

Career Paths and Obstacles in New Orleans' Cultural Economy

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CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Mitchell J. Landrieu, Mayor

Abstract

In the United States, few studies have statistically analyzed career and educational data of individual cultural workers with the goal of crafting policy towards their needs. This research examines the career and educational paths of cultural workers in New Orleans in order to identify gaps and ultimately policy solutions relating to public, educational, and economic infrastructure supportive of the cultural economy. Due to the freelance, portfolio, and self-employed nature of most cultural industries, it is better to approach cultural economic policy from the perspective of the individual workers than from the needs and desires of a constructed sector or industries. This study both researched traditional economic data such as the number of cultural jobs in the city, businesses, and earnings and wages, as well as the individual conditions and needs of cultural workers through survey. The research concluded that most cultural workers in the city hold multiple jobs or roles, have a constrained income, and have multi-faceted and complex career paths. Policies should focus on worker trainings in business management and continue to mitigate the effects of recent development through support of affordable housing.

Executive Summary

In the United States, few studies have statistically analyzed career and educational data of individual cultural workers with the goal of crafting policy towards their needs. Although this research will focus on one city, New Orleans, the methodology will serve as a roadmap for similar regional, state or nationwide studies of how to approach the experience of the individual cultural worker and to translate that into possible policy. This research examines the career and educational paths of cultural workers in New Orleans in order to identify gaps and ultimately policy solutions relating to public, educational, and economic infrastructure supportive of the cultural economy. At the same time, this data will be paired with more traditional quantitative data such as job numbers and economic activity. While much of economic development research and policy analysis focuses on the needs of industries and businesses, however, in a sector dominated by freelancers, portfolio workers, micro-businesses, and the self-employed this approach makes little practical sense.

From the concept of a “creative class” in Richard Florida’s *Rise of the Creative Class*, the idea of the cultural worker or creative worker has evolved throughout the world. Many studies define cultural or creative workers differently, ranging in everything from visual artists to lawyers. In this research, a cultural worker is defined by employment or work in one or more of the following sectors:

- Culinary Arts: Food-related cultural products including food processing, specialty food products and locally-owned, full service restaurants (does not include franchise/non-local chain restaurants);
- Design: Individual designers and firms involved in the communication arts such as graphic design, printing, and advertising;
- Entertainment: The performing arts (music, theater, and dance), individual performers, and the film industries;
- Literary Arts and Humanities: Individual writers and editors and book, periodical, and newspaper publishing;
- Preservation: Economic activities focused on the restoration and redevelopment of the built environment including architecture, landscape architecture and a percentage of construction activity focused on preservation and renovation; and
- Visual Arts and Crafts: Individual artists and craftspeople as well as the galleries and museums that present cultural products.

Although traditional economic development policies are shaped by the needs of industries and employers, this research asserts that in a cultural sector characterized by high self-employment, freelance and portfolio work and multiple jobs within and without the cultural sector, focusing on the composition and needs of the cultural workers makes more sense. Cultural workers often have precarious work, meaning that they are often not full employees of companies, but usually contractors, freelancers, or temporary workers that can be let go at any time.

This research first examined the cultural job and business landscape in New Orleans. New Orleans' cultural industries accounted for 36,478 jobs in 2015, including 27,058 wage and salary jobs and 9,420 jobs from self-employment. With about 36,500 jobs, the cultural sector is a larger source of employment than the city's private healthcare and social assistance sector (26,913 jobs), its private education sector (22,445 jobs, including charter schools), and its retail sector (17,379 jobs). The entertainment and culinary segments are the two largest cultural segments in New Orleans. In 2015, there were approximately 15,000 jobs in culinary arts, which includes employment in locally owned, full-service restaurants, catering, specialty food stores, and food processing. The entertainment segment, which includes film, digital arts, broadcasting, the performing arts (music, dance, and theater), and music production, accounted for about 11,000 of the cultural industry jobs. With the exception of the culinary segment, where only about 9 percent of the jobs involve self-employment, most of the cultural industries involve a large degree of contract work or self-employment. This is highest in the visual arts segment where 83 percent of all of the jobs are in this category, but is also a critical form of earning income in the design category. This survey found 1,735 cultural businesses in New Orleans in 2015 ranging from cooking schools, restaurants, art galleries, and architects; to independent presses, music venues, specialty plasterers, and graphic design firms.

In 2015, cultural industry workers earned \$1.3 billion in salary and wages. Total earnings associated with the cultural industries, including wage and salary earnings, self-employment earnings, and sole proprietorships, has been growing rapidly. Since 2006, there has been a growth of \$463 million in earnings associated with the cultural industries, a 57 percent rate of growth. The average earnings per job in the cultural industries are relatively low, about \$35,000, or well below the average earnings in the city of approximately \$51,000. The low average earnings are due to a number of factors, most notably the large number of low-paying jobs in the culinary segment. In addition, it is important to note that the earnings data include "proprietor" earnings. For many of those in the cultural industries, their earnings from the cultural work, whether that be music or writing, might be secondary to another job. In these cases, the earnings are supplementing other sources of income.

The next portion of research conducted 25 interviews and 280 surveys of New Orleans' cultural workers. The survey was looking for information on job holding, income, education, and the impact of major life events. Finally, the survey covered what types of assistance cultural workers would find helpful. The majority of respondents were White (63%), Female (68%), Visual Artists (49%), and held a Masters degree (41%). These results are partly explained by the survey being mostly available online, and outreach through the Arts Council, whose registered artists skew towards these characteristics. However, the research team did in-person outreach and paper surveys to reach other portions of the cultural worker population to represent workers more fully.

While we received 280 total survey responses, cultural worker respondents were allowed to select more than one cultural "segment" in answering the question "Which cultural segment do you work in or earn income from?" We received 413 total responses to this question, indicating that many respondents work in more than one cultural segment. This multi-faceted view of cultural careers extended into the

interviews as well – ten of our 25 interviewees indicated that they view themselves as participants in multiple cultural segments, and six identified as working in three or more segments.

Cultural career paths are also flexible – many workers balance cultural work with work in other industries, work on a contract / gig / self-employment basis, and move between cultural work and non-cultural work over time. Over one-third of survey respondents earn other income from non-cultural work, and a plurality (43%) are self-employed. This is very similar to many major surveys done outside the United States and matches our self-employment data from the Economic Data Findings above.

African-American cultural workers are far more likely to work in non-cultural industries in addition to doing cultural work, and far less likely to have a full-time job in a cultural industry. Young cultural workers ages 18-24 are also far more likely to work part-time in the cultural economy.

The most popular reasons for cultural workers to also do non-cultural work are to generate additional income or generate a more stable, predictable income for themselves and their families. These reasons are particularly true for African-American cultural workers.

The median individual income category in 2015 for survey respondents was \$30,000-\$39,999; when looking at cultural work alone, survey respondents received a median individual income of \$20,000-\$29,999 directly from cultural work in 2015. The median household income for survey respondents was \$50,000-\$59,999 in 2015. While these numbers are fairly comparable to the Greater New Orleans Area Median Income, given rising costs of living in New Orleans, cultural workers remain income-constrained.

The major life events that cultural workers are most likely to have experienced since the year 2000 are: displacement by Hurricane Katrina (54%); a medical emergency (50%); marriage (32%); housing instability due to an inability to afford monthly payments (31%); and having their main residence destroyed by Hurricane Katrina (31%). This suggests that major needs for cultural workers may include affordable health care; continuing to deal with the economic aftereffects of Hurricane Katrina; and affordable housing.

The survey also investigated cultural workers' interest in eight types of skill-building opportunities for career development. Financial planning and management skills received the most top-ranked responses (24%), followed by marketing and promotion (18%), website development (16%), and business incorporation and management (12%).

Our interview subjects weighed in on the cultural landscape of New Orleans and their sense of authenticity. A common theme was authenticity of the cultural worker by being local paired with dismay at the change of the cultural landscape caused by the influx of “transplants” or gentrification. These factors lowered the authenticity and the cultural confidence as it related to New Orleans as a city.

New Orleans is currently in a state of flux. The recovery from Hurricane Katrina has both restored cultural assets and returned some of the former cultural practitioners, but it has also brought in much more outside influence than was present before the storm. Cultural workers, both local and new, are still discovering New Orleans culture and choosing to approach their cultural practice from a preservation path, and innovative path, and most often times, both. There is fierce debate regarding the degradation of traditional culture versus the creation of new cultural forms next to it.

As predicted by the hypothesis, this survey found that substantial numbers of cultural workers are self-employed, work on a contract basis, work multiple jobs, and hold employment outside the cultural

industries. The self-made and pieced-together natures of their careers and career paths show a complexity that industry-based training policies most likely will not address. Indeed, many of our interviewees felt that there were programs the City or others could create that would address their unique needs and that these programs did not yet exist.

The City and cultural non-profits should consider several types of assistance for cultural workers based on the results of this survey. The City should continue its current focus on affordable housing and the percentages of affordable units in new developments. Affordable housing was the highest ranked form of assistance in the survey. Other creative solutions to housing, such as artist-specific housing, have been executed in the City with varying degrees of success, but supply is far lower than demand. New Orleans is hardly alone in its struggle to lower rents and improve neighborhoods without displacing current residents. Government and community solutions will be needed to properly address this issue.

In interviews and in the survey, one training element mentioned by almost everyone was training in business skills, specifically Financial Planning and Management. Other entrepreneurial skills were also in demand.

A city like New Orleans is attractive to tourists and the local population largely because of its culture. Cultural workers are one part of the cultural landscape that needs to function to create a vibrant sector and city as a whole. Cultural institutions, businesses, non-profits, culture bearers, art education programs, and much more work together to preserve and grow local culture. This survey has introduced some issues and realities of cultural workers and will help shape economic development policies moving forward. We want to strongly encourage other cities to explore their cultural landscape holistically, and create an array of policies and tools for cultural workers and businesses, not just for an industry sector or for employers.

Literature Review: Cultural economic policy with a focus on the experiences of the individual cultural worker

For the past fifteen years, the concepts of creative class and creative cities have been a significant source of study, policy, rhetoric, and hope. Elected officials throughout the world were swept up in the excitement of becoming a creative city, attracting a creative class. These elements were thought to fight blight, regenerate neighborhoods, and benefit the economy through the creation of creative clusters and amenities for the creative class that were employed by them. Richard Florida's *Rise of the Creative Class* ignited the flame, but it also included a large number of occupations in the creative class, everything from artists to lawyers.

