The Creative Underclass

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INTRODUCTION

1. Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, *Creative Providence*, 4.

2. I am thankful in particular for the work of Julie Bettie, who has helped me see more clearly how an ethnographic book on the cultural practices of youth might inform their activism. See Bettie, *Women without Class*.

3. By “entanglement,” I am seeking to avoid the reductionist argument that the economic conditions of Providence determined this reconfiguration of the city for the benefit of upwardly mobile and white people. Moreover, I am seeking to avoid the foundationalist presumption that I am now standing outside that logic as a spectator subject, able to critique those conditions based on a correct representation of reality. “Entanglement” is a concept developed by feminist new materialist scholars such as Karen Barad who argue that the material worlds we represent are dynamic, producing us as much as we produce them. See Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. At the same time, this new materialist orientation seeks to avoid a relativist and nominalist viewpoint that presumes all knowledge claims are language games. In other words, I was, and I continue to be, imbricated in the material and discursive realities of Providence that I am seeking to represent. I am grateful for a paper by Jerry Rosiek on this epistemological and ontological perspective that has helped me understand the implications of this theoretical orientation more clearly. See Rosiek, “Art, Agency, and Inquiry.”


5. Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*.

6. All names have been changed.

7. hooks, *Where We Stand*, 137.

The term “performative wokeness” suggests that symbolic gestures of solidarity by people in positions of power have become performative. That is to say, the subject position of a “woke” individual, or one who is conscious of injustice, is now playing a productive role in shaping how people in positions of power act. They perform symbolic gestures, such as putting rainbows on their Facebook avatar or wearing safety pins, that comfort themselves and enhance their status by signaling their virtue, while perhaps doing little to change conditions that produce injustice.

See Runciman, “Too Few to Mention.”

In her book Women without Class, Julie Bettie describes how her book is “not meant to be critical of individual people, but of the social systems, processes, and ideologies present in our culture that recruit individual actors and inform their actions.” This way of describing poststructurally informed ethnographic analysis was highly influential in shaping my understanding of how I have been “recruited” by various discourses as well as entangled in the “recruitment” of youth as members of a creative underclass. See Bettie, Women without Class, x.


There are a variety of youth scholars who have informed my poststructural orientation to creativity. Two influential texts for me include Bettie, Women without Class; and Kwon, Uncivil Youth.

Dávila, Culture Works, 73.

These white property rights include the right to disposition, the right to use and enjoyment, the right to reputation and status, and the right to exclude. See Harris, “Whiteness as Property.”

It is important to note that I have omitted the perspectives, experiences, and cultural practices of one important group of youth in this research. I did not meet people who self-identified as indigenous youth in the studio at New Urban Arts. Their omission from this book is noteworthy because Providence is an ongoing settler colonial occupation, and creative city politics involves struggles over rights to land. More than 2 percent of the population of Providence are members of the Narragansett tribe. Educationalists such as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang might quite rightly point out that the youth identities and creative cultural strategies presented here do not account for indigenous politics, educational concerns, or epistemologies. This omission points to an area of further research concerning indigenous youth, creativity, and urban life. See Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.”

Murphy, “No Beggars amongst Them.”

Harper, “Slavery in Rhode Island.”

Harper, “Slavery in Rhode Island.”

Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, “Slavery and Justice.”

McLoughlin, Rhode Island, 110.

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30 Rhode Island Kids Count, “Child Poverty in Rhode Island.”
31 Leazes and Motte, *Providence, The Renaissance City*.
33 Leazes and Motte, *Providence, the Renaissance City*.
34 See Stanton, *Prince of Providence*.
35 Catalytix and Richard Florida Creativity Group, “Providence.”
36 Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, *Creative Providence*.
37 Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class.”
38 Waitt and Gibson, “Creative Small Cities,” 1230.
39 Waitt and Gibson, “Creative Small Cities,” 1230.
40 Florida, *New Urban Crisis*.
41 Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class.”
42 Florida, “Cities and the Creative Class.”
43 Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, *Creative Providence*, 4.
44 Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, *Creative Providence*, 2.
45 Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, *Creative Providence*, 11.
46 “Community MusicWorks.”
47 “National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards.”
48 Nicodemus, “Cultural Plan.”
49 Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, “Program Guidelines.”
50 Trinity Repertory Company, “Lie of the Mind.”
51 Dávila, *Culture Works*, 82–92.
52 Dávila, *Culture Works*, 87.
54 Dávila, *Culture Works*, 87.
55 “Now’s the Time.”
56 Berliner, “Rational Responses.”
57 Berliner, “Rational Responses.”
58 Rhode Island Department of Education, “Race to the Top.”
59 Au, “Teaching under the New Taylorism.”
For a discussion of this paradox in other educational contexts and countries, see Burnard and White, “Creativity and Performativity.”

Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, Creative Providence, 37–41.

Krätke, Creative Capital of Cities, 91.

Robinson, Black Marxism.

Mills, “White Ignorance.”

On “performativity,” see Butler, Gender Trouble.

Moan et al., “Role Model,” 122.

Moan et al., “Role Model,” 122.

Conti, “Tyler Denmeade>>Arts,” 19.

Editorial Board, “Denmead’s Urban Uplift.”

Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, Creative Providence, 4; italics mine.

See Vygotsky, Mind in Society.

Kwon, Uncivil Youth.

Kwon, Uncivil Youth.

Kwon, Uncivil Youth, 10–11.

Sukarieh and Tannock, Youth Rising?, 17–24.

Sukarieh and Tannock, Youth Rising?, 23.

See YouthPower, “Positive Youth Development.”

1 Names have been changed.

2 Americans for the Arts, “Brief Conversation.”


4 Kelley, Yo’ Mama’s Disfunktional!, 18.

5 See Lipsitz, Possessive Investment in Whiteness.

6 See Weissmann, “Newt Gingrich.”

7 Szasz, “Sane Slave.”

8 Quoted from Fallace, “Savage Origins,” 95.

9 Quoted from Fallace, “Savage Origins,” 95.


12 Quoted from Fallace, “Savage Origins,” 95.


14 Quoted from Fallace, “Savage Origins,” 95.

15 Weissmann, “Newt Gingrich.”

16 Ayers, Ayers, and Dohrn, Zero Tolerance.

17 Neuman, “Violence in Schools.”

18 Petteruti, “Education Under Arrest.”

19 Heitzeg, “Education or Incarceration.”


21 Goodman, “Charter Management Organizations.”
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22 Mason, “Dennis the Menace.”
23 Marcyliena Morgan has called this kind of discursive strategy “semantic inversion.” See Morgan, Language, Discourse, and Power.
24 For a discussion of the distinction between affirmation and transformation, see Fraser, “From Redistribution to Recognition?”
25 For a public discussion of respectability, see Dyson, “Where Do We Go?”
26 Kelley, “Nap Time.”
27 Davis, “Afro Images.”
28 For a public discussion of respectability, see Dyson, “Where Do We Go?”
30 Quoted from Noguera and Cannella, “Youth Agency,” 335.
31 Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed.
32 Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed.
33 Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed.
34 Noguera and Cannella, “Youth Agency,” 335.
35 See Gaztambide-Fernandez, “Why the Arts Don’t Do Anything.”
36 Fine et al., “Educating beyond the Borders.”
37 Fine et al., “Educating beyond the Borders,” 132.
39 Bowen, “New Black Hotties.”
40 My discussion of this contradiction was influenced by analysis of this article on social media, in particular, by Ashon Crawley, assistant professor of religious studies and African American and African studies at the University of Virginia and the author of Blackpentecostal Breath (2017). See https://twitter.com/ashoncrawley/status/993292692146854209.
41 For a discussion of the property rights of whiteness, including the right to disposition, see Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” 1731–34.

