in primarily creative professions. Workplace mindfulness practice isn’t about achieving work-life balance, but rather about maximizing productivity, facilitating the ability of workers to work as much as possible without burning out. It is a drastic departure from Ford’s paternalistic moralism, a mutation of the Protestant work ethic that attempts to dispense with the domestic sphere entirely. There is no need to police home life as a site of social reproduction if you expect everyone to be working all the time. This is why Google has always been concerned with reproducing the amenities of home at work, offering its workers free meals, sport complexes, child-care, and even high chairs in the company cafes.

Google’s wellness programs are not the moralistic paternalism of the Fordist era then, but they do constitute a neoliberal form of workplace moralism. The ideal neoliberal worker

¹³ Schmidt and Rosenberg cite the work of psychologists Christina Maslach and Michael P. Leiter as justification for this claim. Maslach and Leiter’s book *The Truth About Burnout: How Organizations Cause Personal Stress and What to Do About It* (1997) does list “values conflict” as one of their six sources of work burnout, in addition to lack of control, insufficient reward, breakdown of community, unfairness, and work overload.

is an “entrepreneur of the self”, able to internalize the needs of the company and work towards them in order to live a happier and more successful life (Foucault, 2010, p. 226). The onus of responsibility for worker improvement is placed on the worker herself; there is no need for company inspectors to survey living conditions or monitor sobriety. Workers are compelled to “love their work”; rather than see it simply as a means to achieve satisfaction in the realm of consumption, they are encouraged to align their interests with those of capital. According to McKinlay and Taylor (1998):

Macro-level surveys have registered the emergence of a new discourse of work: employment becomes membership, control is redefined as commitment, management transmutes into leadership. The new language of employment denies the very possibility of class conflict at work...the most sophisticated HR strategies are those which envisage workers as active participants in the construction and refinement of hegemonic factory regimes, complicit in their own subjugation (p. 173).

In *How Google Works* (2014), Schmidt and Rosenberg repeatedly state that Google workers are motivated by an intrinsic sense of responsibility to their jobs rather than monetary incentives. For all of Ford’s paternalistic surveillance and moral superiority, he never claimed workers needed to love, or even enjoy, their work. Ford was more concerned with his workers living up to his standards of decency and eliminating “dissatisfaction and unrest” than cultivating anything approaching “love”. A home life made more comfortable through the commodities made possible from a relatively high wage was the source of happiness for FMC employees. At Google, working hard is not merely the means to achieve happiness through consumption as it was for Ford workers, but, rather, success at work *itself* becomes and end in itself - the ultimate goal.

From the managerial perspective, the most significant benefit of mindful alignment is that work ceases to feel like a burden and instead becomes a labour of love. In his 2005 commencement address to Stanford students, Steve Jobs, himself a practitioner of Buddhist meditation, told students that the only way to be truly satisfied, not just at work but in life generally, is to “love what you do” (“Text of Steve Jobs’ Commencement

address,” 2005). The “Do what you love” philosophy however, entirely effaces the usually “unlovable” toil of setting up the material conditions for an elite few to “do what they love.” The luxury of being able to love one’s work is dependent on the social reproduction work of those who feed, clean, rear and otherwise support the minority of workers who can claim to be paid for pursuing their passion (Parreñas, 2000; Tokumitsu, 2014).

Tan (2012) claims that he thinks “of alignment as finding a way to never have to work again for the rest of your life and still get paid” (p. 134). While Tan and other workplace mindfulness proponents argue that the practice can help us determine exactly what values we find motivating and look for ways to align those values with our work, they neglect to mention the fact that many people who have never meditated also have been able to never work and still get paid; they own the means of production and are called capitalists. Given their privileged working conditions, many Googlers are fortunate enough to experience what Lordon (2014) calls the “joyful real subsumption” experienced by management, that category of employee “who partially crossed over symbolically to the ‘side of capital’” (p. 148) and found themselves insulated from the traditional antagonism between labour and capital. Although they are still working to produce surplus value for their company and its shareholders, through colinearisation mechanisms such as SIY’s alignment techniques and, of course, the offer of stock options, workers come to identify with the agents of their exploitation.

3.5 Conclusion: A Mindful Exodus, or Subdued Dissent?

While there is empirical evidence that workplace mindfulness can help treat some of the deleterious consequences of contemporary labour practices, and no doubt many proponents of corporate meditation and other wellness programs are well meaning, such initiatives are geared only partially towards ameliorating the emotional toll of immaterial toil. The most significant impact of both SIY and the FMC profit-sharing program is to channel worker desire into identification with the employer as a means to achieving happiness and as the locus of care and comfort. In the case of FMC, the company facilitates workers’ entry into the emerging consumer utopia, enabling the pursuit of leisure activities with the family when the working day is done. At Google, the job itself

becomes associated with happiness, “the reinternalisation of the objects of desire, not merely as desire for money but as desire for other things, for new, intransitive satisfactions, satisfactions inherent in the work activities themselves. Put otherwise, neoliberal employment aims at enchantment and rejoicing: it sets out to enrich the relation with joyful affects” (Lordon, 2014, p. 48).

Despite the claims by Tan and other mindfulness advocates that meditation can save the world, most proponents of workplace meditation often are uninterested in doing the uncomfortable and adversarial work required for real social change. An example of this tension occurred at the third annual Wisdom 2.0 Conference in February 2014. The conference brought experts in yoga and mindfulness meditation to the Silicon Valley tech community to address what they called “the great challenge of our age: to not only live connected to one another through technology, but to do so in ways that are beneficial to our own well-being, effective in our work, and useful to the world” (“About Wisdom 2.0,” n.d.).

One workshop, titled “3 steps to Build Corporate Mindfulness the Google Way” and led by Chade-Meng Tan, was disrupted by activists affiliated with Heart of the City, a Buddhist-led coalition of groups organizing to fight Bay Area evictions linked to tech industry gentrification. Demonstrators unfurled a large banner and handed out pamphlets about the impact of the tech industry on housing. They were eventually led out of the conference by security guards as the panelists and audience contemplated what sort of action to take in response.

In the end, however, the response was entirely self-focused and self-serving. The official Wisdom 2.0 blog celebrated how the organizers managed the aftermath of the disruption once security had intervened:

You can imagine trying to continue a presentation in front of thousands of people after such a scene, but [Google Well Being Manager] Bill Duane handled it with incredible grace and compassion. Departing from their prepared schedule, he took a moment to lead the audience in a simple meditation, inviting us to embrace this moment, without judging it good or bad. He asked us to examine our relationship

to conflict, and the conflict that had just played out on stage. In one of the true “you should have been there” moments of Wisdom 2.0, what had felt like an emotionally jarring interruption was transformed into a moment of awareness and peace (“Google Handles Protesters with Mindfulness and Compassion,” 2014).

Somehow this ‘moment of awareness’ failed to lead to any further discussion of the issues raised by the activists. This response from Wisdom 2.0 participants clearly highlights the limitations of appropriated forms of mindfulness, which fail to reflect traditional Buddhist concerns with social justice. Not unsurprisingly, the organizers of the action had hoped that confronting a gathering of people supposedly trained in compassionate awareness and empathetic listening would at least be willing to engage with their concerns. Unfortunately, according to one of the organizers:

No one addressed the issues we were raising, not then or later on in the conference. It was a case study in spiritual bypassing... It’s almost too easy to point this out at Wisdom 2.0. Most of the workshops offer lifestyle and consumer choices that are meant to help people heal from the harm, emptiness, and unsustainability associated with living under capitalism, but it does so without offering an analysis of where this disconnection comes from. The conference presents an evolution in consciousness of the wealthiest among us as the antidote to suffering rather than the redistribution of wealth and power (Ream, 2014).

The response to an attempt by Buddhist activists to reach out to Wisdom 2.0 attendees demonstrates the impossibility of neoliberal individualistic governance to come up with collective solutions to social problems.

Of course the problem with workplace mindfulness is in how it is framed by and aligned with managerial objectives, but this needn’t be the case with all mindfulness or meditation practice. Indeed, as Tom Pepper (2013) argues, meditative practices from the Buddhist traditions can allow us to understand how various ideologies organize our lives and contemplate alternatives. Yet, like any other contemplative practice, mindfulness is not inherently supportive or critical of the status quo. Its political impact is dependent on the conditions of its deployment. If used by employers it becomes a mechanism of

colinearisation--just like the 5 dollar day, which subdued worker dissent rather than empowering it.

Workplace mindfulness, along with ‘Emotional Intelligence’ and other managerial techniques for immaterial labourers, is a post-Fordist application of the same principles of labour discipline that were behind Ford’s profit-sharing plan, particularly the management of the reproduction of labour power. Ford’s five-dollar day wage was effective both at delaying a crisis of overproduction, by providing workers with the means to consume more, and at improving the conditions of social reproduction. Tech industries aren’t yet faced with an overproduction crisis—most marketing departments are still earning their keep—but are facing a potential crisis of social reproduction, of retaining and motivating a skilled labour force without exhausting them (Caffentzis, 2013). Google, like Ford, has recognized that its intensified exploitation of labour power requires a shift in social reproduction in order to be sustainable. Unlike Ford, companies that employ mindfulness workshops or other forms of employee wellness have realized that, under neoliberalism, the primary site of social reproduction has moved away from the family and the state and into workplace.

What is lost when we allow capital to determine the terms of social reproduction? While certainly imperfect, the welfare state allowed at least the possibility of collective public control over how we educate, care for, and entertain ourselves. Once we lose even the illusion of control over social reproduction, we lose the ability to control conditions that might lead to collective organizing against capitalism generally. If workers become dependent upon employers not only for the material means to obtain the necessities of physical life, but also for access to a spiritual or psychic respite from work, we will find ourselves unable to even *imagine or desire* life outside of capitalist relations.

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4 The Neo-Taylorization of Performance Work in Video Games

In 2008 Michael Hollick, the lead actor of the videogame *Grand Theft Auto IV* told the *New York Times* that he was unhappy with his contract. He received no residuals or profit-sharing from working on the year's best-selling videogame (Schiesel, 2008). A 2011 *New Yorker* profile of Jennifer Hale, described by the magazine as "the queen of video game acting," revealed that she still only received union scale rates for her work despite a reputation "as a kind of Meryl Streep of the form" (Bissell, 2011). Hollick and Hale are only two of the most high profile examples of performers who make their living doing voiceover and motion capture (mocap) for video games, the fast growing sector of the entertainment industry. Unlike the film or television industries, where performers can make up to twenty-five percent of the production budget ("Hollywood By The Numbers," 2010; Thomas, 2004), in the videogame industry, actors who might be expected to voice 40,000 lines of dialogue and do motion capture make up only a small fragment of production costs; the bulk of the work is done by a salaried staff of programmers artists and testers.

Like most information technology industries, the game industry is almost completely non-unionized; actors are the only organized labor force in the industry, even though some estimates suggest as few as 20% percent of them are actually union members. Videogame actors are paid hourly wages rather than salaries, do not receive residuals or any other kind of "back end" or compensation based on sales, and are not expected to work unpaid overtime. Concerns about working conditions and pay rates in the video game industry led SAG-AFTRA members in October 2015 to vote 96.52% in favour of authorizing a strike during contract negotiations with development studios ("SAG-AFTRA Interactive Media (Video Game) Agreement Strike Authorization Results," 2015). Performers are hoping to finally receive fee bonuses based on game sales, the equivalent of the residuals performers working on film, television, and commercials are commonly paid.

Paolo Virno (2004) describes the current phase of capitalism as “an epoch in which all wage labour has something in common with the ‘performing artist’” (p. 68). Such “virtuosic” immaterial and affective labour “finds its own fulfilment in itself, without objectifying itself into an end product” (Virno, 2004, p. 52), and is evident in most forms of service, care, and information work, where the “product” is an intangible feeling, idea, or sense of being cared for. As these types of work increasingly draw from the creative intellectual and emotional capacities of workers, management strategies have shifted from forms of over discipline and regulation of labour to the cultivation of a workplace environment conducive to building competencies in communication and connection - the kinds of “Human Relations” necessary for highly collaborative work (Fleming, 2009; McKenzie, 2001).

Indeed, according to many critics working with the tradition of autonomist or post-Operaismo Marxism, immaterial labour in the post-Fordist economy is dependent upon a high degree of autonomy for workers in order to foster the creativity that is now so fundamental to the production of value (Hardt & Negri, 2001; Lazzarato, 1996; Marazzi, 2008). As the social cooperation that serves as a precondition for the capitalist capture of immaterial and affective labour exists prior to its capture by capital, they argue, such means of immaterial production can never be fully owned or controlled by capital, thus offering openings for a potential radical exodus from exploitation.

The broad categories of affective or immaterial labour, however, are much more heterogeneous than many in this tradition suggest. Absent from many of these celebratory accounts of supposedly autonomous creative labour is an analysis of the actual working conditions of creative workers. Indeed much recent scholarship disputes these claims. Research on workplace surveillance (Andrejevic, 2011), crowdsourced labour (Caraway, 2010; Kennedy, 2013), and Commercial Content Moderation (Roberts, 2016) are just a few examples of a burgeoning literature challenging the assumption that creative or affective labour is necessarily any more autonomous or potentially liberatory than other forms of work. Similar critical research into the actually existing working conditions of

the video game industry has only begun to emerge in the last ten years (see for example Bulut, 2015; Dyer-Witheford & Peuter, 2009; Peticca-Harris, Weststar, & McKenna, 2015).

