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What is This?
Making the Intern Economy: Role and Career Challenges of the Music Industry Intern

Alexandre Frenette

Abstract
This article focuses on a major host of unpaid intern labor—the music industry—to examine how internships function as a challenging, intermediary step for individuals attempting to launch careers. Based on interviews and participant observation, the author finds that ambiguity plays an important role in producing and maintaining the intern economy. The author uses the term provisional labor to describe the temporary, conditional, and ambiguous standing of interns, as they simultaneously build their employability and provide inexpensive labor. The case study reveals why aspirants encounter varying opportunities in their internships, which may differ from their respective hopes, expectations, and career aspirations.

Keywords
internships, career, cultural work, music industry, precariousness

“Greg”\(^1\) has just finished his first day of paid work in the record industry. As we sit at a fast-food restaurant in Midtown Manhattan, he recounts the path leading him to this job. In the summer of 2006 he held an unpaid

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internship at a “major” record label. He completed unpaid internships at two more major record labels in the summer of 2007 and spring of 2008. After graduating from a prestigious southern college with a bachelor’s degree in May 2008, he moved back to his native New York City and started his fourth unpaid internship in September 2008 at “Major Records USA.” Of the four major record companies [then] in existence, Greg interned for each one.

On this day, after seven months at the fourth internship, he transitioned to a part-time, temporary, but paid position at a different part of Major Records USA. I congratulate him on the accomplishment, to which he responds soberly: “I have a small amount of my foot in the door.” Greg’s moderate response is understandable. He describes his ascent as a “slow build” and after four internships his new position is far from ideal. Greg does administrative work in the legal department and describes spending part of this day punching holes in “a thousand” pages. He says they hired him to work twenty hours a week for a few months, but assured him he might stay on longer if things work out. (Interview note)

By industry standards, Greg’s path from intern to paid employee is a rare and successful one. Most music industry internships do not transition to paid employment. As Becker (1982) and Faulkner (1983) showed decades ago, art worlds are characterized by a considerable surplus of potential workers. Miège (1989) describes artistic labor markets as marked by a “reservoir of workers ready to work without the need to pay them wages” (p. 30). While many aspirants compete for the few positions in artistic labor markets, the extra workforce is accommodated in less desirable art-related positions such as teaching (Menger, 1999, 2006). A similar dynamic exists among aspirants on the business side of the cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008, 2011; Neff & Arata, 2007; Ursell, 2000). There is no guaranteed path for entry on the business side of the music industry, though internships are currently described as one of the few paths for workers to enter the field and, hopefully, get hired. This is even (or perhaps especially) the case for college students pursuing a specialized college degree in music business (Rolston & Herrera, 2000).

An internship is a practical educational experience whereby an intern learns by working at a host firm under varying degrees of supervision. Interns often receive school credit for their internship through a formal arrangement between colleges and employers. It is estimated that 50% of American students graduating with a bachelor’s degree in 2008 held
an internship, compared with 17% in 1992 (Greenhouse, 2010). The recent figure is consistent with the College Senior Survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute, where 54.6% of the 24,457 respondents in 2008 to 2009 had participated in an internship program since entering college (Franke, Ruiz, Sharkness, DeAngelo, & Pryor, 2010). Research suggests that completing internships has educational and professional benefits for interns (Coco, 2000; Swail & Kampits, 2004); however, little research focuses on what interns actually do and how this plays out in interaction in the workplace.

As internships become more common as part of the training of workers—especially in creative industries—there is a need to further articulate how internships function as a challenging intermediary step for aspirants. While internships are described as a potential path to launch a career, most interns do not find employment in the music industry. In this article, I ask why this is the case and analyze the promise of internships, why companies host interns, and what constrains the range of tasks interns do. Based on participant observation and interview data, I find that ambiguity plays a large role in how internships are enacted in the music industry and provide an account of how internships are interpreted by interns and employers. My findings suggest why aspirants may encounter very different opportunities in their internships, which may or may not be congruent with their hopes, expectations, and career aspirations.

The Intern Economy

Work-based learning as a way to train and incorporate neophytes into the workforce is far from new; extending at least as far back as the Code of Hammurabi, it is an old idea that has recently emerged in internship form. Work-based learning used to be prominent mostly in vocational training and education for the professions—the low (e.g., welding) and high ends (e.g., medicine) of the occupational status hierarchy; however, internships are now common in nearly every sector of the U.S. economy (Bailey, Hughes, & Moore, 2004; National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE], 2011; Perlin, 2011; Smith, 2010). Despite their increasing prevalence and formalization, internships have not yet generated the level of research that befits their rising importance.

Internships are widely praised as a win–win–win arrangement for students, businesses, and colleges (Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002), though some commentators decry internships for exploiting the unpaid labor of overqualified and unprotected young workers
According to supporters, students under this arrangement gain valuable, real-world experience; schools provide popular learning opportunities and benefit from closer connections with alumni; and host companies screen potential employees while receiving low-cost labor. On the contrary, critics suggest that internships—despite official claims—are concerned only slightly with a person’s education and are exploitative. There are debates about the legality of internships; the Department of Labor recently issued a clarification of the rules under which for-profit employers can host unpaid interns as an educational exception to the Fair Labor Standards Act (Lipka, 2010). For an individual to participate in an internship at a for-profit company without compensation, the internship must fulfill various criteria, including “The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded,” and “The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment” (U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, 2010). However, many unpaid internships do not appear to meet those criteria (Perlin, 2011).

In an op-ed, Charles Murray (2012) suggests largely abolishing unpaid internships in order to narrow class divides, calling internships “career assistance for rich, smart children.” Standing (2011) portrays interns as a way for employers to obtain “cheap dispensable labour” and describes them as part of (or a channel into) a larger class of precarious workers he calls “the precariat” (p. 75). Frederick (1997) vividly portrays a system of intern labor where aspirants must arduously compete for and complete numerous, costly unpaid internships in order to be considered for paid positions, citing the cultural (or glamour) industries as the worst abusers of intern labor. With some exceptions, internships in the music industry are unpaid, save perhaps for small daily travel or lunch stipends. In fact, since a great number of interns pay college tuition for this work-based experience, in effect these individuals pay to do internships. There is therefore wide disagreement and burgeoning debate about who can afford to do internships and who benefits from them.