CHAPTER 2. THE HOT MESS

1 Bright, Oesch, and Puello, We Make a Lot.
2 Names have been changed.
4 Scholars such as Samuel Bowles, Herbert Gintis, and Jean Anyon made this same observation in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They argued that different modes of instruction are geared toward the children and adolescents of different social classes, and this differentiation plays a role in reproducing social stratification. In an industrial-based economy, the cultivation of sheepish rule followers, of plebeians, was designed to produce compliant low-wage workers for the factory floor, thus reproducing the social position of the working classes. See Anyon, “Social Class”; Bowles and Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America.
5 Pinar, “Notes.”
6 Fine, Framing Dropouts.
7 Fine, Framing Dropouts, 61.
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8 Fine et al., “Educating beyond the Borders,” 132.
9 Bettie, Women without Class, 144.
10 Demain, “Andy Kaufman.”
11 I am relying on Julie Bettie’s distinction between “performativity (structure) as unconscious iteration and performance (agency) as conscious, knowing display.” See Bettie, Women without Class, xxix.
12 Bettie, Women without Class, xxix.
13 Fine et al., “Educating beyond the Borders.”
16 In a post to his Twitter feed on June 15, 2013, Monty described himself as “Cambodian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Japanese.” It is likely that Monty’s family came to Providence in the early 1980s when over 100,000 Cambodians applied for and received refuge in the United States. A large settlement of refugees moved to Providence. For an account of Cambodian youth experiences in Providence, see Lay, “Lost in the Fray.”
17 For more information on the now defunct Learn and Serve program, see Corporation for National and Community Service, “Learn and Serve America Fact Sheet.”
18 Ryzik, “Monty Oum Dies at 33.”
19 See a version of Haloid posted on YouTube by “AcefromRussia” that has received over five million views as of September 1, 2016, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cL-mR79GErU.
20 Ryzik, “Monty Oum Dies at 33.”
21 Chow, “ ‘Model Minority’ Myths.”
22 Hernandez, “Carnal Teachings,” 95. See also Hernandez, “Miss, You Look Like a Bratz Doll.”

CHAPTER 3. CHILLAXING

1 K. West, 808s and Heartbreak.
2 Simon and Pomrenze, “Black Men Arrested.”
3 Kohl, Open Classroom.
4 Goodyear, “D.I.Y. School.”
5 See Oakes, Keeping Track.
6 Pate, “Radical Politics.”
7 Pate, “Radical Politics.”
8 musicmandana, “On Twerking.”
9 Du Bois, Souls of Black Folk.
10 Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs, “Matter of Time.”
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12 Providence After School Alliance, Rhode Island After School Plus Alliance, and Highscope Educational Foundation, “Quality Assessment Tool.”
13 Providence After School Alliance, Rhode Island After School Plus Alliance, and Highscope Educational Foundation, “Quality Assessment Tool.”
19 Teitle, “Theorizing Hang Out.”
21 See Foucault, Discipline and Punish.
22 Kwon, Uncivil Youth.
24 A common argument in the field of youth development is that it refutes the racist and classist representations of youth by using “positive” representations of poor youth of color, not deficit-based ones. They are represented as resilient youth, for example, and such resilience needs to be cultivated in order for them to be developed. But constructing “positive” and “negative” representations of youth simply uses two sides of the same coin. For example, a negative representation would posit that a young person of color from a low-income background lacks self-restraint, whereas the positive representation would suggest that a young person possesses self-restraint. The question, however, is how and why self-restraint, for example, is being used to judge youth and construct a normative trajectory for youth development, and what social and psychological positions are privileged through that construction.
26 Brown, Hear Our Truths.
27 Harney and Moten, The Undercommons.
28 Harney and Moten, The Undercommons, 110.

CHAPTER 4. THE CREATIVE UNDERCLASS

1 Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, Creative Providence, 4.
2 Grossman, “Downtown Boys.”
3 Sherman, “Downtown Boys’ Victoria Ruiz.”

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NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