The book begged the questions, how does the creative class lead to economic development? How does the creative class interact with industries, spaces, and infrastructure to make a city "creative"? Scholars have been exploring the answer to these questions ever since. Florida himself put some focus on the creative class (Florida, 2005, 2008). He recognized that many creative workers do not work just out of greed for monetary reward, but are motivated by intrinsic rewards and the challenges and responsibilities of their work. They are drawn to "scenes" which are concentrations of artists, such as musicians, that facilitate networking. Nurturing the scene takes social and economic infrastructure, which is where economic development strategies begin (Florida, 2008). Governments can participate by maintaining areas of the city where a critical mass of clubs, restaurants, and venues legally and easily.

But the scene phenomenon is not enough to explain the choice of the creative class to concentrate in a city nor does it explain the economic benefit of this clustering beyond providing a privileged customer base for trendy businesses. There have been several attempts to clarify and quantify the ways artists, not the whole creative class, but a subset with the most cultural jobs, contribute to the economy. Artists obviously consume goods and services to make their art:

Many [artists] act like small firms, hiring others upstream on a part-time or contractual basis to help with bookkeeping, scheduling, research, technical processes involved in their art and so on. They patronize suppliers of materials, agents, teachers and tutors (Markusen, King, 2003, p.7).

This brings us to the patterns and norms of “cultural industries.” Due to the freelance, portfolio, and self-employed nature of most cultural industries (Menger, 2001, 2006), it is better to approach cultural economic policy from the perspective of the individual workers than from the needs and desires of a constructed sector or industries. To date, most work in this area in the United States has focused on the needs of the sector or on improving the qualities of the places where cultural industries cluster based on the desires of this industry or the desires of the “creative class” (see Florida, 2002, 2005, 2008). These needs and desires of cultural industries are defined from the top-down, based on the deductions of experts, testimony of high-level executives, or academic researchers. Meanwhile, work in the United Kingdom, European Union, Australia, and New Zealand has instead emphasized an artist- or producer-based approach, focusing on the career paths of individuals, their motivations, and the obstacles or incentives that they have faced. This research proposes to bring this focus to the United States, starting with the examination of New Orleans, a city with a high concentration of cultural workers and creators, and a high-level of economic development activity in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Cultural workers face some unique conditions in the labor market. They are younger, educated, and tend to be self-employed, freelance, or contract workers. They often hold multiple jobs, both within and without the cultural industries (Menger, 2001, 2006). Because of these qualities, they seek flexibility over stability and their careers evolve in increments as they build a career history or portfolio (Menger 2006). Therefore, a cultural worker has to have entrepreneurial skills in addition to their artistic or creative skills (Eikhof 2006, Menger 2006). The need for networking, which is what allows the worker to hold multiple cultural jobs, move from project to project, and/or build a portfolio leads to concentration of the cultural industries in particular places (Menger 2006). This creates a chicken and egg problem with the idea of clustering of cultural industries since it is difficult to say which came first, the cultural workers, or the industries and network they utilize to get cultural work.

Cultural workers don’t exactly “choose” these working conditions. With a glamorous portfolio and an array of interesting and diverse assignments comes what is called precarity or precarious labor. Companies and clients do not want to hire more permanent employees, and are starting to have a small core staff complimented by independent contractors working on a project-by-project basis. Unlike their parents, today’s young cultural workers are moving from job to job, or creating work out of a piecemeal of projects (Morgan, Wood, Nelligan, 2013). There is little or no security or safety net. However, precarious labor is not always met with anxiety or considered a “bug” in the system. Instead, “...many young workers have internalized the injunction to vocational restlessness and renewal.... To these people job security is synonymous with a repetitive drudgery....” (Morgan, Wood, Nelligan, 2013, p.1).

Neff (2012) explains the embrace of precarious labor by the cultural workforce through their attitudes towards risk. The start-up culture both now and in the 1990s before the tech bubble burst championed risk as the path towards great rewards and sometime significant wealth. Workers that were hired by

start-ups put up with conditions like contract labor, or even low-paid and free work in the hopes of “making it big”. Instead of risk being something that employers take on, risk became individualized. Workers began to accept the precarious nature of their employment as intrinsic to their field, and even a positive feature since risk was sometimes so richly rewarded. Cultural workers work in an industry where big risks can catapult an individual to fame and wealth, but little remains for those below that level. Many cultural workers choose to live with these conditions and with risk.

In addition to risk, as mentioned above, cultural workers also seem to tolerate low-paid or even free work. Entry into cultural work often involves unpaid “internships” or periods like probation where the work is not paid or paid very little. An example is in the digital economy, where the nature of the Internet and those who produce its content supports trends like workforce flexibility, freelance work, and working all the time. (Terranova, 2003).

Freelance work and the qualities that go with it has not been lending itself to worker unity or advocacy, such as unions. Instead, Christopherson (2008) points out that talent and craft guilds are focusing on getting better jobs for their dwindling, mostly white, male members. Women and people of color meanwhile scramble to get low-paid project work. Instead of unions, the networking mentioned above is what is providing these newer workers with somewhat precarious job security.

In addition, cultural workers are motivated by more than simple economic gains. Workers may choose lower wages, lower standards of living, low-level non-cultural “day jobs,” or the insecurity of temporary work without benefits in order to keep the flexibility and freedom in their creative practice that allows them to gain the artistic skills or reputation that they desire (Erard, 2003, Eikhof, 2006, Menger, 2006). For unsuccessful cultural workers, it is unclear whether their lack of success is due to a lack of skill, vagaries in the marketplace, lack of available work, or other factors (Menger, 2006). This research seeks to use retrospective longitudinal career data in order to shed more light on all of these issues: career patterns of individual workers, motivation for choosing types of cultural work, and insight into successful and less successful careers.

In more recent research, there is an acknowledgement of the need for worker-focused research and ultimately economic policies based on that research in the cultural industries. In the United States, there has been criticism of the focus on industries at the expense of individual occupations (Markusen, King, 2003). First, it is difficult to get a clear picture of the careers of cultural workers through traditional job and wage data. This is because many artists and other creatives work outside of the market in the gray economy or supplement their income through informal “employment” and portfolio work (Comunian, 2009). So there is no other way to find data on cultural worker earnings, jobs, and experiences outside the market except through worker-focused longitudinal career data. The sheer diversity of job holdings and patterns in even one individual cultural worker's career path is impossible to capture outside of this approach (Comunian 2011). This is why Comunian (2009, 2011) recommends that local governments and policymakers prioritize or at least consider the perspective of individual workers in the sector over the needs of cultural industries, which is the aim of this research proposal.

Banks, (2009) makes a strong argument in favor of worker-focused research in the cultural industries. He argues that current creative industries policy does not consider the nature of creative labor because it fails to note the freelance, portfolio, and self-employed nature of the work and therefore policymakers are unable to address the problems that this fragmented labor pattern creates, mainly a lack of collective action and bargaining behavior in creative workers. This leads to a policy field that trains workers to meet the needs of employers, even though their careers are driven by individual motivations of flexibility and self-employment.

Without a focus on workers over industry, Banks argues that policymakers are unable to equip them for what they will actually be facing in the marketplace. They will need the skills to run their own businesses and manage their own portfolios instead of only acquiring skills to be utilized by employers.

Finally, this research fulfills a need for New Orleans as a city to better understand a significant part of its workforce and the conditions that shape their careers in New Orleans. In the City, 13.7% of all jobs are classified as cultural jobs (Mayor's Office of Cultural Economy 2014). There are some conditions that New Orleans cultural workers face that are unique to the city, namely the conditions of the educational system and economy before Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the particular cultural landscape of the city. Pre-2005, the median income of African Americans 16 years and older was \$19,000. Ninety-thousand New Orleans households had incomes of less than \$10,000 and the poverty rate was 76% higher in the city than the national average in 2004 (Gadsden 2006). Although things have improved in the recovery years, this project will be looking at longitudinal data that will cover both the pre- and post-Katrina conditions that deeply affected the careers of our local artists and workers, many of whom are African American. Arts education has been widely reported to be cut in post-Katrina New Orleans, with non-profits often stepping in to provide music, performing, and visual arts programming to low-income public schools.

The mass evacuation and resulting diaspora following Katrina also left its mark on the cultural landscape of the city. Local neighborhood culture and cultural expressions unique to them were removed or lost, and while many physical cultural landmarks and assets were left intact, the people who enlivened them were unable to return (Spitzer 2006). It is therefore vital to recover this culture by creating policies that serve the individuals that created the cultural and economic activity as opposed to focusing on physical or place-based assets and industries. In the immediate recovery period, a focus on industry needs was insufficient. Although workplaces were desperately in need of workers, the recovery did not consider their needs, particularly housing, transportation, healthcare, or educational infrastructure for families, resulting in a slower recovery (Vale 2006). For cultural workers, an additional factor in economic development and recovery policy must be a sense of "cultural confidence," namely that policy is taking into account the unique cultural traits of a place and its people and that the ways of life of the community's individuals will be recovered, preserved, or enhanced (Mason 2006). This research will allow the city to understand the cultural, not just economic, needs of cultural workers that are essential to them choosing to live and work in New Orleans and to continue to create.

Hypothesis

We hypothesize that this research will show that a worker-centered approach to cultural economic policy is central to effective policy creation, demonstrating that the majority of workers engage in varied, individualized careers centered around self-employment, freelancing, portfolio, or micro-business careers on one axis, and alternative, non-cultural employment (the "day job") on the other. They also closely consider the cultural landscape and effect of economic policies on that landscape and need "cultural confidence" to participate in the cultural economy. These unique job paths and considerations of cultural workers create difficulties for traditional economic analysis that focuses on employment statistics and industry growth and clustering to explain the behavior of cultural workers which this research hopes to begin to remedy by showing the efficacy of career path data. Ideally, career path data would be gathered in a longitudinal study, but retrospective career appraisal can serve as a close substitute (Menger 2001).

