

Gender Behind-The-Scenes:
Women's Career Experiences in the Contemporary
US Film and Television Industry

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Abstract

Since the 1980s the film and television industry in the United States has developed into a largely contract-based system characterised by career insecurity and precarity. Based upon 27 semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago during the summer of 2013, I analysed women's reported career experiences in the contemporary US film and television industry. Using Banks' (2009) concept of feminist production studies, which integrates political economy, cultural studies, and gendered perspectives I focused on several key areas of women's careers as reported by my participants for analysis.

I divided my analysis into three parts based upon data gathered through the interviews. First I explore how and why my participants chose to enter work in an industry characterised by precarious employment and then why, despite this insecurity, they chose to continue working in this field. Next, I analyse women's networking practices in film and television work, how they conceptualised these relationships, and argue that my participants' networking practices are embodied, genuine, selective, and managed contradicting some elements of Wittel's (2001) concept of 'network sociality.' I conclude with an examination of women's reported experiences of sexism and discrimination in the contemporary industry and strategies my participants used to avoid such encounters.

Research concerning labour in the cultural industries has become more prevalent since the 1990s. However, most of this work has been conducted in reference to cultural work/ers in the UK and Europe. This thesis illuminates the career experiences of women of varied ages who work in diverse occupations in the contemporary US film and television industry.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that all the research and writing presented in this thesis is original and my own. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree.

Introduction

Similar to many other industries, film and television work continues to be dominated by men. In this thesis I explore women's reported experiences of work in the contemporary US film and television industry, an industry characterised by precarious employment, a heavy reliance on reputations and networking, and male-dominated work environments and hierarchies. As will be illustrated in the following section, gendered analyses of contemporary US film and television industry workers are rare. In order to gain an understanding of women's reported experiences of paid work in the US film and television industry,¹ I conducted 27 semi-structured, in-depth interviews in 2013. The experiences and opinions my participants reported were complex, and individually unique, but nevertheless there were common elements and themes exhibited across the interviews that help illuminate an as yet unexplored topic.

This project is the result of a lifelong interest in film and television that began with an enjoyment of watching on-screen stories unfold. I loved film and television when I was growing up. In the evenings after school I would do my homework in front of the TV, much to my mother's dismay and despite her admonition. I would record shows to watch after I finished dance classes and rehearsals and looked forward to new weekly episodes of television shows or the release of a new film. As my high school years were coming to a close I was contemplating where I would attend university. I wanted to live in Los Angeles or New York and focused on applying to colleges in these cities for two primary purposes; first, these were the cities in which film, television, and theatre were made and second, they were also places that had excellent dance studios so that I could continue practicing this hobby. I eventually chose to attend the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

Moving to Los Angeles only strengthened my interest in film and television. I read industry trade publications and learned as much as I could about current, upcoming, and rumoured projects in the industry. I devoured pop culture magazines and

¹ I have decided to use the terms 'film and television industry' or 'the industry' throughout this thesis to describe the type of employment I analyse. I am aware there are numerous distinctions between television work and work on feature films. However, for the purposes of this thesis I refer to them as one sector. I chose to do this because I interviewed women who worked in film as well as women who

websites devoted to movies, TV, and celebrity culture. As a result of my location and continued interest in the field, I began to investigate potential career options within the industry. I managed to secure internships during the summers while at university that helped me to learn more about the realities of work in this sector and to see beyond the glossy image that is often associated with work in film and television. The communities that worked behind-the-scenes were made up of normal, everyday people and the actual work being done really was not all that glamorous. There were a range of tasks to be completed on a daily basis, a lot of which were administrative in nature. Being on set or shooting in the field was a bit more exciting, but it was never glamorous. After spending time in these work environments some of the mystique that I had always associated with the industry disappeared. I realized that it was not some hidden mystical process that made the amazing on-screen products come to life, but the work of innumerable people behind-the-scenes. An enormous world of work had been revealed; a massive industry machine made up of so many individual parts and while I was fascinated by this world of work, I did not pursue a career in it after university.

Following my Master's degree where I focused on masculinities, I applied to the University of York and the Centre for Women's Studies with a research proposal for a project that would examine masculinities in corporate environments. Upon arrival and after consulting with my supervisor about potential paths for this research, I realized I actually was not that interested in looking at gender in corporate culture. I had disliked the few corporate environments I had worked in off-and-on throughout my twenties. Why would I choose to spend three years of my life researching this type of work? I thought about another industry on which to focus my research, and like so many other moments of inspiration, a new idea came to me unexpectedly—to go back to the film and television industry.

What followed was a series of considerations regarding the feasibility of such a study. How could I gain access to participants? Who did I still know that worked in film and television? What did I want to ask them? Perhaps most worrying, how was I supposed to tell my supervisor that two months into my research project, I wanted to completely switch topics? Naturally, my supervisor took it in her stride and the result

is a research project that I remain excited and passionate about to this day. I had always been interested in film and television work and while I took a break from the industry for a few years, I came back to it with a new perspective.

Having settled on a new research topic, I turned to the literature to survey the field. Somewhat to my shock, I discovered that despite decades of research on the cultural industries, there were relatively few qualitative studies that had explored how people experience labour in the contemporary US industry, and even fewer that problematized gender in relation to employment in film and television.² There were quantitative figures regarding the gender imbalance in the industry and I knew anecdotally and from popular texts on the subject that there was such an imbalance. I had expected to find an extended body of literature on women's working lives in the US film and television sector. Instead, I uncovered what I consider to be a sizeable gap in knowledge. I decided to broaden my research in order to help fill this gap. After further investigations, I settled on the following research question: What are women's reported experiences of work in the contemporary US film and television industry? This thesis offers insight into how women experience work in this industry and how gender does and/or does not influence this experience.

The images and stories produced by the film and television industry heavily influence our daily lives, how we view ourselves, and how we view others. Film and television works have the ability to reach massive audiences and as such they have the potential to impact on cultural norms on a large scale. Not only would understanding the barriers to women's equality in film and television work be beneficial to women working in the industry, but also to the products created by this industry. When more women are employed behind-the-scenes on a film or television production, there tend to be more speaking roles for women characters on-screen and their depictions tend to be more diverse, powerful, and dynamic (Lauzen and Dozier 1999). Film and television can help normalize equality in society at large through its representations of diverse stories and characters, but in order to accomplish this, there needs to be increased diversity and gender equality behind-the-scenes.

² The exceptions to this trend will be explored in the Literature Review.

Thesis Structure

Following a review of the relevant literature, I explain the methodological choices I made to complete this project. I explore how and why my research was conducted from a feminist perspective, the challenges I encountered when grappling with methodological and epistemological questions, and finally an account of my time gathering, transcribing, and analysing my data. In Chapter 3 I begin with an analysis of my participants' narratives concerning how and why they entered work in film and television. I discuss how they framed their career experiences in relation to the precarious nature of this work, the reasons they cited for continuing work in such an environment, and finally an exploration of the ambivalent and complex ways in which the women I interviewed negotiated their identities/images as industry workers. Chapter 4 explores the role of networking in my participants' career experiences. This was a key way in which they secured employment. I examine my participants' networking practices and preferences in addition to how my data demonstrates that despite a heavy reliance on information and communications technology in film and television work, networking is still by and large an embodied practice. This chapter also includes a discussion of experiences with mentors as reported by my interviewees and concludes with an articulation of how these two processes inform the initial stages of an industry career. In Chapter 5 I analyse my participants' reports of experiences of sexism and discrimination in this sector, and how these practices have become normalized within the industry and among its workers. I include a discussion of the strategies my participants reported using to diminish the frequency of their encounters with sexism and discrimination as well as exploration of why these incidents are rarely reported. I then turn to my Conclusion to summarize my key findings, contributions to the fields of Women's Studies, feminist production studies, Media Studies, and Film and Television Studies, and offer some suggestions for future research.

Chapter 1. Literature Review

There are a number of ways to critically analyse media production, but what are the benefits of studying the communities that create media texts? David Hesmondhalgh (2007) writes, ‘Films, TV series, comics, music, video games and so on provide us with recurring representations of the world [...] they draw on and help constitute our inner, private lives and our public selves: our fantasies, emotions and identities. They contribute strongly to our sense of who we are, of what it means to be a woman or man, an African or an Arab, a Canadian or a New Yorker, straight or gay’ (3). These products are powerful in their ability to influence attitudes regarding social norms and practices. Therefore, the people and communities that create such products deserve scrutiny and attention. In an effort to trace my own theoretical influences and to contextualize my work I will discuss previous contributions to the fields of media and production studies as well as research concerning gender and work in the 21st century. I examine some of the different approaches to studying the media that have grown out of political economy, cultural studies, and feminism to establish a historical and epistemological frame for my own research regarding women’s employment in film and television. I then offer a review of how labour in the film and television industry has evolved in the US since the studio era of the early-to-mid-20th century. I conclude with an examination of how labour in film and television work has been framed and examined by scholars illustrating the lack of qualitative research regarding women’s experiences in this field in the United States. For now I turn my attention to the under-representation of women working behind-the-scenes to demonstrate the continued gender inequality in employment in the film and television industry.

The Current Status of Women Working in the US Film and Television Industry

Beginning in 1998 Martha Lauzen, executive director of the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University, began compiling data on the representation of women in film and television work in the United States. Her report, known as *The Celluloid Ceiling*, has since been published annually. In the

most recent report covering 2015, women occupied 19% of the key behind-the-scenes positions for the top 250 domestic grossing films in the United States, the same percentage as women working in these roles in 2001(Lauzen 2016).³ The occupations analysed include directors, executive producers, producers, writers, cinematographers, and editors. Aside from cinematographers (also known as directors of photography (DPs)) and editors, these positions are often referred to as ‘above-the-line’ occupations within the industry and characterized by negotiable pay that can vary dramatically based on reputation and residual payment agreements (Banks 2009). According to Miranda Banks (2009),

‘Above-the-line’ and ‘below-the-line’ are industry terms that distinguish between creative and craft professions in production. The distinction is derived from a particular worker’s position in relation to a bold horizontal line on a standard production budget sheet between creative and technical costs, establishing a hierarchy that stratifies levels of creative and craft labor. Above-the-line guilds include practitioners who are paid to create cultural products within a media industry. The kind of labor they do is evaluated, both by the industry and by society, in terms of its imagination, artistry, and inventiveness [...] Below-the-line practitioners are considered—again, industrially and socially—as craftspeople or technicians, people who work with their hands. These practitioners hold distinct trade knowledge, much of which they have learned through apprenticeships or on the job [...] Typically, below-the-line costs in production budgets are standardized by union contract wages (89-90).

In 2008 Lauzen monitored women’s representation in some below-the-line occupations as well. In *The Celluloid Ceiling II* Lauzen reports on the percentages of women that worked as production designers, production managers/production supervisors, sound designers/supervising sound editors, key grips, and gaffers on the top 250 domestic grossing films (Lauzen 2008). According to these findings, women comprised 25% of production managers, 44% of production supervisors, 20% of production designers, 5% of sound designers, 5% of supervising sound editors, 1% of key grips, and 1% of gaffers (Lauzen 2008, 1).

³ The independent film sector has been somewhat friendlier to women than mainstream studio productions (Lauzen 2009).

In addition to her analyses of films, Lauzen has also published figures on women working on prime-time television programs in the United States. This report monitors women working as show creators, directors, writers, producers, executive producers, and editors on both network programs as well as cable channel programs and original productions from Netflix (Lauzen 2014).⁴ In the 2013-2014 prime-time season women comprised 25% of the people working in the positions listed above (Lauzen 2014). Women were more likely to work as producers and writers on television shows, at 40% and 26% respectively, than in other behind-the-scenes occupations (Lauzen 2014).

Lauzen's reports offer useful information that demonstrates the continued gender imbalance in the film and television labour markets which is confirmed in other research. In her study of on-screen representations of women and women occupying key behind-the-scenes positions, Stacy Smith (2008, 6) found that out of the 100 films analysed only 17% of director, producer, and writer roles were filled by women. The Writers Guild of America West (WGAW) also compiles employment and earnings reports about women and minority guild members working in the industry. According to the most recent report which compared median earnings, women television writers earned on average \$9,109 less per annum than their male peers, and female screenwriters earned \$18,224 less per annum than men (Hunt 2014). Statistics and reports like those mentioned above all help to demonstrate the gender inequality characteristic of behind-the-scenes film and television work. However, there remains a decided lack of research concerning the subjective experiences of women working in the industry and how they negotiate that work. Previous research has been conducted concerning on-screen representations of women (Fournier 2007), women as filmmakers (Lane 2000; Levitin, Plessis, and Raoul 2003; Miller 1988), women as screenwriters (Bielby and Bielby 1996, 2002; Francke 1994)⁵, feminist film theory (Kaplan 1983), feminist television criticism (Brunsdon and Spigel 2008; Watkins and Emerson 2000), statistical studies of women working in production (Lauzen 2008, 2012, 2013), women as consumers/viewers of media (Mulvey 1989), and women-

⁴ Netflix is a subscription service that provides customers with access to online streaming content as well as DVDs via mail. In recent years, Netflix has begun to produce its own content.

⁵ Women have worked as screenwriters since the beginning of the film industry. For an interesting history of women screenwriters in Hollywood from the Silent Era through the mid-1990s see Francke (1994).

oriented genres of film and television (D'Acci 1994). Research has also been done, particularly since the 1990s,⁶ on labour in the cultural industries⁷ (Banks 2007, 2010; Banks, Gill, and Taylor 2013b; Blair 2001; Blair, Culkin, and Randle 2003; Caldwell 2008; Caves 2000; Christopherson 2009; Deuze 2007; Gill 2002; Gill and Pratt 2008; Grugulis and Stoyanova 2012; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; McRobbie 2000, 2011; Murdock 2003; Oakley 2004, 2006; Randle and Culkin 2009; Thynne 2000)⁸ and while women were included in some of these investigations, there remains a lack of research that examines women's experiences of this work in the United States as a central topic.⁹ The field would therefore benefit from a more in-depth study of how women working in different positions and genres negotiate work in the contemporary US film and television industry. In order to further contextualize my research, in the following section I explore some aspects of work in the new economy in relation to gender.

Gender and Work in the New Economy

As discussed above, women's experiences of work in the film and television industry have not been adequately explored. However, examining women's experiences of and relationships to waged work more generally is a well-developed area of investigation. In relation to my own research, there are some points and perspectives, particularly concerning work in the 21st century, that are pertinent to this project. Studies that examine gender and work in what is often referred to as the 'new economy' is particularly relevant to the film and television industry. I use the term 'new economy' in reference to several trends that have transformed the world of work in recent history. These trends include: the increased popularity of neoliberal policies and business practices, the increased dependence on and use of global telecommunication technologies, the movement toward a post-Fordist, more knowledge-based economic model, the increased casualization of the work force, the

⁶ Two early studies of labour in film work were conducted by Leo Rosten (1941) and Hortense Powdermaker (1950).

⁷ There are definitional disagreements regarding what constitutes the 'cultural industries.' However, according to Hesmondhalgh (2007) the majority of these definitions include 'television (cable and satellite, too), radio, the cinema, newspaper, magazine and book publishing, the music recording and publishing industries, advertising and the performing arts' (12).

⁸ The vast majority of this research focuses on cultural and creative industry labour in the UK and Europe.

⁹ Thynne (2000) has looked at some aspects of this in relation to women working in film and television in the UK.

decreasing influence of trade unions, the 24/7 nature of globalised business, and the decline of the male breadwinner family model (Banks, Gill, and Taylor 2013a, 2013b; Banks and Milestone 2011; Bauman 2000; Beck 1992, 2000; Castells 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Crompton 1999, 2006; Florida 2002; Gill and Pratt 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008; Lee 2012; Perrons et al. 2006a; Smith and McKinlay 2009a; Williams, Muller, and Kilanski 2012). The film and television industry in the US, and increasingly worldwide, with its project-based employment model that relies heavily on networks exemplifies work in the new economy and trends that are influencing the wider world of work more and more (Jones and Pringle 2015; Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015; Wreyford 2013, McRobbie, 2002 #174). As such, studying those employed in this sector offers insights into how work will increasingly be experienced by labour in contemporary employment markets, making film and television workers' accounts particularly relevant to contemporary and future analyses of employment (Banks 2007; Wreyford 2013). Additionally, examining film and television labour from a gendered perspective can offer insight into how women, specifically, will increasingly experience work in the new economy and the potential gendered challenges they may face.