4 Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.
5 Khan, *Privilege*, 86.
6 See Turner, “Church’s Fried Chicken” for a discussion of how conspiracy theories and rumor indicate racial anxiety in black communities. I am drawing on this literature in my own interpretation of Laura’s conspiracy theory.
7 This analysis is informed by David Gillborn’s theorization of whiteness as a conspiracy in the persistence of the black-white achievement gap. See Gillborn, “Coincidence or Conspiracy?”
8 Brown and Thakur, “Workforce Development.”
9 Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, *Creative Providence*, 3.
10 Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, *Creative Providence*, 4.
11 Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, *Creative Providence*, 9.
12 Americans for the Arts, “Creative Industries.”
13 Americans for the Arts, “Creative Industries Jobs in Providence.”
14 Americans for the Arts, “Creative Industries Jobs in Providence.”
15 Zip Atlas, “Providence, Rhode Island Employment.”
16 Americans for the Arts, “Creative Industries Jobs in Providence.”
17 Wile, “What’s the Matter?”
18 Taraborelli, “Hidden in Plain Sight.”
19 Catalytix and Richard Florida Creativity Group, “Providence,” 2.
21 Nesi, “Providence Phoenix.”
22 Christopherson and Rightor, “Creative Economy.”
23 Christopherson and Rightor, “Creative Economy,” 341.
24 Christopherson and Rightor, “Creative Economy,” 343.
25 Bai, “Curt Schilling.”
26 Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, “Providence/Cranston Workforce Investment Area.”
27 Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, “2012–2022 50 Fastest Growing Occupations.”
28 Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, “Providence/Cranston Workforce Investment Area.”
29 Ahlquist, “Income Inequality.”
30 Ahlquist, “Income Inequality.”
32 Tung, Sonn, and Lathrop, “Growing Movement.”
33 Tung, Sonn, and Lathrop, “Growing Movement.”
34 Tung, Sonn, and Lathrop, “Growing Movement.”
35 Woodman, “Congrats.”
37 Hall, *Fateful Triangle*, 93.
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38 Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.
39 Florida, “Cities and the Creative Class.”
40 Deuze, “Convergence Culture,” 249.
41 Hartley and Cunningham, “Creative Industries.”
42 Bortolot, “Designing a Better Office Space.”
43 Florida, “Cities and the Creative Class.”
44 Ruth Eikhof and Warhurst, “Promised Land?,” 499.
45 Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, *Creative Providence*, 21; italics mine.
46 Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, *Creative Providence*, 4.
47 Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, *Creative Providence*, 4.
48 Clarke, “New Labour’s Citizens.”
49 Clarke, “New Labour’s Citizens.”
50 Coates, “Capitalist Models.”
51 Pratt, “Creative Cities.”
52 See Frank, *Conquest of Cool*.
53 Haiven, “Privatization of Creativity.”
54 Bramson, “Pockets of Hope”; Pina, “Young Providence Fashion Designer.”
55 See Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*.

CHAPTER 5. AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

1 Kolko, “Urban Revival?”
2 Kolko, “Urban Revival?”
3 Kolko, “Urban Revival?”
5 See chapter 12 in hooks, *Where We Stand*. hooks argues that “in the United States racial apartheid is maintained and institutionalised by a white dominated real estate market” (132). Her focus is on how racial apartheid has affected black communities in particular. She provides a variety of housing practices as evidence, including white real estate agents sharing information about select properties with white people, the choice by white people to prefer segregated neighborhoods, and the choice by white people to leave neighborhoods if black presence exceeds 8 percent. Of course, other racist real estate practices include the practice of lending discrimination, which has been one significant way in which black wealth accumulation and the intergenerational transfer of black wealth has been denied.
8 Strongin, “You Don’t Have a Problem,” 59.
9 Strongin, “You Don’t Have a Problem,” 59.
10 Strongin, “You Don’t Have a Problem,” 60.
11 See Haymes, *Race, Culture, and the City*.
12 Malinowski, “In the Renaissance City.”
13 Gramsci, *Selections*.
15 Wootton, “Downtown Providence.”
16 Catalytix and Richard Florida Creativity Group, “Providence.”
17 Althusser, “Lenin and Philosophy.”
18 Tsui, “In Providence.”
19 Tsui, “In Providence.”
20 Tsui, “In Providence.”
21 Hall, *Fateful Triangle*, 93.
22 Dunn, “Loft-Style Apartment Building.”
23 Graham, *Urban Renewal*.
24 hooks, *Where We Stand*, 137.
25 When Audre Lorde, the black poet, feminist, and civil rights activist, wrote about dealing with white people’s hurt feelings, she said that she could not hide her anger toward racism to spare white people from being hurt, from making them feel guilty. At the same time, she wrote, “Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one’s own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change, then it can be useful, since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge” (“Uses of Anger,” 130).
26 I am indebted to the scholarship of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, who discuss the variety of “moves to innocence” within the logic of settler colonialism. See Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.”
27 DiAngelo, “White Fragility.”
28 Rhode Island General Laws §§ 44–33.2–1 to 44–33.2–6.
30 The Industrial and Commercial Buildings Survey was a joint project between the Providence Preservation Society and the city of Providence. In 2014, the Industrial and Commercial Building District was combined with a list of residential properties to create the Providence Landmarks District, a scattered-site district overseen by the Providence Historic Districts Commission.
31 Gregg, “R.I. Treasurer.”
32 Schwartz, “State Tax Credits.”
33 Sgouros, “Outrageous Trading.”
34 Clarkin, Jr., “Analysis of Tax Stabilization Agreements.”
35 City of Providence, “Ordinance.”
36 Corkery, “Buff Chace.”
37 Corkery, “Buff Chace.”
41 Markusen and Gadwa, “Creative Placemaking.”
MARKUSEN AND GADWA, “CREATIVE PLACEMAKING,” 5.