Cultural Economy Economic Data Findings

Defining the Cultural Economy

Cultural Economy is defined as the people, enterprises, and communities that transform cultural skills, knowledge and ideas into economically productive goods, services and places. The definition of the cultural economy used for this report is based upon the 2005 report *Louisiana: Where Culture Means Business*. That report grouped the state's cultural economy into six key segments:

- Culinary Arts: Food-related cultural products including food processing, specialty food products and locally-owned, full service restaurants (does not include franchise/non-local chain restaurants);
- Design: Individual designers and firms involved in the communication arts such as graphic design, printing, and advertising;
- Entertainment: The performing arts (music, theater, and dance), individual performers, and the film industries;
- Literary Arts and Humanities: Individual writers and editors and book, periodical, and newspaper publishing;
- Preservation: Economic activities focused on the restoration and redevelopment of the built environment including architecture, landscape architecture and a percentage of construction activity focused on preservation and renovation; and
- Visual Arts and Crafts: Individual artists and craftspeople as well as the galleries and museums that present cultural products.

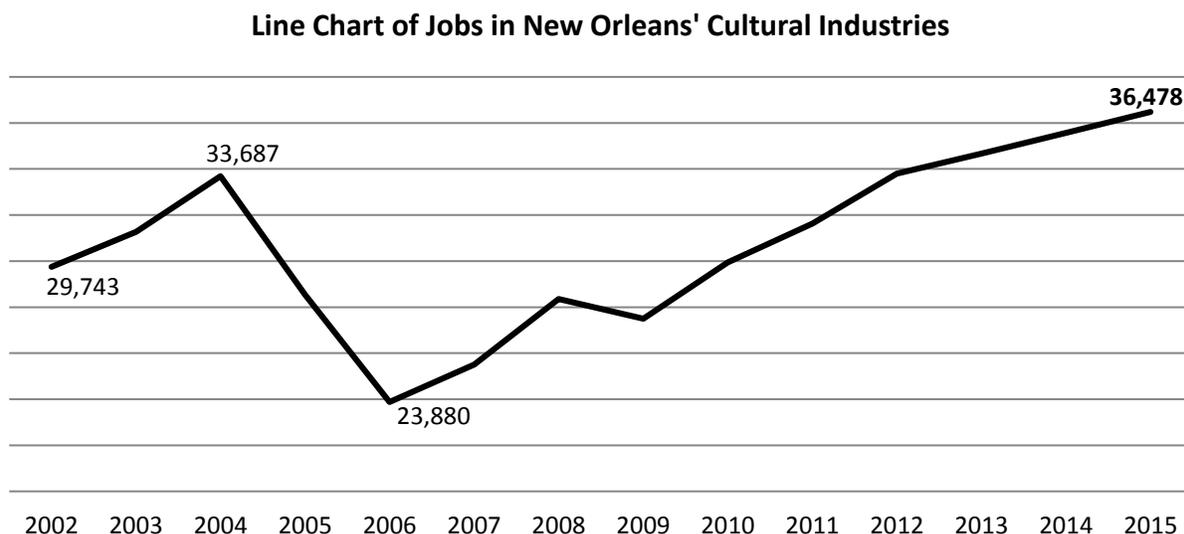
Cultural Jobs in New Orleans^{1,2}

New Orleans' cultural industries accounted for 36,478 jobs in 2015, including 27,058 wage and salary jobs and 9,420 jobs from self-employment. The cultural sector has become one of the largest industry sectors in the city. Between 2006, when cultural jobs were at their lowest point due to Hurricane Katrina, and 2015, the total number of jobs in the cultural industries increased by 12,600 or about 53 percent. This growth exceeded the 28 percent rate of growth in jobs in all industries in the city of New Orleans from 2006-2015.

¹ The data sources used in this chapter are from EMSI. The complete data set included employment (wage and salary workers) as well as the self-employed and sole-proprietors. The individual industry and occupational estimates for the period 2002 to 2015 may vary slightly from previous updates as EMSI revises data to account for newly released information and refinements. Two other refinements were also made to base business data to arrive at the most accurate depiction of New Orleans' cultural economy: 1) for industries with estimates of less than 10 employees, final numeric approximations were based upon industry trends; and 2) the large, catch-all independent artists industry was broken out using staffing patterns data to better target, and include, only those individuals working within the creative economy.

² The employment and job section of this report was contributed by Mt. Auburn Associates.

Figure 1.



Text Description: This figure shows the increases and decreases in the number of cultural jobs over a 14 year period.

Another way of looking at the growth of the cultural industries relative to the city is to consider the proportion of employment in the city that is related to the cultural industry. Despite shedding nearly 10,000 cultural jobs between 2004 and 2006 due to Hurricane Katrina, the cultural sector has continued to increase its share of total employment. In 2002, the creative industries accounted for 9.4 percent of all local employment; by 2015, this share had risen to 14 percent.

Job growth over time in the “core cultural industries”³ in New Orleans has exceeded the level of growth in the same set of industries in Louisiana and the United States as a whole. As Figure 2 shows, the cultural industries grew at a rapid rate in New Orleans between 2002 and 2004, but then declined at an even more rapid rate over the next two years, opening up a large gap between the city’s cultural sector job growth rate (measured from 2002) and the state and national rates.

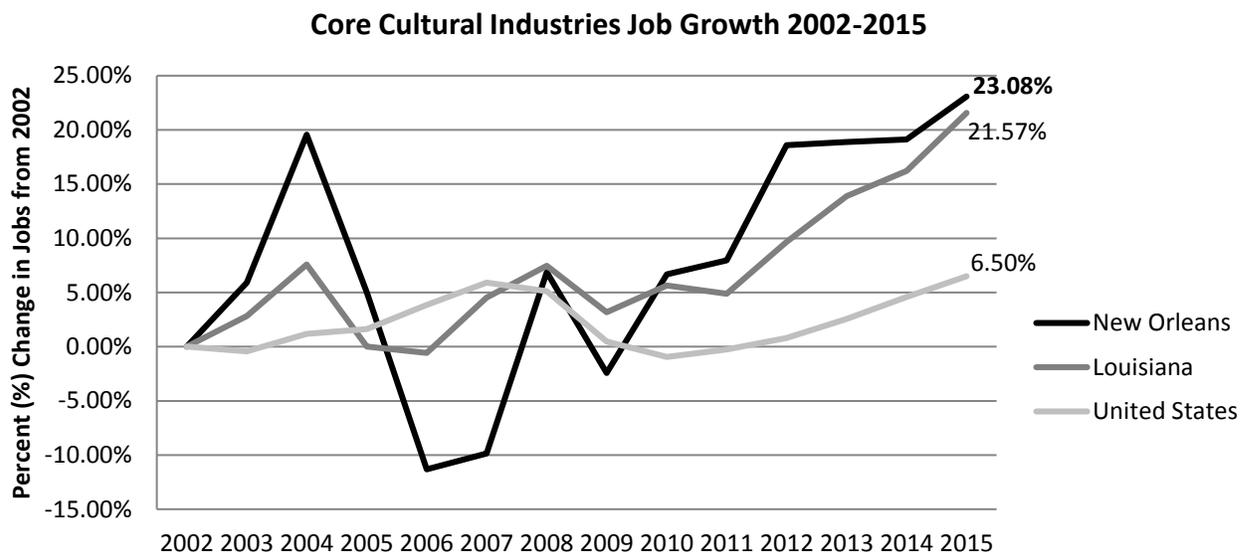
After 2006, however, the city’s cultural sector began to grow quickly once again, and by 2011 the rate of growth exceeded that of both Louisiana and the United States. The overall job growth rate of the city’s core cultural industries for the 2002-2015 period was 23 percent, which was slightly higher than the state rate (21.6 percent) and much higher than the national rate (6.5 percent).

If cultural sector employment is expressed as a percentage of total employment, then the strength of New Orleans during this period looks much more dramatic in comparison to the U.S. and Louisiana. In 2002,

³ Core cultural industries is a set of industries that is used in this update whenever New Orleans is being compared with a different geography. It includes all the industries in the New Orleans cultural economy definition except for those that would make comparison problematic: all the industries in the culinary segment, the architectural preservation/rehabilitation industries in the preservation segment, and bars in the entertainment segment. Jobs in these industries were all included in the New Orleans data definition because of specific connections to New Orleans culture and, in many cases, only a certain proportion of the jobs in the industry code was included. (See Methodology section for more detail.) These proportions were estimates based on research on New Orleans businesses, and the proportion of jobs that are cultural in these industries in the U.S. would almost certainly be smaller.

the core cultural industries were responsible for 4.4 percent of all jobs in New Orleans. This was almost exactly the same as the national average at the time (4.3 percent). By 2014, the share in New Orleans had risen to more than 6.1 percent, but nationally it had actually fallen to just below 4 percent. This means that in 2014 New Orleans' core cultural industries had a location quotient (LQ) of 1.55—the share of core cultural employment in New Orleans was 55 percent larger than its share of total national employment.

Figure 2.



Text Description: This figure shows the growth of core cultural industries jobs in direct comparison to the growth of these jobs in the State of Louisiana and the United States over a 15 year period.

With about 36,500 jobs, the cultural sector is a larger source of employment than the city's private healthcare and social assistance sector (26,913 jobs), its private education sector (22,445 jobs, including charter schools), and its retail sector (17,379 jobs). In 2014, for the first time, it also had more jobs than the city's entire government sector (33,246 jobs). The two sectors with more jobs than the cultural industries—tourism and accommodation/food services—overlap with the cultural industries.

The only one of the city's 10 largest industry sectors in 2014 with a higher 2002-2015 employment growth rate than the creative industries was "Educational Services (Private)," which only grew because of the transfer of jobs from traditional public schools (counted under government) to charter schools (counted under private education). The large decline in government employment is also associated with this shift.

Table 1.
Highest Growth New Orleans' Jobs by Industry, 2002-2015

Broad Industries	2002 Jobs	2015 Jobs	% Change (2002-15)
Tourism	43,428	43,966	1.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	35,733	40,134	12.3%
Cultural Industries	29,743	36,478	22.6%
Government	62,954	30,518	-51.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	31,434	26,913	-14.4%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	19,692	22,612	14.8%
Educational Services (Private)	16,380	22,445	37.0%
Life Sciences	21,972	18,007	-18.0%

Cultural Jobs by Segment

The entertainment and culinary segments are the two largest cultural segments in New Orleans. In 2015, there were approximately 15,000 jobs in culinary arts, which includes employment in locally owned, full-service restaurants, catering, specialty food stores, and food processing. The entertainment segment, which includes film, digital arts, broadcasting, the performing arts (music, dance, and theater), and music production, accounted for about 11,000 of the cultural industry jobs.