Previous research on postsecondary internships focuses primarily on program design and outcomes but there is a crucial need to study what the people involved (interns and employees) actually do at internships—not only in terms of work but also how they interact and
make sense of those interactions. One study compared 156 accounting interns’ initial perceptions of what they should achieve in an internship with their subsequent self-evaluations of what was accomplished. Interns reported that they did not accomplish what they had expected from internships, suggesting a significant gap between interns’ expectations and what was actually achieved (Muhamad, Yahya, Shahimi, & Mahzan, 2009). Based on interviews with 25 student interns from various feminist organizations, Taylor and de Laat (2013) depict the interns’ difficulties fitting in and understanding their (blurry) role, being treated by host organizations as “temps, patients, clients, members, donors, or mailing-list recipients,” and feeling disappointed and disillusioned from the experience (p. 94). Knemeyer and Murphy (2002) found that student and staff member assessments of internship effectiveness differed significantly. The disparity in perception between expectation/experience and staffer/intern points to the need for studies that incorporate the viewpoints and subjective experiences of numerous actors involved in internship programs, namely, intern, faculty/school, and company (Narayanan, Olk, & Fukami, 2010).

**Careers in the Recording Industry**

Although the record industry has undergone drastic changes in the last 10 to 15 years—most notably due to the advent of digital technologies and consequent restructuring of operations and business models—the industry has been notoriously unpredictable for decades (Hracs, 2012; Scott, 1999). The industry’s characteristic unpredictability affects its workers’ chaotic careers. The commercial record industry is a competitive field organized around a few oligopolistic firms and a large number of specialized independent companies, both of which provide unstable contexts for careers: the former tend to frequently reorganize, divest, and buy units, (e.g., Pham, 2011), whereas the latter are inherently small and fragile (Peterson & Anand, 2002). Moreover, the careers of record company personnel are tied to the (unpredictable) success of music recordings, and yet most music recordings do not make a profit since, when it comes to cultural products, hits tend to be flukes (Bielby & Bielby, 1994; Caves, 2000). It is difficult to predict which recorded music releases will be successful despite strategic and often collaborative efforts to ensure commercial success (Hirsch, 1972; Long Lingo & O’Mahony, 2010). Companies in the cultural industries consequently try to minimize this uncertainty (without sacrificing creativity) in various ways, partly by redistributing risks downward—including to its

An emerging body of literature focuses on work conditions and subjective experiences of workers in the cultural industries (or cultural workers), and is especially focused on employees in the fields of music, film, television, and publishing. Stahl (2012) calls cultural workers unfree masters, characterized as Janus-like figures at the intersection of freedom and vulnerability. Cultural workers report strong feelings of stress regarding their job and career uncertainty. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) refer to the workers’ blurring of pleasure with obligation in the television, magazine publishing, and record industries as a complicated form of freedom. Their respondents experience considerable anxiety in the face of work conditions marked by increased casualization, long working hours, and substantial competition. Similarly, research on television and magazine work identifies uncertainty as a key career problem (Dex, Willis, Paterson, & Sheppard, 2000) and portrays a culture of employment insecurity and embedded risk (Ekinsmyth, 2002).

Careers in the cultural industries tend to be chaotic and are not bound by internal labor markets, most obviously for individuals engaged in temporary organizations and freelance work but also for those employed at permanent firms (Ekinsmyth, 2002; Jones, 1996; Neff et al., 2005; Peterson & Anand, 2002). Consequently, cultural workers generally frame and organize their careers around the field instead of the firm:

For virtually all those involved, the locus of the career is now the field and not the current employer, and, as in contemporary team sports, players work very hard for their employer not so much out of long-term loyalty to the team but to ensure and enhance their own career prospects in the field at large. (Peterson & Anand, 2002, p. 272)

While scholars and participants refer to cultural work careers as uncertain, these are perhaps especially so at their onset. The aspirant’s transition from layperson to skilled worker is a slow and challenging process (Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961). Neophytes often struggle to find and define their place and identity (Ibarra, 1999; Louis, 1980), even within large, highly structured firms with clear bureaucratic structures (Hughes, 1958). Established members of a workplace or community of
practice introduce newcomers to its values and behaviors through liminal and (in theory) incrementally growing involvement (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). While there is variation within and between the cultural industries (Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2012; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011), the usual challenge of finding one’s footing—and, potentially, employment—is generally exacerbated by the (a) considerable oversupply of potential workers and (b) lack of a clear, formal sorting mechanism for entry (Ekinsmyth, 2002; Jones, 1996; O’Mahony & Bechky, 2006).

The substantial surplus of aspiring workers prompts some participants to compare attempts at entry with boot camp (Jones, 1996) and fraternity rushing (Rensin, 2004). In the cultural industries, the aspirant—not the firm—assumes the main burden of training (including cost), yet training does not guarantee entry; neither does entry ensure advancement (Jones, 1996; Jones & DeFillippi, 1996). In the absence of a clear, formal, sorting mechanism in most cultural industry subfields—such as a specialized, advanced degree as a recognized filter—employers in these labor markets struggle to differentiate between the skilled and the unskilled (Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2012; Zuckerman, Kim, Ukanwa, & von Rittmann, 2003). Potential employees attempt to build and signal their employability by developing professional networks and accumulating (often unpaid) work experience (Ekinsmyth, 2002; O’Mahony & Bechky, 2006; Smith, 2010). For these workers—and firms more generally—an important part of getting work revolves around building and sustaining a good reputation (Becker, 1982; Blair, 2001; Zafirau, 2008). Cultural workers stress the importance of strong networks at every stage of their careers, but the emphasis on networking is especially salient for new aspirants (Dex et al., 2000; Randle & Culkin, 2009). Moreover, according to Hesmondhalgh (2010), “It is increasingly difficult to enter the media and media-related industries in advanced industrial countries without having performed, at some point, a significant period of unpaid work” (p. 279). Launching a paid career in the cultural industries often necessitates extended unpaid (or low-paid) work, though some commentators and workers claim this informal requirement causes a significant barrier to entry for individuals with less privileged backgrounds (Christopherson, 2009; Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2012; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Lee, 2011).