As mentioned above, while there is a lack of research concerning women in the US film and television industry, researching women's experiences of paid work is a more developed discipline. When considering the gender inequality present in more traditional work environments, Joan Acker's (1990) concept of gendered organizations has been useful. Gender inequality exists in these types of organizations because gender bias has been integrated into the very structures that constitute them (Acker 1990; Williams, Muller, and Kilanski 2012). The customs and organization of traditional work environments were based upon an ideal worker who was inherently male. The processes and rules governing these work environments, ones that largely act in men's favour, have become highly normalized not only by managers and owners, but by employees as well (Acker 1990; Williams, Muller, and Kilanski 2012). Building upon this traditional foundation work in the new economy has also integrated new practices and customs related to labour. Employees no longer expect to devote their entire careers to one organization and instead search for new opportunities, make lateral career moves, have diverse career

skills, and generally deal with more precarious employment than previous generations of workers (Perrons 2003; Perrons et al. 2006a; Williams, Muller, and Kilanski 2012). These changes have influenced organizations and labour in a variety of fields. In their research on women working in the oil and gas industry, Williams, Muller, and Kilanski (2012) set out to discover how Acker's (1990) concept of gendered organizations would translate to work in the new economy. They found that despite the changing nature of work, gender inequality continues to be embedded in the practices of contemporary employment processes (Williams, Muller, and Kilanski 2012). These contemporary work paradigms have been influenced by neoliberalism and neoliberal policies (Beck 2000; Connell 2005b, 2008; Crompton 2006; Kelan 2008). As the goal of this thesis is to illuminate women's subjective experiences in contemporary film and television work, an industry that embodies many characteristics of the new economy, it is important to begin with an understanding of the implicitly gendered nature of the ideal new economy worker which is rooted in neoliberalism.

Governments and global institutions around the world are increasingly adopting neoliberalist policies (Braedley and Luxton 2014). In the US, this process began in earnest in the 1980s under the Reagan administration and has continued since. At its core, neoliberalism advances the concept of the free market as the best economic option (Connell 2014). The free market is held up as the fairest and most efficient market solution as, according to this ideology, individuals are purportedly treated as equal market agents regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, etcetera. Connell (2008) writes that neoliberalism 'works at the level of organizational life, even at the level of personal life, re-shaping our understanding of the social agent. The individual is increasingly understood as a *market* agent, pursuing advantage in competition with others' (247). Unfortunately, there is an embedded masculinity politics in the neoliberal project that is overlooked and/or dismissed by its proponents (Connell 2014, 33). Under neoliberalism the market agent is based upon the archetype of the 'entrepreneur,' which is an inherently male gendered model.¹⁰ As

¹⁰ The archetype of the new economy worker also carries assumptions regarding race, class, sexuality, ability, and geography making it a hegemonic stereotype that not only excludes women, but also anyone who is not a heterosexual, white, able-bodied, western, middle-to-upper class cisgender man.

such, neoliberal organizations tend to be highly gendered environments. However, that gender distinction is often avoided within neoliberal discourse (Connell 2005a).

Connell (2005a) writes:

The neoliberal agenda has little to say, explicitly, about gender. The new right speaks a gender-neutral language of ‘markets,’ ‘individuals,’ and ‘choice.’ But the world in which neoliberalism is ascendant is still a gendered world, and neoliberalism has implicit gender politics. The ‘individual’ of market theory has the attributes and interests of a male entrepreneur [...] Deregulation of the economy, in a corporate world, places strategic power in the hands of particular groups of men—managers and entrepreneurs (76).

In this world, advancement and success are framed as being dependent upon an individual’s merit and supposedly ignore gender or any minority membership. However, rather than levelling the playing field for men and women, the discourses of neoliberalism and the new economy ignore gender altogether. The gender-neutral discourse of neoliberalism does nothing to eliminate bias or dismantle social norms in order to repair imbalances or ensure equal representation. It preserves inequity by refusing to acknowledge the inherent flaws of a system that give advantage to one gender over others, and manages to place blame on individuals who do not conform to the archetype of the individual in the new economy, one that is inherently male.

Much of the film and television industry has been transformed in the new economy with the adoption of neoliberal policies regarding employment and labour. As discussed above, under neoliberalism the individual is responsible for his/her own success and/or failure. Neoliberalism claims that governments and state-run services are inefficient, costly, and ineffective and therefore individuals should take greater responsibility over their own affairs (Luxton 2014). Self-reliance and non-interference by governments are central tenets of neoliberalism. Resulting from this dogmatic emphasis on self-reliance, there has been an accompanying rise of individualism in the new economy as individuals are increasingly thought of as market agents in competition with one another (Braedley and Luxton 2014; Luxton 2014). This individualism is particularly pronounced in the film and television industry due to the freelance nature of employment in this sector, the disintegration of Fordist organizational structures following the end of the studio and networks eras

(discussed below), and the valorization of individual merit, particularly within creative industries, through discourses that conflate success with talent and individual work ethic. In reality, the film and television industry is highly stratified, segregated, and exclusive, and because of its organizational structure it manages to operate largely outside of equal employment opportunity statutes that are more typical in centralized and vertically integrated corporations and industries.

Some theorists (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Castells 2000) have claimed that the rise of individualism that has accompanied the rise of neoliberalism in the new economy could potentially contribute to emancipation from traditional gender roles and limitations. It has been suggested by these theorists that as women continue to enter the workforce in increasing numbers and are thus able to exert greater choice over their lifestyles, there is potential for traditional gender roles to erode further. For Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) these changes could create opportunities for increased equality to develop as a result of the supposed democratizing effect of individualism. While women's entry into the world of paid work has certainly impacted on gendered aspects of employment and labour, I agree with Banks and Milestone (2011) when they call for a cautious optimism regarding Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) assertions. Theorists such as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) discuss changes in work and the effects these have had on individuals from a masculinized perspective and they over-emphasize the possibility of 'choice.' While the new economy has transformed some aspects of paid work, the potential differences in how men and women experience these transformations need to be problematized.

Paid work is a practice from which men continue to produce, reproduce, and achieve masculinity and constitute their identities (Collinson and Hearn 1996; Connell 2005b; Kerfoot and Knights 1996; Martin 2001). Women's identities, however, have been and continue to be more complex as a result of the multiple roles they are expected to fill. In their study of men and women managers Wajcman and Martin (2002) found that when speaking about their public career lives and paths both men and women tended to use neoliberal, gender-neutral narratives to construct themselves as market agents in relation to labour. However, when discussing their private lives, marked

gender differences were exhibited in men and women's accounts (Wajcman and Martin 2002).

Our research also shows that 'choice' means quite different things in the private world for men and women. Because the available private identities remain so deeply gendered, women face a negotiation of employment and domestic responsibilities which is different from that of men. For men, despite the evidence of a profound cultural shift in the meaning of marriage and fatherhood, things are largely unproblematic since a central component of the private identities available to them remains the priority of paid work responsibilities over private ones [...] because private identities remain so integrally and fundamentally gendered, they are the increasingly dominant source of the quite different 'family-work' choices and dilemmas men and women face. In sum, the writings of Beck, Giddens and Sennett speak much more directly to the experience of men than women in the new capitalism (Wajcman and Martin 2002, 999-1000).

Men have traditionally prioritised paid work even in the private, family sphere as it has long been a defining characteristic of successful masculinity (Collinson and Hearn 1996; Kelan 2008; Kerfoot and Knights 1996). As Wajcman and Martin (2002) point out, despite the changes that have occurred regarding cultural norms for men's private lives as husbands and fathers, the priority of paid work continues to define contemporary manhood. However, working women have always needed to negotiate the concurrent identities of work and home/family. Despite the gains women have made in the contemporary public sphere, the deeply gendered nature of the private sphere continues to restrict women's 'choices' (Wajcman and Martin 2002). The new economy has been accompanied by the rise of individualism; however, gender continues to inform and constitute individuals in ways not accounted for by theorists like Beck, Giddens, and Sennett (Kelan 2009; Wajcman and Martin 2002).

The characteristics of the new economy including the rise of individualism, increased globalisation, and advances in technology have influenced social and cultural attitudes toward employment with a rise, as noted above, in the weight assigned to individuality and personal choice (Crompton 2006). The gender disparities present in film and television work, and indeed in many other industries, are often attributed to individual career choices rather than structural inequalities (e.g. Hakim 2000).

However, when examined more carefully it becomes clear that these discrepancies cannot be attributed solely to the personal choices women make regarding their careers.

One example of this emphasis on personal choice in relation to women and employment can be observed in Hakim's (2000) work with preference theory. Hakim (2000) argues that women in affluent societies have 'genuine' choice regarding their family and work lives (2). According to Hakim, women fall into three categories: home-centred, work-centred, and adaptive women who combine work and family life in one form or another over their lifetimes (Hakim 2000). For Hakim (2000) women in contemporary western societies are free to choose which of these three lifestyles they prefer regarding work and/or family life because these societies have managed to create equal opportunity environments in which all people are freely able to access among other things education, labour, and housing. As a result of this equality of access, the explanation for women's positions concerning work and home life becomes a matter of personal preference. Commenting on the feminist movement's success in critiquing the male-breadwinner family model Hakim (2000) writes:

The fact that this model is no longer *imposed* on everyone does not mean it is universally rejected. It has become a matter of personal preference and choice. Similarly, having children, or not, has become a lifestyle choice, rather than an inevitability, for married couples as well as other people [...] Following the contraceptive revolution, this choice is open to people in all social class and income groups, and has a fundamental impact on lifestyle (73).

I agree with Hakim in her assessment that some people still prefer the male-breadwinner family model to other lifestyles. However, her characterization of the ready availability of contraception demonstrates an over-simplification of the issue that is consistent throughout her work regarding this and other arguments.¹¹

¹¹ At the time of Hakim's (2000) publication, contraception in the United States of America, one of her case study locations, was not universally available without cost. Furthermore, she ignores the influence of legal, racial, ethnic, and religious factors that may limit women's ability to secure contraception, with or without cost. For other critiques of Hakim, see Crompton (2006), Houston and Marks (2005), McRae (2003).

Echoing other scholars' (Crompton 2006; Houston and Marks 2005; McRae 2003) critiques, I find Hakim's (2000) complete disregard for the impact of socioeconomic class on women's work choices troubling. The fact remains that for many women, the need for gainful employment to provide for the necessities of life eliminates the unrestrained choice and preference that Hakim (2000) discusses. Furthermore, even when women may choose to focus on home and family life at the expense of their careers, these decisions are often fraught with anxiety, ambivalence, and doubt which are constrained by the availability of decent, affordable childcare options, work flexibility, and traditional gender norms (Buchmann, Kriesi, and Sacchi 2010; Crompton 2006; Stone 2007; Stone and Lovejoy 2004). Stone and Lovejoy's (2004) research concerning the experiences of successful, professional women and the apparent 'opt-out' phenomenon demonstrates how women struggle with the decision to leave satisfying careers and that often their choices are very limited. Hakim (2000) might argue that all these women still make choices about work and family based upon their individual preferences, but I find her arguments do not hold up to scrutiny. Some women do have greater levels of agency when it comes to making career and life decisions, but these decisions are nevertheless made within a context that has been shaped by the legacy of gendered behavioural expectations, racial and ethnic backgrounds, class, sexuality, and geography just to name a few of the factors that inevitably influence women's 'choices' concerning employment. Additionally, Hakim (2000) wavers between advocating for women's agency through an understanding that women may prefer different lifestyles, and denial of this agency when she dismisses the factors women themselves cite (affordable childcare, inflexible jobs, the influence of partners, work as a necessity for survival) as reasons for certain lifestyle decisions even when these may contradict a woman's preferences.

Unlike Hakim (2000), as a feminist scholar I want to integrate an account of how structural systems influence women's career choices paying particular attention to how the world of work has changed for women, and men, over the past 40 years. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the film and television industries underwent a process of marketization beginning in earnest in the 1980s. Other industries and sectors faced similar changes and while research on women's career experiences of US film and television work may be sparse, scholars have examined the interaction

between gender and the shifts in employment patterns and policies in the world of work more generally. Rosemary Crompton (2006) discusses how the increased need for job flexibility, the decline of traditional Fordist employment, the growth of the service industry, changes in management practices, and the increased importance placed on individual employee development have all influenced the current work environment for women. Additionally, the 24/7 nature of the global economy, made possible through advances in telecommunications technology, has created a blurring between the worlds of work and home (Castells 2000; Crompton 2006; Kelan 2009; Perrons et al. 2006b; Sennett 2006). As women have increasingly entered the workforce they have needed to confront these changes and there remain challenges for women's work equality despite years of advancement. While male partners are doing more domestic and family care work than in previous years, overall women still spend more time on these tasks than men (Crompton 2006). On average women occupy lower paying positions and employers continue to dismantle full-time positions in favour of part-time posts that contribute to the persistent pay gap between the genders (Glover and Kirton 2006). Out-dated stereotypical beliefs about gender and social roles continue to impact on how men and women are viewed in terms of suitability for positions and what type of projects are considered appropriate for employees based on gender (Eagly and Karau 2002; Oakley 2000). While lifestyle choices certainly play a role in the career paths of women, the context in which these so-called choices are made must be considered.

Women and minorities are particularly disadvantaged in work environments that eschew equal employment statutes, affirmative action policies, and diversity management (Heery 2006; Jones and Pringle 2015; Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015). Unfortunately, the film and television industry seems to be impervious to these types of equality solutions. Individuals working in in such environments often deny the existence of such inequalities even if they themselves have been the victims of discrimination. Rosalind Gill (2011, 2014) has found that these attitudes are relatively common in post-feminist environments. These are spaces that have adopted the discourse of neoliberalism, of individual merit regardless of gender, and yet men continue to be privileged (Gill 2014). The problem of sexism (racism, classism, ageism, homophobia) in the workplace is often denied or rationalized away

by those exhibiting discriminatory behaviours. However, based upon statistics like those cited at the beginning of this chapter, inequality is still rampant in the industry despite these denials. Deborah Jones and Judith K. Pringle (2015) call these inequalities ‘unmanageable inequalities’ as those disadvantaged within these work environments cannot seek remedy. They write:

There has been widespread refusal to acknowledge inequalities: where they do exist, widespread and consistent statistical claims are combatted by lists of token women, by deep-seated belief in talent as the decider, and by a conservative approach to gender difference (46).

In these new economy work environments, structural inequalities are ignored and merit-based individualised explanations are invoked to explain failures or lack of career success (Gill 2011, 2014; Jones and Pringle 2015). This creates an environment hostile to the very mention of sexism as a potential problem and makes it extremely difficult for inequalities and discrimination to even be discussed, making inequalities both unmanageable and ‘unspeakable’ (Gill 2014; Jones and Pringle 2015). This thesis will illuminate how these trends in the new economy and these unmanageable and unspeakable inequalities are experienced by industry women in the US context. It will be interesting to observe if women working in the US invoke similar individualistic, merit-based explanations for the under-representation of women in film and television production work or if they use discourses of inequality, discrimination, and sexism in their career accounts and industry explanations.

Approaches to Media Studies

As discussed above, the trends of the new economy have transformed many aspects of work. However, gender continues to influence these processes despite the gender-neutral discourse of neoliberalism. I now turn my attention to the different ways in which scholars have explored and analysed media texts, audiences, and producers and how a feminist approach that focuses on the career experiences of women working in the US film and television industry will be beneficial. Two of the primary theoretical approaches to studies of the media are found in political economy and cultural

studies.¹² These two fields have historically been framed as oppositional to each other (Havens, Lotz, and Tinic 2009; Hesmondhalgh 2007). Political economy has been criticised for its exclusionary interest in macro-level structural issues in the study of media while ignoring micro-level production practices and individuals (Havens, Lotz, and Tinic 2009; Hesmondhalgh 2007). On the other hand, cultural studies has been characterised by a focus on textual analysis and audience reception studies that fail to interrogate links with larger societal structures (Havens, Lotz, and Tinic 2009; Hesmondhalgh 2007; Levine 2001). Hence there have been calls (Couldry 2004; Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell 2009) to look beyond the divide between political economy and cultural studies and to move toward more interdisciplinary approaches to studying the media. However, a brief look at these two approaches will be helpful to contextualize this thesis and consider the historical development of the field.