Preservation and heritage, with 4,923 jobs in 2015, is the third largest cultural industry segment in New Orleans. The city's three smallest cultural segments, design, literary arts, and visual arts, together account for just over 5,600 jobs, or approximately 15 percent the city's cultural sector employment.

Not only are the entertainment and culinary segments the largest component of the cultural economy, they are also responsible for much of the employment growth. Over the past year, the culinary and entertainment segments added over 1,000 jobs, while together the other segments saw job losses. Much of this job growth was in full-service restaurants and film and video production. Since the low point in employment in 2006 following Katrina, jobs in the culinary segment have almost doubled, and the entertainment segment grew by 69 percent.

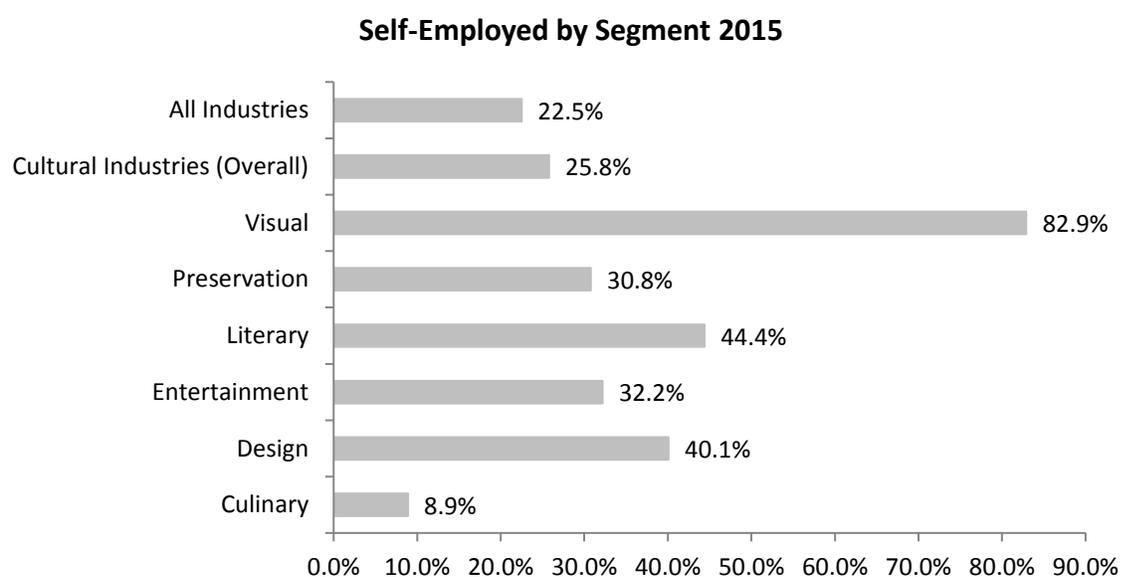
Although jobs in the design segment remain below pre-Katrina levels, this segment has seen steady growth since 2011. Jobs in literary arts, on the other hand, have remained relatively stagnant since 2006. This segment has been seriously impacted by changes in print media with significant job losses in newspaper publishing, bookstores, and libraries. Finally, jobs in the visual arts segments have risen above pre-Katrina levels in past two years and are at their highest levels since 2002.

The share of total employment that the core cultural industries account for in New Orleans is 62 percent higher than the share they account for in the U.S. as a whole, or, in other words, the core cultural industries, put together, have a national employment location quotient of 1.62. The segment that is most highly concentrated in New Orleans compared to the nation as a whole is preservation and heritage, which has a national LQ of 2.17 in the city. This means that the segment's share of total employment in New Orleans is 2.17 times as high as its share of total employment nationally. The segment with the next highest national LQ in New Orleans is entertainment (2.03), which is followed by the visual arts segment (1.61), and the literary arts (1.22). The only New Orleans cultural segment with a national LQ below 1 is design (.84).

The location quotients of each segment have changed over time. All five segments saw growth in their national LQ between 2002 and 2015. The entertainment segment, which was the fastest growing in New Orleans, also had the most growth in its LQ—from 0.95 to 2.03. The preservation and heritage segment and the visual arts segment also had LQs that grew significantly in this period, though in the case of the preservation segment it has been declining in recent years. The city’s design and literary arts segments also had national LQs that increased between 2002 and 2014, though only slightly.

With the exception of the culinary segment, where only about 9 percent of the jobs involve self-employment, most of the cultural industries involve a large degree of contract work or self-employment. This is highest in the visual arts segment where 83 percent of all of the jobs are in this category, but is also a critical form of earning income in the design category.

Figure 3.



Text Description: The bar graph above shows the percentage of self-employed cultural workers by segment.

Cultural Jobs in Non-cultural Industries

In addition to the jobs counted in previous sections of this analysis, there are thousands of cultural workers in the city who work for employers outside the cultural industries. If these jobs are included, there are probably close to 40,000 jobs related to the city’s cultural economy.

Cultural occupations are different from jobs in cultural industries. A musician or graphic artist, for example, is an occupation. A musician could be self-employed, could work in a creative industry such as theater, but could also work in a non-creative industry such as a religious institution. Similarly, a graphic artist could work for himself, could work for a graphic design firm (a cultural industry), or could work for a large financial institution in its communications department. To get a more complete picture of the economic importance of the cultural economy, it is thus also important to consider those individuals who have a “cultural occupation” but may be employed outside of the cultural industries.

An analysis of EMSI's occupational data and staffing patterns found that while there are a total of 16,176 individuals who are in creative occupations, a large number of these, approximately 8,049 or half, are self-employed and have been counted in the previous analysis of cultural industries. However, there are approximately 3,216 individuals in cultural occupations who have wage and salary jobs outside of the cultural industries. If these cultural jobs are added to the 36,500 jobs in the cultural industries, the total number of jobs associated with the cultural economy is closer to 40,000.

Cultural workers are employed throughout the non-cultural industries, but there are particularly large clusters of them working in education, religion, and hospitality.

The most important employers of cultural workers outside the cultural industries are the city's institutions of higher education. According to EMSI's staffing patterns data, there are more than 600 cultural jobs at colleges, universities, and professional schools. This number does not include librarians or library technicians, since this report counted jobs in these occupations as working in a cultural industry. It also does not include professors or other postsecondary teachers.

Another major non-cultural employer of cultural workers is the K-12 school system. However, there is no publicly available data on the number of teachers in New Orleans who primarily teach cultural subjects. If New Orleans had the same ratio of students to cultural teachers as New York State though (one of the few states where good data are available), there would be at least 231 cultural teaching jobs in the city's public/charter schools, counting only the arts.

Beyond educational institutions, some of the largest employers of cultural workers are churches and other religious organizations. There are roughly 300 jobs in cultural occupations working in this area, mostly musicians, singers, and music directors.

There are also many cultural workers who work for non-cultural employers in the private sector. One important employer of cultural workers is the hospitality industry. Hotels in New Orleans employ approximately 361 cultural workers.

Cultural Businesses

Cultural businesses are locally owned or operated and provide a service or product in one of the six cultural economy segments defined on page 3. National chain restaurants are excluded from the data so that the large Culinary segment truly reflects local talent. Other national and international companies that do not have a significant employment presence in the parish or do not do work in Orleans Parish were excluded from the data in order to give a better picture of New Orleans' cultural economy.⁴

This survey found 1,735 cultural businesses in New Orleans in 2015 ranging from cooking schools, restaurants, art galleries, and architects; to independent presses, music venues, specialty plasterers, and graphic design firms. There are 4.6% more cultural businesses in 2015 than in 2014 and 5.8% more than in 2010. The largest increase was in the Visual Arts and Crafts segment, with an increase of 11.5% since 2014. This increase was entirely due to the addition of more art galleries and specialty shops that sell original art. Entertainment businesses increased by 8.5%. More live music venues was a part of this increase, but Film and Video businesses accounted for most of the increase, along with an increase in performance venues and reception halls. Finally, Culinary continued to gain restaurants in 2015, with a 5.2% increase, mostly due to new restaurants and mobile food sellers.

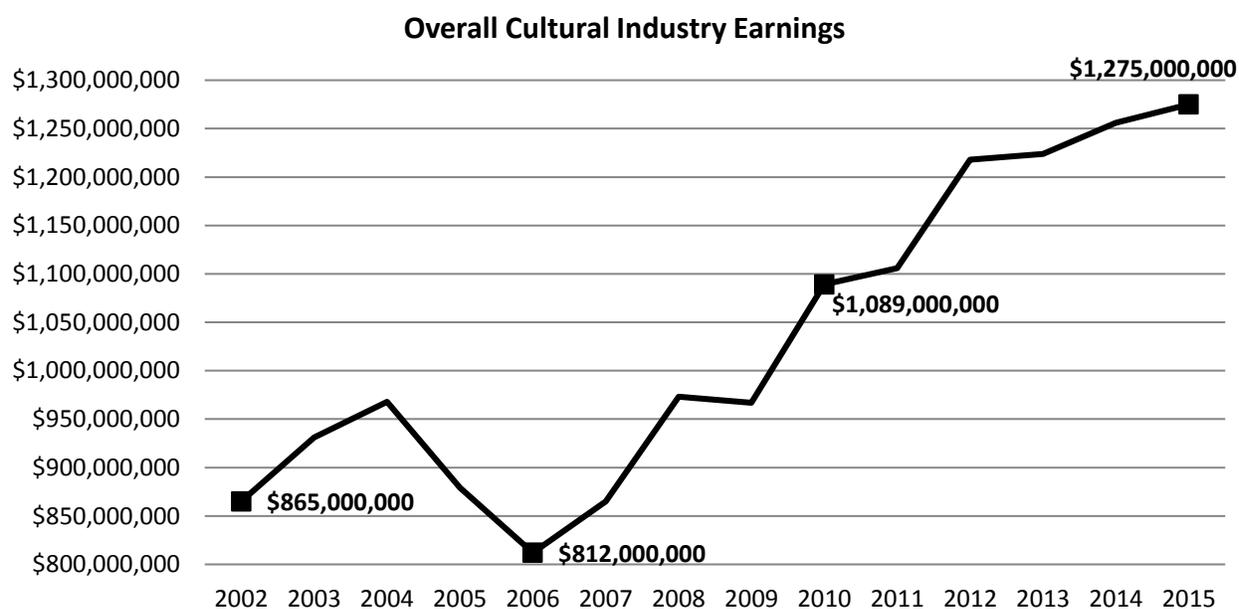
⁴ Please note that "Businesses" does not include non-profits. Cultural non-profits are covered in the Non-Profits section. It also does not include public institutions such as libraries, although university presses are included.