O’Mahony and Bechky (2006) refer to doing free or reduced-pay work as discounting. Discounting is one of many tactics individuals use to overcome the career progression paradox, the catch-22 wherein workers need skills to secure a job, but must first have the job to gain
those skills. Studying contract workers from both the high technology and film industries, O’Mahony and Bechky (2006) found that workers achieve mobility through acquiring stretchwork, a type of work “whose content mostly fits within a person’s base of competence but that also contains a smaller component with which a person has no experience” (p. 924). These authors argue that all workers face the career progression paradox to some extent, though this challenge is more salient for nonpermanent employees as they may not benefit from organizational guidance and a firm’s longer term investment in on-the-job training. Also, attempts at stretchwork do not always lead to career advancement, which can cause frustration for the aspirant, for example, a film crew intern asked to assemble fruit baskets for an entire week (O’Mahony & Bechky, 2006).

Industry and workplace conditions affect the ways workers resolve the career progression paradox (O’Mahony & Bechky, 2006). In the current article, I focus on one such condition—flexibility of work role—as it relates to the promise and challenge of music industry internships. To O’Mahony & Bechky (2006), “roles that are open to interpretation foster opportunities for stretchwork” (p. 933). Some work roles are more constrained—or more difficult to change (or stretch)—than others (Bechky, 2006). Individuals can either seize or challenge an ambiguous role to simultaneously fit in and stand out (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009). Ambiguity is defined here as “an on-going stream that supports several different meanings at the same time,” when “multiple .... explanations are plausible” (Weick, 1995, pp. 91, 134, as cited in Long Lingo & O’Mahony, 2010, p. 52). It is not uncommon—and certainly not new—for a workplace role to be highly flexible. More than 50 years ago, Dalton (1959) described the Assistant-to position as an elastic role or an unofficial jack/jill of all roles that officially “serves to relieve the executive of routine work,” yet also fulfills numerous other purposes (p. 27):

It serves as a reward, as an unofficial channel of information, as an informal arm of authority, as a safety valve for the pressures generated by a necessary surplus of able and ambitious developing executives, as a protective office for loyal but aging members rendered unfit by changes they cannot meet or from other failures, as a training post, etc. (p. 68)

Similarly, I argue, the intern is an elastic role providing many official and unofficial purposes and benefits. In theory (or legally), employers derive no direct advantage from interns’ work, yet I detail several
company benefits in the following. There is ambiguity as well regarding what interns do and what they achieve from the experience. Therefore, an internship represents an opportunity to build one’s employability and launch a career, but it is a role rife with challenges.

The cultural industries have been among the major users of unpaid interns for some time (Frederick, 1997; Neff, 2012). Aspirants are guided into doing internships as a strategy for career entry, yet most interns do not gain music industry employment. Why? And how does this work? By focusing on the characteristics and challenges of the intern role, I find that interns perform what I call provisional labor. Internships are provisional, as in temporary, conditional, and ambiguous (what you make of it). Interns embody a flexible pool of labor for a host company, allowing for a range of formal and informal benefits for all parties concerned. Internships represent a liminal and indeterminate period during which aspirants form a reservoir of excess workers before potentially getting hired as paid employees.

After describing my data and methods, the following analysis begins with a description of what interns do, what interns might achieve, and why employers host interns. I then detail how the characteristics of unpaid internship programs in the music industry constrain the work opportunities presented to interns, and, more generally, the enactment of the intern role. Taken together, this article suggests how ambiguity plays a central role in the production and maintenance of the intern economy. I conclude with thoughts on future research.

Data and Methods

The current article presents evidence from participant observation and semistructured interviews with music industry interns, employees, and college personnel. From July to December 2008, I conducted participant observation for at least 7 hr per day at two companies: I spent 2 days per week for 4 months at the sales and marketing department of a major record label I call Major Records USA and at least 1 day per week for 6 months at the digital sales department of Indie Distribution, an indie-oriented music distribution company. At both research sites I gained entry as an intern and was an overt participant observer.

Assuming the position of intern provided a fruitful point of entry to situate internships and careers within the music industry. Being an intern enabled me to observe and participate in the everyday activities at these sites, focusing particularly on the visible workplace interactions between—and within—interns and employees. At both sites my tasks as
an intern were primarily either administrative or research oriented, though typically not time sensitive, which made extended observation (and note taking) from my desk and during occasional walks throughout the office possible. I had built-in reasons for walking around both offices: At Major Records USA I frequently needed to interact with employees or interns down the hall or on another floor; at Indie Distribution I sat down the hall and around the corner from my assigned department, which made movement necessary. In addition, since employers expect interns to attempt to speak with various staff members, they encouraged or seemingly tolerated my additional walks and detours. Grindstaff (2002) and Zafirau (2008) also studied cultural industries by gaining entry as interns; similar to their respective experiences, my low status as just an intern (Grindstaff, 2002, p. 283) limited my access to certain meetings and people, yet also facilitated entry and mitigated some of the typical trust issues between ethnographer and participants. As Zafirau (2008) found during his fieldwork at Limelight, a talent agency in Hollywood, one’s status as an intern can overshadow (though not completely) one’s status as a researcher. I wrote daily field notes and frequently reread these notes to locate potential themes and gaps in need of further development. Participant observation helped build on early interview data to capture contextualized work practices (Barley & Kunda, 2001) as well as generate and clarify the themes of inquiry of my larger project: analyzing people’s attempts to start and sustain careers in the music industry.

In addition, I completed interviews with 57 people between April 2008 and November 2011. Thirteen of the participants were interviewed more than once to follow up on their status and to revisit findings. All but five of the interviews were digitally recorded. Interviews were transcribed and then coded using ATLAS.ti software. Interviews ranged from 38 min to more than 3 hr, though most lasted at least 90 min. Interview data served to investigate, verify, and counterbalance data from participant observation. Later interviews were conducted for the purpose of theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Questions elicited participants’ biographical and occupational backgrounds, experiences with and opinions about internships (and interns), career challenges in the music industry, the forms and consequences of recent music industry struggles, and workplace culture.

Interviewees include 31 men and 26 women; 45 are White, 8 are Asian, and 4 are Black. I interviewed four internship coordinators from New York City colleges. Among the 53 interns and employees interviewed, 38 had completed an internship or more. Twelve of the recent or current interns had not yet secured their first paid music
industry position (four of these were still full-time students). Five of the employees were no longer employed in the music industry—these relative old timers were interviewed to gain a better historical understanding of internship programs. For additional information about participants, see Table 1.