These studies of the less than emancipatory conditions of immaterial labour are valuable contributions to our study of contemporary labour conditions. However, critical scholarship on the working conditions of performers, particularly those working in the tech sector, remains sparse. Important exceptions include recent work on television actors (Mayer, 2011), models (Mears & Finlay, 2005; Wissinger, 2007), dancers (Njaradi, 2014), and actors doing motion capture for feature films (Burston, 2006; King, 2011). Indeed, performers are routinely exempted from discussions of labour across all media forms, producing what Dean and Jones (2003) have called a “double exclusion” of acting as labour in the scholarly disciplines of media and work and organization studies: “in cultural and media studies we find a privileging of representation, distribution and ownership, and in studies of work and organization we find acting either ignored as work or unnecessarily separated from broad cultural dynamics.” (p. 536). This double exclusion is all the more surprising given the shift towards the “gig economy” and “permalancing” across so many industries, which introduces the type of precarious relationship to work that actors have experienced since the development of capitalism, if not long before (Morgan & Nelligan, 2015). Actors, dancers, singers and other performers have long been subject to the entrepreneurial ethos of neoliberalism now demanded of all workers, who are expected to constantly self-promote and “hustle” in order to find and maintain employment.

This chapter will attempt to contribute to the growing body of scholarship about creative work by focusing on the working conditions of an overlooked group of immaterial and affective labourers: actors working in the video game industry. How are the “virtuosic” characteristics of virtual performance actually put to work? The paper will argue that the case of performers working in the video game industry is paradigmatic of larger developments in cognitive capitalism and creative labour, but not for the reasons of autonomy and radical potential suggested by Virno and others. Rather, the experience of these performers demonstrates the ability of capital to capture the vitality of creative

workers through regimented processes of standardization and fragmentation reminiscent of Frederick Taylor's methods of scientific management: the restructuring of traditional work methods through standardization and the rigid control over employees. Indeed, the processes of neo-taylorization to which game performers are subjected may be seen as the last step before their replacement by full automation involving the synthetic reproduction of human movement, speech, and emotional expression.

This chapter focuses on two types of performance labour in video games: voice over and motion capture. Voice over performance for video games has obvious precursors in animation and radio, while motion capture technology only began to be employed widely by both the film and game industries in the mid 1990s. Although the costs of motion capture technology are decreasing, the process remains very labour and technology intensive and is generally only undertaken by the larger game studios. This analysis draws upon a combination of interviews with industry professionals and a review of trade publications, journalistic sources and academic studies. Thirteen subjects were interviewed in total, including three game studio executives, four motion capture and voice-over directors, five actors, and one executive with an online voice-over service provider. Semi-structured interviews lasting between one and two hours were conducted with each of the participants, some of whom were contacted through the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA), which has signed interactive production agreements with some of the game development studios in Canada.

4.1 A Brief Overview of the Globalized Video Game Industry

The video game industry is highly globalized and multi-faceted, ranging from small independent operations of one or two developers to big budget "Triple-A" games produced in multinational production networks involving multiple studios around the world (Kerr & Cawley, 2012; Nichols, 2013). Game production occurs in developer studios, with publishers handling marketing and distribution. Developers and publishers are often separate business entities working under a contractual partnership on a project-by-project basis. For example, Ontario-based Digital Extremes developed the *Star Trek* game for publisher Namco Bandai, who was in turn contracted by Paramount Pictures to

develop the video game tie-in for its feature film release. Many larger publishers, such as Ubisoft, Electronic Arts, Microsoft and Sony develop games in-house with wholly owned developer subsidiaries. For these big industry players, it is not uncommon for studios in multiple countries to collaborate on a single big budget “Triple-A” game. For example, Ubisoft’s hit *Assassin’s Creed* series is developed primarily at their Montreal studio, with elements of the game produced in Ubisoft offices in China, France, Romania and Singapore.

The global video game industry now rivals Hollywood in terms of production costs, market size and profits. However, the game production process has more in common with the broader software industry than other entertainment industries (Kerr & Cawley, 2012). For example, historically, software developers took advantage of outdated IP laws to copy code and features from their competitors leading to a deeply entrenched culture of secrecy (Torrise, 1998). The gaming industry is equally preoccupied with protecting its IP and maintaining secrecy about all aspects of its operations. As a result of its deep-seated fear of industrial espionage, there is little obvious standardization in the video game production process between different studios. Development practices vary widely between and even within companies; every one of my interviewees found it difficult to describe a “typical project,” as their experiences differed so vastly from project to project.

The secrecy of the video game industry extends well beyond the technical or narrative elements of games to include the business operations of both publishers and developers. Production budgets are carefully guarded secrets, although occasionally some of the largest games, such as Grand Theft Auto V (GTAV), use their status as the most expensive games ever made for publicity purposes. Other than GTAV’s reported \$265 million USD development and marketing budget however, little is known about how much is actually spent on specific production costs (for example, game engine, art and animation, level design, or performance capture). It is likely that even at publisher/developer Rockstar Games, those who did not work directly on the GTAV project would not have had access to details about its budget. One director I interviewed

told me that the culture of competition *between* project teams at the same developer is so intense that very little information and few production assets are ever shared:

It's an extremely secretive industry. Everything I'm involved in, you sign nondisclosure agreements about. Even within a company...they have internal security as well, it's very competitive within the organization. You want to be on the big projects because they pay out bonuses for sales...There's a lot of internal poaching of staff and that kind of thing going on, if one team thinks they've cracked it and figured out the best way of doing something, there's no real incentive for them to share that. Yeah, it's a strange way of doing it, but that's been their modus operandi for as long as I've been working with them (Respondent "S," 2013).

Such stories appear to be common at other large publishers and developers (Leone, 2012). Even within the industry there is very little data about median or typical game development or marketing budgets. Estimates for Triple-A budgets range from \$50 million to \$200 million dollars, including marketing costs, which can reach as high as 100% of the development cost (Sipple, 2012). Sometimes budgets are reported in terms of "employee-months" rather than dollars. This figure can be highly misleading in terms of actual labour-time however, given the standard practice of "crunch-time", which refers to unpaid overtime during the months leading up to a product release, where staff are expected to put in 10-12 hour days and work weekends in order to meet the release deadline. One studio executive estimated that their most recent project, a game tied to a lucrative feature film license, required about 4000 employee months. He went on to suggest that the standard industry cost is about \$11,000 per man month. This would result in a total production budget of approximately \$44 million dollars, not including the costs for performance work or marketing, which are both handled by publishers (Respondent "Z," 2013).

Although most game industry workers are relatively well compensated, they suffer from burnout and turnover at a much higher rate than other IT workers (Weststar & Legault, 2015). One studio executive told me that the average worker only stays in the industry for

five years, and that having children and raising a family is very difficult given the pressure and workload expectations of the jobs (Respondent “B,” 2013). The general expectation within the industry is that employees should work unpaid overtime, especially during the crunch (Weststar & Legault, 2012).¹⁴ This environment expects its employees to feel grateful that they have the opportunity to work in a highly competitive and desirable industry, where the playfulness of the product itself contributes to a workplace culture where production is regarded more as “play” or “fun” than as labour (Deuze, Martin, & Allen, 2007; Ruggill & McAllister, 2011).

Consequently, there is almost no presence of organized labor in the video game industry, in spite of the fact that a recent survey found about one third of developers were interested in joining a union (Weststar & Legault, 2015).¹⁵ According to one account, “Unions were not within the imaginary of developers, even when they felt like they were in ‘the deluxe suite on the Titanic’ only a year before their parent company filed for bankruptcy. Forming a union was ‘a little bit like biting the hand that feeds you,’ a programmer stated” (Bulut, 2015, p. 12). Performers are the only unionized workers in the game industry, and they managed to unionize simply because voice and motion capture directors at large studios wanted to work with seasoned actors and stunt people, and eventually convinced management to sign production agreements with national performers’ unions like SAG-AFTRA in the US, ACTRA in Canada, and Equity in the UK. The majority of game studios however do not have production agreements with any unions and rely solely upon non-unionized performers.

The globalization of Triple-A game development is a prime example of what Michael Wallace and David Brady (2010) call spatialization (see also Kerr & Cawley, 2012). Drawing from the “social structure of accumulation” theory of capitalist development,

¹⁴ See also “UbiFree 2.0: The other side of Ubisoft Montreal”, a now defunct organizing blog by a Ubisoft Montreal developer at <http://ubifree2.wordpress.com/>.

¹⁵ There are some efforts to organize game developers currently underway, most notably by Bectu in the UK.

which examines “the institutional arrangements that help to sustain long wave upswings” (Lippit, 2010, p. 45), spatialization refers to the

spatial division of labor and the threat of spatial relocation to defuse workers' resistance and fragment their interests along regional and national lines...spatialization involves the restructuring of the labor process so that different work tasks can be done in different locations with no loss in profitability or control. Less bound by temporal and spatial constraints, employers can use relocation or threats of relocation to discipline workers, erode wages, and maintain a supply of quiescent labor. Simply put, spatialization affords capitalists wider access to cheaper and weaker labor in the new global economy (Wallace & Brady, 2010, p. 133).

The multinational publisher Ubisoft fits this description perfectly. They develop their flagship games in several studios around the world, taking advantage of local tax incentives, digital innovation funds and strategic partnerships with universities to secure a skilled labour force (Cohendet & Simon, 2007; Kerr & Cawley, 2012). The US game industry overall is one of the most heavily subsidized sectors in that country (Kocieniewski, 2011). In Canada, the world's third largest producer of video games after the US and Japan, game development is supported by provincial tax incentives. Ontario and Quebec offer the most attractive tax credit packages, covering up to 40% and 37.5% of labour costs respectively, followed by British Columbia at 17.5%. Provincial governments also subsidize capital investment in the game industry, such as the development of a multi-million dollar motion capture studios in Toronto (Ferguson, 2009; Serebrin, 2014).

Even as locations like Montreal and Toronto become performance capture hubs for the game industry, the spatialization of Triple-A game production around the world means that the integration of motion capture data into animated 3D models may occur in Shanghai or Bucharest. Furthermore, the ever-present threat that overseas performers could be hired influences session rates in Canada and the US; performers' unions are acutely aware of the risks of negotiating agreements that are significantly different than

those of their counterparts in other countries. Global studios routinely spread performance work across multiple studios in order to achieve cost efficiencies. For example, most unionized English “walla” voice work (involving creating background chatter in a crowd of people) is contracted to performers in the UK where union “walla” rates are significantly lower than in North America. The spatialization of the video game industry threatens the security and labour militancy of performers, who are legitimately concerned about performance work moving if they make too many demands of studios.¹⁶

4.2 Voice-over and Motion Capture Work in the Game Industry

The use of professional performers in video games is a relatively new phenomenon. While most Triple-A games employ seasoned union actors, most studios still rely on non-union performers; some estimates claim they comprise up to 80% of performance labor in the game industry (Miller, 2013; Verrier & Fritz, 2009). Part of this is due to the fact that the video game industry has historically considered itself more aligned with the software industry than the performing arts. After all, the earliest video games lacked the processing power and memory capacity for digitally recorded audio playback, although some early cabinet arcade games like *Berzerk* (1980) featured computer generated synthesized speech (“Berzerk - Videogame by Stern Electronics,” n.d.). To achieve a more realistic human vocal sound, arcade games had to rely upon older analog technology.¹⁷ Most likely the first game to utilize sustained recorded vocals was the cabinet arcade game *Journey*, released in 1983 (“Journey - Videogame by Bally Midway,” n.d.). *Journey* was a side-scrolling platformer game, similar in style to *Super Mario Bros.*, where the player must retrieve musical instruments for each of the five members of the pop-rock band Journey. While most of the game utilized synthesized electronic versions of songs like *Don’t Stop Believing* and *Chain Reaction*, during a

¹⁶ This can be seen in the importance performers’ unions such as SAG-AFTRA and ACTRA place in advocating for continued subsidies for the video game industry.

¹⁷ One rather unsuccessful exception was the Intellivision Intellivoice digital speech synthesis system, which was on the market for less than two years due to low sales. See http://www.intellivisionlives.com/bluesky/hardware/voice_tech.html

bonus level, a cassette player located inside the arcade cabinet plays a loop tape of the studio recording of “Separate Ways (Worlds Apart)”¹⁸.

By the late 80s digital audio technology had improved to the point where recorded voices samples could be included in games. The first games to feature extensive recorded dialogue were sports games including *Blades of Steel* (1987) and *Sports Talk Football* (1991) that offered rudimentary play-by-play announcers (Good, 2012). Such games inherited the voice-over recording process and conventions from film and television animation, which continue today. Performers are booked for four-hour sessions and usually recorded alone in a studio with a voice director and an audio technician. Generally, voice performers are given a short description and early concept art of their character, and only a brief overview of what they are supposed to be doing in a scene.