Political economy

Firmly rooted in Marxist theory, political economy has been used as a means of analysing the processes of media production. While traditional economics views the economy as a system separated from other entities, political economy examines the intersections of economic actors with political, social and cultural forces (Golding and Murdock 2000). When applied to the investigation of media, political economy examines how economics influences the production of goods (media texts) for public consumption, who makes decisions about these choices, and who is capable of consuming these products (Golding and Murdock 2000). According to Golding and Murdock (2000):

Where mainstream economics focuses on the sovereign individuals of capitalism, critical political economy starts with sets of social relations and the play of power. It is interested in seeing how the making and taking of meaning is shaped at every level by the structured asymmetries of social relations [...] What marks critical political economy is that it always goes beyond situated action to show how particular micro-contexts are shaped by general economic dynamics and the wider structures they sustain. It is

¹² See Hesmondhalgh (2007) and Havens, Lotz, and Tinic, (2009) for further explanations of other modes of inquiry into the media.

especially interested in the ways that communicative activity is structured by the unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources (73).¹³

Hesmondhalgh (2007) expands upon Golding and Murdock's (2000) definition of critical political economy adding that this approach suggests that culture is produced and used by consumers under a capitalist system that will inevitably play a part in explaining differences in 'power, profit, and prestige' and that critical political economy studies of the media seek to understand 'the extent to which the cultural industries serve the interests of the wealthy and powerful' (Hesmondhalgh 2007, 34).

Therefore, political economy considers media ownership as one of the central issues in understanding how the media influences larger society (Hardy 2010; Hesmondhalgh 2007). Political economists have explored to what degree ownership influences textual production and how ownership, especially of large corporate media conglomerates, may interact with political and economic systems. Media moguls such as Rupert Murdoch of the Australian conglomerate News Corporation and Silvio Berlusconi, former Prime Minister of Italy¹⁴ and owner of several large Italian media outlets, have been scrutinized in both the international press and academia. During his time as Prime Minister of Italy Berlusconi controlled three of the seven largest television channels in Italy, and members of his family were in charge of some of the most popular print media outlets (Blatmann 2003; Fabbrini 2011). Political economists would view Berlusconi's access to media outlets and his opportunity to influence political discussions in the media as problematic due to the conflict of interest between media ownership and political power that can threaten social justice and equality (Fabbrini 2011). In the case of Rupert Murdoch and News Corporation, the influence exerted on political parties and politicians in the United Kingdom is perhaps less straight forward, but nevertheless problematic. While scholars have analysed Murdoch's influence in politics for years (Arsenault and Castells 2008;

¹³ Golding and Murdock (2000) differentiate between 'classic political economy' and 'critical political economy', writing: 'Classical political economists and their present day followers start from the assumption that public intervention ought to be minimized and market forces given the widest possible freedom of operation. Critical political economists on the other hand point to the distortions and inequalities of market systems and argue that these deficiencies can only be rectified by public intervention...' (76). For simplicity, I refer to both as political economy.

¹⁴ Silvio Berlusconi served as Prime Minister of Italy in 1994-1995, 2001-2006, 2008-2011.

McChesney 2001; McChesney and Schiller 2003) with the phone hacking scandal that led to the 2011 closure of the *News of the World*, one of the UK's best-selling tabloid newspapers, Murdoch's News Corporation and the influence he potentially has over national politics became a subject of sustained public scrutiny (Wring 2012). Political economists look at these relationships that have the potential to impact on wider society and critique the social structures that help keep such power concentration in place. So while producers and owners of media are considered a critical part of the equation, the everyday experiences of media workers and consumers can be marginalised in political economy in favour of examinations of larger structural issues.

Political economy has certainly contributed to our understanding of the media, particularly the intersections between the industry and larger political, cultural, social, and economic forces. I use parts of this foundational work to inform my own investigations. However, as a feminist I find that generally, political economy approaches to the media tend to overlook the daily practices of those working in film and television. I agree with Havens, Lotz, and Tinic (2009) when they argue that political economy approaches can focus on macro-level analyses of production and are reluctant to integrate human agency at all levels of production into explanations for media. Additionally, I think there has been a lack of attention paid to the effects gender can have on the production of media in the political economy tradition. In the following section another approach to studying media, cultural studies, is discussed.

Cultural studies

Cultural studies analyses of the media, like political economy, are concerned with issues of power. However, according to Havens, Lotz, and Tinic (2009) cultural studies differs from political economy in its 'continued emphasis on the quotidian practices that form the integral building blocks of cultures' (248). Cultural studies problematizes and questions the micro-level practices that create cultural texts and influence the reception of these products by consumers. In this respect, cultural studies has contributed to our understandings of how audiences interact with and potentially resist the messages present in some media texts while also critically analysing the content of media products themselves.

Furthermore, cultural studies has pointed out the need to engage with all the different types of cultural products (Havens, Lotz, and Tinic 2009; Hesmondhalgh 2007). Cultural studies questions what is considered culture and who has the power to determine what constitutes a cultural object. This field has validated media analyses that look at what might be considered 'pop' culture or 'entertainment' (Hesmondhalgh 2007). This is not to say that political economists have never considered entertainment, particularly in the recent past as media corporations have continued to diversify their product lines and merge with other companies. Nor is this a claim that cultural studies scholars never consider news media in their analyses. However, historically these are the divisions that have developed out of differences in ontologies and epistemological foundations between political economy and cultural studies (Hardy 2010; Havens, Lotz, and Tinic 2009). While political economy is concerned with questions of power and whose interests are served by the media, cultural studies interrogates this 'conception of interests beyond economic and political ones to include a strong sense of the politics involved in issues of recognition and identity' (Hesmondhalgh 2007, 42). In other words, cultural studies recognizes that certain cultural products may privilege particular viewpoints and populations while continuing to marginalise already excluded groups. Political economy also examines how social inequities may influence media, but tends to base analyses on secondary data and larger societal trends rather than focusing on the individual producer (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). According to Cottle (2003) studies of media production tend to sway between the two extremes of political economy and cultural studies in which:

[T]he former can all too often begin and end with a materialist presumption of the determinacy of the marketplace, the latter too often substitutes an idealist interpretation of the play of discourses divorced from a grounded analysis of exactly how these were selected and shaped in the processes and practices of media production...Questions of organisation and production have yet to be fully opened up to empirical analysis and interpretation and in ways that are analytically sensitive to the 'mediating' agency of cultural producers (13).

It is my goal to make these connections in this thesis with a particular focus on how employment in film and television continues to be influenced by larger gender norms.

I explore how these norms are experienced on a micro-level by women working in the contemporary US industry. While there are exceptions to Cottle's (2003) generalisation, neither political economy nor cultural studies have examined women's career experiences in the contemporary US film and television industry. Nevertheless, the strong foundations laid through these two traditions have helped to foster the field of production studies, which offers more potential for my own investigation.

New directions: production studies

The fields of political economy and cultural studies have contributed to our understanding of the cultural industries but there remains a gap in the literature as to the lived experiences of the people that create media texts (Conor, Gill, and Taylor 2015a; Hesmondhalgh 2010). However, beginning in earnest in the 1990s increased attention has been paid to the individuals that work behind-the-scenes in media, and new theories and methodologies have emerged as a result (Banks, Conor, and Mayer 2015). As a field, production studies developed out of the tradition of cultural studies but integrated a political economy perspective with a recognition that larger structural and economic forces have the ability to influence localised processes of the making and interpretation of culture (Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell 2009). Production studies scholars are:

...interested in how media producers make culture, and, in the process, make themselves into particular kinds of workers in modern, mediated societies. [They] want to look up and down the food chains of production hierarchies, to understand how people work through professional organizations and informal networks to form communities of shared practices, languages, and cultural understandings of the world. [They] assume that directors and editors, lighting technicians and storywriters, contract casting agents and full-time studio caterers are all cultural actors, too. [These workers] shape and refashion their identities in the process of making their careers in industries undergoing political transitions and economic reorganizations (Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell 2009, 2).

Production studies looks at the ways that 'culture both constitutes and reflects the relationships of power' within and across societies (Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell 2009, 2) and furthers the field of inquiry into the media by adopting an

interdisciplinary approach to research in order to foster greater understanding of the intersecting forces that help construct media (Banks, Conor, and Mayer 2015). According to Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell (2009), ‘production studies borrow theoretical insights from the social sciences and humanities, but, perhaps most importantly, they take the lived realities of people involved in media production as the subjects for theorizing production as culture’ (4). For these reasons, a production studies approach is most appropriate for my research which examines women’s experiences of work in the industry.

Todd Gitlin’s (1994) *Inside Prime Time* first published in 1983 is a relatively early example of production studies at work. Hesmondhalgh (2007) categorizes Gitlin’s (1994) work as radical sociology because it adopts the view that power and inequality are embedded within the structures of society rather than flukes within a rational system. However, I would argue that because Gitlin (1994) integrated an account of the historical and socioeconomic factors of the television industry as well as the subjective experiences of the television executives he interviewed into a cohesive explanation of how these individual components all influenced the cultural texts produced, his work is a prime example of the capabilities of production studies when it comes to researching media. Gitlin (1994) divided his work into three parts. The first examines the uncertain nature of television programming success and the tactics networks¹⁵ use to try and mitigate this ambiguity in order to increase audience size, advertising revenues, and profits. The second portion of Gitlin’s (1994) work examines the closed nature of the industry and its reliance on reputation, social networks, and repeat business to try and recreate successful and popular television. Finally, Gitlin (1994) shifts his attention to the interplay between television and politics at the national level, the impact of the conservative movement in the United States, and how advertisers influence television programming. In order to accomplish this Gitlin (1994) used a number of different data-gathering methods including interviews with network executives, examination of media texts, programming schedules and ratings, historical analysis of the television industry and the politics of the era, research on market conditions, and other cultural artefacts. In

¹⁵ Gitlin’s (1994) work examined the television industry of the 1970s and early 1980s when networks still dominated television broadcasting in the United States.

Gitlin's (1994) words, 'I want[ed] to convey not only how and why I think the networks do what they do, but a sense of the ambiance and texture of the industry's life-as-it-is-lived' (14). Gitlin (1994) provides a detailed study of television production, but he does not account for the influence of gender on these processes.

Looking at more recent research, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* by John Thornton Caldwell (2008) is an example of updated production studies methodology particularly suited to the post-network era in the United States. In his investigation of the cultural practices of production workers in Los Angeles, Caldwell (2008) used the narratives of working individuals, industry texts, economic information as well as ethnographic observations of industry workplaces and events to better understand the communities of people that create media. While Caldwell (2008) did observe and speak with producers, directors and other higher-level workers, he also critically examined the habits of below-the-line workers who have historically been marginalized in studies of labour in the industry. In the modern era, film and television production as an industry has become more self-reflexive not only through trade publications, behind-the-scenes documentaries and specials, and entertainment television shows but, as Caldwell (2008) points out, through production workers' discourses as well. While some scholars may not consider this reflexivity worthy of examination, Caldwell (2008) argues that this practice needs to be understood within the context of the contemporary US film and television industry. He writes:

I recognize that film and television are far more than either industries or groups of media corporations that simply manufacture entertainment or compete as part of a national economy or international cultural marketplace [...] they also very much function on a microsocial level as local cultures and social communities in their own right [...] the world of workers that I offer [...] proves to be as critically provocative and culturally significant as the on-screen content of prime-time programs and widescreen films that critics and theorists traditionally analyse (Caldwell, 2008, 2).

I agree with Caldwell's (2008) assessment of the importance of examining the daily lives of cultural workers. Caldwell (2008) explored the often marginalised communities of below-the-line workers and brought to light how these workers

constitute and locate themselves within the larger industry. The narratives examined were complex and compelling. However, I find that the trade-stories Caldwell (2008) studied, particularly surrounding career origins and success, tended to prioritise male experiences. Caldwell (2008) found that below-the-line workers typically constructed their narratives as ‘production war stories’ in which workers overcome intense (often physical) trials during production. However, as discussed above, an overwhelming majority of these positions are occupied by men (Lauzen 2008). It is possible that women who work in these positions may participate in similar narrative practices to fit in with the highly masculinized culture associated with such work, but this has yet to be analysed. Additionally, the above-the-line worker narratives analysed were mostly those of men as well. Caldwell (2008) found that the ‘genesis myths’ many above-the-line workers construct and articulate were invoked for two primary purposes:

First, ancestral name dropping¹⁶ functions as a kind of walking-talking résumé and/or personal demo reel. Second, the practice functions as a form of territorial turf marking. Much as dogs urinate to mark, announce, and warn others about their turf, these producers constantly drop ancestral names to denigrate or discourage the many lesser figures and wanabees on set (49).

Here Caldwell (2008) describes the behaviour of above-the-line workers in a masculine manner by comparing them to dogs urinating to mark their territory and ward off potential competitors. I wonder, had the same behaviour been observed in a predominantly female work environment would it have been described with the same aggressive, competitive, dominating language? Do women participate in this type of behaviour in industry workplaces? If they do, why? Is it as acceptable for women to claim their professional pedigrees to their colleagues in the same ways as men do? These are just a few of the questions that are left unanswered in Caldwell’s (2008) research. To be fair, throughout his work Caldwell (2008) does call attention to the problematic specificities of some gendered industry practices and he does comment on the masculinized nature of the industry. However, I think a gendered lens that focuses on the experiences and narratives of women working in the industry, largely

¹⁶ By ‘ancestral name dropping’ Caldwell (2008) means the practice of individuals claiming affiliation, familiarity, and/or previous working relationships with well-known projects or individuals in the industry to advertise their professional pedigree.

absent from his work, would provide an as yet unexamined perspective on production communities.

Another recent addition to the field of production studies comes from Vicki Mayer (2011) who examined labourers who typically fall outside the Hollywood labour hierarchy system. Combining interviews and ethnographic observations Mayer (2011) researched how workers such as soft-core cameramen, television set assemblers, and reality program casters identify themselves in relation to the globalised television industry and economy. She argues that positions like those she researched make up an invisible labour force that is not credited with the same value that more traditionally defined 'television producers' are afforded (Mayer 2011). Mayer (2011) writes:

Deconstructing the rhetoric of the creative economy and its implicit material inequalities in the first instance means breaking down artificial distinctions between the mental and manual, between skilled labor and organic labor, between above the line and below the line. These dichotomies continue to justify the perception, especially in the middle class, that some types of work are categorically better than others, that their workers should be better compensated and more entitled to societal rewards (176).

Gitlin (1994), Caldwell (2008), and Mayer (2011) have contributed to a growing body of film and television research that places labour, which has traditionally been marginalised in studies of the media, at the centre. The turn toward labour, which builds upon the contributions of political economy and cultural studies perspectives, has offered new insights into a vital aspect of how cultural texts are produced and the hidden experiences of those that do much of this production work. I absolutely agree with Caldwell (2008) and Mayer's (2011) calls for more research into the lives of below-the-line workers and the ways in which they conceptualise their work in relation to the global film and television economy. It is the case that above-the-line workers tend to gain higher levels of recognition and compensation than below-the-line labour and that research into film and television production has more often examined the experiences of the middle to upper echelons of labour in the industry. However, the gendered experiences of women that work above as well as below-the-line in the industry, particularly in the US context, have yet to be adequately

examined. As a feminist scholar, I see this as a conspicuous absence and one that has been recognized within feminist scholarship on the cultural industries.