Participants were recruited through messages sent via two local university music-oriented student e-mail lists, through contacts at fieldwork sites, and via snowball sampling. College internship coordinators were contacted directly from website listings and were chosen partly based on their likelihood to supervise interns in the music industry. While the sample was not randomly selected and thus is not representative of the music industry as a whole, it is arguably illustrative of practices in the commercial New York City rock/pop record industry, focusing especially on major record companies and smaller independent (indie) companies.3 Participants mostly worked or interned in the following departments at either major or indie record companies: A&R (artists and repertoire, who scout talent and act as a liaison between the artists and record company), publicity (cultivates publicity for artists/releases), and sales/marketing.

The Internship as Elastic Role: What You Make of It

Record industry interns report doing mundane (or clerical/administrative) tasks as well as professional duties similar to the higher level tasks of their supervisors. Although the bundle of tasks done by interns varies from one company to the next as well as between departments and even within a company’s department, both interns and supervising employees report some general features: A&R interns tend to listen to, research, and prepare reports regarding potential artists; publicity interns gather press clippings—that is, they flip through newspapers and magazines page by page and cut out pertinent articles; sales interns generally create (or assist in creating) reports tracking company performance. Additional tasks reported include low-level assignments (stuffing envelopes for mass mailings, making copies of CDs, organizing or cleaning storage rooms, ordering lunch or coffee, running errands), more administrative tasks (filing, making photocopies, answering phones), and professionally focused endeavors (doing research, writing press releases, managing artists’ MySpace profiles, calling stores regarding sales, contacting radio stations or regional press, and scouting potential bands).
Table 1. List of Participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Intern</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jessie</td>
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</table>

(continued)
Most interns interviewed report considerable downtime during their internship, their workload being organized around routine tasks with intertwined gaps. Some report being assigned long-term projects to help fill these gaps. These routines can be broken by urgent or various idiosyncratic tasks, for example, an unexpected errand. Monique interned for two summers in the A&R department of a major record company and describes her routine: “I had a lot of down time, but I just kind of would sit on MySpace and look up all of these bands.” She adds, “There were definitely times when I was just kind of sitting there, checking Facebook [she laughs].” I ask Monique whether her supervisor appeared to mind her periods of inactivity, to which she responds no and clarifies:

I was in an office by myself and whenever [my boss] gave me something to do I’d do it and I’d finish it in a timely fashion until she had something

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Table 1. (continued)

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*aNo longer working in music industry at the time of interview.*
else for me to do or until there was something else in the daily routine that I had to do. OK, mail’s going to come at 3 [o’clock]. You get up at 3 [o’clock] and check the mail and be in the mailroom by 5 [o’clock] so I can meet the UPS guy, kind of thing. I don’t know, there are certain things that happened every day, but between the gaps in time between the daily routines sometimes I wouldn’t have too much to do.

Supervisors may or may not know, notice, or care when interns have nothing to do. According to some supervisors, interns may not mind a light workload. A junior employee at a major record company’s A&R department who supervises a group of interns describes the range of interns he has worked with, including interns who showed little interest in doing work: “There’s a lot of people you can tell just . . . don’t want to work in the music business. They have no interest in it.” He continues:

And I think this internship is, you know, totally what you make of it. We’ve had people who come in here and sit here and watch videos on YouTube. If that’s, you know, your prerogative, awesome, do your thing, I’m not going to stop you.

The uncommitted, uninterested, or shy intern may be ignored or forgotten by supervisors. It is often tolerated for interns to do nothing, but the burden rests on the intern to proactively seek out additional work.

An internship is presented to the aspirant as a vague promise. An internship coordinator at a large New York City college describes how she prepares students beginning an internship in the music industry:

We try to impress upon our students that no matter where you go [in the music industry] you’re going to be doing mundane tasks. . . . At some companies they’re not really good at gauging a particular student, but we always tell them: “go in, do what you can, whatever job that they give you you do the best that you can do at it because if you do this job well they’re going to move you up to do the next job and just continue on.”

Some interns are told specifically to expect considerable mundane work, but are often promised potential improvements to their position (as described in the preceding quote) under the heading that an internship is what the intern makes of it. However, there is variation in the types and levels of interns’ interests.
Intern Benefits

Doing an internship provides the intern with many potential benefits. Previous studies find that completing internships correlates positively with superior postsecondary academic performance (Swail & Kampits, 2004), improved soft skills (Divine, Miller, & Wilson, 2006), career clarification (Rothman & Sisman, 2010), and a heightened chance of securing career-oriented employment after graduation (Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Coco, 2000). Respondents in the present study identified additional benefits, describing internships as a credential attesting to the intern’s practical workplace value (e.g., a line on the resume), a way to learn about the world of work and more specifically about the music industry, an opportunity to meet people (ranging from a helpful contact to a mentor/champion), and an opportunity to experience meaningful involvement within the music world, potentially as an extension of fandom. Regarding the latter benefit, some interns emphasize the psychic rewards (Menger, 1999) they derive from the internship, that is, the intangible benefits from involvement in the production of something they consider especially meaningful, as well as receiving tangible free stuff (McClain & Mears, 2012) such as CDs, T-shirts, and tickets for shows.

Interns do not necessarily aim to gain imminent employment in the music industry. For example, Greg, the recently employed ex-intern depicted at the beginning of this article, describes only becoming a job seeker as his intern career progressed: “At first I wanted to know what [the music business] was all about. And then once I knew what it was all about and wanted to do it, I needed to keep interning if I wanted a job.” Job-seeking interns try to convince paid employees they are serious in their efforts and attempt to stand out as exceptional, since many interns claim interest in music industry employment. One high-profile intern was Carlos, who I met when we both interned at Major Records USA (where he was eventually hired as a temp). He interned for approximately 3 hr nearly every weekday afternoon after a full shift at his paid job. On numerous occasions, I noticed Carlos walk in holding fast food or coffee for employees and, upon asking, I realized he routinely sent text messages to employees while on his way to the office, offering to pick up snacks and drinks for them. An employee on a different floor of the building took note: “You can tell that Carlos really wants to be here and will do anything to stick around.” Interns must seize the ambiguity inherent in their role, elevate their status, and demonstrate their commitment and interest to employees.
Why Companies Host Interns

The ambiguity and varied interpretations of internships’ benefits apply not only to the intern but also to the advantages derived by host companies. Both staff members and interns claim that companies host interns for numerous, overlapping reasons: interns provide an inexpensive source of labor; an influx of youthful energy, information, and ideas; and internships train the next generation of record industry professionals while providing a pipeline of qualified candidates to music firms. However, respondents predominantly stressed the inexpensive labor rationale. While the literature would predict that relative newcomers must complete mundane tasks as they attempt to become full members of the record industry’s workplace community (Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2012; Lave & Wenger, 1991), interns are constrained by the view that they primarily serve as a source of inexpensive labor.