Culinary includes 1,005 of the following types of locally owned and operated businesses: caterers, cooking schools, food manufacturing, mobile food trucks, restaurants, restaurant management, and specialty food stores. Mobile Food Trucks increased their share of Culinary businesses by 5% since 2014. Design contains 192 of the following types of businesses: advertising, public relations, digital and commercial printing, fashion, graphic and web Design, media and media representatives, commercial photography, and specialized Design services. Design is one of the most diverse segments, with even proportions of the various types of businesses throughout the city. The Entertainment segment contains 256 businesses of the following types: music and performing arts venues; film and video; performing groups; recording studios; retailers; and agents. Literary Arts and Humanities is the smallest commercial segment including only 35 businesses comprised of presses/publishing businesses and bookstores. Bookstores make up 94% of Literary businesses in the city in 2014, while Publishing has decreased its share by 7% since 2014. Preservation includes a selection of architects, interior design retailers, interior designers, landscape architects, restoration contractors and firms, renovation firms, and craftsmen/workshops that specialize in the preservation of the built environment and the restoration of older homes and buildings, making a total of 92 businesses. Visual Arts and Crafts includes 140 galleries, and galleries have increased their share of Visual Arts businesses by 15% since 2010. Art supply and craft product retailers, for-profit museums, and for-profit arts centers and schools are also included.

Earnings and Wages

In 2015, cultural industry workers earned \$1.3 billion in salary and wages. Total earnings associated with the cultural industries, including wage and salary earnings, self-employment earnings, and sole proprietorships, has been growing rapidly. Since 2006, there has been a growth of \$463 million in earnings associated with the cultural industries, a 57 percent rate of growth. During this same period, total earnings from all industries increased in New Orleans by only 27 percent.

Figure 4.



Text Description: The above line chart shows overall cultural industry earnings over a 15 year period.

The average earnings per job in the cultural industries are relatively low, about \$35,000, or well below the average earnings in the city of approximately \$51,000. The low average earnings are due to a number of factors, most notably the large number of low-paying jobs in the culinary segment. In addition, it is important to note that the earnings data include “proprietor” earnings. For many of those in the cultural industries, their earnings from the cultural work, whether that be music or writing, might be secondary to another job. In these cases, the earnings are supplementing other sources of income.

Table 2.

2015 Earnings* by Segment

Segment	2015 Total Earnings	2015 Avg. Earnings (Per Job)
Preservation	\$218,897,524	\$44,467
Visual	\$39,872,681	\$24,798
Entertainment	\$379,481,700	\$34,766
Design	\$79,195,495	\$43,522
Literary	\$91,082,478	\$40,874
Culinary	\$466,263,121	\$31,117
Cultural Industries (Overall)	\$1,274,792,998	\$34,947

*Includes wages, salaries, benefits, and sole proprietor earnings

Preservation and Design have the highest earnings. These segments include construction-related jobs as well as professional jobs such as architects and graphic designers. The lowest annual earnings were in the visual and culinary arts segments, where in 2015 average earnings were \$24,798 and \$31,117, respectively. These low earnings figures are partly a reflection of the fact that many artists and food service workers split their hours between more than one job, and earnings are calculated per job, not per person.

Table 3.

Change in Average Earnings 2002-2015

Segment	2002	2015	%Change (2002-2015)
Culinary	\$25,382	\$31,117	23%
Design	\$34,545	\$43,522	26%
Entertainment	\$28,979	\$34,766	20%
Literary	\$37,890	\$40,874	8%
Preservation	\$32,707	\$44,467	36%
Visual	\$21,449	\$24,798	16%
Cultural Industries (Overall)	\$29,093	\$34,947	20%
All Industries	\$39,035	\$50,724	30%

Cultural Worker Survey Findings⁵

Survey Demographics and Segment-Based Breakdowns

Asakura Robinson conducted 25 interviews of cultural workers and received 280 survey responses from cultural workers through a combination of online, in-person, and community partner-based outreach.

The majority of respondents identified Visual Arts and Crafts as a source of work and/or income. Because of the online nature of the survey, many visual artists on the Arts Council of New Orleans registry were notified several times of the survey. It is likely that the use of this particular resource to recruit survey responses caused there to be both more female and more visual artist respondents, reflecting the list. It is also likely that more women than men will reply in a survey (Ball, Pollard, Stanley, 2010).

Also Culinary is under-represented due to difficulties in reaching out to restaurant staff. Most Culinary respondents were chefs or caterers or individual entrepreneurs. The majority of the respondents identified as White (63%) with the second largest group being Black or African American (22%). Again, the survey being primarily online contributed to this result, however, the survey team worked hard through in-person outreach and community partner outreach to collect enough responses from African-American cultural workers to allow substantive analysis of these responses as a sub-sample. However, surveys done throughout the UK and Australia tend to show that cultural workers tend to be White and highly educated, which could be a result of focusing on higher educational institution graduates and not the general population or reflect a population that is majority White, unlike New Orleans.

Table 4.

Segment-Based Breakdown of Survey Respondents (Including Multiple Segment Selections)

Which of these cultural segments do you work in or earn income from? (Choose all that apply.)	
Culinary Art (e.g. restaurants, specialty food stores, food processing)	14.29%
Design (e.g. graphic design, printing, advertising, web design)	21.07%
Entertainment (e.g. performing arts, music, theater, dance media, film)	36.79%
Literary Arts and Humanities (e.g. publishing, writing and editing)	16.79%
Preservation (e.g. architecture, landscape architecture, historic renovation and preservation)	10.00%
Visual Arts and Crafts (e.g. visual artists, craftspeople, art gallery employment, museum)	48.57%
I do not participate in any of these segments	3.21%

⁵ The survey was created in collaboration with Asakura Robinson Company LLC and the Mayor's Office of Cultural Economy. Asakura Robinson administered the survey and analyzed these results in this section. The Office of Cultural Economy contributed to the comparisons of this data to previous surveys of cultural workers and general editing and formatting.

Table 5.

Gender of Survey Respondents

What is your gender?	
Male	32.11%
Female	67.89%

Table 6.

Race / Ethnicity of Survey Respondents

Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)	
Black or African American	21.56%
White or Caucasian	63.30%
Asian	1.38%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.00%
Two or more races	5.50%
Some other race	0.92%
Prefer not to answer	7.34%

Our respondents also tended to be more highly educated than the general population. The Data Center⁶, a New Orleans based data collector shows 36% of New Orleanians with a Bachelor's or higher. Again, surveys of cultural workers often skew this way, partly due to more online access and partly due to the participation of populations that tend toward higher education degrees. The most prevalent level of education was Master's or professional degree (41%). However, as some previous surveys have found, cultural workers tend to work on education and degree programs throughout their lives, gaining skills that benefit their freelance work (Ball, Pollard, Stanley, 2010). This may partly explain the larger numbers of college degrees.

⁶ <http://www.datacenterresearch.org/>

Table 7.

Educational Attainment of Survey Respondents

What is the highest grade of school you have completed, or the highest degree you have received?	
Some high school completed	21.36%
High school diploma or GED	24.09%
Some college credit, no degree	29.55%
Associate's degree	10.91%
Bachelor's degree	14.09%
Master's or professional degree	40.83%
Doctoral Degree	2.29%

Table 8.

Age of Survey Respondents

The median survey respondent age is 30-39 years.

What is your age?	
18-24 years	5.50%
25-29 years	14.68%
30-39 years	31.65%
40-49 years	16.97%
50-64 years	26.15%
65 years or more	5.05%

The largest group surveyed fell into the 30-39 years age range. This matches relatively well with the New Orleans metro area, which has a median age of 37 years according to the Data Center. While many surveys of cultural workers show that it is a “young” industry, the vast majority of cultural workers in New Orleans are over the age of 30, with 26% aged 50-64 years.

The vast majority (79%) of survey respondents had no children in their household. This is a notable result, but there seems to be little explanation for it. It could be that freelance, portfolio or self-employed careers do not lend themselves to creating a family until a later age or perhaps not at all. Many of our interviewees

are very devoted to their work, rarely mentioning family or even partners. This is a result that would be of interest to learn more about in future studies.

Table 9.

Presence of Children in Household – Survey Respondents

How many children (ages 0 to 17) currently live in your household?	
No children	79.41%
One	13.24%
Two	7.35%
Three	0.00%
More than three	0.00%

What Do Cultural Career Paths Look Like?

Cultural Career Paths are Multi-Faceted and Flexible

While we received 280 total survey responses, cultural worker respondents were allowed to select more than one cultural “segment” in answering the question “Which cultural segment do you work in or earn income from?” We received 413 total responses to this question, indicating that many respondents work in more than one cultural segment. This multi-faceted view of cultural careers extended into the interviews as well – ten of our 25 interviewees indicated that they view themselves as participants in multiple cultural segments, and six identified as working in three or more segments.

Cultural career paths are also flexible – many workers balance cultural work with work in other industries, work on a contract / gig / self-employment basis, and move between cultural work and non-cultural work over time. Over one-third of survey respondents earn other income from non-cultural work, and a plurality (43%) are self-employed. This is very similar to many major surveys done outside the United States and matches our self-employment data from the Economic Data Findings above.

African-American cultural workers are far more likely to work in non-cultural industries in addition to doing cultural work, and far less likely to have a full-time job in a cultural industry. Young cultural workers ages 18-24 are also far more likely to work part-time in the cultural economy.

The most popular reasons for cultural workers to also do non-cultural work are to generate additional income or generate a more stable, predictable income for themselves and their families. These reasons are particularly true for African-American cultural workers.

Table 10.

Percent Earning Income from Non-Cultural Work – Caucasian and African-American Survey Respondents

Do you earn income that does not come from cultural work?		
	Yes	No
Black or African American	57.45%	42.55%
White or Caucasian	30.43%	69.57%

Table 11.

Employment Arrangements – All Survey Respondents

Which of these employment arrangements best describes your cultural work?	
Full-time employment with a regular salary	33.21%
Part-time employment with a regular salary	6.79%
Full-time self-employment or freelancing (working on individual contracts, sales, or gigs)	21.43%
Part-time self-employment or freelancing (working on individual contracts, sales or gigs)	22.50%
A business that you own in which you have other employees	10.00%
Not applicable	6.07%

Table 12.

