

Sexual Assault in Creative Industries and The Need for Arts Management

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to give a new view to the conversation of sexual assault in creative industries. A view that does not focus on the victim or perpetrator, but the root of the problem. While human resources is a source that can be helpful within industries, the evidence is starting to prove that it is not enough. Through many articles, interviews and papers written by women in the industry I grew an understanding on what the real problem is. The problem and focus of this paper is the lack of arts management within these creative industries.

Methodology

This section will describe the methods I used to answer my research question: What are the ways in which we can shift the focus of Arts Managers to protect artists involved in creative industries from harassment and Sexual Assault? The research method I chose to use is a content analysis research approach. A content analysis research method is examining bodies of work such as television, websites, music, works of art, etc. and identifying patterns, themes and biases within that work. I chose this research method because I would really like to crack down on the male bias concerning these creative industries since I do believe that there is an unequal amount of power when it comes down to gender. This method will be helpful for my topic since I would like to have real information that presents the problem at hand. This method will also produce information that will help me find patterns and themes, helping me draw a conclusion to what needs to be done in creative industries. With many benefits to assist my topic, there are few

weaknesses to cover. One weakness of this topic is time; it will take a longer duration of time for me to find my observations. Another weakness for this method is that details are very important, to be accurate I must note exactly what I hear and observe to keep the context clear.

Understanding intentions of specific individuals and groups is a huge part of content analysis and I feel that would be perfect for my topic. These setbacks could possibly ruin the methodologies of my paper, but I decided to take a risk. I have worked with content analysis before during my senior year of High School. I found that the sources I was using helped me find patterns and biases that assisted the topic of my paper.

The data collection techniques that I chose to use are observations and interviews. I plan to use observation as a data collection technique as a way of seeing people in a certain setting or reading on observations of people in a certain setting. The disadvantages to this is that I may not get any notable interactions or observations that compare to readings of someone who has had real experience. Along with these observations I will be taking notes, which will benefit in helping me remember what I read. I was planning on using these notable moments to open up a chance for interviews with individuals who have been affected by this behavior, which did not work out in my favor. Interviews are another data collection technique that I wanted to use. I believe interviews will be super beneficial to my topic since I think it's better to obtain raw, real answers from people who are sitting right in front of you. As my research developed and after asking a couple individuals, I realized this is a tricky topic to interview someone about and it is very hard to find someone who is willing to and I do completely understand their reasoning when it comes to declining an interview about SA in creative industries. Content Analysis will be helping me accomplish my study, and also assist me in making better observations that will

backup the sources used. These sources have helped solidify my research, as it has been very hard to find a decent amount of information on my topic.

Introduction

Arts Managements' role is to support arts institutions, both for-profit and nonprofit. Art is meant to be expressive and allows the freedom and space for any artist to contribute to society. Arts Management must respect artists' by not messing with their creativity or freedom (IESA, 2017). Positions in Arts Management are needed in order for Arts Organizations thrive and maintain structure. When there is a lack of structure within any business or organization, room is left for problematic behavior that can possibly get swept under the rug. Especially in the music industry that is incredibly male dominated, it puts women in an unfortunate situation to not speak up in circumstances of Sexual assault and harassment. The act of turning a blind eye to sexual assault is a problem in many creative industries, there is a need for more Arts Management positions to open to stop this problem.

Human Resources (HR) is put in place for all workers under a corporation, and is responsible for employing workers, training workers, and compensating them. Human Resources is responsible for policy and legal trainings, such as sexual harassment training and ethics training. One of the major tasks in Human Resources is staffing since individuals are needed for things to get done within a business or organization. First, human resources develops a staffing plan, in order for HR to decide how many people they should hire based on budget. Human resources then develops policies that encourage multiculturalism at work to include people from a variety of backgrounds in this workforce. After this step HR starts recruitment to find

individuals that fit open positions, which leads into the selection process that involves interviews and negotiating compensation packages. Another job of HR is the development of workplace policies. This includes policies like the discipline process policy, vacation time policy, dress code, ethics policy and internet usage policy. ‘For example, the HRM professional will likely recognize the need for a policy or a change of policy, seek opinions on the policy, write the policy, and then communicate that policy to employees’ (*Human Resource Management*, 2016). HR is also responsible for compensation and benefits that employees receive. ‘HRM professionals need to determine that compensation is fair, meets industry standards, and is high enough to entice people to work for the organization’ (*Human Resource Management*, 2016). Worker protection is a major responsibility of HR and anything that comes down to safety for employees. This ties in directly with the training HR implements, since there are standards set from federal or state laws to ensure worker safety. ‘It is up to the human resource manager to be aware of worker protection requirements and ensure the workplace is meeting both federal and union standards’ (*Human Resource Management*, 2016).