The earliest forms of motion capture not only predate video games but were precursors to motion pictures themselves. Cinema pioneer Eadward Muybridge utilized an array of still cameras recording a horse in canter to settle a bet for Leland Stanford over whether all four hooves left the ground at once (Delbridge, 2015). Muybridge used this and later experiments capturing bodies in movement to write *Animals in Motion* (1957; first published in 1899) and *The Human Figure in Motion* (1955; first published in 1901), which became foundational texts for early animation. The first motion capture suit was developed by a colleague of Muybridge, Etienne Jules Marey, who refined Muybridge’s techniques by using an illuminated body suit to plot human movement (“Etienne-Jules Marey,” 2009). Similar rudimentary motion capture systems were used by Frank and Lillian Gilbreth in their motion study analysis of worker movements, which they saw as an extension of Fredrick Taylor’s time studies of worker efficiency. Industrial engineers

¹⁸ The *Journey* arcade game was also one of the first games to use a rudimentary form of “facial capture” technology. The band members are all rendered in the game as cartoon bodies attached to photos of their faces. The original design for the game was going to use a camera built into the game cabinet to photograph the player and digitally insert their face onto the in-game characters - a feature only recently added to the popular basketball simulation franchise NBA 2K15 through Microsoft’s Xbox Kinect technology. However, according to arcade gaming lore this plan was dropped as some players on early machines photographed parts of their bodies other than their face (making this game also an early example of both video game pornography and modding) (“Journey - Videogame by Bally Midway,” n.d.).

would analyze the filmed footage of workers, break down various tasks into smaller component parts, and rearrange these element to produce a more efficient work process (Price, 1989).¹⁹

The next significant development in motion capture was the use of rotoscoping, where animators replicated realistic human movement by tracing over live-action film footage, frame by frame. Rotoscoping was famously used by Disney in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937) and more recently by Richard Linklater in *Waking Life* (2001) and *A Scanner Darkly* (2006). True digital motion capture using computer animation didn't emerge until the 1980s, with feature films *Total Recall* (1990) and *Lawnmower Man* (1991). The first video games to use motion capture to portray realistic character movements were *Rise of the Robots* (1994) and *Soul Edge* (1995) (Fischer, 2014; Mondry, 2014).

Motion capture processes and voice over technologies have changed dramatically since their initial use in game production in the early 1990s. The most ambitious and expensive game projects now use full performance capture, which involves body motion capture, facial scanning, and voice recording using an integrated body suit and helmet. Smaller productions either break up these functions, recording body motion, facial movements, and audio separately, or avoid using motion capture altogether, relying instead on computer animation "keyframing," which employs software algorithms to generate the movement between a start and end point for a 3D model (such as the movement of a leg from rest to an extended position to animate a walk). Keyframing, however, can have

¹⁹ While motion picture technology aided the development of Taylorism in the US, the adoption of Taylor's principles of scientific management in the 1920s U.S.S.R. influenced Russian acting practices. Theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold developed an acting technique of biomechanics; "an acting technique where the actors have no room for personal initiatives and the director carefully controls every movement and timing. This idea followed Scientific Management principles, under Lenin's understanding of Taylorism, detached from its capitalist ideas on production, establishing precise analytical and scientific execution of movements with the purpose of a maximum precision through geometric movements" (McColl, 2013, p. 62). A similar precision of movement became necessary for performers working with early digital motion capture technology, which was unable to handle the conversion of truly natural human movement into three dimensional animation data (Menache, 2011).

artificial results that require extensive revision by animators. Motion capture is preferable, as it allows for more realistic movement patterns to be applied to 3D models.

Mocap performers wear a form-fitted suit using markers that reflect light back to a series of cameras in the mocap “volume” (room) that record the shifting positions of the markers over time. The record of these movements becomes animation data that is mapped onto a 3D wireframe model of a game character that will mimic the movements of the performer. In the case of full performance capture, one or more helmet-mounted cameras capture facial expressions and lip movements, and a small microphone records dialogue. A mocap recording session begins with the performer adopting the “T-Pose,” standing with arms outstretched, a standardized position used to match the markers on the body suit with the wireframe animation template. The performer will return to the T-Pose throughout the capture session to ensure that the markers remain aligned with the animation template throughout the day.

Mocap performers typically work a standard eight-hour day, although interviewees were unable to describe a “typical” day of mocap work, as the style of direction varies wildly depending upon the particular studio and director. All of the performers and directors interviewed for this project did agree that larger studios are trying to move towards full performance capture for all major characters because the process provides a more consistent and authentic performance and eliminates the synchronization errors that sometimes occur when trying to combine performance data from multiple sources.

After the mocap session, there is still much processing work that must be completed before the animation data is ready to be integrated with a 3D character model and inserted into the game engine. Motion capture technology is not yet sophisticated enough to automatically convert body movement into usable animation data without the intervention of animators. Animators have to “clean up” the raw data from the motion capture session to make it fit convincingly with the character model that will eventually be put into the game (Kuchera, 2012). One performer gave an example of how raw mocap data might need to be further processed in order to be usable:

I once had a director tell me that he spent a good deal of the night editing some of the data he had grabbed of me because apparently, according to him, I'm so broad shouldered that when my data was put on the wireframe the elbows would naturally angle inwards and pop the arms out at a ridiculous angle, because the computer would compensate for it. So he had to reduce the width of my shoulders to make the data usable (Respondent "O," 2013).

Voiceover work is typically much less labour intensive than mocap, both in terms of performer work and supporting labour. Voice performers, even on Triple-A games, are generally only needed for a handful of four-hour recording sessions, following industry conventions of voice recording in film and television. Voice performers are limited in the amount of time they can spend recording each day due to the cumulative effects of vocal strain, which occurs more often in games than other media due to the frequent need for various death cries and combat screams (Respondent "G," 2013; Respondent "S," 2013).

During the session, the performer records her lines with a voice director and an audio engineer, and in many cases may even record remotely from a home studio. Post-processing requirements are also less for voiceover work, and it is uncommon for voice performers to be booked for extra sessions due to editing or technical errors. Unlike mocap performers, who might work on a game five days a week for several months, voice performers usually complete their work on a project after four or five recording sessions spread out over a few weeks.

4.3 The Performance Labour Market

In his work on the role of performers in highly technologically mediated productions such as big budget films and megamusicals, Burston (2006) highlights "actors' relative unimportance in interactive production environments" (p. 251). In the digital gaming industry, performers are even more marginalized, as they are involved in only a fraction of the overall production and are overshadowed by legions of technical staff. At an industry level, expenses for performers comprise only a tiny proportion of development budgets. One Canadian video game industry study estimated that what they classified as

“outsourced creative functions,” which would include voice-over and motion capture performers, accounted for only 3.8% of total production expenditures (Nordicity, 2013).

As noted above, due to the secrecy in the industry, it is very difficult to estimate budgets for performance work in games. The cost of motion capture and voice over work is particularly opaque, as so many people and facilities are involved in the process. One interviewee, a voice director hired by game publishers to negotiate contracts with celebrity and unionized journeyman actors, provided a very rough estimate of his typical budget for voice-over work. For a large Triple-A game, which can involve over 100 actors recording voice over the period of a year, the director estimated a total voice-over budget of between \$500,000-\$800,000—a fraction of an overall production budget in the tens of millions of dollars (Respondent “D,” 2013). One studio executive who had experience hiring non-union actors to do motion capture work quoted a figure of “between \$20 to \$30 an hour” for three four-hour mocap recording sessions (Respondent “Z,” 2013).

Overall, actors have relatively little influence in the game industry compared to the power and pay of film, television, or theatre actors. They are rarely a factor in the financial success of a video game, and are seldom even mentioned in marketing or promotion. As one lead performer of a successful game series put it, “If you don't do one of these games, fans are going to be upset, but they're still going to buy the game... There's only so much footing that you have as a voice actor. I don't know if it's because you don't see us physically or what” (Griner, 2013). Even video game star talent such as Jennifer Hale and Nolan North, celebrities in the gaming community, are seldom able to negotiate more than twice the union minimum (Griner, 2013).

The only performers able to command significantly better contracts are film or television stars hired for their name recognition rather than game industry experience. Celebrities can earn between twenty-five thousand to half a million dollars for a few sessions of voice over work according to one interviewee; these gigs are even more lucrative when they involve full performance capture (body motion, facial scanning and voice-over captured simultaneously) instead of or in addition to voice over (Respondent “D,” 2013).

Such expensive contracts eat into production budgets, putting pressure on directors to get as much as possible out of the journeyman performers they work with. One director referred to this practice derogatively as “stunt casting,” a practice insisted upon by the publisher for marketing and promotional purposes rather than a creative decision on the part of the development studio:

Most companies will want you to get [stars] to participate in a candid interview behind the scenes. That’s used in marketing materials...On average I'd say anywhere from \$25,000 to \$150,000, and that usually will give you two full sessions at four hours each, two pickups at two hours each, and a smile for the camera for a canned interview. If you want them to start appearing at Comic-Con or E3, that can add an extra 25 grand right there, depending on the person. There are some people who get paid more for their personal appearances than they do to come and record audio for a videogame...We all know that this functionally doesn’t really add anything to the video game. And I say 99.999% of game players don’t give a hoot who the voice of so-and-so is (Respondent “D,” 2013).

As veteran voice actor Steve Blum put it,

With very few exceptions, allocating a major portion of a budget to a big name is a magnificently terrible waste of money...A name on a game is something executives use to impress each other, and I find it difficult to believe that those huge dollars can ever be recouped or even justified. I recently walked off a game because they expected me to record over 20 vocally stressful characters in one session for scale because they had blown their budget on a few 'A-listers” (cited in Griner, 2013).

In film, the star stands in for the assemblage of labour that went into the production of the entire film, symbolizing for the audience not only the unseen work of dozens of creative and technical workers but also the studio heads and financial producers for whom financial success is even more important than artistic quality. As the audience’s primary connection with the obscured production context of the film, stars inhabit an “ambiguous position...as hybrid of the employer and employee” (King, 2007, p. 325). In video

games, performers do not fulfill this same symbolic function as cinema stars who simultaneously represent the creative and commercial forces of production. Even “star designers” like Mario creator Shigeru Miyamoto are more like star directors in film, behind the scenes auteurs, rather than on-screen symbolic representatives of the production.

The only real example of a crossover game and film motion capture “star” would be Andy Serkis, best known for his work as Gollum in the *Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* films. Serkis helped establish The Imaginarium Studios, a motion capture production house for film, television and video games, and both starred in and directed motion capture sequences for the game *Heavenly Sword* (2009). However the problem of situating Serkis as a motion capture star, according to Burston (2006), is that he “cannot derive any sense of satisfaction or solidarity from the moment of actor-audience cross-identification” because he is not visible “as an actor labouring on a text...he has neither body nor biography on screen” (p. 258). Serkis and other digital performers provide the movements and physicality for animators to bring digital characters to life on the screen, but the erasure of the performer from the performance effectively alienates and separates actors from their usually embodied product, undermining the taken for granted associations of stardom, reputation and celebrity.

The true “stars” of games might be the characters and settings of the games themselves. During a site visit to a major game studio, there were no publicity photographs of notable people, actors or developers. Instead, festooned on walls and in glass cases were posters and figurines depicting the major franchise characters, creatures and locales familiar to any casual gaming fan. Outside of appearances at fan conventions, the only time game performers are highlighted in promotional or marketing content such as trailers or advertisements are when they are already major stars from film or television, such as *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare* featuring Kevin Spacey as a character almost identical to his role as Frank Underwood from the Netflix series *House of Cards*.

To be sure, other than for those lucky few who achieve stardom, acting has never been a lucrative profession. With the exception of a tiny proportion of stage and screen stars,

most actors rely upon secondary employment in order to survive. Acting is such a difficult and unstable profession that employment web site CareerCast listed actor as its fourth worst job of 2013, slightly better than enlisted military personnel but less desirable than oil rig worker, security guard, or cashier (“Worst Jobs of 2013 - 4. Actor,” 2013).²⁰ Vicki Mayer (2011) describes 1930’s Hollywood as “where thousands of workers are anonymous, ‘in the shadow’ of a product with more value and power in the global economy than themselves. Hollywood merely indexed the national split between estranged labor and its objectified forms” (p.16). The anonymity of workers in the video game industry today mirrors the anonymity of workers in 1930s Hollywood, where an even smaller proportion of game designers and performers are known by name even to gaming insiders and journalists.

Performance work in video games is much more precarious than it was in the studio system, however, with actors and directors hired on temporary contract on a project basis rather than as salaried staff.²¹ If directors are to be involved in casting (which is not always the case), they are typically brought in between one to two years into the three year production cycle. Recording occurs simultaneously with other aspects of development (such as character modelling and level design), but it doesn’t begin until the later stages of production, when much of the initial design has already been completed. Writers, artists and designers will have already put significant time into character design before casting calls go out. As one director put it, “Video game acting is really about being able to operate in a complete vacuum” (Respondent “S,” 2013). Not only are game performers expected to act and react to the empty space of the motion capture volume or recording studio, but, as we will see later in the chapter, they are seldom involved in the creative process of developing a character.

²⁰ This study was based on a number of factors including income, work environment, and stress. Actor scored lower than all other professions for “hiring outlook.”

²¹ Exceptions include Ubisoft Montreal’s new Alice Studio, which use a combination of contracted and full-time in-house voice and mocap directors. There are no known game development studios that keep performers on staff.

Another difference between game and film or television production is the uncertain production scheduling. Producers generally do not have a clear idea of how many days a performer will need to be working, or how long the overall recording period will be because recording usually occurs while the game is still in the midst of development:

It's very much as you go along. So let's say that my first recording session, my agent would be like "hey, I'm putting you on hold for Wednesday next week" and then as soon as she has confirmation she'll let me know and email me again with another date... It could be up to six days where I am on hold, it's very much like a week by week thing... But in my experience it's always been in that range of about four months to six months, and sometimes more (Respondent "A," 2013).

Game production schedules are routinely extended as deadlines get pushed back, often leaving performers waiting months or even years to complete work on a project. One performer interviewed was called back in for additional sessions eight months after first recording, and another has been waiting for over a year to finish her work on a game that has been postponed by the studio (Respondent "H," 2013; Respondent "K," 2013).