Feminist production studies

Angela McRobbie (2000) writes: ‘for too long in feminist media studies there has been a concern with media texts and their various meanings at the expense of any detailed sociological consideration for those who actually make these texts’ (255). While there are notable exceptions to this trend that have interrogated the gendered worlds of particular women-oriented shows and genres (e.g. D’Acci 1994), as well as non-academic work focusing on powerful women in the film and television business (e.g. Abramowitz 2000), there is a lack of literature on the everyday gendered experiences of women that work in the contemporary US industry. McRobbie’s (2000) research concerning young women working in fashion journalism is instructive for examining gender in the context of creative work. McRobbie (2000) warns that too often studies of labour in the creative industries fall into three ‘traps’. Workers in these fields may be exploited by employers through a system of freelance and contract work but, according to McRobbie (2000), it would be incorrect for researchers to dismiss any agency on the part of the women who choose to work in such a way. Additionally, many studies do not explore the relationship between this new work reality at the beginning of a career and how this might influence an individual’s long-term working pattern (McRobbie 2000). Finally, McRobbie (2000) cautions that the ‘specific gender dynamics of work and employment at a time when young women are entering the workforce as a lifelong endeavour’ are often ignored or discounted. Ultimately, I think McRobbie (2000) is calling for researchers to cast off traditional notions and ideas concerning employment, particularly when it comes to media industries, as new frameworks are needed in order to understand and account for the agency of individuals as well as the constraints imposed on workers in the new economy. In order to accomplish this, I will use Miranda Banks’ (2009) feminist production studies framework.

According to Banks (2009) when feminism informs production studies projects, research becomes increasingly nuanced and particular. By problematizing the gendered nature of work within film and television production and the gendered

experiences of individuals working in this field, research projects are able to clarify and expose previously overlooked aspects of labour in the industry (Banks, Conor, and Mayer 2015). For Banks (2009), feminist production studies ‘provides an intervention to traditional feminist media analysis by incorporating a theorization of the material conditions of gendered labor within the context of a specific industry history’ (87). Through this interweaving of epistemologies, new patterns and insights into film and television production can emerge as diverse voices can help illuminate the often opaque operations of cultural industries (Banks, Conor, and Mayer 2015). Feminist production studies integrates knowledge from various disciplines ‘in order to grapple with questions of gender within historical, industrial, institutional, and aesthetic frameworks’ (Banks 2009, 95). Banks (2009) suggests that feminist production scholars must develop an understanding of the interconnections between the production, distribution, and reception/consumption of media texts in order to fully grasp a specific topic in this field. These three processes constantly interact and inform one another in multiple ways and form a circular relationship. In order to understand one aspect, scholars must have at least a basic knowledge of the others (Banks 2009). Feminist production studies uses the historical insights of feminist theories to critically analyse labour as a gendered process, a process that creates and perpetuates inequalities also found in other sectors and potentially those that are unique to the film and television industry.

Despite a tradition of neglecting labour in studies of the media, this subject has seen a surge in interest since the end of the twentieth century (Banks, Gill, and Taylor 2013a; Banks, Conor, and Mayer 2015; Christopherson 2008; Christopherson and Storper 1989; Hesmondhalgh 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Murdock 2003). In order to understand the products that are created for consumption, we must investigate the conditions and communities in which these texts are produced. It would be a mistake, however, to begin this discussion without contextualizing these studies within the macro-level changes that have influenced the US industry. The historical trajectory of the film and television industry in the US is distinct from other ‘advanced economies’ due to its tradition of ‘private ownership and commercial orientation’ (Christopherson 2008, 75). As such, a brief review of the major historical developments of the US industry is provided below.

A (brief) history of the film and television industry in the United States (1927-early 1980s)

Following the release and success of the first film with recorded sound in 1927, the Golden Age of Hollywood began. This era saw the rise of the legendary Hollywood studios—Paramount, RKO, MGM, United Artists, Warner Bros., Twentieth Century-Fox and the two smaller studios of Columbia and Universal (Caves 2000). In their heyday, the studios controlled production, distribution, and exhibition through vertically integrated organizations (Caves 2000). The studio system was incredibly efficient at churning out feature films as:

The assets owned or regularly employed by the film studios included all the crafts and physical facilities normally needed to assemble motion pictures. The physical facilities included studio lots with fixed or buildable sets where many films could be made without the expense of travel to distant locations, and with low costs of supervision by the nearby headquarters. Workers with more technical creative skills and the purely craft skills were under contracts based on collective bargaining [...] All of these, along with actors and directors, were deployed from film to film and film projects were selected and scheduled so as to keep these contractually tied inputs occupied (Caves 2000, 90).

These highly organized, vertically integrated studios operated as mass production machines (Blair 2001; Caves 2000; Christopherson and Storper 1989; Storper and Christopherson 1987). The film production process from inception to completion followed a standardized set of principles and practices allowing the studios to produce a large number of projects through this ‘factory-like’ structural organization (Christopherson and Storper 1989; Storper and Christopherson 1987). This set-up provided steady work for creative and craft workers in the industry who were hired as permanent staff members in order to keep up with the constant demand for new films that followed a formulaic production process (Christopherson and Storper 1989; Storper and Christopherson 1987). Similar to other mass production labour, in the studio system remuneration and promotions were tied to seniority and entry-level pay tended to be above average (Christopherson and Storper 1989). It was during this period that the unions and guilds of the film industry, for both above and below-the-

line workers, were born (Caves 2000; Christopherson and Storper 1989).¹⁷ The establishment of craft unions delineated the specializations of craft labourers and encouraged the continuation of the apprenticeship as the primary means of learning specialized crafts and skills (Christopherson and Storper 1989). The mass production model of the studio system combined with the unionization of its workers established a labour market that offered steady work, good pay, and opportunities for advancement based upon seniority and firm loyalty (Christopherson and Storper 1989; Storper and Christopherson 1987). In other words, early film production adhered to Fordist production and organizational traditions. However, following WWII, and largely as a result of the increasing popularity of television ownership, the studio system was no longer economically viable and studios began to downsize and maintain fewer departments and employees (Caves 2000).¹⁸ Studios made fewer films per year and project teams were assembled for one-off productions as opposed to being permanent employees (Caves 2000). These changes led to the demise of the vertically integrated studio system. It was replaced by a complex system in which the work that used to be done in-house by the studios was outsourced to small production companies who in turn hired innumerable specialized firms to perform the necessary work to produce one film. However, just as the studio system was vertically disintegrating, broadcast television was on the rise. Thus began a new historical period in the US industry which is commonly known as the ‘network era’ (Curtin and Shattuc 2009).

During the network era, three major television corporations—Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), The National Broadcasting Company (NBC), and the American Broadcasting Company (ABC)—formed an oligopoly that was responsible for the production of television programmes, their distribution to markets throughout the nation, and the exhibition of these programmes through broadcasting (Curtin and Shattuc 2009). This set-up allowed the three networks to keep tight control over their programming and to collect all profits procured from advertising and syndication

¹⁷ Guilds were established for writers (Writers’ Guild of America), directors (Directors’ Guild of America), and film actors (Screen Actors’ Guild). Below-the-line workers belonged to specialized unions which formed a ‘federation’ known as IATSE (International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees) (Christopherson and Storper 1989, 333).

¹⁸ The increased popularity of television ownerships along with the Paramount anti-trust Supreme Court ruling helped bring the studio era to a close; for detailed explanations see Caves (2000).

sales (Curtin and Shattuc 2009). With control in the hands of a few, and with limited choices for viewers, networks were able to offer relative job security to employees in their vertically integrated organizations (Tunstall 2001). However, this employment model would not last.

Amid pressure from politicians, interest groups, advertisers, movie studios, and other media outlets all looking to move into the growing business of television, in 1972 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) relaxed restrictions on a technology that until then had been heavily regulated and not much used—cable (Curtin and Shattuc 2009). This shift in policy opened the doors for multi-channel cable television and allowed new competitors and independent programmers into the business (Curtin and Shattuc 2009). As a result of these changes and with more restrictions placed upon the networks in terms of programme ownership and syndication statutes, the oligopoly of CBS, NBC, and ABC was broken and the network era came to a close by the early 1980s (Meyers 2009).

With the decline of the studio system and the end of the network era the film and television industry in the US adapted in a number of ways including industrial reorganization. These changes in the film and television industry coincided with neoliberal policy changes regarding the de-regulation of markets emblematic of the Reagan and Thatcher governments in the United States of America and the United Kingdom respectively (Hesmondhalgh 2007). These neoliberal policies encouraged less state interference in industry, weakened the bargaining power of labour unions, and helped push the global economy toward the practice of marketization (Hardy 2010). According to Hardy (2010) marketization refers to the general change in governing values that ‘privileges and promotes freedom of action for private businesses and market mechanisms over state regulation and public provision’ (200). In terms of the media industries, these shifts in policy and attitude had pronounced effects on the ways in which media products were and are produced, and upon the people employed in these sectors (Blair, Grey, and Randle 2001; Deuze 2007; Dex et al. 2000; Golding and Murdock 2000; Hardy 2010; Hesmondhalgh 2007).

There are four primary characteristics that are universal to the marketization process (Murdock 2003). The first of these is privatization in which public or government-

run entities are sold to private investors and are transformed into profit-seeking companies (Murdock 2003). Liberalization, or the introduction of competing companies into markets and industries that were previously dominated by a small number of actors, is another process that takes place during marketization (Murdock 2003). In terms of film and television production, liberalization began with the introduction of cable television as an alternative to network broadcasting in the United States and with regulations that were introduced by the FCC to break the oligopoly of CBS, NBC, and ABC (Curtin and Shattuc 2009). Another important aspect of marketization is the ‘re-orientation of regulatory regimes’ which Murdock (2003) characterizes as the relaxation of statutes pertaining to corporate bodies. This occurs when governments step back and promote industry self-regulation, permit corporations to own multiple media outlets, and prioritize corporate interests over public ones. Finally, through corporatization public entities are encouraged to act and perform more like private enterprises and success or failure is measured using the same indicators that corporations use (Murdock 2003).

The film and television industry was placed on the marketization track along with many other industries and public services starting in the 1970s. Film and television production in the United States reacted to these changes in policy and practice through the concentration, casualization, and commodification of the industry (Murdock 2003). With relaxed regulations regarding media ownership, media outlets started to grow in size as companies and broadcasters were bought out or merged with larger entities (Meyers 2009). In an effort to decrease costs and compete in the market, labour in the industry went through the process of casualization that transitioned many employees from long-term workers to contract hires and freelancers who were given short and/or part-time employment on a project-by-project basis (Blair 2001; Curtin and Shattuc 2009; Dex et al. 2000; Hesmondhalgh 2007; Thynne 2000).

The marketization of the film and television industry included such mergers as ABC Disney (1996), CBS Paramount (1999), and NBC Universal (2004). This created an environment in which companies had access and control over television and film projects’ production and distribution. While these conglomerates enjoyed great

success, the film and television industries are evolving once again with the increased popularity of content streamed from websites and the use of digital video recorders (DVRs) which make it possible for consumers to bypass advertisements altogether, causing the industry to scramble for new business models that will allow them to remain profitable in this environment (Deuze 2007). In addition to these changes, paradoxically, in recent years many of the conglomerates chose to decentralize operations and create smaller ‘independent’ companies that still fall under the larger organizational umbrella (Deuze 2007). While media conglomerates do control a great deal of the film and television market, there are more and more independent production houses being set up, in some cases by the large conglomerates themselves to disperse risk and try new formats, that all help create an extremely complex, but interconnected web of businesses (Deuze 2007). Film and television production takes place within this messy web of independent contractors who themselves hire subcontractors to complete projects (Christopherson 2008; Christopherson and Storper 1989; Storper and Christopherson 1987). The organization of the contemporary US film and television industry is:

...difficult to depict in a straightforward way. The industry is highly concentrated – at the point of product distribution and in particular product markets, including film and television. Just a few firms control the gateways to consumer markets. At the same time, production of entertainment media is carried out in a vertically disintegrated system, organized around projects [...] Since the 1990s, new types of media entertainment products have developed, such as videos shown on YouTube and other consumer-created content. While these products are innovative, they lie outside the mainstream profit-oriented media production and distribution system (Christopherson 2008, 76).

Despite the disintegration of the production process, the means of mass distribution remain tightly controlled by relatively few parties (Christopherson 2008). As such, this has created an employment model that Christopherson and Storper (1989) refer to as ‘flexible specialization.’ In this environment, the majority of workers in the industry are employed on a freelance basis and use their particular skills on projects. This creates a highly mobile workforce and increases flexibility for larger producers as they are no longer required to maintain permanent workforces, but unfortunately increases instability for the majority of workers (Christopherson and Storper 1989).

Furthermore, like many other industries, film and television work is increasingly being outsourced to geopolitical spaces with cheaper labour, and as a result of technological advances in telecommunications, individual projects can have work done simultaneously in different locations throughout the world (Deuze 2007). All of these elements contribute to the creation of an employment environment that requires temporary, flexible, and mobile labour.

It should be noted that there are differences between the film and television industries within the US. While both film and television share similar processes of pre-production, production, and post-production, they have traditionally differed in their distribution and exhibition models (Randle 2011). The distribution of television programs in the US traditionally has not been as centralized as it tends to be in other areas of the world. As opposed to national programming providers, such as the BBC, which broadcasts programs simultaneously across the UK, broadcasting in the US depends on a number of factors. It involves a complex web of individual media markets, network affiliates, syndication, and different air times even for the same program. Shows produced by the major networks are typically licensed and distributed to local network affiliates as well as digital and satellite providers across the nation who then broadcast the ‘first-run’ of the program in their media market or to their subscribers.

Films, however, were traditionally distributed to movie theatres in a limited or national release and only exhibited in those theatres (Randle 2011). There were limited copies of the film in existence, so audiences paid a premium to view films. These differences in distribution and exhibition were largely related to the distinct technologies used to create and display television and film works. In previous years, films could not make the transition from the big screen to television formatting. This created a greater divide between the film and television industries than exists in the contemporary sector. Technological advances have helped bridge these divisions to the point where production and post-production workers can move more fluidly from film to television and vice versa (Randle 2011). For the purposes of this study, I chose to interview women working in both film and television in order to gain perspectives from both types of career experiences. If anything, the film sector

continues to be more male-dominated than television. While there are no doubt distinct industrial practices and customs specific to either film or television work, I was more interested in analysing how and why women chose their specific careers and their experiences of it as opposed to doing a comparative study between populations. Furthermore, several of my participants had moved between employment in film and television throughout their careers which is becoming more common in the contemporary industry.

Labour in the Contemporary Film and Television Industry

With all of the organizational, legal, and structural changes the film and television industry has endured over the past four decades, in recent years researchers have turned their attention to labour. Gillian Ursell (2000) describes the industry as:

A vampire, ingesting youngsters at low prices from a large pool provided by the education system, working newcomers and established hands remorselessly, and discarding the older and less accommodating at will. That workers are, by and large, not merely volunteering to co-operate with the vampire but are actively constituting its life processes, is a phenomenon which merits careful attention, both in its own right and in the opportunity it provides to reconsider whether and, if so, how capitalism is a system of determinations (816).

Given this description, why do individuals seek out work in this sector? What motivates people to pursue such careers despite the difficulties Ursell (2000) cites? In an attempt to better understand this type of work Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) carried out research in three different cultural industries: television, magazine journalism, and music. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) sought to answer, ‘to what extent is it possible to do good work in the cultural industries’ (1)? Using Marx as a foundation, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) outline their framework of good work which consists of: ‘decent pay, hours, and safety; autonomy; interest and involvement; sociality; esteem and self-esteem; self-realisation; work-life balance; security’ as well as the relative quality of products in the eyes of those who produce as well as those who consume them (17). Through qualitative interviews and participant observation Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) explore elements of good and bad work in the cultural industries as experienced by some employed in these

fields. Using their framework of the characteristics of good work they conclude with calls for greater social justice within the cultural industries through processes that offer this endeavour its best chance: strengthening of trade unions, reconsidering the role of work in individuals' lives and the 'starving artist' stereotype which normalizes a certain amount of sacrifice and suffering on the part of the cultural worker, and finally calling for a more equitable distribution of the 'benefits and burdens associated with work' as well as less emphasis on the highly individualized 'winner-take-all' neoliberalism that is dominating contemporary western work ethos (229). While there were idiosyncratic practices particular to each sector, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) found many shared characteristics, that will be discussed below, that applied to work in media and the cultural industries more generally.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) integrate cultural studies, business and management studies, and political economy perspectives into their work. They succeed in explicating the complex experiences of workers in the cultural industries as well as the relationship between the workers and the products they create. There are elements of good and bad work in the cultural industries, many of which are experienced by its workers throughout their career in simultaneous fashion. Gender was not their primary category of analysis but they do include brief discussions of gendered issues, particularly surrounding parenthood and work-life balance. However, this analysis is specifically situated within the UK context. There are not doubt numerous similarities in the experiences of cultural industry workers in the UK and the US, but there will inevitably be differences resulting from distinct histories, geographies, cultural practices, political processes, national policies, and attitudes regarding work. This thesis, using gender as a primary category of analysis, seeks to illuminate how work in the film and television industry is experienced by women in the US context thereby furthering our understanding of how the processes and products associated with this specific cultural industry are influenced by particular global settings. In the following section I explore characteristics of cultural industry employment encountered by other scholars in their research in or to provide context for my findings which are discussed in Chapters 3-6.