Harassment in the Arts & Human Resources

Sexual assault in creative industries is a pervasive issue that has been brought to light in recent years through various high-profile cases and movements such as The “MeToo” Movement. Despite the increased awareness and conversations surrounding this issue, Human Resource (HR) departments within these industries have often failed to do enough to address and prevent such incidents from occurring. Creative industries, such as film, television, music, and

fashion, are often known for their highly competitive and male-dominated environments. This power dynamic can create an environment where sexual harassment and assault can occur. In addition, the 'freelance' nature of these industries can make it difficult for victims to report incidents without fear of retaliation or harm to their career.

Human Resources is available as a 'resource' to protect workers but, why do we still see sexual assault going unsaid in the workplace? One of the main reasons for this failure is the prioritization of profits and the reputation of the company or industry over the safety and well-being of employees. In some cases, HR departments may even participate in covering up incidents or protecting the perpetrators, rather than addressing the issue head-on and providing support for the victims. According to a new report released by the Cambridge-based organization Arts Professional. Eighty percent of the 1,580 respondents said that they had been aware of incidents of sexual harassment and 48% had experienced it first-hand with almost three quarters of those cases (73%) going unchallenged (Dawson, 2017). This report points to the realization that there is a lack of institutional structure when it comes to Arts Organizations due to the lack of size. Only 42% of respondents said that their company had a policy on sexual harassment and 23% of those who reported an incident felt that it had been dealt with appropriately (Dawson, 2017). "It is challenging to measure sexual harassment in the workplace—not everybody will come forward and not everybody will go public with such a concern," says John Palmer, a senior adviser at the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, an independent UK organization that advises on workplace relations and employment law. This report is an example of one of the many reasons that better policies and training is needed within the workplace, specifically arts organizations. HR departments within creative industries must prioritize the safety and

well-being of employees above all else. This includes implementing strong policies and protocols for preventing and addressing incidents of sexual assault and harassment, as well as providing support and resources for victims. According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), ‘Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, or pregnancy), national origin, older age (beginning at age 40), disability, or genetic information (including family medical history).’ In order for ‘annoyances’ to be unlawful, the conduct must “create a work environment that would be intimidating, hostile, or offensive to reasonable people” (EEOC, 1992.) Prevention has been proven to be a huge tool within organizations to decrease harassment. “Employers are encouraged to take appropriate steps to prevent and correct unlawful harassment. They should clearly communicate to employees that unwelcome harassing conduct will not be tolerated. They can do this by establishing an effective complaint or grievance process, providing anti-harassment training to their managers and employees, and taking immediate and appropriate action when an employee complains” (EEOC, 1992).

Types of Harassment in the Arts

While harassment is prevalent in all fields of work, it can be situational depending on the type of work that the individual is involved in. In the arts, it is hard to make a name for yourself, limiting only so many ways to network. An example to present is Rosie Prata, the Managing Editor at Canadian Arts and her experience: “Be coquettish, receptive, supplicant. Make clients

think you're talking to them because they're fascinating, not because you're relying on that commission to pay your rent. Keep the wine flowing and endure slimy come-ons from bloated, wealthy men (while staying smart about your own intake, so that when you're pressured to drive to the next location in his red sports car with him, you have the wherewithal to push away the clammy palm that flops onto your thigh). With any capitalist system, there are standards set and the art world being one has set a standard that you must achieve in order to have a successful career" (Hollenberg, 2020). "Marginalized" groups, such as women, people of color, and queers "are put at risk of their bodies of work being erased because these systems typically privilege certain people and silence others", Madelyn Beckles, Artist. The unfortunate part of all of this is that most women and non-binary individuals ever get any recourse for any harassment they experience. We come to the term "blacklisted", with the Merriam Webster dictionary definition that states "a list of persons who are disapproved of or are to be punished or boycotted." Sex exchange for networking opportunities and job openings are something publicly discussed in the news recently. "People don't talk about sex exchange or abuse as everyone's afraid of being blacklisted, losing their opportunities/job, being humiliated in public or branded a prude or a slut", Shary Boyle, Artist.