Employment Arrangements – Caucasian and African-American Survey Respondents

Which of these employment arrangements best describes your cultural work?						
	Full-time employment with a regular salary	Part-time employment with a regular salary	Full-time self-employment or freelancing (working on individual contracts, sales or gigs)	Part-time self-employment or freelancing (working on individual contracts, sales or gigs)	A business that you own in which you have other employees	N/A
Black or African American	21.28%	6.38%	19.15%	42.55%	0.00%	10.64%

White or Caucasian	42.03%	6.52%	18.84%	19.57%	10.14%	2.90%
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Table 13.

Employment Arrangements – By Age of Survey Respondents

Which of these employment arrangements best describes your cultural work?						
	Full-time employment with a regular salary	Part-time employment with a regular salary	Full-time self-employment or freelancing (working on individual contracts, sales or gigs)	Part-time self-employment or freelancing (working on individual contracts, sales or gigs)	A business that you own in which you have other employees	N/A
18-24 years	16.67%	8.33%	8.33%	50.0%	0.0%	16.67%
25-29 years	37.5%	6.25%	15.63%	37.5%	0.0%	3.13%
30-39 years	47.83%	10.14%	17.39%	13.04%	10.14%	1.45%
40-49 years	35.14%	2.70%	24.32%	16.22%	21.62%	0.0%
50-64 years	26.32%	5.26%	21.05%	26.32%	12.28%	8.77%
65 years or more	36.36%	0.0%	27.27%	27.27%	0.0%	9.09%

Our survey also explored why cultural workers do work outside of their cultural work. Based on these results, non-cultural work seems to be essential to cultural workers in New Orleans. The “day job” is strong here and unfortunately turns out to be a necessity and not an augment to cultural work (see also Bridgestock, 2005). Some of the top reasons include “need income to support my household;” “need more predictable income;” and “better benefits.” It is also disappointing to see that 13% are unable to find steady employment in cultural work, despite cultural jobs in Orleans being higher than ever. It’s possible that many of the cultural jobs require skills some do not have, such as teaching, or that some of those cultural jobs, such as restaurants in the Culinary segment, are undesirable and low paying. While 19% did answer “enjoy a variety of experiences,” cultural workers happily working lower paying day jobs to increase flexibility and spend more time on their creative work (ref. here) seem to be more of a rarity in New Orleans.

Table 14.

Reasons for Doing Non-Cultural Work – Survey Respondents

If you answered “yes” to question 6, what are some of your reasons for choosing to do additional work outside of your cultural work? Choose all answers that apply. (If you answered “no” to question 6, please check “not applicable.”)	
Need more income to support myself/my household	42.27%
Need more predictable income that does not vary from month to month	25.26%
Enjoy a variety of experiences	18.56%
Better benefits from non-cultural work (e.g. health insurance, retirement)	12.89%
Have not been able to find steady employment in cultural work	12.89%
More stable hours available from non-cultural work	6.19%
Transportation to and from cultural work is difficult	1.03%
Prefer that cultural work remain a part-time occupation	2.06%
Cultural working hours can interfere with my family’s needs	1.55%
Cultural activities are something I do outside of work, not for pay	3.61%
Not applicable	47.94%

The results for this question have also been examined by race. African American respondents were far more likely to be working for income to support their households (51%) and needing more predictable income (32%). Whites were still most likely to be working for income for their households as well, but at a much lower rate (40%). Instead, White respondents were slightly more evenly divided among the categories and 6% more of them answered that their non-cultural work provided them with a variety of experiences.

Table 15.

Reasons for Doing Non-Cultural Work – African-American and Caucasian Survey Respondents

If you answered “yes” to question 6, what are some of your reasons for choosing to do additional work outside of your cultural work? Choose all answers that apply. (If you answered “no” to question 6, please check “not applicable.”)									
	Need more income to support myself/my household	Need more predictable income that does not vary from month to month	Enjoy a variety of experiences	Better benefits from non-cultural work (e.g. health insurance, retirement)	Have not been able to find steady employment in cultural work	More stable hours available from non-cultural work	Transportation to and from cultural work is difficult	Prefer that cultural work remain a part-time occupation	Cultural working hours can interfere with my family’s needs
Black or African-American	51.35%	32.43%	13.51%	18.92%	16.22%	13.51%	0.00%	2.70%	5.41%
White or Caucasian	39.77%	25.00%	19.32%	10.23%	14.77%	4.55%	2.27%	2.27%	0.00%

Interviewees describe their career paths as evolving processes that rely on a combination of grit and determination to succeed; networking and building connections; and flexibility in moving from self-employment to full- or part-time employment and back.

"I don't know any performer in this city who is just a performer. All of them have some other hustle that actually pays the bills and at times I think it can be working two full time jobs so...greater funding and just more opportunities for more rigor, more expertise in the city..."

–Entertainment Segment Interviewee

"You have to make work for yourself. You can't expect work to come to you. You have to network. You have to go to things. You have to work for free a lot of times."

–Design / Visual Arts and Crafts / Entertainment / Preservation Segment Interviewee

"I've had times when I was stagnant and just sitting there like "oh my God, what am I going to do?", "oh my God, how do I pay my rent?", "how do I eat?", "I'm so hungry right now."

–Entertainment / Culinary Arts /

Cultural Workers are Income-Constrained

The median individual income category in 2015 for survey respondents was \$30,000-\$39,999; when looking at cultural work alone, survey respondents received a median individual income of \$20,000-\$29,999 directly from cultural work in 2015. The median household income for survey respondents was \$50,000-\$59,999 in 2015. While these numbers are fairly comparable to the Greater New Orleans Area

Median Income, given rising costs of living in New Orleans, cultural workers remain income-constrained. Interviewees indicate that these income constraints are a major driver of their decision-making about their future career options. Previous surveys in the United Kingdom and elsewhere confirm that minorities in the cultural industries tend to make less than Caucasians (Bridgstock, 2005; Throsby, Hollister, 2003).

Table 16.

Income Received from Cultural Work Alone – All Survey Respondents

What amount of income did you receive in 2015 from cultural work alone?	
\$0-\$4,999	19.40%
\$5,000-\$9,999	9.33%
\$10,000-\$19,999	11.19%
\$20,000-\$29,999	14.93%
\$30,000-\$39,999	10.45%
\$40,000-\$49,999	12.69%
\$50,000-\$59,999	7.09%
\$60,000-\$74,999	4.85%
\$75,000-\$99,999	3.36%
\$100,000 or more	3.73%
Not applicable	2.99%

Table 17.

Income Received from Cultural Work Alone – African American and Caucasian Respondents

What amount of income did you receive in 2015 from your cultural work alone?		
	Black or African American	White or Caucasian
\$0-\$4,999	38.30%	13.77%
\$5,000-\$9,999	8.51%	10.87%
\$10,000-\$19,999	10.64%	9.42%

\$20,000-\$29,999	10.64%	15.22%
\$30,000-\$39,999	6.38%	12.32%
\$40,000-\$49,999	10.64%	13.77%
\$50,000-\$59,999	4.26%	7.97%
\$60,000-\$74,999	2.13%	5.80%
\$75,000-\$99,999	2.13%	3.62%
\$100,000 or more	0.00%	5.07%
Not applicable	6.38%	3.17%

Table 18.

Total 2015 Household Income – All Survey Respondents

What was your total household income in 2015 (including your income and that of the other adults you live with)?	
\$0-\$9,999	4.10%
\$10,000-\$19,999	8.96%
\$20,000-\$29,999	9.70%
\$30,000-\$39,999	11.94%
\$40,000-\$49,999	11.19%
\$50,000-\$59,999	9.70%
\$60,000-\$74,999	7.09%
\$75,000-\$99,999	11.94%
\$100,000-\$124,999	9.70%
\$125,000 or more	10.82%
Don't know	4.85%

Table 19.**Total 2015 Household Income – African American and Caucasian Survey Respondents**

African American survey respondents' household incomes were markedly lower than those of Caucasian survey respondents.

What was your total household income in 2015 (including your income and that of the other adults you live with)?		
	Black or African American	White or Caucasian
\$0-\$9,999	17.02%	0.72%
\$10,000-\$19,999	6.38%	7.97%
\$20,000-\$29,999	14.89%	7.25%
\$30,000-\$39,999	8.51%	13.04%
\$40,000-\$49,999	10.64%	10.87%
\$50,000-\$59,999	14.89%	10.87%
\$60,000-\$74,999	4.26%	5.80%
\$75,000-\$99,999	10.64%	14.49%
\$100,000-\$124,999	2.13%	13.04%
\$125,000 or more	4.26%	10.87%
Don't know	6.38%	5.07%

Overall, cultural workers' median income generated by cultural work alone during the three different time periods investigated (2000-2004; 2006-2010; and 2011-2015) increased from \$10,000-\$19,999 per year in 2000-2004 and 2006-2010, to \$20,000-\$29,999 in 2011-2015 (once those answering "not applicable" for any particular time period are subtracted from the sample). The change may be partially attributable to the age and advancing career stages of survey respondents, but it may also reflect an increase in relatively more affluent cultural workers post-Katrina. Our economic data does show that wages have risen over the last 15 years for a variety of the cultural economy segment workers. Those in Preservation, Design, and Literary earn averages in the \$40,000s in the City.

Table 20.

Average Annual Income from Cultural Work, 2000-2004 – All Survey Respondents

What amount of yearly income did you receive from cultural work alone, on average, between 2000-2004? (Choose one option only.)	
\$0-\$4,999	30.20%
\$5,000-\$9,999	5.49%
\$10,000-\$19,999	8.24%
\$20,000-\$29,999	10.98%
\$30,000-\$39,999	9.02%
\$40,000-\$49,999	2.75%
\$50,000-\$59,999	3.92%
\$60,000-\$74,999	2.35%
\$75,000-\$99,999	0.39%
\$100,000 or more	1.18%
Not applicable	25.49%
<i>Median Category (excluding N/A answers)</i>	<i>\$10,000-\$19,999</i>

Table 21.

Average Annual Income from Cultural Work, 2006-2010 – All Survey Respondents

What amount of yearly income did you receive from cultural work alone, on average, between 2006-2010? (Choose one option only.)	
\$0-\$4,999	26.19%
\$5,000-\$9,999	8.33%
\$10,000-\$19,999	11.90%
\$20,000-\$29,999	13.89%
\$30,000-\$39,999	9.92%

\$40,000-\$49,999	7.54%
\$50,000-\$59,999	2.38%
\$60,000-\$74,999	2.38%
\$75,000-\$99,999	3.17%
\$100,000 or more	1.98%
Not applicable	12.30%
<i>Median Category (excluding N/A answers)</i>	<i>\$10,000-\$19,999</i>

Table 22.