Interns as Inexpensive Labor

Sitting on a black leather couch in his Chelsea apartment, Nate recounts managing interns at an independent record company. According to him, some of these interns were not very smart, but still of some use:

There’s always shit work to be done and no one else is going to do it. And if [the intern] is that dumb, there’s always something like cleaning up the store-room that you should make him [sic] do. . . . There’s always shit to be done. Always.

The preceding statement is a typical one in that interns provide a source of inexpensive labor and companies use this resource. Nate’s claim that “no one else is going to do it” is not always correct, however; if an intern does not clean the storage room, a paid employee will eventually do so. Nearly everyone interviewed in this study claims that companies take interns to benefit from inexpensive labor, but answers differ in emphasis: many portray interns as facilitators for the company; others tell stories about how interns, when well managed, help further employees’ careers; and some describe interns as crucial to ensuring company operations.

Karl worked as an employee in sales and marketing for an independent record company for approximately 3 years until it went out of business, and directly after spent a few months (at time of interview) with another small label. At both companies, the number of interns has varied from one semester to another, mostly between one and three
interns at a time. Karl occasionally spent time without intern support because, as he describes it, interns are assigned work based on their interests and the company’s immediate needs. When asked to imagine how things would be different without any unpaid interns, Karl answers, “I feel like we wouldn’t get as much accomplished.” He clarifies his point by describing interns primarily as extra hands:

A lot of our work is very grassroots and, frankly, labor-intensive [and] having those extra hands around is a tremendous asset, but I feel like without them, you know, we’d get by. We’d still sell records, but it’s just sort of the little extra oomph to really complete things and allow us to do all the things, at least most of the time, that we want to do.

According to this view interns are facilitators, but they are not necessary for a company to function. Many employees speak in these terms, as do some interns. Emily interned at two major record companies (one in A&R, the other in publishing) and claims that without interns many companies “could function but it would be not as... They’d have a lot more mundane tasks for people who are being paid.” Monique, who interned at a major record company’s A&R department for two consecutive summers, echoes those words. She suggests that record companies could survive without interns: “I feel like they could do it. It’d be hard. [Staff] are busy already, more or less, and we do the stuff that would make them borderline insane probably.” Monique adds that having interns “makes things run smoothly.” In this sense, both emphasize how interns facilitate the work of employees for the sake of getting things done.

Nancy, an A&R employee, provides a slightly different emphasis on the contribution of interns:

The reason I’ve always taken an interest in interns, having them and mentoring them, is because several jobs ago I assisted this woman who ... was able to figure out a way so that she only focused her day on things that were going to really help her with her job and help her move forward. ... As I was sort of coming up and trying to figure out how to get out of the cubicle and get into an office I started really relying on college kids and taking the time to train them on things that I did so that I could really focus my time on keeping my boss happy, but also making time so I could work on things to get out of that cubicle.

Now, out of her cubicle and sitting in an office with a window at a major record company, Nancy boasts that she loves her company’s internship
program, notably because in the last year “I ended up signing two artists out of that internship program based on college kids that I’ve met and trained to do A&R.” Nancy’s answer emphasizes how individual staff can personally gain from intern labor; according to this view, interns are still facilitators, but the benefit is for the individual employee.

Finally, some participants—interns and staff members—go so far as to claim that intern labor is crucial to company operations. Mark (a staff member) says that public relations firms specialized in music are the worst places for interns: “Their entire business model is built upon free labor.” At such companies, he adds, interns do “grunt work” including “emailing a thousand people..., mailing things or putting together packages. So, PR places are, from my experience, the ones who have the most turn-around with interns—who require the most interns to maintain their business.” Further, Larry has worked in the music industry for more than 20 years and is now a senior employee at a major record company, where paid positions in the last decade have been routinely cut:

The role is, I think, so important—because we have a lot less staff and one person is doing the job of two or three—that an intern’s services, whether it’s researching something or putting together agendas, answering phones, is now a pivotal part because if we didn’t have [interns] I think that a lot of stuff wouldn’t get done the way it should.

Per the preceding quote, an intern routinely answers Larry’s phone. Also, people in Larry’s previous position had assistants, which is no longer the case:

That went away a long time ago. So [assistant duties] became internalized and people did a lot of the stuff that their assistants would do. My assistant was busy all the time, but that was a luxury that never will be back.

In this way Larry suggests that interns better support the work of ever-leaner record companies, going so far as to suggest that interns buffer the loss of paid positions.

**Interns as Source of Youth, Information, and Ideas**

Employees sometimes describe an influx of youth, information, and ideas as an added benefit provided by interns. For companies, the shape of this benefit ranges from indirect contributions to the
company atmosphere to direct sources of information and ideas in the form of a built-in, informal focus group. In terms of the former, employees note how interns make their office more vibey—that is, their youth, enthusiasm, and subcultural savvy reinforce an informal workplace culture—even if purely at an ornamental level. However, some employees go further in pointing out their interns’ youth-specific contributions:

As I get a little older, unfortunately, I’m not so in tune with college age kids as I used to be. I don’t think of myself as that old, but there’s a big difference between me at thirty-two and, you know, the nineteen-year-old in college. When those are some of the people I’m marketing records to, to have someone there, part of the team that is that person and relates to those people because that’s what they are. . . . I find that to be helpful. I remember having an intern a couple years ago that introduced me to Facebook. You know, at that time it was only available to students. I didn’t even know it existed. “Like, oh, Facebook!” [I] started promoting some records and some shows and events on Facebook, which I never would have discovered until years down the road on my own. (Karl, employee)

Later in the interview I ask Karl if interns also help him stay informed about new bands, which he flatly denies: “It’s part of my job to kind of keep my finger on the pulse of what’s going on. I’m not that old yet.” He gets more animated as he continues: “I’m not that out of touch where I need someone a little younger than me to tell me, you know, what the kids are listening to. I feel like I still have a pretty good grasp on that.” Karl claims he stays sufficiently abreast of new music partly since that is integral to his job.