4.4 Neo-Taylorizing Performance

As noted above, the two primary types of performance work in video games, voice over and mocap, also exist outside the gaming industry in motion pictures and television, and concerns that new technologies deskill performers go back at least to development of motion pictures. In 1956 philosopher Edgar Morin wrote that "[c]inema does not merely detheatricalize the actor's performance. It tends to atrophy it" (cited in King, 1991, p. 172). Walter Benjamin (1968) attributed the fragmentation of cinematic montage to a loss of creative autonomy by screen actors.

According to Barry King (2011), the fragmented cinematic production process was not a direct result of the aesthetic demands of montage or "an intrinsic feature of motion-picture technology but a matter of organizational convenience, favouring a certain kind of control over performance" (p. 249). This "organizational convenience", then, had its

origins not in the technical demands of cinematic production, but in the managerial requirements of the production system. The rationalization of actors' labour began in the mid-1910s with the institution of the "central producer" system of film production in Hollywood. Film studios explicitly studied Taylor's principles of scientific management and established a detailed division of labour in the filmmaking process "in order to ensure regularity of production and adherence to uniform standards of excellence" (Holmes, 2000, p. 98).

Because performers are much more peripheral to the production process in game development than in filmmaking, they are even more beholden to rigid production deadlines set by producers. These deadlines are based on project management estimates that take various aspects of production including level design, game engine development, art production, and quality assurance testing into consideration; all of these aspects tend to take priority over performance capture. As a result, voice-over and motion capture directors are always under pressure to deliver content as quickly and efficiently as possible. The remainder of this chapter will examine how the overriding logic of efficiency manifests in the neo-taylorized performances of video game actors, focusing on three specific examples: the intensification of the recording process, the fragmentation of performance through the separation of voice over and mocap roles for the same character, and the archival and potential reuse of motion capture data.

4.5 The Intensification of the Recording Process

Taylor's concept of scientific management held that workplace efficiency could be improved by replacing workers' control over routine tasks with a set of "best practices" dictated by management. Work process engineers would assemble the informal working knowledge held by workers, codify it into a set of written procedures, and train workers to use only these new standardized processes (Crowley, Tope, Chamberlain, & Hodson, 2010). Braverman (1974) and Huws (2003) describe how these new workplace technologies, first in factory production in the 1910s and then in office work in the 1960s and 1970s, lead to deskilling, as the division of labour split between the "mind" and "body" of the production process. Control over the production process is centralized in

the intellectual labour of worker management, and more corporeal, embodied work is deskilled and devalued (Hennessy & Sawchuck, 2003).

Although Taylor believed that his principles would improve working conditions, in practice increasing the “efficiency” of workers necessarily meant ramping up the intensity of their work in order to increase productivity. The videogame industry has far greater performer requirements than other media such as film or television, and consequently has established a recording process that is much more rigorous than in other industries. Large games can have up to 40 times the amount of dialogue as a feature film, and actors will deliver between 10 to 20 times more lines in a typical game than they would in an animated feature. One estimate given was approximately 2000-3000 lines for a lead character and 200-300 lines for a background performer (Respondent “S,” 2013). The performers and voiceover directors interviewed gave varying accounts of the amount of dialogue expected within a four-hour recording session - anywhere from 250 lines to 400 lines. Getting through this much dialogue necessarily requires sacrificing the creative process:

It's not about being creative. There's no time for that. It's about recording cues. We call ourselves actors, but we're really technicians. There's very little space for spontaneity or imagination in that room. The people I've worked with have been very nice for the most part, but if they could replace me with a robot that can emote in ten different dialects, they would do it in a second (Abbott, 2009).

In general, directors and performers are under pressure to record as much content as possible during each session. As one voice director put it,

You've got to be able to paint them a very quick, general picture to what they're doing and not get too specific, because it's all about the timing. They try to record a ridiculous amount of lines in as short a time as possible...Like you can record a lead, a substantial role in the video game, you can record that character in four to six hours. Which is not the case in a TV show or film, you can sit with them for days and days. So there's certainly not the time to slowly explore and find things, at the beginning of the session that's all compressed into the first 15 to 30 minutes,

trying to establish exactly what the character is and how they should sound (Respondent “S,” 2013).

Unlike in film or television voice over work, performers are also expected to record a litany of vocalized sound effects, called “barks” and “onos.” Barks are short lines used in the midst of gameplay, such as a soldier calling for a medic or an angry pedestrian cursing at an unsafe driver. “Onos,” short for “onomatopoeia”, include all the death cries, grunts, and other sounds that characters might utter. According to interviewees, “barks” and “onos” generally take up no more than 15% of a performer’s recording time, and much less if it they are voicing a principal character.

Interviewees also noted that “onos” and “barks” are typically left until the end of the session because they require the most vocal strain and performers are frequently exhausted after recording them. The studio aims to squeeze as much as possible into the four hour recording session, and, because game development and recording are happening simultaneously, new characters and lines often arise that need to be recorded. The end of the session, then, is also reserved for any extra lines spoken by smaller characters that the performer may not have been initially hired to portray. The goal is to avoid paying for new casting sessions and to extract more work from the voice over actors who have already been contracted for session time.

In comparison with screen or stage acting, game performers receive far less information about the overall project they will be working on. A performer may not even be aware that they are required to voice so many different characters until they day of the recording session. Casting calls often do not mention or describe the role, or, in some cases, fail to note that the role is for a video game. This appears to be changing, however, as big budget Triple-A AAA games are beginning to use the casting process as a promotional tool by releasing “behind the scenes” footage fetishizing the more glamorous elements of the production process.

In some cases, performers are even expected to cold read during their audition (as they aren’t provided with “sides” or lines to prepare in advance): “With all the confidentiality and so forth with games, most people coming in for auditions when it was just the voice

work, you wouldn't receive anything in advance. So you come in and 15 minutes before your audition, you see the script and the character for the first time" (Respondent "S," 2013).

One director noted that this process is helpful, insofar as it identifies those performers who are better able to jump into a recording situation where the lines might not be provided in advance (Respondent "D," 2013). While this is common in voiceover work, it is also important in full performance capture, as scripts and levels are being produced simultaneously with the recording process (unlike most film or television production where the script is more or less finalized before shooting begins). As one performer reported, they may never see a full script during the entire recording process:

You never get the full script, even when you actually have the gig. They never say "here's your full script" like you would for film or TV, because they are actually writing the game while they are shooting it... So that's a very different element to the game industry that's different from film and TV or theater, because as an actor normally get your full script, you work it out, you read it a few times. Whereas in the videogame industry you kind of have to just go with the flow and try to get as many answers from the writers and the director about the arc of your character, where your character is heading, so that you can modulate your performance accordingly (Respondent "A," 2013).

The primary criterion for actors in the game industry might best be described as "versatile efficiency", the ability to perform a number of different roles as quickly as possible with a minimum of preparation. One director described his minimum requirements for a voiceover performer:

At the end of the day I'm only going to bring in the guys who were able to pull 20 voices out of their butt without thinking about it... I need actors who can come into my booth and whip out 200 lines an hour at least, who can just look at a line and go "okay, I can probably figure out what that means" without me saying "okay, here's the background on this line. Your hot dog cart was just flipped over." Just say "hey what are you doing, that's my cart, get back here buddy!" I

just need guys and gals who can just rip through that stuff. People who are cost effective (Respondent “D,” 2013).

This logic of performers made “cost effective” by the routinization and deskilling of the labour process is also evident in the emergence of new online services for connect voice-over talent with studios. Services like Voices.com and Voice123 offer an online marketplace for contracting voice-over performance, eliminating the usual processes, which involve casting calls, agents, and often unions; most performers hired on these sites are not members of performers unions. Performers bid on voice acting contracts and submit their work remotely from home studios, effectively absorbing the capital costs of investing in recording equipment.

This new model of spatialized, just-in-time voiceover offers a digital version of the pre-industrial “putting out” system, where a cottage industry of artisans assumed responsibility for the conversion of raw materials “put out” by a merchant into a finished good (Caffentzis, 2013). These original cottage industry workers achieved autonomy from supervision by the merchant capitalist who nevertheless retained ownership of the raw materials and in some cases the tools used by the cottagers. Furthermore, the historical accounts of the putting-out system show the merchant capitalist deeply involved in the planning and organizing of the work process, while cottagers remained under pressure to drive their rates down in competition with one another. But, as George Caffentzis (2013) observes, such freedom from supervision afforded to the cottagers was “a bitter autonomy indeed” (p. 115). The putting out of voice-over work on Voices.com and Voices123 functions in a similar way, as performers outbid each other rather than negotiating collectively for minimum session rates. These performers willingly accept the constraints of the production process and the demands of “versatile flexibility” in exchange for a kind of “bitter autonomy”.

Digital prompting systems in voice over work comprise yet another performance capture technology that exacerbates the deskilling of acting work. Many studios have invested in these systems that automate much of the voice direction process in order to reduce voice-over recording time. Edmonton-based Bioware uses a prompting system it calls the

“Intensity Volume Matrix”. It compiles direction notes, audio and visual cues, and other actors’ lines in a single screen that lets the actor know how each line needs to be performed, thereby avoiding any lengthy back-and-forth discussion with a voice director (Yoon, 2012). One director experienced with this system felt that it sacrificed the quality of the performance for quantity and efficiency:

[The producers] were like "keep going keep going" rather than perfecting anything that I had been known for. I was really not happy, there are so many more layers to this which I won't go into that will just be bile from me. I absolutely hate it. I hated the thing. I talked to other voiceover directors and a couple of them who had done big games, and they hated it too, so I know I'm not alone on it (Respondent “G,” 2013).

Such technologies contribute to the deskilling of vocal performance professionals, particularly voice directors, and centralize control of the performance with the writers, who compile the voice prompts database but are otherwise rarely directly involved in the recording sessions. Systems such as the intensity volume matrix serve to further rationalize the recording process, reducing the mental labour of performance to a regimented form of manual vocal labour – literally reading lines as fast as possible with the minimum effort to make dialogue convincing.

4.6 Motion Capture and the Fragmentation of Performance

The extensive use of motion capture is what distinguishes acting in video games from other media. There are two primary types of motion capture performance work, cinematic (for scripted scenes) and AI or open world (for background characters). In cinematic motion capture, the type of digital performance popularized by actors such as Andy Serkis, performers act out a regular scripted scene in a motion capture studio. Once the scene is rendered and edited, it is inserted into the game as a cinematic sequence involving minimal or no player interactivity; it is most often used as an introductory transitional device to drive the game narrative between gameplay sequences. As cinematic sequences are essentially computer animated short films, this type of motion capture work is the most similar to screen acting and is often identical in practice to the

type of motion capture done in the film industry. Games that rely heavily on cinematic mocap are increasingly turning to established film and television directors to direct in-game sequences, including John Carpenter on *F.E.A.R. 3*, Guillermo del Toro on *Silent Hill* and Spike Lee on *NBA 2k16*.

Of more interest here is AI motion capture, which is perhaps the most unique type of performance work in video games. AI mocap, also called open world motion capture, involves recording the body movements for the thousands of “Artificial Intelligence” (AI) controlled characters that populate “open world” or “sandbox” games like the *Grand Theft Auto* or *Assassin’s Creed* series. AI characters are grouped into subsets (eg police officer, military guard, elderly pedestrian) and each subset is given a unique set of movements for specific situations; for example, an elderly pedestrian would use a different animation to react to incoming gunfire than would a military guard.

The motion capture process for open world characters is much more regimented than cinematic mocap because the programmers need to be able to draw from a library of discrete movements in order to program a series of AI character routines. Rather than acting out an entire scene, as with cinematic mocap, in open world mocap, actors perform short sets of movements called “idles” and “breakers.” Idles are repetitive movements that an AI character will perform on a loop, and breakers are used to periodically interrupt the loop in order to make the sequence look more realistic. One performer described one possible idle/breaker combination:

An idle is when, say there's a guy window-shopping. He'll be looking at the window, hand on his hip, and he scratches his ass every couple of minutes, then he just kind of looks from one thing to the next, he never actually does anything... And then they have something called breakers, idle breakers or cycle breakers, which are usually two or three or four or five algorithms that they capture of movement that they do away from your position, where you start, you do something and then you come back. And then they'll randomly insert those every two minutes or three minutes. So if the guy was window-shopping, at one point he turns around and he sneezes loudly, wipes his nose with his hand, wipes it on his pant leg, turns around,

and goes back to window shopping. That would be a breaker (Respondent “O,” 2013).

Idles and breakers can be used together in different combinations to allow for a wide range of possible AI character movements and reactions to player interactions.

For actors, then, a day’s work in the studio might require performing a long list of simple movements rather than rehearsing and performing a scripted scene. Yet, for some performers, one of the benefits of motion capture work is that it follows a regular 8-hour day, unlike film and television where actors might be on set all day waiting to shoot a two minute scene:

I'd say I prefer being in a mocap studio than being on [a film] set because what kills the on set is the downtime. You get up at six in the morning, go to hair, go to make up, go to your trailer and get changed. Okay, it's now 7:30, now wait. Five hours later, you're still there. You go have lunch. Three hours later, someone will be getting you in an hour, because they moved the scene. Okay, 5 PM rolls around we're ready for you, now you start working, and then you realize oh my God were not even close to being done, were going to finish at four in the morning. You finish at four in the morning and you just had a 22 hour day, that you didn't know where it was going to go...there's a high chance of you not being used because, you know that's the nature of film. Whereas mocap is not going to bring you in and just shoot you at 4 PM (Respondent “O,” 2013).