Average Annual Income from Cultural Work, 2011-2015 – All Survey Respondents

What amount of yearly income did you receive from cultural work alone, on average, between 2011-2015? (Choose one option only.)	
\$0-\$4,999	19.76%
\$5,000-\$9,999	8.87%
\$10,000-\$19,999	15.73%
\$20,000-\$29,999	13.71%
\$30,000-\$39,999	13.71%
\$40,000-\$49,999	12.50%
\$50,000-\$59,999	6.05%
\$60,000-\$74,999	3.63%
\$75,000-\$99,999	2.42%
\$100,000 or more	2.82%
Not applicable	0.81%
<i>Median Category (excluding N/A answers)</i>	<i>\$20,000-\$29,999</i>

Many interviewees, particularly part-time and self-employed interviewees, expressed frustration and challenges emerging from unstable income levels that did not allow them to plan for the future.

Particularly in the entertainment segment and in segments that were more dependent on tourism to generate income, income levels were often dependent on seasons or events (e.g. festivals).

"The cost of living here is very expensive. If I was to be a full time artist that worked for a lot of the organizations here, I would still be poor. Making \$25 an hour for one hour, that's no money. "

- Entertainment / Visual Arts and Crafts Interviewee

"It's still very difficult to earn a full time living simply playing your instrument in New Orleans if you're a classical musician."

- Entertainment / Visual Arts and Crafts Interviewee

"If there were any way for the city to create some sort of economic stimulus for club owners, business owners, restaurant tours to bring in live acts in the summer months without losing money. A lot of them have voiced this to me that it's very difficult to bring live acts in in the summer time because they lose money doing it. Their clientele is vastly diminished. When there's not a big tourist event in the city, their customers really slack off. The people who end up taking it on the chin for that are the artists."

- Entertainment Interviewee

Major Life Events and their Effects on Cultural Workers

This section examines major life events that cultural workers have experienced and their effects on cultural career paths. The major life events that cultural workers are most likely to have experienced since the year 2000 are: displacement by Hurricane Katrina (54%); a medical emergency (50%); marriage (32%); housing instability due to an inability to afford monthly payments (31%); and having their main residence destroyed by Hurricane Katrina (31%). This suggests that major needs for cultural workers may include affordable health care; continuing to deal with the economic aftereffects of Hurricane Katrina; and affordable housing.

Table 23.

Major Life Events Experienced Since 2000 – All Survey Respondents

Now we are going to ask you about some major life events that may have happened to you since the year 2000. In this first table, please indicate whether each event was a good event or a bad event in your life. (If you have not experienced a particular type of event since the year 2000, please select "N/A".)			
	Good	Bad	N/A
Experienced a medical emergency	5.05%	44.95%	50.00%
Needed long-term medical care	1.82%	15.91%	82.27%

Was displaced by Hurricane Katrina	8.26%	45.41%	46.33%
Had my main residence destroyed by Hurricane Katrina	1.36%	29.55%	69.09%
Got married	27.85%	3.65%	68.49%
Got divorced	2.75%	6.88%	90.37%
Had a child or children	18.26%	1.83%	79.91%
Experienced housing instability due to inability to afford monthly payments	0.00%	31.05%	68.95%

African American cultural workers are slightly more likely to have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina (55%) than White/Caucasian cultural workers (52%), and all African American respondents who were displaced agree that this was a negative event in their lives (compared to 10% of White/Caucasian respondents who found it to be a positive event). African American cultural workers are also far more likely to have had their primary residence destroyed in Hurricane Katrina (53%) than White/Caucasian respondents (28%).

Table 24.

Displacement by Hurricane Katrina – African American and Caucasian Survey Respondents

Was displaced by Hurricane Katrina			
Now we are going to ask you about some major life events that may have happened to you since the year 2000. In the first table, please indicate whether each event was a good or bad event in your life. (If you have not experienced a particular type of event since 2000, please select "N/A".)			
	Good	Bad	N/A
Black or African American	0.00%	55.23%	44.68%
White or Caucasian	10.22%	41.61%	48.18%

Table 25.

Primary Residence Destroyed – African American and Caucasian Survey Respondents

Had my main residence destroyed by Hurricane Katrina			
Now we are going to ask you about some major life events that may have happened to you since the year 2000. In the first table, please indicate whether each event was a good or bad event in your life. (If you have not experienced a particular type of event since 2000, please select “N/A”.)			
	Good	Bad	N/A
Black or African American	2.13%	51.06%	46.81%
White or Caucasian	0.72%	27.74%	77.54%

Support Systems and Education to Benefit Cultural Workers

This section examines the types of support systems and educational opportunities that cultural workers feel are most important to their quality of life and career advancement. When asked to rank nine potential support systems that would be helpful for workers in pursuing their chosen careers, access to housing affordable at cultural workers’ income levels received the largest number of top-ranked responses by far (31%), while a higher minimum wage for salaried employees (17%) and a higher minimum wage for tipped employees (15%) also received a significant number of top-ranked responses.

Summing the number of workers awarding a “1”, “2”, or “3” ranking to these support systems shows a similar set of most-desired systems, including access to affordable housing (48%), higher minimum wage for salaried employees (39%), higher minimum wage for tipped employees (33%), and access to more affordable health care (32%).

Table 26.

Support System Rankings – All Survey Respondents

Below are nine types of support systems that may be helpful for workers in pursuing their chosen careers. Please rank these skills in order of how helpful you think they would be to you personally in supporting your cultural work, with 1 being the most helpful support system, and 9 being the least helpful support system.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Access to housing that is affordable at your income level	31.12%	11.23%	5.88%	9.5%	15.46%	6.35%	16.08%	5.23%	6.7%

Higher minimum wage for salaried employees	17.35%	16.57%	5.34%	5.67%	14.44%	7.94%	14.07%	12.04%	8.24%
Higher minimum wage for tipped employees	15.3%	8.02%	9.63%	12.88%	19.59%	9.0%	9.55%	10.99%	6.19%
Access to affordable business loans	9.69%	11.76%	8.02%	13.4%	14.95%	9.52%	11.06%	11.52%	10.31%
Access to more affordable health care	7.14%	13.37%	12.3%	9.28%	11.85%	5.29%	14.08%	14.66%	11.86%
Access to more affordable child care	7.14%	9.62%	8.55%	12.37%	9.8%	9.53%	11.06%	13.7%	11.34%
Access to further education (e.g. college or professional training)	5.61%	9.63%	10.7%	12.37%	7.74%	12.17%	11.06%	13.09%	12.37%
Public transportation that is more reliable and frequent	3.57%	13.37%	18.18%	10.31%	4.12%	11.12%	8.54%	13.61%	14.44%
Access to a private vehicle for your household	3.06%	6.41%	21.39%	13.92%	2.07%	29.1%	4.53%	3.14%	18.55%

Interviewees strongly agreed about the need for affordable housing opportunities for cultural workers, and saw it as the City's responsibility to continue supporting affordable housing solutions.

"If we want to keep the cultural creativity that we're iconic for, then [New Orleans] needs to be affordable for people who maybe on the fringe of that or don't have dependable income...I think that is the city's responsibility to not just stand there and passive in like, of this housing situation is happening. Who knew? That's not right... the job of the city is to take it and say, okay, this is a problem. Our citizens are not able to afford to live culturally dominant and important areas. They're not able to move around the city freely or there's more harm being done because people are being put in dangerous situations who aren't dangerous."

- Culinary Arts / Literary Arts and Humanities Segment Interviewee

The survey also investigated cultural workers' interest in eight types of skill-building opportunities for career development. Financial planning and management skills received the most top-ranked responses (24%), followed by marketing and promotion (18%), website development (16%), and business incorporation and management (12%).

Summing "1", "2", and "3" ranked responses reveals a similar list with the addition of email usage skills: financial planning and management (56%), marketing and promotion (51%), website development (46%), email usage (39%), and business incorporation and management (37%).

Table 27.

Career Development Skill Rankings

Below are eight types of career development skills that may be helpful in achieving additional career success. Please rank these skills in order of how helpful you think they would be to you personally in achieving additional success in cultural work, with 1 being the most helpful skill to develop, and 8 being the least helpful skill to develop.								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Financial planning and management	24.02%	16.08%	7.92%	9.5%	5.82%	6.9%	10.71%	22.89%
Marketing and promotion	18.14%	15.58%	17.33%	11.0%	3.4%	9.85%	10.2%	17.41%
Business incorporation and management	12.25%	17.59%	17.33%	9.5%	3.4%	11.33%	7.65%	17.42%
Website development	16.17%	22.11%	9.91%	12.5%	5.34%	10.84%	9.18%	17.42%
Email usage	10.29%	12.06%	16.34%	17.0%	7.28%	8.87%	20.41%	6.47%

Social media training (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	9.31%	8.55%	8.42%	15.0%	7.77%	19.71%	19.39%	10.95%
Computer and software programs specific to your industry	4.41%	5.53%	15.85%	16.5%	16.02%	22.66%	14.79%	3.49%
Business development tools and programs specific to your industry	5.39%	2.52%	6.93%	9.0%	50.97%	9.85%	7.65%	3.98%

Almost all interviewees agreed that financial management and business training were important opportunities to offer for the cultural community.

"I see people needing a lot of support, and when you're an independent artist you're your own business. That's a totally different skill set, and there's a whole knowledge base that you don't have. Honestly, if there was an accountant, I want to put this out there, our community needs pro bono accountants who will help independent artists file their taxes and understand how to take advantage of tax benefits. That's huge. I see people struggling with that. I still struggle with it. I think healthcare, I was just talking to the musicians clinic, they sound amazing, but I don't think people are even aware of ... I did know that dancers can access the musicians clinic services. I think, better information about resources are already there for us that we don't know about. Obviously, affordable housing would be great. I know things pop up and there's four units, like the art labs or whatever, and it's not even that affordable. It's like \$1000 a month, which that would be 50 percent of our income. It's probably 70 percent of someone else's."