Characteristics of industry employment

One characteristic associated with work in the media industries is the degree of autonomy it offers workers (Banks and Milestone 2011; Gill 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). Deuze (2007) sums up this dual notion of autonomy, writing: ‘It must be clear, that autonomy is an important, individual-level and thus particular concept in media work: it both refers to the level of control over one’s career, and the (real or perceived) ability one has in making more or less independent decisions in the creative process of producing media’ (92). Media workers, and cultural workers more generally, often cite autonomy, flexible schedules, and creative control as some of the major perks of working in these industries (Banks 2007; Gill and Pratt 2008; Ursell 2000). This autonomy is not absolute, however. While individuals and project teams are afforded a greater level of creative autonomy than others working in more traditional Fordist environments, this autonomy is constrained within a system in which the capitalist ‘hirers’ have tight control of reproduction and distribution of creative works produced by cultural labour (Caves 2000; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Smith and McKinlay 2009b).

Along with autonomy, perceived or real, employees in the media industries report pleasure derived from the fact that there is a ‘cool, fun’ image associated with working in the industry (Gill 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin 2005). There can be a certain level of mystery and glamour attached to media work when viewed from the outside, particularly in film and television production (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). The actual world of film and television work is one that is obscured for the average person and outsiders often express interest in the inner workings of shared cultural products (Tunstall 2001). Based on my personal experience of internships and work in the industry, people were (and still are) curious about celebrities I may have met, projects I worked on, and what it was like to work in such a ‘fun, interesting’ environment. The image that accompanies work in film and television production is enticing, and in part acts as a motivation for the thousands of people that try to enter into the business every year.

Association with the larger industry is not the only source of pleasure for cultural labour. Workers in these industries often cite their ‘love’ of their work as one of the

most rewarding aspects of their chosen fields (Gill and Pratt 2008; Lee 2012; Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin 2005; Ursell 2000). McRobbie (1998; 2002b) found that young fashion designers considered their work as a ‘labour of love’ and were ‘passionate’ about their work. This is similar to what Ursell (2000) observed in her research on contemporary UK television workers. Cultural workers often describe their work using the language of ‘love’, ‘passion’¹⁹, and ‘pleasure’ despite the drawbacks that tend to accompany a career in the cultural industries. This trend has been reflected in other research. Gill and Pratt (2008) write:

One of the most consistent findings of research on work within the creative industries is that it is experienced by most who are involved with it as profoundly satisfying and intensely pleasurable (at least some of the time) (15).

While cultural workers may engage in ‘passionate work’ and derive great pleasure from their jobs, there are drawbacks associated with employment in these industries. The stereotype attached to creative industries workers, which arises from the characterisation of passionate work, can create difficulties when attempting to focus on actual working conditions. While creative industry workers often cite their ‘love’ for their work, they also talk about long hours, low pay, lack of benefits, insecurity, and difficulty with planning for the future (Conor, Gill, and Taylor 2015a). Unfortunately, the prioritization of passionate work, of finding work that one loves, can diminish the focus on issues relating to fair working practices as well as equality, diversity, and accessibility. In other words, creative workers may accept the drawbacks of their careers as a ‘reasonable’ price for getting to do what they love. These drawbacks are examined below.

While they may be able to ‘do what they love’ when working in film and television, individuals must first gain access to this world by being hired. Unfortunately for women and other minorities, hiring in film and television relies heavily on informal recruitment processes that circumvent equal employment opportunity policies more common in other sectors with less fragmented industrial structures (Grugulis and Stoyanova 2012; Ibarra 1992, 1993; Jones and Pringle 2015; Wing-Fai, Gill, and

¹⁹ The type of worker employed in the cultural industries has also been described as a ‘self-expressive worker’ (Christopherson 2008).

Randle 2015; Wreyford 2015).²⁰ While a career in the industry is high-risk and full of precarity for many workers, studios and production houses are extremely risk-averse and aim to diminish financial risk through many channels. One method is through the projects in which they choose to invest and those they employ to complete these projects. These choices are often based on predicted product marketability and a portfolio of previous successes respectively. This risk aversion trickles down and permeates all levels of hiring within the industry. It contributes to the continued unequal representation of women working behind-the-scenes. Teams are assembled and dis-assembled quickly to accommodate the project-based nature of film and television employment, which further encourages the use of informal hiring practices and the reliance on referrals from trusted network contacts (Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015).

The film and television labour environment also has an overpopulation of potential workers (Murdock 2003; Thynne 2000; Ursell 2000). With this oversupply of labour, and because so many workers in the film and television industry are freelance/contractual employees, hiring entities have a marked advantage when it comes to negotiating pay (Ursell 2000).²¹ While it is true that the overabundance of workers may be less pronounced in some occupations within the industry, in general employees are aware of the acute competition that exists. Individuals working in film and television may be less inclined to negotiate higher pay rates as they are cognizant of the many other people that could replace them (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Ursell 2000). Even when freelancers belong to one of the trade unions or professional organizations that monitor and advocate for fair pay rates in the industry, there are times when workers will not report union rate violations they have been victims of in order to be viewed as a cooperative employee (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). It is not uncommon for individuals in the industry to work second and third jobs to supplement their incomes as pay rates for film and television work can be low and contracts short especially throughout the early years of a career. For some this is a long-term necessity (Deuze 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008; Randle and Culkin 2009; Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015).

²⁰ Networking and inequalities associated with it will be extensively discussed in Chapter 5.

²¹ There are 'superstars' within the film and television labour market who have more power in these negotiations (Hesmondhalgh 2007; Ursell 2000).

Adding to this difficulty is the fact that many newcomers to the film and television industry are actually willing to work for little or no pay (Deuze 2007; Hesmondhalgh 2007; Ursell 2000). Students, recent graduates, or people transitioning into the industry are often hired as interns²² or low-level employees with very low pay. Indeed some individuals are willing to work for free in order to ‘build up’ their experience and their curriculum vitae when first beginning their careers (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Ursell 2000). This helps fuel the depression of pay rates for the entire industry. There are additional implications of this common practice. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) suggest that abuses of low-level workers or students can occur because people are so desperate to gain a foothold in the industry that little or no pay is not the only abuse they are willing to accept. Workers can be further exploited because of their lack of union status and/or their beliefs that current unpleasant conditions will be compensated for by their increased career opportunities in the future. Furthermore, as Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) point out, ‘That so many workers, including graduates, are willing to sacrifice pay for a foot in the door has repercussions for the class composition of these industries. It is bound to limit mobility, because in most cases working for free is only possible with the resources of a relatively wealthy family to provide financial back-up’ (116). I would take this point further. While this practice may certainly limit the career mobility of newcomers, it no doubt restricts entry into the industry altogether for some individuals who may not be able to accept an unpaid position even while in school or with help from a partner in a dual-income household.

Despite the fact that many employees in the film and television industry are underpaid they are nonetheless expected to have incredibly flexible schedules and work long hours (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Perrons 2003). According to Banks (2007):

Currently valued are those ‘flexible’, ‘creative’ workers with the ability to ‘go the extra mile’, ‘think outside the box’, ‘live for the project’, and show dedication by working long hours or under oppressive circumstances. To be

²² Internships in the United States are often unpaid, particularly in the media industries. Depending upon state statutes interns are sometimes expected to gain class credit from a post-secondary educational institution in exchange for their work, but depending on the employer and the educational institution these requirements are often ignored and/or improperly regulated.

described as a regular '9-5' worker is no longer a commendation of diligence but a term of disapprobation. While flexible working is found in other industrial sectors, its virtues are more vigorously promoted in the cultural industries...(56).

Even though employees may work longer hours, they do not necessarily get paid for additional hours worked over their contract or union regulations (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). This no doubt impacts an individual's financial situation. Workers are also subjected to the physical demands and consequences of working 16 or 18-hour days. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) cite an interview in which a camera operator discussed 'downing Red Bulls' and ingesting caffeine pills to stay awake for jobs and 'shaking' while trying to work (118).

Those employed in the industry talk of the dangers of working long hours (Caldwell 2008). Individuals have been known to fall asleep while driving home, sometimes with fatal consequences (Caldwell 2008). Indeed, the 1997 death of 35-year-old Brent Hershman who was killed after he fell asleep at the wheel on his way home from a 19-hour film shoot is invoked as a cautionary tale and helped inspire the launch of a campaign by other below-the-line workers known as 12 On/12 Off²³ (Caldwell 2008). The purpose of 12 On/12 Off is to 'reduce workplace dangers that come from unrealistic managerial and scheduling demands intended as production "shortcuts"' (Caldwell 2008, 44). The campaign urges for a workday to consist of no more than twelve hours, with no less than twelve hours of turnaround, and no more than six hours between meals (Caldwell 2008). However, even with grassroots efforts such as 12 On/12 Off on the part of production workers, exploitation and abuse of employees continues in the business.

In addition to the long hours, abnormal schedules, low pay, and overly abundant pool of workers, employees in film and television production must also negotiate the emotional costs of working in the industry. As discussed above, while there are plenty of available workers to fill positions, the limited availability of jobs in film and television work cannot accommodate this oversupply of labour (Banks 2007; Christopherson and Storper 1989). Freelance and contract labourers are cognizant of

²³ More information available at: <http://12on12off.weebly.com/>.

the fact that they must almost perpetually seek work, even while employed, to ensure a steady income. After the completion of a project, it is not uncommon for weeks or months to go by in between paying projects, creating what Pratt (2000) has dubbed 'bulimic' work patterns. As a result workers must negotiate a large level of career uncertainty and the stress that can accompany this lifestyle (Deuze 2007). In Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) many participants reported 'nervousness, anxiety and even panic as a regular part of their working lives' (122). Adding to this stress is the pressure from management to complete projects with ever shrinking budgets, fewer employees, and in less time (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). So while employees tend to be overworked on a current project they are also forced to consider and spend time seeking future work. All of these elements can combine in ways that exacerbate stress and uncertainty and have the potential to seep into other aspects of employees' daily lives. Workers may be on location for days, weeks, or months while they are completing a project. In the post-production process, pressure to finish a project can mean extremely long hours, both of which can adversely affect work/life balances, particularly for individuals, more often women, with care-giving responsibilities.

The industry is not the only source of stress and exploitation. In her study of television labour in the United Kingdom Gillian Ursell (2000) posits that as a result of the contemporary television production environment, employees, particularly freelance workers, tend to exhibit signs of self-exploitation. In an industry in which employment is largely dependent on reputation and a portfolio of previous successful work, labourers can become willing participants in their own exploitation and commodification. Ursell (2000) acknowledges that the exploitation that takes place within the television labour market could be viewed as conforming to traditional capitalist labour theory in which labourers are victims of capitalist efforts at maximizing profits. However, she argues that this explanation fails to account for the importance of employee volunteerism (Ursell 2000). In order to establish a reputation within the industry and to create a network of industry connections, workers often put up with poor conditions in the hope that current sacrifice will result in future success (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Murdock 2003; Ursell 2000).

Research such as the studies mentioned above have helped to pull back the curtain on the sometimes mysterious lives of cultural workers, but the gender of employees has seldom been problematized, particularly in regard to the contemporary US film and television sector. The qualitative data collected and analysed by scholars has predominantly been treated as if belonging to the singular category of ‘worker’ rather than ‘female worker’, ‘male worker’, ‘Latina worker,’ or ‘trans worker’ and does not address the distinct experiences that women in the US industry may report if given the opportunity.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by citing research that demonstrates the continued gender inequality of behind-the-scenes work in the contemporary US film and television industry. Since the 1980s, this sector has been transformed through the implementation of neoliberal policies and practices that characterise work in what is commonly known as the new economy. Authors such as Beck (1992) and Castells (2000) posit that the rise of individualism that has accompanied the rise of the new economy may help erode traditional gender norms. However, as discussed in this chapter, the ideal new economy worker is based on the western, male entrepreneur model, creating an inherently gendered standard against which all are measured. As a result, contemporary work environments continue to be affected by gendered, raced, and classed practices and attitudes.

Following a review of literature concerning gender and work in the new economy, I discussed the theoretical perspectives and traditions that most influenced the framework I employed in this research—feminist production studies. Banks’ (2009) concept of feminist production studies integrates political economy, cultural studies, and feminist theoretical traditions to account for the material realities specific to the film and television industry. Through the application of this perspective, investigations of film and television work and labour include macro-level structural issues, micro-level daily practices of individuals, as well as an account of how gender influences these processes.

I then turned my attention to a discussion of how labour in the cultural industries has been analysed following a brief historical account of the development of the film and television industry in the US. Since the 1990s, labour in the cultural industries has increasingly become a topic of investigation. Studies have found that workers in these industries enjoy the autonomy, creativity, flexibility, sociality, and ‘cool, fun’ environments, despite the generally lower pay and precarity that usually come with work in these sectors. Additionally, scholars like McRobbie (1998) and Ursell (2000) have found that individuals employed in the cultural industries often described their work as ‘labours of love’ which McRobbie has termed ‘passionate work.’ While investigations of labour in the cultural industries have seen a surge in interest in recent years, the vast majority of this research has been conducted in relation to workers in the UK and Europe. While there are a number of similarities between the labour practices in the US industry and that of, for example, the UK, there are also distinctions that deserve accounting for. According to Keith Randle (2011) Hollywood continues to dominate the international film landscape while other national film sectors like that in the UK, even with a history of high quality film productions, are referred to as ‘cottage industries.’ He writes:

The consensus seems to be that while there is some dissipation of Los Angeles as a center for global moviemaking, impacting to a greater or lesser extent on U.S. film workers, the unarguable dominance of the United States in the export of film and television products remains unchallenged (147).

Given the size of the industry in the United States, workers’ experiences may differ from those in other locales.

Women in the US no doubt share some experiences with women in film and television in the UK and Europe, but there are significant differences as well. For example, how do women in the US, where there is no national health service, deal with employment precarity? Does it influence their decisions regarding work and parenthood? Furthermore, in the US, merit-based explanations for success are hyper-valored, to the point of rationalizing away any potential structural inequalities. Class is viewed by many as an impediment that can be overcome by sheer will and hard work. Those belonging to lower socioeconomic classes are often blamed for

their lack of success, particularly in the contemporary political environment that has seen a surge in conservative politics and discourse. One recent example comes from U.S. Senator Marco Rubio who, when addressing the House of Representatives, said, ‘We have never been a nation of have and have-nots. We are a nation of haves and soon-to-haves, of people who have made it and people who will make it. And that is who we need to remain’ (Rubio 2011). In line with neoliberal discourses, success in the US is often framed as being dependent on individual effort only, completely ignoring how the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and ethnicity affect people’s lives. As such, my research into the career experiences of women working in the contemporary US film and television industry helps to fill a gap in knowledge in the fields of Media Studies, Film and Television Studies, and Women’s Studies. My goal is to develop a view of labour in film and television that is more nuanced, inclusive, and reflective of women’s experiences of work in an industry that embodies many characteristics of the new economy.