Danielle is fresh out of college, has completed three internships, and is searching for a full-time job. I ask her why companies host interns and she immediately answers free labor. After a brief silence she adds,

If they listen they can get the word from the streets. If you have an intern who really, like somebody who really loves music and is out there and is looking at what’s going on—a couple times I would hear my boss talking about something and I’d drop in, “Oh I saw them on this [show]” . . . “Oh my 17 year-old sister loves this” . . . You know? Just like a little “bloop” because they’re in their world under high-rise [buildings] being fifty years old. The fact of the matter is that they are not where we are, in the same bars, at the same clubs, listening to music, going to shows. Or they’re
going to shows in like [the] V.I.P. [area]. They’re not experiencing it like we are. So if they’re listening [to interns] they can get important insight.

Interns may therefore provide a source of youth, information, and ideas to host companies, though these resources are unevenly acknowledged and used by employers.

**Internships as Training Ground and Pipeline for Job Candidates**

Several respondents stressed that the internship represents a training ground as well as a foot in the door for potential employees. Since music industry employees do not necessarily consider schooling a sufficient source of experience for employment, and because a college degree no longer represents a satisfactory credential to sort between potential employees, internship experience helps employers prepare and test aspirants. After first noting the benefits of inexpensive labor, Larry (a staff member) stresses the training component and presents it as a service to schools and students: “[Internships] provide a valuable service to schools and people like you [in] that you can have practical experience.” According to a senior publicity employee at a major record company with more than 10 years of experience, if an intern “works in the company for even a couple months, you know, they’re already one step ahead” toward getting hired. The training/pipeline reason tends to be the publicly acknowledged rationale for why companies host interns (Muhamad et al., 2009; Perlin, 2011). However, many interns and employees make skeptical or cynical claims about this view.

Agatha is doing her second internship at the same major record company. She spoke with the company’s main human resources contact for interns and recounts how this person portrayed the internship: “She said, ‘Listen, that’s why we encourage students that are really serious about music to take internships at [this company] because we will hire our interns. If you get really good feedback from your employer, we will hire a lot of our interns.’” In this way, the carrot of employment is waived in front of prospective, current, and ex-interns. Yet Agatha continues by summarizing why companies host interns for economic reasons: “And they might say, ‘Oh yeah we want interns to come and learn,’ but think about it from the capitalist perspective. It’s free! It’s free labor.” The training/pipeline answer is not deemed incorrect, but Agatha questions whether it is the companies’ primary benefit.
Interns like Agatha are not alone in skepticism about the training/pipeline benefit to companies. Nate (an employee) makes the same point:

People can sit there and say like, “We’re trying to harbor careers” and all that, but the essential reason is to get that shit work done and then hopefully you’re going to find that diamond in the rough, ideally, but essentially it’s that reason, it’s shit work to get done.

Companies do hire a small minority of their interns as paid employees; in the case of Nate’s employer, he estimates at most 10% (i.e., four, including himself) of the more than 40 interns were hired as employees during his 5 years with an indie record company. Nate describes the use of intern labor as “a pretty efficient system” for companies. Interns he deems unhirable for paid positions are not dissuaded from interning. Laughing slightly, Nate adds: “You can stick around and just stuff envelopes and waste your time. We’re not going to hire you, but we will use you for the other crap.” Similarly, Mark (an ex-intern and a current employee) goes further by saying internships are, for companies, solely about free labor:

It’s all about free labor. I mean, anyone who says [the opposite] is completely deluded or rationalizing. It’s not about getting people opportunities, it’s about getting things done without paying for it. . . . That’s not to say that it’s not a great filter for finding good fits for your organization. And people like myself do get hired out of internships. So I’m not speaking without having had some success there.

According to this view, the training/pipeline benefit of internships is no more than a by-product to the company receiving inexpensive labor.

Thus, interns and employers describe three primary company benefits for hosting interns, but they emphasize their importance differently. Almost every person encountered in this study mentioned cheap labor or free labor as part of why companies host interns. The other two reasons are more contentious since not everyone agrees that companies host interns for the youth/information/ideas reason, and many participants are outwardly critical of the training/pipeline reason as a public rationalization for inexpensive labor. Significantly, regarding attempts at gaining career entry, participants primarily describe interns as a source of inexpensive labor and frame on-the-job training as a secondary benefit.
Characteristics and Constraints of the Intern Role

The intern, as an elastic role, provides many official and unofficial benefits to the aspirant and the host company, though these may or may not be congruent with the former’s expectations or hopes. Ambiguity stems not only from the internship’s varied interpretations by all parties but also from characteristics that constrain the intern’s range of tasks, and, more generally, the enactment of the role. These factors become clearer when considering whether (and how) employers delegate tasks.

Shane has worked for a small indie record company for more than 3 years. Four years ago, he was an unpaid intern at that same company before getting hired as a full-time employee the next year. Shane describes how employees delegate tasks to interns, noting how his understanding of this process changed when he went from being an intern to an employee under the same roof:

[Employees] are not exactly good at telling you what to do or showing you how to do things. Or even to have time to do any of those things. And I feel it’s the same now with the interns that I have where I work…. You’re so busy, you’re so wrapped up in what you’re doing, you know you’re really appreciative if you have the help and you definitely take advantage of it when something comes up, but you’re not exactly spending much of your day finding interesting tasks for them to do.

He describes managing interns as an opportunistic endeavor—staff members are neither necessarily good at, nor do they prioritize, training interns. Instead, Shane portrays staffers as delegating the easiest tasks, partly because they do not spend much time reflecting upon what to delegate. Looking back at his time as an intern, he continues:

I came into this internship and there were definitely things immediately that I would do, like make packages and stuff like that obviously, run errands and all that stuff. So, I did a lot of sort of street team stuff too; they’d give me postcards to take to the record shops, to hand out at shows, I would do all of that stuff and they’d be good about delegating that work. But as for doing bigger projects, they didn’t have a whole lot, really.