While downtime is bad for performers, it is arguably worse for studios that would much rather avoid paying actors for doing nothing. A rationalized production process ensures that actors are always productive when they are on the clock.

One aspect of cinematic motion capture unique to the game industry is the separation of voice actor from motion capture performer for the same character. When a developer is unable, or unwilling, to bring a voice actor into the motion capture studio due to scheduling conflicts or for budgetary reasons, they will use a local performer to record all of the movements. This is often the case when star talent is brought in to voice a game, as

their contracts generally only cover a few voice-over recording sessions, which are usually conducted in Los Angeles or New York. The diffused spatialization of game design has cultivated a new form of acting paradigmatic of the globalized division of labour of multinational production networks: game engine developed in Shanghai, level design in New York, testing in Bucharest, marketing in Paris, voices in LA, body movements in Montreal, animation in London. The result is that several performers and animators might collaborate on the creation of a single character without ever meeting one another.

In these cases of spatialized division of performance labour, the standard practice has been to record the voice-over first, with the motion captured physical performance attempting to match the vocal track. This process of “mocap-to-voice,” or “body dubbing,” was a more common practice a few years ago before full performance capture technology was available, but is still used in situations where dialogue is recorded remotely—for example, by a celebrity contracted for only one or two voice recording sessions. For the purposes of determining performer rates, mocap-to-voice is considered basic motion capture, not full performance capture, because the mocap performer’s voice will not be included in the final game. This has frustrated some performers, as they are still expected to learn and deliver the lines that will ultimately be recorded by the voice-over actor, and, in some cases, the mocap performer’s dialogue is used as a placeholder until the voice actor’s recording has been edited and finalized:

You're doing it as if you are playing this character. And you learn all the lines and you go through everything, you do the rehearsals and all the intentions everything else, and then you know that it's going to be replaced, but that's how it is right now. It's one of the things that some actors are having an issue with... When you end up getting 17 pages of text for a day and you're going through it and learning it and giving it everything and then you know it's going to be replaced, it doesn't lessen the amount of work that you've done... I think there should be an adjustment made for people who are doing the full capture as a placeholder voice, as opposed to just going in and doing AI [background] work. It's a different beast

completely. You can go in and do AI work, that doesn't mean that you can go in and do full performance capture (Respondent “C,” 2013).

Mocap-to-voice performers might be compared with body doubles in film and television; workers who have struggled for increased recognition and compensation for their work for decades (Chisholm, 2000). The responsibilities of the mocap-to-voice performer often go beyond that of a double or stand-in, as they are routinely required to learn lines, emote and move their lips in synch with the dialogue of the voice performer, while paid at a lesser rate than a speaking performer. Some performers prefer this type of work to more conventional background roles, however, as the anonymity of mocap can allow for additional work on a project. Mocap performers generally have more opportunities than voice or full performance capture actors to audition for larger roles because players will never notice the repetition of mocap performances: “Even though I've done lots of work and [my] body is visible all over the game, it doesn't really stop you from being able to audition for a specific role, which is great. Which is very different from the film and TV industry” (Respondent “C,” 2013). Performers also found that motion capture work offers a freedom to perform roles that might not otherwise be available to them due to their age, ethnicity, or even gender. One male performer had been asked several times to do mocap for female characters, although none of the women performers interviewed had ever played a male character (Respondent “O,” 2013).

Here we see how the division of video game acting into voice-over work and motion capture work privileges the voice-over actor in the character creation process, particularly when the voice-over recording precedes the motion capture. Even with this privileging of voice actor over mocap performer, voice actors are limited in the amount of creative input they can bring to a character, as this process is primarily in the hands of writers and designers working on the game long before performers are brought in.

4.7 Motion Capture Databases

Once motion capture data is recorded and processed, it is entered into an animation database to be placed into the game as needed by the programmers. It is not clear what happens to these motion capture assets after the game is completed and released. Most of

the performers and directors interviewed claim that new movements are captured for every game, even sequels in a series, as motion capture technology is always developing; it is generally cheaper to recapture motion rather than try to adapt legacy mocap data to fit a new system:

With the technology changing so fast, the motion capture that you did a year ago, you're now using a completely different system anyways. It would be more time-consuming to go back and recode and do all that sort of stuff. It's like "well we have the studio up and running, it's going to take us an hour to get someone walking, so let's just do that" (Respondent "S," 2013).

Some interviewees, however, also said that animators are always drawing from older animation assets; even if these assets aren't used directly in new games, they serve as a foundation to build new character models and animation sequences. An executive at a mid-sized studio that uses a combination of keyframing and motion capture for its animation describes using existing movement sequences as a template to begin work on new animation:

There's a lot of stuff in [the animation database], like generic walks are pretty common. Usually what ends up happening is those form templates for the next game, and generally animations are becoming more sophisticated so we will use that as a template. Then we're like "no, this guy would walk with more of a swagger," or "no, this guy would do this". So normally everything gets reused but then it gets customized and adapted for the type of feeling or type of story that we're doing (Respondent "Z," 2013).

Another actor claimed that animators and directors had told him that at least some mocap data is reused from game to game. However, he also noted that he'd been asked to perform certain movements for one game and then been brought back in for another game in the same studio to do exactly the same movements because there is so little communication between the project teams (Respondent "C," 2013). It may be that some of the larger studios might not even know how much motion capture data is being reused

internally, given that they seem to be inefficiently recording similar movements multiple times across all of their active projects.

While some major studios aren't yet consolidating their archive of digitized human movements, other companies are looking to fill this gap. Toronto-based Motives in Movement, founded by game actor Pascal Langlois, is developing a library of human movements and facial expressions that it hopes to sell to game studios (Richardson, 2010). According to the Motives in Movement web site,

A behaviour library is where instinctual creative performance meets data and coding. We create performances for library creation large and small, from a score of nonverbal sports-field celebrations, to fully categorised, situationally flexible facial behaviours. Our experience in acting and directing, Capture and Nonverbal Behaviour means we can get the best performances out of actors, but tailored to your needs. Uses can range from in-game A.I. to Expressive space creation (“The Library,” n.d.)

The growth of these animation libraries, either by service providers like Motives in Movement or within game development studios, will eventually lead to a decline in motion capture work for performers and further deskilling; this technology will just need performers to act out abstract emotions divorced from any context to be plugged into games as interchangeable parts. Reusable mocap data will become the digital animation equivalent of the “stock system” of 1960s animation practiced by studios such as Filmation that were notorious for reusing footage to keep production costs low (Stahl, 2010).

Finally, the compiling of human movement into animation libraries might even be possible without the direct involvement of motion capture performers at all. The Xbox Kinect terms of service allows Microsoft to use mocap data captured from home users. While this is most likely intended for Kinect development rather than animation purposes, the ability of the Kinect to be used as an inexpensive motion capture device for independent game studios (not unlike the use of voice-over home studios) makes it possible that Xbox users' motions are being used in game development. Microsoft isn't

using this data yet, but the door is open for them to do so (conceivably when Kinect technology makes it viable). Section 9 of the Kinect terms and conditions allows Microsoft to “collect data about the way in which you interact with the console and the Service to improve Microsoft products and services” (“Xbox Live Terms of Use,” 2013). This language is vague enough to allow for the capture of users’ motion data to be incorporated into game development.

4.8 Conclusion: Automating Performance

In her landmark study of emotional labour, Arlie Hochschild (1983) describes how front line service workers have their emotions “transmuted” to produce surplus value for capital; the smiles of the flight attendant are managed by and the property of the airline (p. 198). This transmutation of emotion from personal expression of the worker to its capture and control by capital is subsumed even further in the case of video game performances, particularly motion capture. With the increase in databases of motion captured movements and facial expressions, emotions not only become property in their performance by the actor, but also in their *reproducibility* as digital animations archived by facial and (e)motion capture. Such systems could completely replace the living labour of performers with the dead labour of their past performances, an automation process that appropriates not just skills from workers but their emotions as well.

The neotaylorization of video game performance is only the next step towards total automation. It is another example of what Dyer-Witheford (2015) has called “singularity capitalism”: the ability of the machinery of capital to automate itself free from the inefficiency of human bodies and minds. The claims of Virno (1996) and Hardt & Negri (2001) that immaterial labour will coalesce into a multitude able to liberate the “general intellect” from the capitalist machine appear impossible unless labour is able to retain control over the products of their creativity. If the unique expressions of performers can be archived and reused indefinitely, then immaterial labour becomes worthless to capital, leading to “not the empowerment of immaterial labour, but the explosive proletarianization and re-proletarianization that arises as huge tranches of the global population are rendered surplus to requirements by an increasingly automatic capitalism” (Dyer-Witheford, 2015, p. 184).

The cultural industries, including the game industry, however, are not the only sites where the seemingly irreplaceable living labour of human creativity and emotional expression is routinized, standardized, and then ultimately automated. Call centers have long served as laboratories for managerial experiments on regulating emotional expression and social interactions (Brophy, 2011; Gabriel, 2013). New technologies offered by firms including Cereproc and London Brand Management promise to automate many call center functions with algorithmic speech recognition and synthesis. London Brand promises that its system

like a human, understands natural language such as questions and feedback as well as product knowledge held by clients and in the public domain. It then finds the required information, performs programmed actions and replies as a human would... The only difference between how a real person would do this and our system is the speed of the reply and that our system is tireless – it can work 24/7/365 and can reply to a potential customer’s question with the correct information in milliseconds. It is unfailingly polite and always has the right answer. It is also almost infinitely scalable; think of a call centre with 10,000 or 100,000 or more agents (“Customer Service Automation,” n.d.).

Marketing hyperbole aside, then, the potential for sophisticated replication of creative human expression is on the horizon, if not already feasible today.

Performers recognize the problems associated with their work being compiled and reused without permission or compensation. One interviewee felt that actors’ unions aren’t fulfilling their obligation to monitor the unauthorized reuse of motion captured or voice-over recorded game performances, comparing the need for union oversight of game performance reuse with recent calls for legislation requiring the use of condoms for adult film performers: “we’ve got representatives to make sure everybody on a porn set has a condom, right? That’s all I’m asking for: I want our condom rep. We’re going to get fucked anyway, but at least we can get some residuals out of it” (Respondent “H,” 2013).

Unfortunately, there doesn’t seem to be any prophylactic on the horizon to protect performers from the reuse of their voices or motion capture work in video games.

Monitoring the reuse of voice-over work in games would require a massive investment of time and energy, as someone would have to listen to every possible utterance in every single video game and match each line of dialogue with a specific performer and recording session. Policing the reuse of motion capture data would prove even more difficult, as one game studio executive stated that motion capture data from old games is often used as a starting point to develop animations for new games.²²

Other interviewees seemed to think that the reuse of voice work was not a common practice in the game industry, as it is not worth the risk of gamers noticing such obvious cost cutting practices. Furthermore, given that performance work is such a relatively small part of the overall production budget, reusing this work would save less money than reusing other assets such as levels or object models, which are almost never repeated between games. As it stands, voiceover costs are low enough that studios would rather record new audio than risk upsetting fans. According to one voice director,

Users are smart. They're going to the next game thinking, "I know this, this is the same crap I heard in the first game." ... So I think with development being what it is, obviously developers are looking to shave off cost and whatnot, but I think in terms of this, you want the next [game] to be even better than the first one. You want fresh, you want new, you want new staff, you want new levels, you want new characters, you want new situations. You want them to run into new characters all over that open world. And again, like I said, it's the reason why since 2002, I only think I've done integration [reuse of voiceover assets] six times (Respondent "D," 2013).

Recording costs for voiceover will only continue to fall, as more voiceover actors record from home studios and attempt to outbid one another on platforms like Voices.com, and voice directors are gradually replaced with prompting systems such as the Intensity Volume Matrix. However, motion capture will continue to be a labour and capital

²² This studio largely does motion capture without professional performers, getting their in-house animators to don mocap gear themselves. However they have on occasion hired non-union women performers to do mocap work for female characters, as their animation staff is entirely male.

intensive process, leading studios towards body and facial animation solutions that eliminate the need for expensive recording facilities and performers. Indeed, Barry King (2011) believes that software will never completely replace the “wetware” of real actors, as “what appears to be an autonomously functioning, self-sustaining ‘synthespian’ is in fact dependent upon a current ‘real-time’ (or past) performance by an actor” (p. 254).

The way that performers’ unions have traditionally dealt with the problem of reimbursing actors for the reuse of past performances has been to demand residual payments, whereby performers receive a small usage fee every time their performance is reused or rebroadcast in some form. The issue of residuals has become one of the most contentious issues facing performers’ unions in their negotiations with the game industry. Unlike nearly every other major cultural industry, almost no one involved in the production of video games is paid a usage rate based on sales. The most that some lucky developers receive is a relatively small bonus based on whether a game hits certain sales targets. The closest any actors’ union has come to negotiating residual payments for game performers is ACTRA, who recently signed a three year agreement with Ubisoft that provides for reuse payments after thirty years, which could very well be three hundred years of usage rights given the rapid release schedules of the game industry (“Video Game Agreement,” 2014).²³

Antonio Gramsci (1971) observed that one of the consequences of taylorization is that the routinization of work allows workers more time to think critically about the conditions of their exploitation. SAG-AFTRA’s fight to receive bonuses tied to sales for its members working in the game industry suggests that performers have had ample opportunity to consider the structure and conditions of their employment. Performers remain the only segment of the game industry that are unionized, and if their struggle to connect pay rates to product sales is successful, they will be the only group of game industry workers guaranteed a revenue share.