Chapter 2. Methodology

Adopting and articulating a methodology can be a tricky, complicated, and confusing endeavour. As a researcher, and I think particularly as a feminist researcher, the legacy of making universalizing knowledge claims from privileged positions, and the rightful critiques of this practice (Anzaldúa 1987; Collins 1990; Hull, Scott, and Smith 1982; McIntosh 1988; Mohanty 2003), created a sort of methodological paralysis for me. Throughout this project I was plagued by questions regarding my reasoning for making certain claims based upon my data. I would turn to methodological texts for clarity and it seemed that the moment I grasped answers to my questions they would scurry away from me before I could put them to paper. While this was a frustrating process, ultimately it was a necessary one. Examining and re-examining my data and the conclusions I drew from them helped to create a stronger thesis.

My methodology in a sense acted as a mechanism that required continued reflexivity on my part throughout the life of this project. In this chapter, I give an account of the feminist principles I adopted in my study, my choice of methods and research locations, my participants, the data gathering process, the power relations and insider/outsider issues that arose during the interviews, and finally an account of the transcription and data analysis processes. I turn my attention now to the feminist research principles that have been central to my project.

Feminist Research Practice

My position as a feminist researcher has shaped my work due to my political beliefs, my personal history, and my position as a white, middle-class, well-educated, heterosexual woman. I chose to research women working in film and television in large part due to my concern with gender inequality. Having previously worked in the film and television industry, this was a sector I was already ‘tuned’ into and after some initial investigation it became clear that gender equality does not exist in film and television work. As a researcher I wondered why, and as a feminist researcher I sought to answer this by approaching my project from a gendered perspective.

Feminists often differ in their opinions of what makes research specifically feminist. While there may be disagreement on what constitutes feminist research, there is general acknowledgement that certain differences exist between feminist and other social science research methodologies (Bhavnani 2004; DeVault and Gross 2007; Hesse-Biber, Leavy, and Yaiser 2004; Maynard 1994; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). According to Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002), what differentiates feminist research from other approaches is the concern with theories of gender and power, normative practices and frameworks, and transformative and reflexive research practices. The positivist tradition which aims to uncover objective truths has been criticised by feminists (Harding 2004). According to Hesse-Biber, Leavy, and Yaiser (2004), ‘feminists have pointed out that the epistemological assumptions on which positivism is based have been shaped by the larger culture and perpetuate the hierarchies that characterize social life: patriarchy, elitism, heterosexism, and racialized modes of social power’ (11). Rather than assuming one is capable of being completely objective in an analysis, feminists argue that a researcher’s position and viewpoint should be acknowledged and interrogated throughout the research process as the knowledge gained during any project is influenced by the specific realities of the researcher, the subjects, and the research environment (Bhavnani 2004; Sprague and Kobrynowicz 2004). Feminists question the power relations that exist between researcher and subject, the ethics of positivistic research, the issue of who is ‘allowed’ to generate knowledge, and the assumption that a singular ‘truth’ exists. This is not to mean that there is never any truth to find, nor that everything can be explained by cultural relativism, but rather that knowledge needs to be situated within contexts (Sprague and Kobrynowicz 2004).

As mentioned above, feminist methodologies call for researchers to practise reflexivity throughout a project in order to account for their own social and historical positions. Hesse-Biber and Yaiser (2004) write:

Reflexivity can help a researcher both publicly and privately acknowledge that she is not the essential woman. In simple terms, reflexivity is the process through which a researcher recognizes, examines, and understands how her social background, positionality, and assumptions affect the practice of research. The researcher is as much a product of society and its structures and institutions as the participants she is studying (115).

Feminist research does not try to eliminate these variables from the research process, for to do so is indeed impossible, but rather acknowledges, accounts for, and embraces the importance of one's position in informing the research project as a whole. Furthermore, feminists have cautioned against using the term 'woman' as all-encompassing. Researchers should avoid essentializing diverse women's experiences and ignoring the differences among women (Collins 1986; Hesse-Biber 2012; Hesse-Biber and Yaiser 2004; Letherby 2003; Martin 2001; Mohanty 2003; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002; Reinhartz and Chase 2003). As Hesse-Biber and Yaiser (2004) argue, it is important for researchers to ask themselves 'which women?' rather than constructing a monolithic category that includes all women (or all men). However, I agree with Letherby (2003) that it is still possible to speak about 'women' and the category 'woman' but it must be done thoughtfully. Drawing on Stanley and Wise (1990), Letherby (2003) writes:

Differences do exist between women, so the category 'woman' needs to be carefully defined in order to focus on ontological separations as well as similarities. There is a common material reality that all women share which is characterized by inequality, exploitation and oppression, but women are not all oppressed in the same way. It is therefore important to recognize that while oppression is common, the forms it takes are conditioned by race, age, sexuality and other structural, historical and geographical differences between women (57).

Attempting to speak broadly about women is problematic. Nevertheless there are some material realities that are shared by all women. In terms of my own research, the reported experiences of my participants are specific to the women I interviewed. However, there were commonalities among these reports that cannot be dismissed. These commonalities and the individual ways in which my participants described experiencing them shed light on some of the ways in which women working in film and television experience and interpret the material realities of that industry.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Banks' (2009) concept of feminist production studies research is particularly well-suited to my project. Feminist production studies examines gendered experiences and structures while accounting for the historical, economic, and industrial specificities of film and television work. In this way, I

consider feminist production studies as a sub-type of materialist feminism specifically tailored to the film and television industry. Materialist feminism takes into account the social structures and institutions that influence gendered lives while maintaining a focus on how difference, discourse, and culture intersect with the material realities of historically situated subjects (Hennessy 1993; Jackson 2001). Jackson (2001) argues that using a materialist framework does not preclude researchers from integrating an understanding of the differences among women nor does a materialist approach ignore issues of discourse and language. Rather, materialist feminism encourages the inclusion of these aspects that have been discussed by standpoint theorists (Sandra Harding, Nancy C.M. Hartsock, Patricia Hill Collins) and post-structural scholars (Judith Butler, Michel Foucault) in order to create fuller pictures of women's lives. It is important to investigate how women experience material inequalities and how they interpret these experiences in order to create more informed accounts of women's lives. The goal of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of how women experience the realities of labour in the contemporary US film and television industry. As I am analysing women's reported micro-practices of everyday work, feminist production studies, which synthesizes materialist feminism, cultural studies, and political economy perspectives, is the ideal choice as an analytical framework.

Method

I used semi-structured interviews for my data collection. A detailed account of my participants, the interviews, the transcription process, and my approach to data analysis occur in the subsequent sections of this chapter. For now I shall just say that I conducted a total of 27 interviews between 3 June 2013 and 15 August 2013 in three US cities: Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. I interviewed nine women in Chicago, 17 in Los Angeles, and one in San Francisco. My sample included 22 Caucasian women, two African-American women, two Latin American/Caucasian women, and one Asian woman. My participants ranged in age from 20 to 57 years old and were all middle- to upper-middle-class.²⁴ Within this sample there were five

²⁴I use these labels in line with the work of Dennis Gilbert (2015), whose definitions are particular to the United States. There are six categories and one sub-category of class in Gilbert's (2015) work. Moving from highest to lowest they are: Capitalist, Upper-Middle, Middle, Working, Working Poor, and Underclass. The sub-category of Working Rich is within the Upper-Middle class category, just

participants over the age of 45, eight participants aged 35-44, 12 participants aged 25-34 making this the most represented age group, and two participants under the age of 25. The interviews were conducted in a range of locales including: participants' offices, participants' homes, and local coffee shops/restaurants. The interviews took from 50 minutes to 117 minutes with the average interview lasting approximately 75 minutes. All interviews were recorded using a SONY digital voice recorder and then transcribed using a combination of Microsoft Word and ExpressScribe software. As mentioned above, all of these elements of the research project will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. I now turn my attention to my choice of semi-structured interviews as my data-gathering method.

Researchers have used interviews to uncover the experiences of subjugated populations and communities, particularly those that have been dismissed in the past by mainstream Anglo, patriarchal social sciences (DeVault and Gross 2007; Reinharz and Chase 2003). Interviews create opportunities for researchers to access 'people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher' and to make 'full use of the differences among people' by asking open-ended questions (Reinharz 1992, 18-19). Feminists often treat the interview process as a way to develop knowledge collaboratively *with* their participants (DeVault and Gross 2007). Rather than viewing interviewees and their experiences as objects that can be gathered, feminist researchers aim to work with participants to create knowledge that reflects the reported subjective experiences and situated realities of the participants (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, and Yaiser 2004). In the following section I discuss why interviews were appropriate for gathering my data.

My interviews allowed for in-depth investigations into my participants' experiences of labour in film and television work in complex ways. As discussed in the previous chapter, the research that has been conducted on women working in the US film and television industry so far has predominantly employed quantitative methods (Hunt and Ramon 2015; Lauzen 2014, 2015; Smith 2008). In order to move beyond those

below the Capitalist Class. Upper-Middle class members tend to be university educated, higher-level professionals earning around \$150,000 USD per year per household (Gilbert 2015). Middle class members are lower-level professionals earning around \$70,000 USD per household per year (Gilbert 2015). The majority of my participants were from the Upper-Middle and Middle class categories, both in their upbringing and their statuses when the interviews took place.

statistics it was vital to engage directly with women working in the industry. I could have chosen a survey method to conduct this research. However, according to Rubin and Rubin (2005), unlike survey research in which the same questions are presented to all participants, qualitative interviews are used by researchers in order to gather in-depth data that are, in some respects, unique to each individual interaction between researcher and participant. Interviews allow the researcher room to improvise and tailor the larger research questions to each participant based on her responses, and the topics participants themselves may bring up (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Rubin and Rubin 2005; Wengraf 2001). Interviews also allow room for the researcher and the interviewee to create knowledge together in a more collaborative manner.

Furthermore, as Gubrium and Holstein (2002) point out, in modern society people are quite comfortable with the interview format as a way of exchanging information as individuals are generally familiar with the social cues and structure of interviews. Interviews expand upon conversational skills that individuals, both researcher and participants, already possess, making them an ideal method to gather subjective, experiential data (Rubin and Rubin 2005).

I do not think I would have been as successful in my fieldwork had I chosen another qualitative method such as participant observation or ethnography. Aside from issues of gaining access to a workplace in the industry, spaces that are often governed by strict non-disclosure policies and by industrial secrecy, the women I would have been able to interview alongside these observations might not have felt as comfortable answering my questions about their careers, had an entire office/studio/production house known that they were participating in my study. Additionally, I wanted to hear from women that worked in different positions behind-the-scenes and across different genres. By recruiting from a specific location or work environment I might not have gained such varied perspectives.

I also do not think that using focus groups as a data gathering method would have worked as well as the interviews did. My participants shared insights about their current and former work environments with great openness in part because we were

alone and there were fewer risks of breaching confidentiality.²⁵ Several participants said things like: ‘this is confidential, right?’ prior to sharing a story or ‘you aren’t going to include any of the names I mentioned in your work, are you?’ after discussing particular individuals or organizations inside and/or outside the industry. I think they would have reasonably been more guarded in their responses and self-edited their stories to a greater degree had I chosen to use focus groups.

While there were several advantages to in-depth interviewing that made it the ideal method for my project, there were also trade-offs. During qualitative interviews researchers must be able to improvise while still managing to ask questions that are relevant to the larger research project and maintaining the conversational style of the interaction (Mason 2002). Mason (2002) argues that a researcher should be able to recognize valuable bits of information and decide spontaneously on the most appropriate ways to pursue them. This requires an intense level of concentration during each interview, and was particularly difficult when I needed to conduct two interviews in one day. Additionally, using interviews did limit the amount of data I was able to collect when compared to other potential data-gathering methods such as surveys. However, I think the specificity and chance for clarification that interviewing afforded outweighed what I might have gained in numbers of participants had I used a different method. Interviews gave me the opportunity to rephrase questions when a participant did not understand what information I was seeking and allowed room for participants to bring up issues and concepts that I had not considered. The interactional nature of interviews created chances for me to investigate these unanticipated aspects of work in the industry.

In preparation for the interviews I developed an interview schedule (Appendix A). As Wengraf (2001) suggests, larger research questions need to be operationalized into interview questions. Research or theoretical questions are written in the disciplinary jargon of the researcher but in order for these larger questions to be answered they need to be translated into a number of interview questions in the language of participants (Wengraf 2001). My primary research question was: what are women’s reported experiences of work in the contemporary US film and television industry?

²⁵ This ‘open sharing’ can also be attributed, in part, to my ‘outsider’ status which will be discussed later in this chapter.

In order to address this larger question I developed an interview schedule that followed the basic chronology of the interviewees' careers. The opening questions were about how interviewees entered into their careers and their early work in the industry. I then moved on to current career experiences and challenges, and finished with questions about their individual career plans and their predictions regarding the future of the larger film and television industry. In addition to creating a chronology that could be followed easily by both researcher and participants, translating my research question into a comprehensive interview schedule also helped balance the power relations²⁶ between my participants and me during the interviews. My aim was to speak to my participants in a manner that put us on as equal a ground as possible. I did not want them spending our limited time together deconstructing academic jargon-laden questions.

This section has explained why semi-structured, in-depth interviews were the appropriate method for this particular study. Interviews create opportunities to delve more deeply into women's reported experiences of work in the US film and television industry than is possible in quantitative research projects. They also allow for improvisation on my part and the chance for participants to bring up topics that were not anticipated. They are time-consuming and limited the amount of raw data I was able to collect but, as explained above, the benefits gained from the interviews outweighed the potential gains from other methods. In the following section I discuss how my research was carried out in an ethical manner.

Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in compliance with the ethical research standards of the University of York and the Centre for Women's Studies. The project was subject to ethical review and gained approval in the spring of 2013 prior to my fieldwork. All of my participants received a letter (Appendix B) stating the purpose of the research, how long interviews were expected to last (approximately one hour), that interviews

²⁶ Power differences in interview settings will be discussed later in this chapter.

would be recorded with a digital voice recorder, and details about how participant confidentiality would be maintained.²⁷

After participants had agreed to an interview, I gained informed consent from them in multiple ways. As discussed above, potential interviewees were told about the purpose of my research in a letter detailing their right to confidentiality and their ability to leave the project at any stage should they wish. I also had each participant read and sign a consent form (Appendix C) at the beginning of every interview session before any recording began. I asked if they had any questions for me prior to starting the interview and reminded them that they could ask to speak off the record, that identifying facts would be omitted from the transcription, and that they could contact me any time after the interview if they wanted anything we talked about to be omitted from the record. A few of my participants asked that specific details not be included in my work and one participant asked that I stop recording for a small portion of the interview when she told me a personal story. I also made choices throughout the transcription process regarding the omission of specific details which will be further discussed in a following section of this chapter. Participants were made aware that interviews would be used for the primary purpose of developing my doctoral thesis and related academic publications and that these works would be available in libraries in both electronic and physical formats.

Participants in this research were not members of a particularly vulnerable group. They were adults, in (apparent) good health, well-educated, middle- to upper-middle-class, and aside from one woman, were all native English speakers.²⁸ Furthermore, this research did not focus on traumatic or especially sensitive topics. Of course, there is always a chance that a participant may share accounts of troubling and sensitive issues in an interview setting. In my research, these sensitive topics were most likely to present themselves if the women I interviewed discussed sexism and discrimination in the film and television industry. When participants did tell stories about facing discrimination in their careers, I listened, empathized with them, and allowed them to tell as much or as little about the incident as they wished. None of

²⁷ Participant recruitment will be discussed later in this chapter.

²⁸ Marissa was born in the Philippines but had been living in the US for years and was fluent in English.

my participants asked to stop speaking about a certain topic or incident during her interview. I understand that it is possible that some participants may not have raised concerns because of the assumed authority that can be granted to researchers, a topic that will be explored in detail later in this chapter. However, I re-iterated several times throughout the recruitment, the interview, and follow-up with participants that they could contact me at any point should they wish to rescind anything from the record, provide further explanation, discuss concerns, and/or clarify any points.