There are constraints, apart from being busy, that shape this distribution of tasks. To employees, interns generally possess three interrelated, limiting characteristics: (a) low status, (b) presumed incompetence, and
(c) temporary nature of position. These factors pose interactional challenges between interns and staff members, notably in reaching an agreed upon division of labor, social interaction seen as mutually respectful, and—for interns—potentially, a substantive learning experience leading to possible employment.

Low Status

On my last day as an intern at the Major Records USA, I updated the intern guide, a document with which new interns in the sales department are greeted. As I rewrote this introductory text, a senior employee walked by and joked about what should appear in the guide: “Enjoy learning about all the kinds of lattes Starbucks makes!” adding shortly thereafter, “Soon you will be able to fix any paper jam that the photocopier will throw at you!” I fetched coffee for a group of six people on most Friday mornings—doing a “Starbucks run”—and did only occasional photocopying; combined, these tasks made up less than 5% of my time as an intern. Many interns do not have to make photocopies and fetch coffee as part of their music industry internship; however, staff members and interns nevertheless refer to these tasks as representative of the very basic, low-level, sometimes humbling work done by interns, that is, typical intern stuff. Interns must accept that in the eyes of a number of employees no task is too small.

The low status of interns is built into the physical structure of the workplace. The intern’s lower status is perhaps most visible in terms of workspace. At one major record label workplace, for example, status hierarchies are represented in the organization of office space: managers and above sit in offices (often with windows), assistants have desks or cubicles in alcoves along the wall of the hallway, and interns sit in makeshift workspaces at small metal tables in the hallway. Immediately to their left or right sits the supervising assistant, separated by a four-foot-tall partition between the assistant’s desk space and the intern’s, leaving the intern unambiguously alone in the hallway for a few feet (until the next intern station). As someone walks down the hall, it is easy to read people’s positions. On different floors, at different companies, there are other spatial complexities, but in the vast majority of cases the dynamics are similar. Of course, spatial hierarchies in the workplace are extremely common, but in this case these are especially pertinent because interns are supposed to learn from and develop rapport with employees; instead, the two groups are literally and symbolically segregated.
Presumed Incompetence

In addition to their lower status, employees do not typically assume interns to be competent. Interns are to be used as a resource by employees, though often employees do not trust them enough to delegate much work. As Patrick, an employee at Indie Distribution, put it: “A good intern knows where to put a stamp on an envelope. A bad intern, I’d say, wouldn’t.” If an intern makes a mistake, it falls on the shoulders of the supervising employee. The work delegated from employee to intern is ultimately the employee’s responsibility. Employees and many interns know stories about bad interns who did little or no work, were fired, quit, or simply stopped showing up. Jerry, an A&R executive at a major record company, describes a mundane task he delegates to interns and potential mistakes in execution:

“I need you to get in a cab, go down to Sterling Sound, tell them who you are, you need to meet this girl, you’re going to pick up this CD, you’re going to make sure it’s got these three songs on it, here’s 20 bucks and I want you to come back and I want you to have two receipts.” Now, a fucking orangutan can do that. But by the way, there’s [sic] people who will lose a receipt, they’ll lose the change, they’ll go to the wrong place, they’ll go to Sterling Sound and they’ll get the wrong disc because they went to the wrong person who still knows me and hands them the wrong CD. They don’t check the back of the CD and make sure that the right songs are on the disc so it’s the wrong CD because they didn’t do what I asked them to do, they came all the way back up here and it’s missing a song.

Jerry’s depiction captures how some interns might come off as incompetent, though by describing this task as something an orangutan could do—and the inability of some interns to get it right—his statement also highlights how the perceived incompetence of interns is mutually related to their low status.

The status of particular interns can change with time, but staff members describe playing it safe upon meeting interns by assuming that interns are relatively incompetent. Larry (a staffer) from Major Records USA told me the following in an interview:

You come in not as somebody I know who you are now, but you come in as another intern. . . . Intern A comes in, Intern B comes in, one of them is good, one of them is bad, and you don’t know what they’re capable of doing. So automatically you just generalize and say, “OK, it’s an
intern.” And then all of a sudden by the time we get to know you, you’re gone.

Since interns are not assumed to be very competent, interns must seek to distinguish themselves as more than just the intern to potentially do higher level work. This may cause frustration among the more motivated interns who seek high-level tasks; for the job-seeking intern hoping to eventually get a paid job in the music industry, their intern career is affected by the variation in other interns’ commitment. In this way, unserious interns pollute the pool of interns. The problem of lack of commitment (or ability) of some interns is dealt with, organizationally, by assuming in practice that all interns possess a low level of commitment (or ability) and therefore keeping the responsibilities of the interns low.

Temporary Nature of Position

Interns are limited by their brief tenure in the workplace. Internships are typically part-time endeavors and last 2 to 4 months, approximately the duration of an academic semester (or summer break). Some employees describe being reticent to train interns beyond doing obvious, mundane work because by the time interns have potentially mastered a complex task their internship has concluded. Many employees I spoke with find it frustrating and time consuming to oversee interns, because they describe them as prone to making mistakes. While the educational narrative stating that internships exist to provide work-based learning prevails as the official description of internships commonly used by colleges and companies, closer scrutiny reveals a built-in tension in the role of the intern. While an intern is ostensibly undertaking an educational or training venture, the paid employees around them are neither prepared nor necessarily rewarded for being educators; they are acting as managers (Becker, 1972). Similar to other studies of work-based trainees (Fine, 1996; Marshall, 1972) the music industry employees interviewed and observed in the present study acknowledge that their main, day-to-day focus is on doing their job, not on training interns. Interns operate simultaneously as students and workers, leaving them in ambiguous standing.

Several employees point out that some tasks take significantly more time to teach to interns than to simply handle on their own, and therefore are not worth delegating. The limited range of tasks employees delegate results partly from the overlap between interns’ temporary standing and presumed (or demonstrated) incompetence. Complaining about how hard it is to work with interns, Rita (employee) describes her
frustration regarding having to repeat instructions to a new group of interns:

I want them to just jump on it. You know, I say, “Hey, this is how you publish this on the Internet.” You know? And then tomorrow I walk in and say, “Hey publish this on the Internet” and not have to refresh them.

But, alas, she has to refresh them. She does not recall being as incompetent as an intern: “I don’t remember being that dumb. It just feels like every day I’m spending less time doing my own job and more time teaching them how to do theirs.” To spend time on training interns is a necessary counterbalance to the free or inexpensive labor companies receive, but employees describe both a limited ability and desire to do so.