²³ There may be agreements between other performers’ unions and game studios that provide residuals, however many of these agreements are secret and not publically available.

In the end however, game industry performers need to recognize that their demands for residual fees will only be successful if they connect their struggle with those of other workers in the industry. Solidarity between video game performers and the majority of other workers in the industry who have no tradition of involvement with organized labour will be difficult but is necessary in order for a critical mass of game workers to achieve their demands. Much like other highly skilled cultural and intellectual workers, game developers, designers, and artists see themselves as autonomous creative producers, not the exploited subjects of a new digital working class. Yet the apparent freedom of this work is undergirded by the neotaylorization of some of the most expressive and unique creative labour in the industry, acting.

As labour organizers in North America and Europe negotiate for residuals and better working conditions for video game performers, they join the broader struggles against labour exploitation that have largely bypassed the game industry. Such organizing efforts demonstrate that game industry workers are beginning to recognize that despite their apparent creative freedom they are subject to the same pressures towards rationalization and efficiency as workers in service or manufacturing jobs. Unfortunately even if game industry workers are able to win concessions on revenue sharing or working conditions, this will likely only hasten the development of technologies such as speech synthesis and archives of human movement data in order to sidestep union agreement requirements altogether. The work of video game actors is paradigmatic of the contradictions of labour under cognitive capitalism more broadly, where capital not only aims to make all human activity productive of value, but also seeks to press labour time to zero by removing humans as autonomous subjects from the labour process entirely.

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5 Conclusion

The three essays that make up this dissertation examine attempts by capitalist management to handle a core problem of post-Fordist labour relations: how to create the conditions for creativity and flexibility in immaterial labourers while simultaneously maintaining sufficient control to prevent workers' self-valorisation or exodus from the capitalist employment relationship. The capture and exploitation of creativity by management is not a simple process, as these essays have shown, and the strategies employed often have deleterious and contradictory consequences for workers and management alike. It also has been the goal of this dissertation to pose challenges to some of the optimistic readings of cognitive capitalism that suggest capitalism's dependence on immaterial labour's subjectivity and communicability offers unique possibilities for resistance.

The ability of management to contain immaterial labour is most pointedly shown in the case of the neo-Taylorization of video game performers, who find their creativity does not render them immune to the rationalization of the recording process. Management also employs more subtle methods to stifle worker resistance, including the use of workplace improv to cultivate "cultures of fun" and "organizational bullshit" – the generation of cynical, empty discourse designed to make it appear as though both workers and management are contributing to the organization even when the purpose or meaning of their work is far from clear (Fleming, 2009; Spicer, 2013). The growing role of privately owned corporations in the social reproduction of labour power through wellness programs like mindfulness meditation that tie workers ever closer to their employers is another challenge to the radical possibilities of immaterial labour. Such tactics of colinearisation—the alignment of workers' perceived interests with those of capital—work to defuse and contain labour's inherently militant antagonism. If workers do not understand themselves to be exploited, the unprecedented capacities for communication, organization, and radical imagination available to immaterial labour under cognitive capitalism are neutralized.

Each essay included here explores a different managerial approach to the problem of regulating immaterial labour. The first essay looks at workplace improv as an early attempt to improve organizational innovation and creativity by inculcating a sense of play and spontaneity into teamwork and problem-solving at work. It argues that the practice of workplace improv training is less about cultivating creativity and more about conditioning workers to express themselves as much as possible, even if they have nothing meaningful or helpful to say. It also argues that the use of this kind of training works to legitimate and valorize the work of management itself at a time when the “entrepreneurial” worker puts management’s role in doubt. In both cases, the use of improv training exemplifies the generation of organizational “bullshit”— forms of non-productive discourse and practice purposefully deployed to disguise the emptiness of work. In addition, the playful qualities of these workplace improv initiatives set the stage for the recent workplace trend of gamification, which is used to monitor and motivate employees under the guise of making the workplace more fun.

The second essay picks up on the subject of worker motivation by comparing Google’s current internal mindfulness meditation initiative with the Ford Motor Company’s early twentieth century profit sharing program. Both of these initiatives represent attempts to align employees’ interests, desires and values with those of their employer, what Lordon (2014) calls “colinearisation.” Whereas Ford effected colinearisation by drastically increasing wages and establishing domestic standards that workers had to meet, thereby bringing his workers into the burgeoning consumer society, in the current era of neoliberal austerity, monetary incentives are generally considered insufficient for a workforce compelled to put their entire being to service for the employer; under these conditions, workers are expected to love their work for its own sake. As the previous essay argues following Fleming (2015), however, this ‘love’ is more often born out of fear of employment loss and uncertainty than anything intrinsic to the job itself.

The affective demands of much cognitive and immaterial labour have led to burnout and other consequences of overwork. Combined with decreasing state support for mental and physical health, many employers, like Google, are picking up the mantle of providing for the social reproduction of workers. This trend of workplace wellness has the dual effect

of ameliorating the negative health outcomes of immaterial labour and conditioning workers to see their interests aligned with those of capital. When employers integrate themselves and their workplace values ever more deeply into workers' lives, they stifle worker desires for existence outside of work.

These processes of colinearisation, whereby workers come to see their interests running parallel to those of capital, can have long-term consequences in addition to taming labour militancy. They can also contribute to the realization of management's ultimate goal of reducing labour time to zero. If what is good for the employer is considered to be good for the employee, and vice versa, the spectre of eventual worker obsolescence through automation is obscured. The case study of video game performers provided in the third essay of this dissertation demonstrates the early steps of this process: the return of rationalized techniques of scientific management, which dismantle and reconstruct the creative labour of acting into discrete fragments in order to maximize efficiency. With the development of archives of human speech and body movement animations, video game actors are encountering the limits of one of the central claims of optimistic post-Operaismo theories of immaterial labour—that the productive capacity of cognitive capitalism is dependent upon the irreplaceable creativity of living labour. If actors, the paradigmatic figures of cognitive capitalism (Virno, 2004), can be automated, who is next?

Capital's trajectory towards the obliteration of labour is not limited to automation. As discussed in all three essays, corporations are increasingly attempting to redefine workers as independent contractors, freeing them from the legal and social responsibilities of conventional employment. More research is needed into emerging professions which blur the lines between self-entrepreneur and employee, and which require new forms of management to keep them in line. This includes the quasi-contractors of permalancing networks like Uber and TaskRabbit, as well as the "mompreneurs" engaged in multilevel marketing schemes such as Avon, Amway, and HerbalLife.

Despite the importance of these new forms of labour, there has been almost no research on the managerial techniques or organizational culture experienced by workers involved

in the sharing economy or recent multilevel-marketing programs. These are industries comprised primarily of the types of “entrepreneur-employees” who willing submit to self-exploitation, both, because, like commissioned salespeople, they only earn income when they produce value for their employer, and because these new forms of employment relationship have sophisticated ideological mechanisms through which they maintain colinearisation. But, what value does management provide in these cases? In many ways, they cannot even be understood conventionally as “management” any longer, rather they may be better seen as branding and marketing entities backed by finance capital; they own the platform through which contractors must operate, but offer little or no training or front-line support to their users. As truly parasitic initiatives, these companies simply extract rent from already existing commodities and services all while spinning “bullshit” about how they are “saving” the economy (Booth, 2015). So, as the beneficiaries of this “rentier economy” legitimize their rent-taking with claims of “ownership” over the various platforms, networks, or brands that they operate, they figure their subscribers and service providers as “autonomous entrepreneurs” who are not really “working” but rather “sharing” or doing “what they love.” What need, then, do these new economic “disruptors” have for management?

Like labour, management is trying to keep up with the rapid economic and technological changes of post-Fordism, and, in the end, it too is trying to find a way to fend off obsolescence. The uncertainty and instability in the current labour market and the rise of automation, which is putting more and more people out of work, do provide us with resistant possibilities however. First, growing automation will inevitably strand more and more of the population in unemployment and privation, or with no other option but to endure the vicissitudes of the “sharing economy.” Increasingly, the unemployed will realize they have nothing to lose, and those “sharing” their skills, cars, or homes might come to realize their potential to self-valorise and proceed to untether productive work from the parasitic platforms and organizations that extract rent from them. After all, the model of “sharing” still offers a glimpse into the possibilities of restructuring our economic system away from exploitation toward practices of production and exchange based on collectivity and mutual care. And, if capitalism really does not want us to think of ourselves as workers anymore perhaps we should oblige them.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Protocol

UWO NON-MEDICAL RESEARCH REB SUBMISSION FORM

(VERSION – JAN 2004)

Page 1

SECTION 1 PROJECT REGISTRATION

| | |
|-----|---|
| 1.1 | Project Title |
| | Managerial Discourse, Precarity, and the Real Subsumption of Subjectivity |

| | | | |
|------|---|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1.2a | Anticipated Project dates | Start Date | July 2010 |
| | | Completion Date | August 2011 |
| 1.2b | While all protocols are dealt with as quickly as possible it is helpful to know in advance about pending agency deadlines. Indicate if there is a specific funding agency deadline by which REB approval is required. | Pending deadline date | |

| | | | |
|-----|---|--|--|
| 1.3 | Principal or Lead Investigator, or Sponsor of Student's/Visiting Scholar's project at this site. (PI must be a faculty or staff member at UWO or affiliated institutions. Sponsor for student or resident projects must be the faculty advisor. Sponsors of Visiting Scholars should be the Chair, Director or Dean of the unit where the visitor is primarily located) | | |
| | Name | Alison Hearn | |
| | Title & Position | Associate Professor | |
| | Degrees | BA, MA, PhD | |
| | Departmental Affiliation | Faculty of Information and Media Studies | |
| | Mailing Address | North Campus Building, Room 240 | |
| | Telephone | [REDACTED] | |
| | Email | [REDACTED] | |

| | |
|-----|---|
| 1.4 | Signature of Local Principal Investigator or Sponsor of Student/Visiting Scholar attesting that: |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) all co-investigators have reviewed the protocol contents and are in agreement with the protocol as submitted; b) all investigators have read the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans (1998) and the UWO Guidelines on Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects and agree to abide by the guidelines therein; c) the investigator(s) will adhere to the Protocol and Consent Form as approved by the REB; and d) the Principal Investigator will notify the REB of any changes or adverse events/experiences in a timely manner; e) the study, if funded by an external sponsor, will not start until the contract/ agreement has been approved by the appropriate university, hospital or research institute official. |
| | <p>_____ Signature</p> <p>_____ Date</p> |

| | | | |
|-----|--|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1.5 | List all local co-investigators and collaborators. Include research personnel only if they have a significant role in the conduct of the study. Expand chart as required. | | |
| | Name | Title/Position | Degrees |
| | Alison Hearn | Associate Professor | BA, MA, PhD |
| | Nick Dyer-Witthford | Associate Dean | BA, MA, PhD |
| | Trent Cruz | Doctoral Candidate | BA, BBA, MA |
| | | | Role |
| | | | Chief Advisor |
| | | | Committee Member |
| | | | Student/Researcher |

| | | | |
|------|---|-----|----|
| 1.6a | Is this a multi-centred study? | YES | |
| | | NO | XX |
| 1.6b | If YES, who is the Principal Investigator or Project Leader for the entire study? Provide name and contact information. | | |
| | ⇒ | | |

| | | | |
|------|--|-----|----|
| 1.7a | Is this a student project? i.e. Is completion of this project an academic requirement for a course or degree? | YES | XX |
| | | NO | |
| 1.7b | If YES, please describe the course or degree. (e.g. name of course, Honours BA paper, Masters or Ph.D theses etc) and the student's role in the research (e.g. questionnaire design, data collection, interviews, data analyses etc). | | |
| | ⇒PhD thesis, Media Studies: Trent Cruz will select the interviewees to be included in the interview program; engage in correspondence with potential interviewees; write the interview questions; conduct the interviews in person and over the telephone; and interpret the qualitative data. | | |

| | | | |
|------|---|------------|--|
| 1.7c | If YES, Signature of Student attesting that they: | | |
| | a) have read the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the UWO Guidelines on Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects and agree to abide by the guidelines therein; | | |
| | b) will adhere to the Protocol and Consent Form as approved by the REB; and | | |
| | c) will notify their supervisor and the REB of any changes or adverse events/experiences in a timely manner; | | |
| | Signature _____ | Date _____ | |

| | | | |
|------|---|------------|----|
| 1.7d | Is this a Visiting Scholar's project? | YES | |
| | | NO | XX |
| 1.7e | If YES, Signature of Visiting Scholar attesting that they: | | |
| | a) have read the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the UWO Guidelines on Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects and agree to abide by the guidelines therein; | | |
| | b) will adhere to the Protocol and Consent Form as approved by the REB; and | | |
| | c) will notify their Sponsor and the REB of any changes or adverse events/experiences in a timely manner; | | |
| | Signature _____ | Date _____ | |

SECTION 2 FUNDING

| | | | |
|--|---|---|----|
| 2.1a | What is the status of the funding or support for this project? <i>The NMREB strongly recommends waiting to apply for ethics approval until after a project submitted for funding has received notification that the funding has been approved. It is very wasteful of the researcher's and the REB's time to prepare/review a protocol that may not proceed or may require significant revision and re-review as a result of receiving less funding than anticipated.</i> | Funding not required | |
| | | Application Pending | |
| | | Funded | XX |
| | | In-Kind contribution only | |
| If Application Pending; Funded; or In-Kind Contribution fill in chart below. | | | |
| 2.1b | Name of funding agency(s) or sponsor(s) | Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) | |
| 2.1c | Name of investigator receiving/applying for funding | Trent Cruz | |
| 2.1d | Date submitted for funding. | Submitted October 2008; funding commenced September 2009 | |
| 2.1e | Agency/sponsor reference number if known | Not known | |
| 2.1f | Title as submitted to funding agency(s) if different than title of this ethics submission | The Productive Consumption of Subjectivity: Commodifying Identity on Facebook, YouTube, and Xbox Live | |