- Entertainment Segment Interviewee

"A lot of the art departments at all of these Universities that are training all of these students to go out. They're training them to be proficient in their industry, but they're not training them to actually own a business one day. A lot of creative people, especially now days, are more inclined to start their own business because we realize the benefits, the increased income you can make, also the lifestyle it's a little more flexible for us as opposed to being stuck at some sort of corporate firm. I think people, if they knew more about how to manage their expenses and payroll, making sure that they have confidence in paying all of their bills, all of their taxes on time, just being a responsible business person, I think that would be very helpful for people. If there was some very affordable service that would provide that, I think that would be very, very helpful for a lot of people."

- Preservation Segment Interviewee

Other cultural worker support systems suggested by interviewees included:

- Establishing an artist registry or other way of contacting and aggregating information about New Orleans artists and their work;
- Finding new ways to support native New Orleanian cultural workers in an increasingly competitive environment for funding, business, and recognition;

"There's tremendous competition. I think now with the influx of non-New Orleanians, the native artists' work is pushed to the side... When you see so many managerial positions or board positions filled by non-locals, it changes the game for local artists in a very big way and in a negative way."

- Visual Arts and Crafts Segment Interviewee

"...you got people from out of town and they want to do what you're doing. Now you got more people incoming into the field that you've already been in and already established. It's like these people coming in and they're low balling... We have a certain standard that we feel like we're holding ourselves up to, a certain price [and] someone else might come in and be like, 'Hey, we could do this for half price.' Then, it cuts [our] business. [It] won't be the same sound, but they can potentially get the job done."

- Entertainment Segment Interviewee

- Creating opportunities to waive fees associated with festival entries and business licenses using income-based criteria or a scholarship-type application process.

"If there was temporarily reduced fees, like occupational license or state fees, maybe it could be industry standard that I don't have to pay \$150 just to operate in Louisiana as a firm - there's a firm fee, then there's a license fee, then there's an insurance fee, there're are a lot of agencies that call for different fees and licenses every year... I have to work at my full-time job and my part-time job for six more months just to make sure that I'll have enough to cover these sort of larger license costs. If there was a temporarily reduced fees for your first year in business, if all of those fees were waived or reduced, that would encourage more people to start their business or at least try it out and see if they can handle the stress. They would be more likely to try it."

- Preservation Segment Interviewee

"I'm wondering, why is it that as an artist, let's say at Jazz Fest, I have to invest \$5000 to gamble to make money? If it rains like it did this past Jazz Fest, what happens to us out here? We drown in our ambitions every time it rains on a festival... as artists, we should have a city that protects and encourages us to get on our feet since all of these people are in town, but instead large corporations put up large fees to stop us from trying to get the crumbs that we need to pay the rents in the city. It's almost an assault on your entrepreneurial character to be in a city like this."

- Visual Arts and Crafts / Literary Arts and Humanities / Culinary Arts Segment Interviewee

Cultural Confidence and the Cultural Landscape

The concept of “cultural confidence” was introduced above and is part of the hypotheses of this paper. To review, cultural confidence is policy which takes into account the unique cultural traits of a place and its people and that the ways of life of the community's individuals will be recovered, preserved, or enhanced (Mason 2006). The concept is closely related to and also seems to include “authenticity.” Cultural practitioners may have difficulty being located in a place in which they have no cultural confidence and thus feel that the place also does not lend itself to authenticity both for themselves and for the creative products that they create.

Our interview subjects weighed in on the cultural landscape of New Orleans and their sense of authenticity. A common theme was authenticity of the cultural worker by being local paired with dismay at the change of the cultural landscape caused by the influx of “transplants” or gentrification. These factors lowered the authenticity and the cultural confidence as it related to New Orleans as a city. As two Culinary Segment interviewees put it:

“I think there’s a lot of people who are viewing New Orleans as a venture instead of a place with a culture....The things that made me want to be here, and have family here, and stay here forever are not really present anymore, or they’re slowly dying as we speak.”
“Somewhere there needs to be more of a connection between what we need to give people authentic experiences and our ability to afford to get in there, you know?”

Both of these workers are seeing New Orleans change demographically and gentrifying, and seeing the resultant effects such as lowered income and dying traditions as killing the cultural landscape, lowering place-based authenticity, and thus making it harder for them to deliver authenticity through their work. However, others still feel that the cultural legitimacy of New Orleans is alive and well:

“The idea of recognizing New Orleans in particular as a city and globally significant place. Certain things like the architecture, the music, the food, have that extra awareness and cache on an international basis. I do think the visual arts have come a long way and certainly the serious cultural arts. The more indigenous and outsider aspects that we want to preserve. The more they are recognized as something unique and special and can be preserved, I think that has the potential to [enter] into people’s awareness.”
-Visual Arts and Crafts Segment Interviewee

“They come because of something that they’ve seen, or they’ve been connected to our music and passing through just being in the south or a kid on the radio or coming to school here, they just have some kind of connection here, where they just want to be a part. They want that experience. Well, that soul of the experience is the Creole people.”
-Entertainment/Visual Arts and Crafts Segment Interviewee

New Orleans is currently in a state of flux. The recovery from Hurricane Katrina has both restored cultural assets and returned some of the former cultural practitioners, but it has also brought in much more outside influence than was present before the storm. Cultural workers, both local and new, are still discovering New Orleans culture and choosing to approach their cultural practice from a preservation path, and innovative path, and most often times, both. There is fierce debate regarding the degradation of traditional culture versus the creation of new cultural forms next to

it. A current example is the second line, a tradition of the New Orleans black community that descended from traditional jazz funerals, and is a thread that weaves many black communities together in the city. However, in the past 10 years, the second line has also become the province of out of town brides and impromptu funerals for celebrities such as Prince and Carrie Fisher. For \$300 and the price of a brass band, weddings, bachelor/ette parties, birthday celebrants and more parade through the French Quarter. There is controversy in the city over the cultural meaning and authenticity of these “tourist” and “transplant” parades, complicated by the fact that it is a crucial source of income for traditional jazz bands. The term “second line” is now being claimed to refer solely to its traditional uses.⁷

As this discussion of cultural authenticity shows, New Orleans is forever evolving and negotiating its cultural landscape among its practitioners. Clearly, however, that cultural landscape is strong, and many are trying to lay claim to it and be a part of it.

Conclusion

As predicted by the hypothesis, this survey found that substantial numbers of cultural workers are self-employed, work on a contract basis, work multiple jobs, and hold employment outside the cultural industries. The self-made and pieced-together natures of their careers and career paths show a complexity that industry-based training policies most likely will not address. Indeed, many of our interviewees felt that there were programs the City or others could create that would address their unique needs and that these programs did not yet exist.

There was also persistent below average income from cultural work, and career path history showed little improvement over the span of the years in cultural income streams. Further study should examine why more experience and sophisticated work and portfolios as careers continue is not resulting in higher income, the ability to work in cultural work full-time, or other markers of a mature cultural career.

The City and cultural non-profits should consider several types of assistance for cultural workers based on the results of this survey. The City should continue its current focus on affordable housing and the percentages of affordable units in new developments. Affordable housing was the highest ranked form of assistance in the survey. Other creative solutions to housing, such as artist-specific housing, have been executed in the City with varying degrees of success, but supply is far lower than demand. New Orleans is hardly alone in its struggle to lower rents and improve neighborhoods without displacing current residents. Government and community solutions will be needed to properly address this issue.

In interviews and in the survey, one training element mentioned by almost everyone was training in business skills, specifically Financial Planning and Management. Other entrepreneurial skills were also in demand. Currently, New Orleans has a strong entrepreneurial culture, with a high rate of start-up businesses over the past 10 years. Between 2005 and 2008, the rate of opening start-up businesses

⁷ For an example of this debate, see: http://www.nola.com/music/index.ssf/2017/01/celebrity_second-lines_new_orl.html.

doubled⁸, and from 2009-2012, the start-up rate exceeded the national rate by 56%.⁹ There are many opportunities for the City, cultural non-profits, and business incubators to team up to offer these trainings, and because of the high rate of start-ups, there is some infrastructure in place for entrepreneurs, but individual skill training has not thus far been one of them. The Mayor's Office of Cultural Economy has offered business development seminars in the past, which teamed up small business funders with cultural business owners and introduced helpful tax credit programs. However, what cultural workers seem to really want is individual training in all the skills needed to be your own employer. Going forward, this should be a priority for economic development efforts in the cultural sector.

Thus far, the strategy employed by the City towards cultural sector development has used the tools of government to achieve goals. For example, in the new Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance reviewed and implemented in 2015-2016, restrictions on live music were softened, and the venues for live music greatly expanded by allowing it in restaurants throughout most of the city and increasing the number of special overlay districts that allowed for live music, art markets, and other cultural business venues. Alternatively, the administration and the City Council have passed ordinances that created new licenses for cultural activity such as food trucks and second line vending, or created Cultural Districts that waive sales taxes for original art.

While the value of culture-friendly zoning and laws is high and essential for a functioning cultural economy, the results of this survey are telling us that cultural workers are seeking more individualized programs to help them succeed. One solution is to model this training on the Office of Cultural Economy's film worker training, which paired support from the Office with professional trainers and a local non-profit. The non-profit provided outreach and organization for the training, while the Office supported it so it could be free of charge.

The last area of policy covered by this survey are large and complicated infrastructure issues such as public transportation and healthcare. Cultural workers are not alone in lacking ability to travel and healthcare coverage. The large tourism sector in New Orleans also has a large portion of lower income workers who struggle with getting downtown to work and receive healthcare. Since these are needs that are hardly unique to cultural workers, the City will continue to work on city-wide policies to improve these areas by expanding transportation routes and continuing to offer a network of free and low cost clinics.

A city like New Orleans is attractive to tourists and the local population largely because of its culture. Cultural workers are one part of the cultural landscape that needs to function to create a vibrant sector and city as a whole. Cultural institutions, businesses, non-profits, culture bearers, art education programs, and much more work together to preserve and grow local culture. This survey has introduced some issues and realities of cultural workers and will help shape economic development policies moving forward. We want to strongly encourage other cities to explore their cultural landscape holistically, and create an array of policies and tools for cultural workers and businesses, not just for an industry sector or for employers.

⁸ <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/04/the-big-comeback-is-new-orleans-americas-next-great-innovation-hub/274591/>

⁹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nishacharya/2014/03/25/new-orleans-has-5000-entrepreneurs-and-the-largest-crowdfunding-event-in-the-world/#50239a8d2939>

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