Conversely, interns often complain about a lack of supervision. Danielle recounts receiving only brief training at an internship in music marketing, where, as she puts it, “you were just in. . . . One day I wasn’t there and one day I was there and I was supposed to all of a sudden always have been there.” Nonetheless, after three internships, Danielle claims to understand how employees might be frustrated by interns as temporary and potentially incompetent workers: “Their lives keep going whether I’m there or not. . . . I guess I sympathize.” She continues, noting how an employee must prepare for a meeting and might not want to depend on her as an intern: “If you have a meeting at 3 [o’clock], whether or not I know what I’m doing, the meeting’s still at 3 [o’clock]. You need to be prepared. Business keeps going. They can’t be holding my hand, you know?”

**Conclusion**

While internships provide a path through which aspirants attempt to gain entry into the business side of the music industry, most interns do not secure paid employment in this industry. In this article, I ask why this is the case and offer an account of the ways interns and employers depict and enact the intern economy, focusing on the characteristics and challenges of the intern role. I find that in the context of a highly competitive labor market without a clear, formal mechanism for entry, interns perform provisional labor: Internships are temporary, conditional, and ambiguous. Interns embody a flexible pool of labor for a host company, allowing for a range of formal and informal benefits for all parties concerned. Internships represent a liminal and indeterminate
period during which aspirants form a reservoir of excess workers before potentially getting hired as paid employees.

Previous studies suggest a disparity between the expectations, perceptions, and experiences of interns and host employees. The current study incorporates the viewpoints and subjective experiences of numerous actors involved in internship programs and finds that ambiguity plays a central role in the production and maintenance of the intern economy. Ambiguity allows for multiple interpretations; as a result, interns and employees can maintain very different (and varied) interpretations of the role. The ambiguity in the intern’s role is organizationally useful for host companies because it simultaneously allows for labor of many kinds, ranging from mundane work to professional tasks, completed by individuals with varying levels of commitment, interest, and ability. Employees use interns as a resource but express frustration at needing to closely supervise these potentially (or presumably) incompetent workers, generally deciding to delegate easy tasks. There is also ambiguity about what the intern will achieve; internships are described as a vague promise, and it is up to the intern to make the most of the experience. The negotiation of tasks and attempts to make the most of the internship are made more challenging by the characteristic constraints of the role: low status, presumed incompetence, and temporary tenure. Thus, the interns’ vetting slowly occurs within the workplace for an indeterminate period of time as they assume the costs for their training and firms put them to (some) productive work.

Hesmondhalgh (2010) cites “desirability of creative labour and the over-supply of workers” as key reasons why people want to do unpaid internships in media industries (p. 279). Hesmondhalgh may generally be correct, but the current article suggests the complexity of benefits individuals potentially derive for doing internships. Among other benefits, music industry internships present an opportunity to gain a credential, learn about the world of work, derive meaning as a music fan, and be better positioned to seek paid employment in a highly competitive labor market. The multiple possible benefits as an elastic role suggests a complex negotiation of the intern’s work identity. What strategies do interns use to move beyond being just the intern? How does the job seeker enact the intern role differently than the student seeking career clarification? Further work must be done to understand how different intern subsets (Wynn, 2011) negotiate their role, define success, and are cooled out (i.e., come to adjust their expectations; Goffman, 1952).

Finally, the intern economy has consequences for inequality. Numerous commentators describe unpaid internships as exploitative
and express concern especially about these practices in cultural (or glamour) industries (Frederick, 1997; Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Kamenetz, 2006; Perlin, 2011). Simultaneously, internships potentially provide a democratizing path to launch careers, but the current article shows how the act of doing an unpaid internship far from guarantees transitioning into a paid position. The symbolic challenges of being an intern in the music industry point to a long and costly path to full-time employment, one that advantages those people who can afford to work for free. More research is needed to better understand broader issues of inequality in the cultural industries and the ways internships might exacerbate or alleviate such disparities. With half or more of U.S. college students graduating with internship experience (Greenhouse, 2010), future work should also address the issues of access and inequality in other industries in an era where the transition from school-to-work, long seen as tenuous for students who do not attend college, is becoming increasingly problematic even for graduates from four-year institutions (Arum, Cho, Kim, & Roksa, 2012). Advocates must be careful that suggested policies—including outlawing unpaid internships or, more likely, enforcing the current laws on the books (see, e.g., Perlin, 2011)—do not have unintended consequences that would make internships more competitive and, therefore, even less accessible to those with more limited social networks and financial resources.

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Notes
1. To protect confidentiality, I changed all respondents’ and company names to pseudonyms.
2. As the table of participants suggests, interns at Major Records USA and other companies are mostly female (though gender distribution varies between departments), whereas the employees with the longest tenure tend to be male.
3. My findings suggest some variation between the experiences of and tasks assigned to interns, notably related to company size (large vs. small), department, and company culture, yet the problem of ambiguity remained salient (though occasionally mitigated) at every site. For this reason, I focus here on the common characteristics and constraints of the intern role.
4. The distinction between clerical/administrative and professional tasks comes from studies on internship tasks (see, e.g., NACE, 2011), whereas the terms mundane and higher level (or close equivalents) were used by participants in the current study. I do not suggest that the tasks called mundane are necessarily easy; my field notes and interview data suggest many tense and challenging moments doing things as simple as ordering lunch for a department of employees (some more urgently hungry than others) and screening phone calls (with some callers more patient with an intern’s lack of knowledge than others).
5. Similarly, Lloyd (2006, p. 132) suggests that service sector workers in a culturally desirable haunt describe working for the community over the pay.
6. Additionally, the part-time status of most interns also signals their potential lack of commitment, warranted or not, akin to the way it does for part-time employees (Epstein, Seron, Oglensky, & Sauté, 1999).
7. Respondents describe some variation in the internship experience depending on the time of year. For example, summer internships are often full-time (as opposed to part-time during the fall/spring), which can enable an intern’s more intensive and substantive workplace involvement. However, record companies report hosting most interns during the summer, which makes sticking out and consistent contact with employees more challenging.
8. The stigma of the temporary worker, as Brooks (2011) shows with project attorneys at law firms, limits access to permanent positions. The limited investment of employees toward training interns is a practical manifestation of this stigma.

References


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