SECTION 3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Complete each section under the appropriate heading. Be succinct and adhere to the page limitations. DO NOT DIRECT THE COMMITTEE TO 'SEE ATTACHED'. DO NOT USE TEXT COPIED FROM FUNDING APPLICATIONS OR STUDY PROTOCOLS UNLESS IT PROVIDES A SUCCINCT SUMMARY OF THE METHODOLOGY APPROPRIATE FOR ETHICAL REVIEW AND DEALS WITH ETHICAL ISSUES. Copies of detailed proposals submitted to a funding agency or sponsoring agency protocols will not be reviewed as the ethical issues are not often adequately addressed in such documents and they frequently do not provide a succinct summary as noted above. Your protocol will be RETURNED UNREVIEWED if the project description information is incomplete, illegible or improperly filled out.

| | | | |
|------|---|-----|----|
| 3.1a | Is this a sequel to previously approved research? | YES | |
| | | NO | XX |
| 3.1b | If YES, indicate the previous ethics review number(s): ⇒ | | |
| 3.1c | If YES, describe differences from the previously approved protocol(s): ⇒ | | |

| | |
|-----|--|
| 3.2 | Provide a <u>brief</u> one or two sentence overview of the proposed research describing the population, intervention and outcome. <i>E.g. Children 5 to 8 years of age will view a video about animal mothers and their babies then be asked if they think there are any similarities between an animal mother's behaviour and a human mother's behaviour. The research will take place in the children's classroom.</i> |
| | ⇒ Adult professionals involved in innovation and interpersonal communication training will be asked to comment on their role in the management of creativity and affect in the workplace. The research will take place primarily in Toronto, but may extend to other North American cities. |

| | |
|-----|---|
| 3.4 | Background & Justification – Summarize the scholarly and scientific contribution of the study. (1 page maximum) |
|-----|---|

⇒ The recent global financial crisis and its rippling effects across various industries and nations is only the latest development in what some European observers of labour dynamics describe as the contemporary condition of *precarity*. Precarity refers to the widespread casualization of the labour force under post-Fordism; as the relatively secure work arrangements of Fordism disintegrate with the decline of union organizing, full-time jobs are increasingly replaced with outsourced and contracted labour. The exploitation of a highly flexible and globally dispersed labour force, combined with the neoliberal dismantling of the welfare state, has drastically altered the composition of the working classes.

The concept of precarity, either as a term descriptive of the current labour situation or of a significant political recomposition of a militant working class (i.e. the "precarariat" as a revolutionary subject), emerged in Europe during the 1990s and has yet to become widely adopted in North America. Nevertheless, the conditions of precarity are as evident here as in Europe; even the relatively stable manufacturing industries have been racked by layoffs and outsourcing in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Popular and academic accounts of the destabilization of labour relations describe a normalization of uncertainty when it comes to the workplace. In popular culture, films like *Up in the Air* and television programs such as *The Office* and *The Wire* depict the consequences of the dissolution of stable employment that result from the intensified cycles of organizational restructuring necessary for firms and social intuitions to survive the hyper-competitiveness of neoliberalism.

Management and management schools are also acutely aware of the effects of precarity. They recognize the need to develop a new set of organizational strategies to prevent a recomposition of the working class as a "precarariat," one that could potentially organize around the same sorts of issues that have spurred on European radical labour groups. On a more practical level, human resource departments and managerial

scholars struggle with the day-to-day effects of precarity; in addition to the increasingly routine issues of dealing with layoffs, contractors, and outsourced labour, there are also the less tangible problems of coping with the emotional and psychological consequences of precarious employment and living conditions.

The emotional and psychological consequences of precarity are exacerbated by another tendency of post-Fordist labour dynamics – the putting to work of subjectivity itself through the creation and circulation of knowledge and affect. Although elements of subjectivity have always been mined for value by capitalism, the last few years have seen an intensification of the exploitation of the intangible aspects of the self such as creativity and affect. Workers, particularly in North America and Europe but increasingly on a global scale, are moving away from functioning as mere “appendage of the machine” as described by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*; rather, capital attempts to put subjectivity itself to work. This project will examine some of the ways in which subjectivity is harnessed, controlled and mined for value by contemporary management initiatives.

| | |
|-----|---|
| 3.5 | Objectives and Hypotheses: Provide a clear statement of the purpose and objectives of the project. (1 page maximum) |
|-----|---|

⇒ My project will analyze a set of management discourses that represent some of the most recent attempts by capital to harness the creative potential of labour by putting subjectivity to work. It will examine how academic and popular management texts and practices influence corporate training practices aimed at cultivating workers’ capacity for innovation, communication, and flexibility—traits that have become essential qualities for workers in the current environment of economic and social instability. This project will add to our understanding of the capture of subjectivity by capital and explore some of the tactics employed by workers’ tactics to evade or subvert this capture.

My project will focus on three case studies of popular and academic texts and training regimes that aim to facilitate the putting to work of knowledge and affective labour under conditions of workplace and social precarity. The first case study will look at the management of innovation and spontaneity through employee training programs that work with improvisational theatre actors and techniques. The second examines the growing management literature on user generated content and reputation management on Web 2.0. The final case study looks at the use of motivational speakers to ameliorate the affective “collateral damage” of precarity and its attendant subjective demands upon workers who must be increasingly flexible with respect to work conditions and responsibilities and are expected to bring more and more of “themselves” to their job.

| | |
|-----|--|
| 3.6 | Methodology – Describe the study design and what participants will be asked to do at each stage of the research. Investigators are encouraged to use flow charts or diagrams in their descriptions. (2 page maximum) |
|-----|--|

⇒

Interviews will be one-on-one, open-ended, semi-structured, and face-to-face in a free format whenever possible, but via telephone when pragmatic or necessary. Interviews will emphasize dialogue with participants, and will be designed so as to enable interviewees to respond most deeply to questions targeted at their areas of expertise. I am interested in uncovering participants own accounts of their role in the management of creative and affective labour.

My questions will be oriented around and will seek to uncover the perspectives of (1) trainers and HR professionals involved in organizing and conducting training and (2) workers receiving training. While the reliability of my sources and the generalizability of their insights will be of paramount importance, my interest lies not in generating a representative sample. Rather, this interview program seeks to understand the training techniques used by management to cultivate creativity, communication and innovation in its workforce.

Interviews will take place at interviewees’ places of employment or at alternate locations at the interviewees’ request. In the event that I am unable to meet an interviewee in person, the interview will be conducted over the

telephone. I will use an audio-recorder to record the discussion for my later consultation—a fact interviewees will be made aware of in advance of the interviews. The duration of each interview will be approximately one hour.

| | |
|-----|--|
| 3.7 | Indicate why a particular design was selected. Address the strengths and weaknesses of the selected design. (1 page maximum) |
|-----|--|

⇒ By adopting an unstructured format within the interviews, I will foster opportunities for interviewees to take the conversation in directions most pertinent to their areas of expertise. Moreover, this format will allow me to utilize an iterative interview process, where I can incorporate unexpected insights and reflections uncovered in my initial interview into subsequent interview guides. Although unstructured interviews can result in too much data and a loss of focus, by using an iterative interview process I plan to revise my interview outline after each interview to develop a more refined instrument that draws upon findings from earlier interviews.

I am interested in discovering managerial and worker-based, rather than merely academic or theoretical, perspectives on workplace training; consequently, the data I seek from these interviews are not readily available in other forms. Due to the lag time involved with the process of publishing new insights in a rapidly changing industry, coupled with the speculative character of analyses about the management of workers' creative capacities and emotional condition, interviews with trainers and trainees will allow me to garner the most up-to-date, on-the-ground observations and interpretations of workplace challenges and changes.

By weighing the interview data against in-depth analysis of relevant theory and print research (including academic and popular employee training literature), I will be able to interpret the responses derived from my fieldwork data in a way that taps into real reactions to and perceptions of the training practices employed and experienced by each of the participants.

| | |
|-----|---|
| 3.8 | References – If possible please restrict the list to ten of the most relevant references. References must be properly cited and contain the author, title of article, journal and page number(s). |
|-----|---|

⇒

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| | | | |
|---|--|----------------|----|
| 3.9 | Analysis – Discuss how the data will be analyzed. (1 page maximum) | | |
| ⇒ Discourse and standard qualitative analysis will be employed to process interview data. That is, transcriptions are treated as social texts in which patterns of language and meaning emerge. These patterns are at once contextualized by a specific institutional setting—such as a particular work environment—but also by the myths that permeate culture generally during a given historical moment. | | | |
| 3.10 | CONTINUING REVIEW - At a minimum all Principal Investigators will be required to complete the NMREB's Surveillance Report Form annually. | | |
| 3.10a | Are the risks associated with this project sufficiently low that the project requires only an annual review? | YES | XX |
| | | NO | |
| 3.10b | If NO, Please indicate why you feel a more frequent review is required? | | |
| ⇒ | | | |
| 3.10c | If NO, Please indicate your recommendation as to the appropriate frequency of the REB's continuing review. | EVERY 6 MONTHS | |
| | | EVERY 3 MONTHS | |
| | | EVERY MONTH | |

SECTION 4 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

| | | |
|------|--|-----|
| 4.1a | Number of subjects in entire study | 20 |
| 4.1b | Number of subjects at this centre (if a multi-centred study) | N/A |
| 4.1c | Number of centres participating | N/A |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| 4.2 | What is the rationale for using the intended number of subjects. | | |
| ⇒ By conducting interviews with 20 subjects, I will be afforded the opportunity to draw out a range of perspectives from my 2 core participant groups: (1) trainers and HR professionals involved in organizing and conducting training and (2) workers receiving training. This number is large enough to generate substantive data, whilst manageable enough to make for a feasible study. | | | |

| | | | |
|------|--|-----|----|
| 4.3a | Was a formal sample size calculation used? | YES | |
| | | NO | XX |
| 4.3b | If YES – give the actual calculation and a reference for the formula used. If, instead of a calculation, a table in a published source was used, provide the reference(s) and table reference numbers. If a sample size calculator was used, provide a description of the software package used and/or the URL for internet-based calculators. | | |

⇒

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 4.4 | The study will involve: (check all that apply) | √ |
| | Incompetent or unconscious participants | |
| | Minors (under 18) | |
| | Institutionalized persons (e.g. prison, extended care facility) | |
| | UWO Psychology Pool | |
| | Participants with possible language barriers (e.g. illiterate, non-English speaking, dysphasic) | |
| | Employees or students of UWO or the institution where the study is being carried out | |
| | Patients | |
| | Pregnant women | |
| | Participants recruited in emergency or life-threatening situations | |
| | Others whose participation may be problematic for some reason (describe) | |

| | | | |
|------|---|-----|----|
| 4.5a | Will the study involve males AND females? | YES | XX |
| | | NO | |
| 4.5b | If NO, explain why only one gender is being selected. (e.g. condition under study is gender specific) | | |
| | ⇒ | | |

| | | | |
|-----|--|-----------------|----|
| 4.6 | What is the age range of the participants? | LOWER AGE LIMIT | 18 |
| | | UPPER AGE LIMIT | 80 |

| | | | |
|------|---|--|--|
| 4.7 | Participant Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: List all inclusion/exclusion criteria and indicate with an asterisk (*) those criteria which will be included in the Letter of Information. | | |
| 4.7a | Inclusion Criteria | | |
| | ⇒ Participants will be included on the basis of their expertise and experience with the training programs I am studying. | | |
| 4.7b | Exclusion Criteria and rationale for exclusion | | |
| | ⇒ Individuals not participating in the training programs being analyzed in this project will be excluded. | | |

| | | | |
|------|--|-----|----|
| 4.8a | Are there any risks for these participants if they are also taking part in other research? | YES | |
| | | NO | XX |
| 4.8b | If YES explain any risks associated with participation in multiple studies | | |
| | ⇒ | | |

SECTION 5 PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

| | |
|-----|--|
| 5.1 | Describe the method of selecting, sampling and recruiting participants. |
| | ⇒ Participants will be selected on the basis of their involvement in workplace training programs relevant to my study and their respective role in the training process (as trainer, HR professional overseeing the training, or trainee). Corporate websites will be used to identify such individuals when possible, with telephone calls to corporate switchboards used as an alternative means of identifying participants and obtaining contact information. Email correspondence and follow-up mail correspondence, in addition to telephone correspondence, will be used to recruit participants. |

| | |
|-----|--|
| 5.2 | Identify who will be contacting them . |
|-----|--|

⇒ Trent Cruz will contact each participant.