Since I had found 13 of my participants through snowballing (as discussed later in this chapter) some of them would occasionally ask questions about other participants that they knew had taken part in the research. These questions and conversations were very general, usually something like: ‘Isn’t _____ great?’ or ‘You spoke with _____, right?’ When any specific questions were posed that I thought could perhaps compromise confidentiality I deflected with general answers. Mariah, a personal friend and interviewee, directly referred eight women. These eight participants were often interested in how she and I knew each other. I did not see any harm in telling them the generic story of our meeting during our years at university. When interviewing people that worked in the same office, occasionally participants would say something like: ‘I’m not sure if you spoke with _____ about this...’ and I would answer in the affirmative if it had been brought up in a previous interview but would then turn the conversation back to the interviewee’s experience. I did not find these references to other participants awkward and when other participants did come up during our time together, I would steer the conversation back on track.

In addition to their curiosity regarding other participants and what I had discovered in other interviews, my participants also expressed interest in learning about me. Aside from the first three interviews, the final question I asked participants was, ‘Is there anything we haven’t discussed that you would like to talk about?’ This was often when participants asked how I had developed an interest in women working in film and television. They were also curious about what I hoped to do with my research following the completion of my degree and what type of employment I was planning to pursue. Similar to Oakley (1981), I chose to answer these questions as I thought

that refusing to do so could have caused problems with maintaining rapport with my participants. I did not view answering my participants' questions as a risk to my data set and as a feminist researcher I wanted to diminish power differences between my participants and me as an interviewer as much as possible. These women were volunteering their time, their stories, some of which were quite personal in nature, and trusting me with their narratives. I wanted to reciprocate this trust as much as possible and therefore chose to answer their inquiries. I usually gave brief answers, but occasionally there were longer conversations during the interviews as well as after the interviews when recording had ceased. Furthermore, during one interview in particular it was through describing an experience I had in common with the participant that I was able to establish better rapport. Following this exchange Emily seemed to settle into a more conversational style of talk and her responses to my questions became more detailed. Ultimately, the decision to answer my participants' queries and share some of my own personal history with them helped balance the power relationships between myself and my interviewees and increased the quality of my data (Oakley 1981; Reinharz 1992; Reinharz and Chase 2003).

Finally, I immensely enjoyed speaking with my participants. I heard fascinating, entertaining stories and it often felt like I could be friends, or at the very least friendly with, some of my participants. Most asked me to keep them updated regarding my progress with the research and to let them know when they could read the thesis. I have periodically emailed all of my participants throughout the research process about the themes I was finding in the research and thanking them again for their participation. They have maintained contact to differing degrees. Below are a few examples of the responses participants emailed to me following an update:

Thank you so much for emailing me! I can't wait to see your PhD - sounds fantastic and I'm so happy you did it. And of course in a year I have so much more to say and be aware of.

Good luck with all of your work and thank you for speaking on this issue.
(Personal correspondence with Emily, 22/11/2014)

Thanks so much for your email! I can't believe it's been a year as well. So exciting to hear about your research and equally impressive that you're almost done [...] I still continually find myself shocked about the sexism in TV and film (including being told most recently that my work is too narrow because I write about women!)...

(Personal correspondence with Nell, 21/11/2014)

Nice! Excited to read it :)

(Personal correspondence with Rachel, 4/12/2014)

The appropriateness and possibility of relationships with participants following the completion of fieldwork has been debated by feminists (Cotterill 1992; Letherby 2003; Oakley 1981; Reinharz 1992). Do I envisage that I am going to be very close friends with any of my participants that I did not already know prior to my fieldwork? I think it is unlikely due to our differing locations and chosen fields. Do I expect to maintain contact with some participants in the coming years? Yes, for two reasons. First, they asked me to keep them updated about the research project and about my professional career following the completion of my degree. In line with feminist research methodologies, I view my project as a body of work co-created with my participants and to deny them information regarding the progress of this project and any future work that may come from the data would be, in my opinion, unethical. Second, I am genuinely interested in these women's lives and careers (and at this point they reciprocate this interest) and look forward to maintaining relationships with participants that are open to such an endeavour. I do not wish to force a relationship on any of my participants, but neither do I view maintaining reciprocal contact with them as unethical or problematic (Letherby 2003).

Participants and Locations

As mentioned previously, I conducted a total of 27 interviews during my fieldwork. I wanted to interview women at various points in their careers, in different geographic locations, and who worked in diverse occupations and genres in order to access a broad range of experiences in the film and television industry. I aimed to recruit women on both the creative/production and executive/business sides of the industry to explore how my participants located themselves in relation to the larger film and television sector. I did not specify an age range (other than requiring participants to

be at least 18 years of age) as I wanted to hear from women who had experience working in film and television across different historical periods.

Table 1 on the following page summarizes additional relevant characteristics of my participants including job title, age, location, marital status, parental status, and time spent working in the film and television industry at the time of the interviews. This data was collected using a demographic questionnaire (Appendix D) that participants completed prior to beginning the interviews at our meetings.

Table 1. Participants' Demographics Sorted by Location and Descending Age

Name	Age	Occupation/Job Title	Years in Industry	Marital Status	Children	Location
Gwen	57	Writer/Director/Executive Producer	20+	Married	2	LA*
Max	49	Writer/Producer	12	Married	0	LA
Taylor	48	Writer/Director	25+	Single	0	LA
Penelope	47	Writer/Director/Producer	25+	Single	0	LA
Jemma	41	TV Writer	11	Married	1	LA
Grace	40	VP Drama Development	15	Single	0	LA
Lilly	37	TV Writer	14	Married	2	LA
Kasey	36	Actress/Writer	13	Married	0	LA
Danielle	33	VP Current Programming	8	Single	0	LA
Lucia	33	Art Director	3	Single	0	LA
Nell	33	TV Writer	3	Engaged	0	LA
Melanie	31	Executive Assistant/TV Writer	11	Single	0	LA
Rachel	31	Screenwriter	8	Married	0	LA
Anabelle	29	Writers' Assistant	5	Single	0	LA
Kathryn	29	Associate Casting Director	8	Engaged	0	LA
Mariah	28	Manager of Drama Development	5	Single	0	LA
Emily	26	Talent Agent Assistant	3.5	Married	0	LA
Marissa	35	Producer/TV Host	10	Married	1	SF*
Valerie	57	Lecturer/Producer	34	Married	1	CH*
Sasha	41	Documentary Filmmaker/Associate Professor	15	Married	1	CH
Isabella	37	Director/Creative Director	12	Married	2	CH
Samantha	35	Executive Producer	14	Married	1	CH
Liana	33	Field Marketing Specialist	11	Single	0	CH
Susan	31	Supervising Producer	8	Married	0	CH
Annie	27	Senior Producer	5	Single	0	CH
Becca	22	Director of Photography	2	Single	0	CH
Hallie	20	Gaffer	0.5	Single	0	CH

Source: Interview Data, 2013. *Note: LA=Los Angeles, SF=San Francisco, CH=Chicago.

My sample of participants represented a broad range of ages, occupations, years spent working in the industry, as well as marital and parental statuses. Aside from Lucia, Becca, and Hallie all of my participants worked in above-the-line occupations. While I would have liked to interview more women in below-the-line occupations, I had difficulty recruiting participants who worked in these positions. I would specifically ask participants for referrals to women working in below-the-line positions at the end of interviews, but the majority of participants did not know women working in these roles. There are two likely reasons why so few below-the-line women were referred to this study. First, as most of my participants worked in above-the-line roles, they were more likely to form professional network connections with other similar individuals. This may be viewed as one drawback²⁹ in using snowballing as a technique for recruiting participants. Second, as discussed in the Literature Review, the vast majority of below-the-line jobs are occupied by men (Lauzen 2008, 2014, 2015) making it less likely for my participants to have worked with women in these roles. This is reflected in the low number of below-the-line women in my sample.

Twelve of my participants were unmarried at the time of their interview, which is slightly higher than the 2013 US national average of 50.3% for working women (United States Department of Labor 2014). 19 of the 27 women did not have children. Three of the 17 participants from LA were parents and four of the nine women from Chicago were parents (Marissa from San Francisco was also a parent). While parenthood occurred at a higher rate among my sample of participants in Chicago than Los Angeles, where I conducted nearly twice as many interviews, few conclusions can be drawn from this data. It is difficult to compare the marital and parental characteristics of my participants to US national averages. The United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics calculates national averages using data on working women aged 16 and over, making their statistics difficult to compare with my data in a meaningful manner. While it appears that women without children occur at a relatively high rate in my sample, this does not necessarily reflect a trend in the industry. Statistics on working women's parental statuses in the US film and television industry could not be located. It would certainly make for an interesting

²⁹ The advantages and drawbacks of using snowballing as a recruitment technique will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

future quantitative study to discover whether or not parental status among women in the film and television industry differs from the national average for working women. Additionally it would be quite compelling to study the regional differences in marital status and age at marriage along with parental status and parental age among women working in the industry. However, at the time of completion of this thesis such information was not available.

The women I interviewed worked in fiction television, non-fiction television, reality television, documentary films, narrative films, content creation for advertising, casting, talent representation, television development, and current programming. There were 11 women who categorized themselves as writers. However, not all of them were actively employed as writers at the time of their interview. As discussed in Chapter 1, individuals working in film and television often face insecurity in their careers. By diversifying their skill set to include multiple functions, they can potentially mitigate some of this risk. This often means that individuals have multiple simultaneous job titles. For example, Melanie was employed as an assistant to an executive producer, but she was also pursuing a career in writing for drama television concurrently. Gwen also identified herself as a writer, but worked as a director and executive producer as well. These were all roles Gwen had occupied at different points in her career, sometimes simultaneously. At the time of our interview, Gwen was the executive producer of a television show and she served as director for one episode of that same program. Job titles are often combinations of roles in film and television with one function taking primacy for one project while another function may be more appropriate for another. The titles included in Table 1 were those the participants assigned to themselves in the demographic questionnaire they completed prior to beginning an interview. I did not alter their titles for this thesis. If a participant wrote 'exec. producer/writer/director' on the questionnaire I maintained that for Table 1 above. While some women identified strictly under one job title, many others categorized themselves with multiple titles separated by slashes. Furthermore, even when a woman identified one primary job title, it did not necessarily mean that she was only working in that particular function. For example, Taylor classified herself as a writer/director but was also teaching acting classes simultaneously.

The majority of the women I interviewed were primarily employed by the film and television industry alone. As noted in the previous chapter it is quite common for creative workers to have jobs outside the industry while simultaneously seeking work/actively working in film and television. This was not the case with my participants.³⁰ This may be due in part to the socioeconomic backgrounds of my interviewees. The vast majority of the women came from middle- to upper-middle class backgrounds. This suggests that they may have had access to familial and/or monetary assistance to help support them in their careers, particularly at the beginning when so much of early practitioners' work is unpaid and/or underpaid. The lack of variety in terms of class in my study can partially be attributed to my use of snowball sampling, which will be discussed later in this chapter. As pointed out in the previous chapter, individuals tend to socialize and form network ties with people similar to themselves in race/ethnicity, gender, age, and class (Ibarra 1992; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). In other words, my participants were more likely to refer me to women with similar characteristics because they were more likely to know such women. Additionally, the employment structure of the contemporary film and television industry also makes it very difficult for an individual from a lower class background to gain entry (Hesmondhalgh 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015; Wreyford 2015). The prevalence of referral hiring, exclusionary networks, and the reliance on unpaid or underpaid workers create barriers to entry into film and television work for individuals from less well off groups. Additionally, below-the-line occupations, which may be more welcoming to workers with diverse class backgrounds, are overwhelmingly occupied by men. For these reasons it is not surprising that my sample of participants belonged to the middle and upper-middle classes.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section I chose three US cities in which to conduct interviews: Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. Being a global hub for film and television production, Los Angeles, was an ideal location to conduct interviews. Kleinhenz et al. (2012) reported that 247,000 jobs were directly created

³⁰ One of my participants, Taylor, had worked as a bartender alongside her industry career in previous years, but was not doing so at the time of our interview.

by the industry in 2012.³¹ Film and television work is highly concentrated in Los Angeles making it a logical choice for field research not only because of the prevalence of people employed by the industry, but also for the unique cultural environment created by the clustering of media workers and employees that has developed in this geographic area (Deuze 2007). According to Deuze (2007) certain cities (Los Angeles, New York, Milan, Vancouver, Manchester, etc.) have reputations for fostering the creative industries and as a result businesses, services, and individuals tend to cluster in these metropolitan areas, converting them into communities in which everyone seems to be involved in the industry in some way. The film and television industry is embedded in the culture of Los Angeles, creating unique experiences for women that work and live in this city.

I also wanted to hear from women who worked in the industry outside of Los Angeles in order to diversify my group of participants and gain different perspectives. I chose San Francisco because I wanted to explore women's experiences of the industry in a distinct urban environment within the same US state. I conducted interviews in Chicago because I wanted to speak with women living and working in a city outside of California, where the industry was not so ubiquitous, to observe how these women's experiences might differ from those in California. Finally, I also chose these locations because I had personal connections who resided in these cities, worked in film and television, and could help me gain access to participants and assist in the recruitment process. In order to recruit a broad range of participants, I used snowball sampling. This process is discussed in the following section.

Recruiting Participants

Approximately two months before I went on my research trip I started contacting people who I knew worked in the industry in addition to friends in the Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago areas. I gave a brief summary of my travel plans and asked if they would be willing to forward my information to any women they thought would be interested in participating in my research. I also included a copy of the letter introducing my research they could forward to any potential participants. I

³¹ Combining direct and indirect employment from the industry there were almost 586,000 jobs (Kleinhenz et al. 2012).

began my fieldwork in San Francisco but was only able to recruit one participant from this location, Marissa. Recruitment was much more difficult in San Francisco than I had anticipated as I had allocated insufficient time for this. I had allocated only one week for research in San Francisco. In hindsight, I should have stayed for at least one more week in this city in order to allow sufficient time for recruitment chains to develop. I was also using my time in San Francisco to line up potential participants in Los Angeles as I knew my time there would be limited as well. While it is unfortunate that I was unable to conduct more interviews in San Francisco, I do not think this adversely affected the quality of my data because the lack of participants in this location was balanced by the number of participants I interviewed in Chicago. I had intended to interview women working in the industry in the film and television epicentre of Los Angeles as well as women working in film and television outside this city and I accomplished this.

My second fieldwork location was Los Angeles. During the three weeks I spent in the city I interviewed a total of 17 women. As previously discussed, approximately two months prior to my fieldwork I contacted several individuals that I knew from my time of living in Los Angeles that could potentially put me in touch with women working in film and television.³² I also used the social networking site, Facebook, to contact individuals for whom I did not have email addresses.³³

When I arrived in Los Angeles four of my personal acquaintances had agreed to participate in the project (Kathryn, Kasey, Lilly, and Mariah). The majority of the other interviews resulted from snowball sampling and from one gatekeeper in particular, Mariah. The use of gatekeepers to gain access to difficult-to-reach populations and to disseminate information regarding a research project is a well-established practice (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Penrod et al. 2003). Mariah and I have known each other since 2003 when we met at university. We had lived together for two years and have remained friends since. When I arrived in Los Angeles and spoke with Mariah she offered to put me in touch with several of her

³² A discussion of the issues that arise when interviewing friends and acquaintances will occur further along in this chapter.

³³ My primary method of communication was through email. However, I did use Facebook to initially contact my acquaintances Marissa and Kathryn, as I did not have access to their email addresses but was 'friends' with them on Facebook.

colleagues/friends working in the industry. I gained a further 11 participants in Los Angeles either directly or indirectly as a result of Mariah's efforts. Mariah emailed a number of her contacts and several then got in touch with her or me directly via email. Additionally, one of Mariah's contacts forwarded my information to the Alliance of Women Directors' (AWD) email listserv administrator who then emailed the details of the project to the larger AWD membership. I gained three participants (included in the previous count of 11) through this organization. These interviewees contacted me directly and volunteered to participate. One such example was participant Max:

I saw your information on the AWD news list. I don't know how helpful I can be, but I have spent time as a writer and researcher on film and television documentaries, and have written three short films that have been produced. One was a work for hire co-written with my husband. I would be happy to be interviewed (Personal Correspondence with Max, 16/6/2013).