"MeToo" in the Music Industry

The "MeToo" Movement was founded by activist Tarana Burke in 2006, it gained widespread attention in 2017 when actress Alyssa Milano urged victims of sexual harassment and assault to share their stories on social media (Brown, 2022). While this movement gave access to many sexual assault cases and gave access for big name celebrities to discuss troubling

past encounters, there is a constant lack of coverage and outrage within the music industry, compared to other industries within the arts. The music industry is not nearly as close in size to the film industry. “Since 2007, freelance labor in the music industry has increased by 30% while traditional studio employees have decreased by 22%” (Arthur, 2020). The music industry, compared to the film industry, is more widely spread out and there are many industries that can make up for a single artist. These industries can include merchandising, royalties, streaming service companies, etc. With music performance comes a large group of individuals involved behind the scenes handling certain tour necessities. This leaves a lot of room for incidents to get “lost” in the mix, if nothing is said. “Because of how spread out and fragmented the music industry is, on top of the fact that music labels are decreasing in size, survivors face more barriers to coming forward and sharing their experiences in the music industry” (Arthur, 2020). A great example showing the fear of a woman coming forward within the industry is Amy Ziering and Kirby Dick’s 2020 documentary, *On The Record*. The documentary is about Drew Dixon, a former A&R executive at Def Jam Records, as she recalls her experience working in the music industry in the 1980s and 1990s. In this documentary she shares her story of sexual assault while working at Def Jam Records by co-founder Russel Simmons. This happened in 1995, 22 years later Drew Dixon has come out with the real story, as she never had a real reason for leaving the music industry. Which makes people question how many women have these stories in their back pocket and never feel like they can step into the music industry ever again. “Because of their bravery and courage to stand up and face criticism from fans, the media, and fellow employees, we know how much of a problem sexual harassment and violence is in music and how to implement the much needed change (Arthur, 2020).

Problem Solving: Arts Management

Throughout the resources that I've addressed, there has been a constant theme of "lack" of management within arts organizations that lead to this type of behavior. Human Resources is not something that is available when working at just any organization so, why does that bring us back to the need for Arts Management? Arts management in itself plays a crucial role in creative industries, as it involves the management and coordination of various elements of the artistic process, including production, marketing, finance, and human resources. While HR departments have a responsibility to prevent and address incidents of sexual assault and harassment, the lack of training and resources provided to them can hinder their ability to do so effectively. This is where arts management can step in to fill the gap. Since art itself is all about freedom of expression, any regulation that could be put down on the arts could possibly threaten that. "There is frequently no HR department for the individuals working in these spheres of film, music and publishing, and one phone call, or one grope, can launch or end a career" (Scott, 2017). The possible focus shift for arts managers could mean a lot to the safety of all artists, specifically female artists in this case. Arts Management can help to create and implement industry-wide standards and guidelines for preventing and addressing incidents of sexual assault and harassment. By working together with other creative organizations, arts managers can help to establish practices that can be adopted and implemented across the industry. This can help to ensure that all employees, regardless of where they work, are protected and supported. "The problem is that this is a very narrow path for teaching the field of arts management because it does little to empower students to create, lead, or manage. Instead, this type of training only prepares students to apply their skills—in practice—to a very focused professional environment

that has already been constructed by someone else” (Brkić, 2009). The main focus I have seen while studying Arts Management is on how to budget and run an arts organization, as well as understanding the arts as a whole. While this information is important, there seems to be a lack of understanding when it comes to what can make and break your whole career.

In early March of 2021, USC’s Annenberg Inclusion Initiative released the results of a study that concluded there have been no significant improvements for women in the music industry over the last nine years (*USC Annenberg, 2022*). The study notes that this sexualization and objectification “are a consequence (or symptom) of unbalanced power dynamics” as they relate to ageism (reported by 38% of the women polled), lack of access to male-dominated industry resources (36%) and lower pay (27%). This is a great example that leads to the questions of who is regulating? Who is watching out for these female artists? It all comes back to the lack of women in the industry, a lack of arts management, and a lack of believing individuals. The expression “The Glass Ceiling”, first used in the title of an academic article by A.M. Morrison and others published in 1987. Entitled “Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Can Women Reach the Top of America’s Largest Corporations? (*The Economist, 2009*)”. I found this expression interesting as it represented an invisible barrier that women face, stopping them from advancing in large corporations dominated by men. This has been a constant problem within these industries, and all women have felt it, I know this feeling all too well while being a female who is a musician. Arts management can play a critical role in helping women in creative industries break through the glass ceiling and advance in a workplace that is often dominated by men. By implementing policies and practices that promote diversity and inclusion, creating opportunities for professional development and advancement, and providing support and resources for women in the industry, arts managers can help to create a more level playing field and empower women

to succeed. One way in which arts management can support women in creative industries that would be beneficial is creating mentorship and networking programs that connect them with industry leaders and other successful women in their field. This would provide opportunities for women to learn from and be inspired by others who have succeeded in the industry. Arts managers can help to build a pipeline of talented and motivated women who are ready to take on leadership roles.

Conclusion

Creativity and freedom is what art is all about. The fact that sexual assault and problematic behavior is constantly getting swept under the rug in creative industries is only leaving less room for Arts Managers to figure out where their place stands in the industry. Supporting artists is what arts managers want to do but, when there is a heavy reliance on human resources these artists are going to be let down due to the lack of broadness in creative industries with little structure in place.

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