5.3 Indicate where the research will be conducted.

⇒ The interviews will be conducted at participants' own corporate offices, or alternate locations most convenient and preferable to participants. As noted in 3.2, interviews will take place primarily in Toronto, but potentially other major North American urban centres if required. If face-to-face interviews cannot be arranged, some telephone interviews may be employed instead.

| | | | |
|---|---|-----|----|
| 5.4 | Will announcements or advertisements be used? | YES | |
| | | NO | XX |
| If YES (Provide 10 copies of all advertisements /announcements that will be used) | | | |

SECTION 6 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

| | | | |
|-----|--|----|---|
| 6.1 | Indicate which of the following interventions, testing or procedures are to be performed on the human participants as part of this research study. (Check as many as needed) | | |
| | Interview/survey/questionnaire | XX | Evaluation of program or services |
| | Experiment | | Non-invasive physical measurements (e.g. BP, temperature) |
| | Observation of public behaviour | | Collection of biological materials |
| | Observation of laboratory behaviour | | Retrospective chart or file review |
| | Analysis of existing data | | |
| | Audio or video taping | XX | Other (specify) |

SECTION 7 INSTRUMENTS TO BE USED IN STUDY

Instruments (forms) = questionnaires, assessment forms, scales, interviews, surveys and diaries etc.

| | | | |
|-----|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 7.1 | <p>In the chart below list all instruments that will be used in the study. If you will be using standard, previously validated, previously approved by the NMREB, or widely accepted instruments provide FOUR copies. If the instruments have been developed or adapted for this project, provide 10 copies Expand chart as required.</p> <p>If you are conducting open-ended or unstructured interviews or focus groups provide an outline of the topics to be discussed.</p> <p>To assist the REB indicate clearly on this chart, who will be completing the form (E.g. subject – self administered, subject-interviewed, caregiver, teacher etc)</p> | | |
| | INSTRUMENT | Who will be completing the form? | STATUS Standard New Adapted |
| | Interview outline (Appendix A) | n/a | N |
| | Letter of information and consent (Appendix B) | Researcher & Interview Subject | N |
| | Letter of permission to cite participant by name (Appendix C) | Interview Subject | N |

SECTION 8 DECEPTION OR PARTIAL DISCLOSURE TO BE USED IN THE STUDY

| | | | |
|------|--|-----|----|
| 8.1a | This section refers to instances of deliberate deception or the withholding of key information that may influence a participant's performance or responses. Do any of the procedures in this study include the use of this type of deception or partial disclosure of information to participants? | YES | |
| | | NO | XX |
| 8.1b | If YES, provide a rationale for the planned deception or partial disclosure. | | |
| | ⇒ | | |
| 8.1c | If YES, describe the procedures for a) debriefing the participants and b) giving them a second opportunity to consent to participate after debriefing. If debriefing and re-consent are not viable options please explain. | | |
| | ⇒ | | |

SECTION 9 RISKS AND BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

| | |
|------------------|---|
| 9.1 | RISKS & DISCOMFORTS: Discuss the overall risks of the proposed research, and specify the particular risks and discomforts associated with each aspect of the protocol. Consider physical, psychological, emotional, social, economic etc. risks and stressors. |
| ⇒ No known risks | |

| | |
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| 9.2 | BENEFITS: Discuss benefits to the research participants, to groups or to society at large or the population being studied. Please note that monetary compensation is not considered a benefit. . |
| ⇒ There are no direct and specific benefits to the interviewees though they may find gratification in participating in a timely study of economic and social changes relevant to workplace-based creativity training. | |

SECTION 10 COMPENSATION AND COSTS

| | | | |
|-------|--|-----|----|
| 10.1a | Will the participants be compensated or reimbursed for their time and expenses? | YES | |
| | | NO | XX |
| 10.1b | If YES, provide details. Specify the amount, what the compensation or reimbursement is for, and how payment will be determined for participants who do not complete the study. | | |
| ⇒ | | | |

| | | | |
|-------|--|-----|----|
| 10.2a | Are the participants likely to incur any additional expenses or inconveniences as a result of their participation in this study? | YES | |
| | | NO | XX |
| 10.2b | If YES, describe | | |
| ⇒ | | | |

SECTION 11 PROTECTION OF HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PARTICIPANTS

| | |
|--|---|
| 11.1 | Describe facilities and procedures to protect the physical and mental health, comfort and safety of the participants. |
| ⇒ No such facilities or procedures will be needed for this study, as participants' physical and mental health will not be at risk within the interview context. As noted in 5.3, interviews will be conducted in participants' own corporate offices or at alternate locations at their request. The research design will accommodate participant comfort and convenience. | |

| | | | |
|-------|---|-----|----|
| 11.2a | Will the study be likely to induce high levels of stress, fear, anxiety in some or all participants or require them to discuss painful memories of past events? | YES | |
| | | NO | XX |
| 11.2b | If YES, explain what resources you will make available to subjects to cope with such stress. | | |
| ⇒ | | | |

SECTION 12 CONFIDENTIALITY & PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

| | |
|--|--|
| 12.1 | Describe the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and for preserving the confidentiality of data both during the research and in the release of the findings. This would include procedures such as removing identifiable information, collecting anonymous data and ensuring that highly visible subjects in small communities or groups will be protected from inadvertent identification. Describe any condition in which confidentiality or anonymity cannot be guaranteed or must be breached. |
| ⇒ Email and mail correspondence with interview participants will make clear that any identifiable information will remain confidential, if that is what they prefer. A combined letter of information and consent outlining the procedures to be employed during the interview (see Appendix B) will be sent to participants in advance of the interview. This letter will indicate that confidentiality will be guaranteed unless participants indicate otherwise. Participants requesting confidentiality will be referred to with generic names that disguise any distinguishing features like gender, age, or ethnicity. | |
| It should be noted that some participants may not desire confidentiality. To accommodate such cases, the combined letter of information and consent will be followed up by a letter of permission to cite participant by name (see Appendix C). This letter will be sent separately and at a later date in order to avoid creating any pressure for participants to wave their right to anonymity. | |
| Participants will be afforded the ability to withdraw their permission of consent in writing in advance of an agreed upon date. While the aforementioned efforts will be made to preserve participant privacy, the letter of information and consent will indicate that the nature of participants' comments, combined with the prominence of their position, may mean that they identify themselves inadvertently. The letter will also make clear that every effort will be made to avoid such an outcome. | |

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|--------|--|----------------------------------|----|
| 12..2a | Is identifiable participant data being sent off-site to a sponsor, co-investigator or central data collection site or registry? | YES | |
| | | NO | XX |
| 12..2b | If YES, indicate which, if any, of these participant | Surname Name &/or Initials | |
| | | Contact info: address, phone etc | |

| | | | |
|--------|--|---|--|
| | identifiers will be included with the data? | Date of Birth or Death | |
| | | Personal Numbers: e.g. SIN, employee or student number, | |
| | | Institutional / Hospital Chart or Record # | |
| 12..2c | If any of the above identifiers will be included, provide a rationale why it is necessary to include this information and why a unique, de-identified code cannot be used instead. | | |
| ⇒ | | | |

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|--|---|
| 12.3 | Describe the procedures for securing and storing written records, videotapes, computer discs, recordings and questionnaires etc. Indicate if the material will be retained indefinitely or the length of time the material will be retained and describe the method of disposal if it is to be destroyed. |
| ⇒ Audio-taped interview conversations and hard copies of written transcriptions will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet during analysis and writing. Electronic copies of these data will be password-protected on my personal computer. Tapes and electronic files with de-identified information will be kept indefinitely for the purposes of future research. | |

| | |
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| 12.4 | Identify all agencies or individuals other than the research team you know will have access to confidential data collected for this study. |
| ⇒ No additional agencies or individuals will have access to confidential data collected for this study. | |

SECTION 13 INFORMED CONSENT

Disclaimer: The REB does not assess the legal validity of the consent form nor does it provide any other legal advice.

| | |
|--|---|
| 13.1 | Briefly describe any plans for provision of feedback to participants. |
| ⇒ Participants will have access to the full study after publication upon request. Access will occur primarily by email unless participants request hard copies be sent by mail. The researcher will retain and update the contact information of all participants until the research has been completed and published. | |

| | |
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| 13.2 | If written consent cannot be obtained from potential participants prior to intervention or written consent is not appropriate, provide a justification. (E.g. completion of a questionnaire in a survey study is evidence of consent.) |
| ⇒ | |

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|-------|---|-----|----|
| 13.3a | Will minors or persons not able to consent for themselves be included in the study? | YES | |
| | | NO | XX |
| 13.3b | If YES, describe the consent process and indicate who will be asked to consent on their behalf and discuss what safeguards will be employed to ensure the rights of the research participant are protected. <i>Whether or not a separate assent form is used, investigators and parents or guardians should discuss the study with the person (when appropriate) and explain exactly what will happen and what the person's rights are. In certain circumstances, the REB may find it acceptable for mature or emancipated minors to give consent without also requiring consent from parents or guardians.</i> | | |



- | | |
|------|--|
| 13.4 | <p>Attach a copy of the documentation that will be used to inform and obtain consent from the potential participants about the research. Separate Information/consent documents or a combined Information/Consent document may be used. Wording regarding the participant's consent <u>must</u> comply with the UWO policies and procedures and participants <u>must</u> be given a copy of the Letter of Information or combined Information/consent document to keep for reference if they wish.</p> <p><i>Some requests for interviews with competent persons who hold or have held positions of responsibility and who are primarily relating their experiences in public or private office (e.g. politicians, government officials, senior executives) need not follow such a structured outline. (see Section 10.0 in the NMREB Guidelines.)</i></p> |
|------|--|

**YOU MAY FIND IT HELPFUL TO COMPLETE
THE OPTIONAL CHECKLIST ON NEXT PAGE**

NOTIFICATION OF REVISIONS, AMENDMENTS, REVISED BROCHURES TO AN APPROVED PROTOCOL
FORM 3-F-004 UWO Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) Revised 04-06-01

| | | |
|---|---|------------------------|
| UWO ETHICS NUMBER | | FIMS-2010-019 |
| LOCAL PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR | | Alison Hearn |
| PROJECT TITLE | Managerial Discourse, Precarity, and the Real Subsumption of Subjectivity | |
| Signature of Principal Investigator: | | Date: January 28, 2013 |

| | | | |
|----|--|-----|---|
| 1. | Do the proposed changes alter the information contained in the UWO protocol submission, Letters of Information and Consent documentation or affect local participants? | YES | |
| | | NO | X |

| 2.. | SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN THIS REQUEST FOR A REVISION | √ IF YES | IF YES TO ANY ITEM IN THIS CHART, PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON A SEPARATE SHEET AND/OR DOCUMENTATION AS NOTED BELOW. (Put Ethics # on each additional page) |
|-----|---|----------------|--|
| | Study design or methods? | | Provide detailed explanation/rationale for changes. Revising the UWO protocol form as appropriate. |
| | Information/Consent documentation? | | Provide copy of revised documentation with changes <u>underlined</u> , <i>italicized</i> or grey-shaded. Do not use coloured marker unless you are prepared to highlight each copy. |
| | Study instruments, questionnaires etc? | | Provide copy of revised or additional questionnaires, instruments etc. |
| | Number of study participants? | | Provide detailed explanation/rationale for changes. Address statistical issues if appropriate. |
| | Participant recruitment? | | |
| | Eligible subjects? | | |
| | Study end date? | X | Provide revised date and detailed explanation/rationale for change. |
| | Administrative changes? | | Summarize changes and revise UWO documentation as appropriate. |
| | Principal and/or Co-Investigators? | | If PI changing, include letter signed by both PI who is stepping down and the new PI indicating they both agree to the change and that the new PI is prepared to take over all responsibility for the study. |
| | Other | | Provide a complete description. |

LEAVE THIS SPACE BLANK

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Let start by talking about your experience working in the game industry.

Can you discuss some of the game companies you've worked with and specific games you've worked on?

What are some of the particular types of skills/abilities studios are looking for from performers?

How does the audition process work in the game industry? How is it different from the audition process in film/tv/theatre?

How is video game performance work different from more conventional forms of acting (eg stage/film/tv)?

How are working conditions in video games vs other forms of acting?

How is the pace of video game performance work different from other forms of acting?

Please describe some of the physical strain of video game work.

What are some of the drawbacks to working in the game industry as a performer?

Describe the organizational hierarchy around your work. For example, who is directly responsible for performers in voice over versus motion capture?

When in the development cycle are you brought in (eg how soon before release)?

How long do you typically spend working on a game? How many total recording sessions?

Are there differences between development studios in how they use performers?

How many different performers do you work with on any given project? How many principals/leads vs background performers?

How many different characters are you generally expected to voice on a single project?

How involved are you in character development? How much input are you given into the process?

Do you feel as connected to a video game character as you do with a film/tv/stage character?

Have you ever worked with a developer that has hired non-union talent (yourself or others)?

Do you know the session rates for performers not working under a union contract?

Have you worked on any projects that have hired performers under a union contract other than ACTRA (eg SAG AFTRA)?

Do you know how much developers re-use assets (ie generic voice effects like barks, mocap animation assets like walking/running, etc)?

Have you found any problems with the current agreements that you work under? Either protections that you think are lacking, or limitations that make it harder for you to do your job?

Can you talk a bit about how performance capture is changing? For example, are you currently do facial motion capture or plan to do it in the future?

Gaming has historically been very male-oriented. What proportion of the performers you work with are women?

What proportion are ethnic minorities?

Was there any colour-blind casting/ use of minority performers in roles where ethnicity was not specified?

Are games becoming more inclusive (both in diversity of talent and roles)?

Finally, can you suggest any other performers in the video game industry that I should interview?

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Trent Cruz

Post-secondary Education and Degrees: Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada
1999-2005 B.A.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2005-2007 M.A.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2007-2016 Ph.D.

Honours and Awards: Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2006-2010

Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
Doctoral Fellowship
2009-2011

Related Work Experience Teaching Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2005-2011

Instructor
The University of Western Ontario
2012-2016