CHAPTER 6. “IS THIS REALLY WHAT WHITE PEOPLE DO?”

1 hooks, “Eating the Other.”
2 hooks, “Eating the Other,” 367.
3 See Robinson, Black Marxism.
4 L. West, “Complete Guide.”
5 Modrak, “Bougie Crap.”
6 Modrak, “Bougie Crap.”
7 Modrak, “Bougie Crap.”
8 North Star Destination Strategies, “About Us.”
9 North Star Destination Strategies, “Case Studies.”
10 North Star Destination Strategies, “Providence, Rhode Island.”
11 Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class.”
12 Nesi, “Providence Phoenix.”
13 City of Providence, “FY2015 Approved Budget.”
14 Donnis, “Providence’s Development Boom.”
15 See Lipsitz, Possessive Investment in Whiteness.
16 Abbott, “In Providence.”
17 Abbott, “In Providence.”
18 Hunt, “America’s Best Cities for Hipsters.”
19 Ekstein, “5 Reasons to Visit.”
20 “The Avery.”
21 See Smith, New Urban Frontier.
22 Hall observed this spectacle in the context of working-class black migrants being invited to “well-meaning and enlightened White church or community groups to prepare our ‘ethnic food,’ wear our ‘ethnic dress,’ and perform songs in our ‘ethnic languages.’” See Hall, Fateful Triangle, 92–93.
23 Hall, Fateful Triangle, 93.
24 See Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” for discussion of enjoyment as a property right of whiteness.
26 Donnis, “Class Warfare in Olneyville.”
27 Donnis, “Class Warfare in Olneyville.”
28 Donnis, “Class Warfare in Olneyville.”
29 Dreeszen and Associates, New Commons, and City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, Creative Providence, 1.
30 National Endowment for the Arts, “Art Works Guidelines.”

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37 Atkinson et al., “Worse than the Great Depression,” 18.
38 Americans for the Arts, “Arts and Economic Prosperity IV.”
40 Americans for the Arts, “Arts and Economic Prosperity IV,” 3.
41 Americans for the Arts, “Arts and Economic Prosperity IV,” 3.

CONCLUSION

1 Swearer Center for Public Service at Brown University, “History.”
2 Sizer, *Horace’s Compromise*.
3 See “Coalition of Essential Schools.”
4 Lowery, “Black Lives Matter.”
5 Burns, “Universities”; Cumbo, “UK University Staff.”
6 See Hall, “What Is This ‘Black’?”
9 Woodman, “Congrats.”
10 Cox, “Progressive Cities.”
12 For a paper that I coauthored in response to that exhibition, see Denmead and Brown, “Ride or Die.”
13 Walker, “Ruffneck Constructivists.”
14 Amieson “Hotel Worker.”
15 Franke-Ruta and Romano, “New Generation.”
16 Franke-Ruta and Romano, “New Generation.”
17 Franke-Ruta and Romano, “New Generation.”
18 McGahan, “Gentrification.”
19 Morse, “sjws.”
20 Morse, “sjws.”
21 Editors, “Fodor’s No List 2018.”
22 Editors, “Fodor’s No List 2018.”
23 See North Star Destination Strategies, “About Us.”