



Psychic Income: Working for Nothing in the Creative Industries

Prof Irena Grugulis

Leeds University Business School

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Abstract

Psychic income, the intrinsic satisfaction that people get from work, is traditionally used as an explanation for low pay and seen only in its negative form, as compensation. There is little understanding of what constitutes psychic reward, nor of how and or whom it benefits. This article challenges that. Psychic rewards are positive attributes in their own right. They are also variable, just as financial rewards are, so people can be exploited psychically as well as financially. Drawing on detailed qualitative research into film and TV production it argues that psychic rewards in the form of creative and interesting work was important and often featured in contractual discussions, but that it was the established professionals who were most capable of negotiating for creativity. Here the idea of individual bargaining power is combined with that of psychic reward to distinguish between bargains at different stages in professionals' working lives. Novices experienced exploitation, those developing skills found work intensified, and established professionals negotiated for earnings and creativity. All professionals were prepared to accept low (or no) pay in exchange for a 'good credit', but most of the positive aspects of psychic reward were reserved for the established professionals.

About the Speaker

Irena Grugulis is Professor of Work and Skills at Leeds University Business School. Her research focuses on skills, particularly the way people learn in and at work and the ways in which work may either limit or encourage that learning. Her work has been funded by the ESRC, EPSRC and EU and has been published in *Organization Studies*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, *Work*, *Employment and Society* and *Human Resource Management Journal*. She has also published two sole-authored textbooks, *A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book About Human Resource Management* (Sage, 2017) and *Skills, Training and Human Resource Development* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Irena is an ESRC/AIM Services Fellow, an Associate Fellow of SKOPE and an Academic Fellow of the CIPD. She served on the Academic Advisory Panel of the UKCES and contributed to a number of governmental skills enquiries including the Leitch Review and the National Skills Task Force as well as advising the Singaporean Government. She has been both Editor and Joint Editor in Chief of *Work, Employment and Society* and currently chairs the journal's Editorial Board.