When Max contacted me I was unaware that information about my research project had been distributed to members of this group. I was extremely pleased with this development as this helped diversify my group of participants in terms of age and occupation. The three participants from the AWD (Max, Penelope, and Taylor) were 47 years of age or older and offered unique perspectives of employment in film and television and accounts of the changes within the industry they had witnessed over the course of their careers. Their participation helped create a greater balance among the ages represented within the group of interviewees and their experiences of directing, writing, and producing offered insights into diverse occupations within the industry and how gender influenced these experiences.

I was connected to my other participants in Los Angeles in a number of ways. The interview with Emily was based on a referral from one of my personal contacts, Kathryn, who had also participated in an interview. Finally, the interview with Lucia was the result of happenstance. I was seeking accommodation during my first few days in Los Angeles and used the website Airbnb³⁴ to secure a residence. I posted a brief summary of the purpose of my research trip to Los Angeles on my profile page

³⁴ Airbnb (airbnb.co.uk) is a website that connects homeowners who want to rent their spaces and travellers in need of accommodation.

and made a reservation at Lucia's apartment. Lucia read my profile and mentioned that she worked in the industry. I asked if I could interview her when she came back into town. She agreed and we met the following week.

After my time in Los Angeles I travelled to Chicago where I interviewed nine women. Two of my participants in Chicago were personal contacts and the other seven resulted from referrals from personal friends or previous participants and responses to cold emails.³⁵ I had arranged to interview four women in Chicago who were personal contacts. However, I was unable to schedule an interview with two of these women who had initially agreed to participate in the project prior to my arrival in Chicago. When I attempted to contact them in order to schedule interviews they did not respond to my emails or phone calls. Their lack of response was unexpected as they had previously expressed interest in participating in the study. I have no explanation as to why they chose not to engage further.

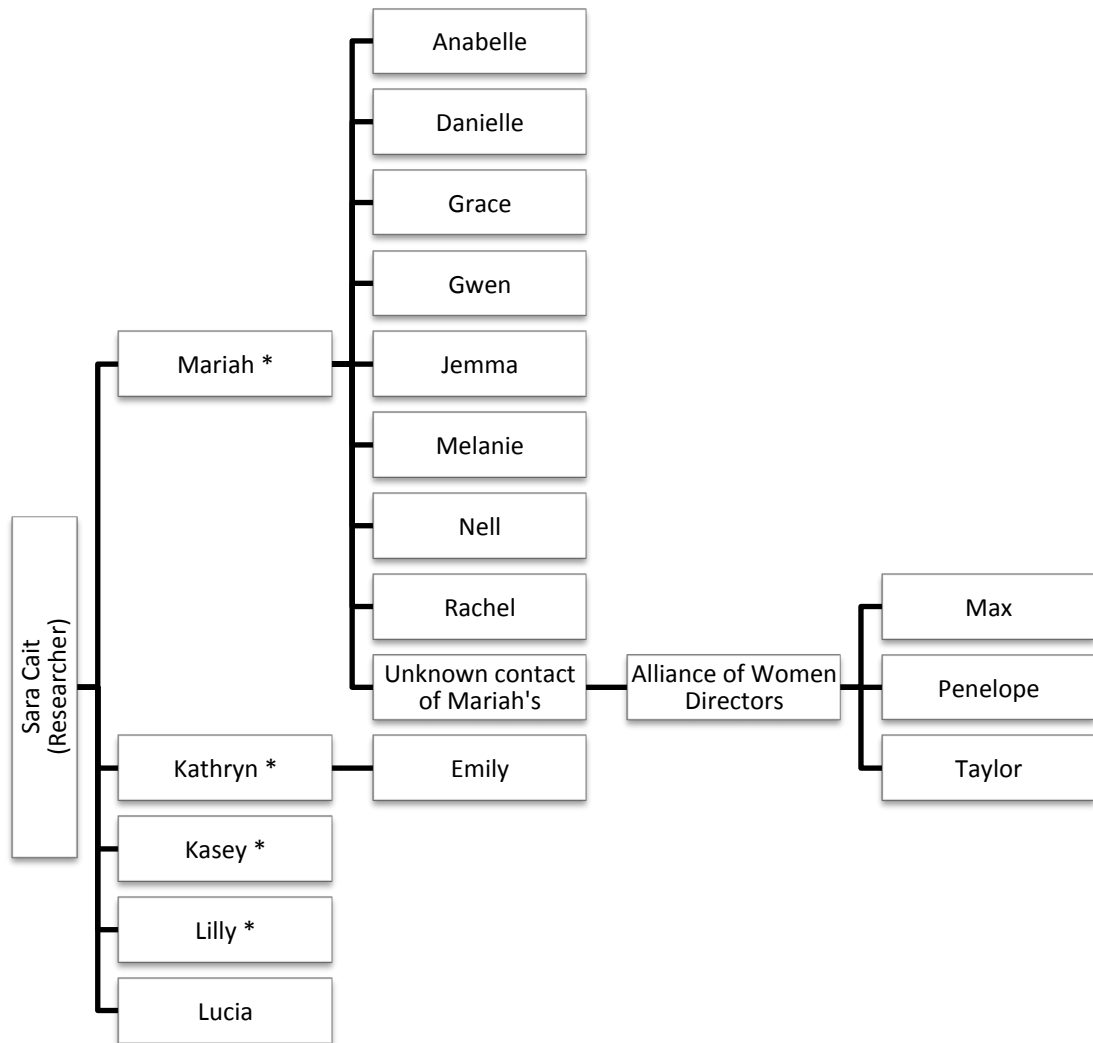
As I was having greater difficulty recruiting participants in Chicago than in Los Angeles I sought out new potential 'seed' individuals to begin fresh chains of referral (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Noy 2008). I browsed the faculty information pages of a film and television department at a university in Chicago for potential participants that had industry experience. I emailed several faculty members to introduce my project and request interviews and I gained two participants through this—Sasha and Valerie. I also looked for potential participants through several of the local film and television organizations in Chicago. I left a voicemail with one such organization that specifically focused on supporting women in the industry but received no return call. I then managed to discover the email address of Samantha, one of the board members of this organization, and emailed her directly, introducing my project and asking for an interview. Samantha agreed to participate and referred me to Isabella who in turn put me in touch with Liana.

³⁵ I use the term 'cold' emails in reference to emails sent to individuals with whom I was not previously acquainted and who were not referred to me by other participants. This process will be explained in greater detail below.

Figures 1 and 2 on the following pages illustrate the referral chains that developed during recruitment as a result of snowball sampling in Los Angeles and Chicago respectively.³⁶

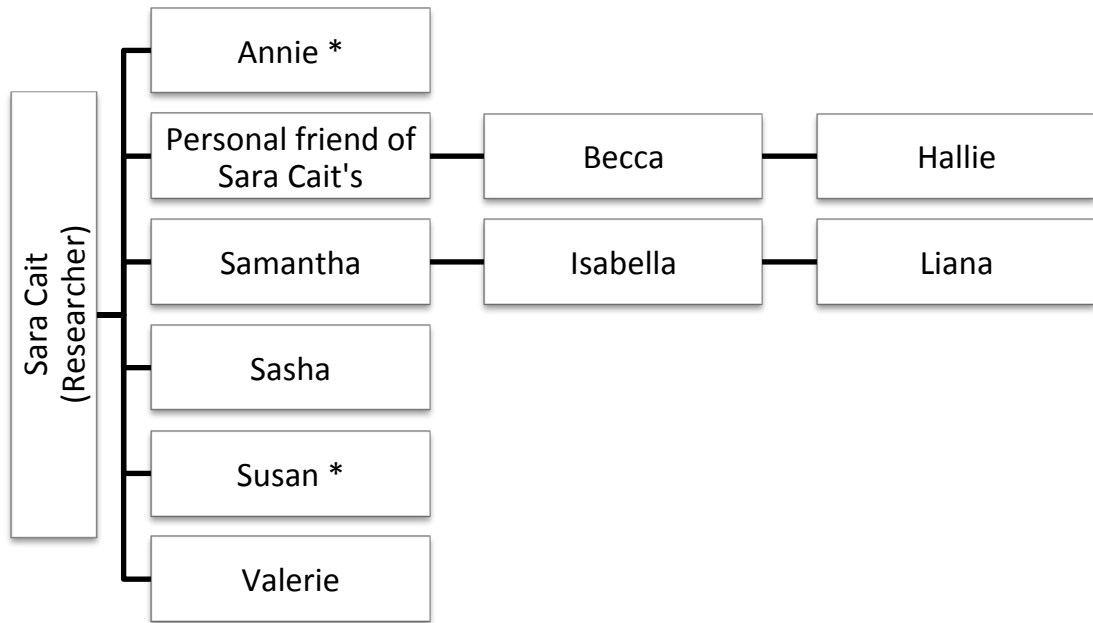
³⁶ Marissa, the sole participant from San Francisco, is not included in Figures 1 or 2. She was a personal acquaintance of the researcher prior to this project and did not refer any other participants.

Figure 1. Participant Referral Chains in Los Angeles.



Source: Interview Data, 2013. Note: Asterisk * indicates participant who was a friend/acquaintance of the researcher prior to the interviews.

Figure 2. Participant Referral Chains in Chicago.



Source: Interview Data, 2013. Note: Asterisk * indicates participant who was a friend/acquaintance of the researcher prior to the interviews.

Figure 1 illustrates how crucial Mariah was during the recruitment process in Los Angeles. At the time of our interview Mariah worked in drama development. This meant that she regularly interacted with a range of people working in a broad array of occupations. She had established connections with professionals on both the creative/production side of the industry as well as the executive side through her work. During a television development season Mariah and her team could expect to meet with 350-400 individuals and/or teams of people pitching concepts for new shows. Grace, who worked with Mariah, said: ‘We will hear probably 350 to 400 ideas. We will buy or pursue about 100 of those. We’ll sell probably 60 to 75 of those. Ummmm, and then about ten will be shot and maybe four will get on the air.’ This process occurs every year, meaning that Mariah had access to a very wide network of diverse individuals whom she generously offered to contact on my behalf. While I would have been able to complete my fieldwork in Los Angeles without

Mariah's assistance, I do not think I would have been able to gain access to as many participants with diverse career experiences.

I did not have a great deal of trouble establishing trust with my participants.³⁷ I attribute this, in part, to my use of snowball sampling. As discussed above, a large number of the women I interviewed were referred by other participants or through mutual acquaintances. In instances where there was no previous connection, like my interview with Samantha whom I recruited directly through email due to her association with Women in Film Chicago³⁸, additional potential participants were not recommended to me until after Samantha and I had completed our interview. Thus, I was being vetted in a sense. While there were some challenges related to participant recruitment and snowball sampling, which will be discussed below, overall this was an effective method for recruiting a diverse sample of participants whom I otherwise might not have had access to.

As previously stated, my primary method for recruiting participants was through 'snowball' sampling, sometimes known as 'chain-referral' sampling (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981) or 'respondent-driven' sampling (Heckathorn 1997; Johnston and Sabin 2010). Snowball sampling is a well established practice in qualitative research (Atkinson and Flint 2001; Faugier and Sargeant 1997; Hendricks, Blanken, and Adriaans 1992; Johnston and Sabin 2010; Lockyer 2014; Noy 2008; Spreen 1992; Watters and Biernacki 1989) and is particularly effective when researching groups that are 'hidden' due to the sensitivity of the topic being investigated, low population numbers, or high barriers to accessibility (Browne 2005). While my participants were not necessarily members of a 'hidden' population, they were hidden from me, and gaining access to individuals who work in film and television can be difficult for industry outsiders (Caldwell 2009). Furthermore, as I wanted to interview women who represented a broad spectrum of occupations, I did not want to limit my recruitment to one organization, professional association, or work environment. Instead, I contacted individuals who I knew worked in or around the industry in different occupations such as: drama development, casting, television writing, non-

³⁷ I cannot speak to my participants' experiences in trusting me, but based on my interpretation of the interviews, lack of trust was not a problem that I encountered.

³⁸ Women in Film is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing, educating, and empowering women working in entertainment, that has more than 6,800 members spread over twenty-three chapters in the United States (WIFC 2014; WIFLA 2014).

fiction television, and acting in order to begin the snowballing from a diverse set of initial participants, also known as ‘seeds’ (Johnston and Sabin 2010).

There are some drawbacks associated with snowball sampling. Most often cited are the possibilities of an over-representation of individuals with similar backgrounds and an over-representation of individuals who are well connected in social networks (Atkinson and Flint 2001; Johnston and Sabin 2010; Noy 2008). The similarity among my participants in terms of class and race supports this. As I relied on my participants’ social and professional networks for recruitment, I was more likely to interview women with similar class, race, and sexuality backgrounds (Ibarra 1992; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001).

My participants did include some women from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Among my 27 participants there were 2 African American women, 2 Latin American/Caucasian women, and 1 Asian woman. The low number of non-Caucasians in my sample is a limitation of this study, but is reflective of the low numbers of non-whites employed in this sector. Caucasians are employed at significantly higher rates than racial and ethnic minorities in the industry. According to the *2015 Hollywood Diversity Report* (Hunt and Ramon 2015), which gathered data from the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 television seasons, the minority share of television writing employment was approximately 10% and the minority share of television directors was also approximately 10%. Minorities were credited with creating 5.9% of broadcast scripted shows, 10.7% of Cable scripted shows, and 5% of digital platform and syndicated shows for the 2012-2013 season (Hunt and Ramon 2015). Additionally, of the 48 CEO/Chairs of the television networks/studios examined, 96% were white, of senior management positions (n=142) investigated 93% were white, and unit heads (n=167) were 86% white (Hunt and Ramon 2015) in 2013. In the feature film landscape, minorities directed 17.8% of the 174 films examined and wrote 11.8% of films (Hunt and Ramon 2015). Similar to the television industry, of the 18 CEOs/Chairs of film studios examined 94% were white (all were male), senior management (n=76) was 92% white, and unit heads (n=56) were 96% white (Hunt and Ramon 2015). The underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities employed in the film and television industry is reflected in my sample (approximately 18.5% of my participants were of non-white). Future research

might make it a priority to recruit non-white women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in order to gain a greater understanding of how the intersections of gender, race, and class influence their experiences of work in film and television. Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis do engage with the racial issues as reported by my limited sample of ethnically diverse women. However, due to the socioeconomic homophily among my participants, it is difficult to account for how class influenced my participants' reported experiences. Class was seldom discussed in the interviews except as a career barrier that the women I interviewed overcame in their professional lives.

While there were some drawbacks to snowball sampling, such as the tendency to be referred to others with similar race, class, and sexuality backgrounds, ultimately snowball sampling was by far the most appropriate method for recruiting participants for this study. This was because my participants were engaged in dense networks and were used to disseminating and receiving information (professional or otherwise) through their network contacts. While it is possible that my sample has an over-representation of individuals who are well connected in social networks, the heavy reliance on and use of networks is indicative of the sociality that prevails in the film and television industry.³⁹ Snowball sampling enabled me to expand the breadth of my sample population by relying on the extensive networks that are characteristic of workers in that industry. My recruitment method was chosen, in part, due to my knowledge of the high levels of networking present in the industry. In this sense snowball sampling was based in and built upon the connecting process of the industry. This industry can be difficult to navigate without insider knowledge. As such, snowball sampling created an opportunity to delve deeply into a breadth of women's reported experiences of work in this sector by relying on my participants' connectedness to other industry professionals as well as the legitimacy they granted me when recommending me to a member of their networks. Finally, snowball sampling gave me access to a variegated set of individuals that I might have been unable to reach had I used different recruitment methods. For these reasons, snowball sampling was an appropriate recruitment method for this study.

³⁹ Those employed in the film and television industry rely heavily on their social networks to increase their career opportunities and secure employment. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Interviewing Friends

I had pre-existing relationships with six of my participants. Mariah, Annie, and Susan were personal friends that I have known for years while Kathryn, Kasey, and Lilly were previous colleagues or superiors. Researchers have grappled with the potential benefits and drawbacks of including friends and/or acquaintances in projects (Brewis 2014; Cotterill 1992; Letherby 2003; Reinharz and Chase 2003; Tillmann-Healy 2003). Friends who participate in research may feel increased pressure to share more than they would with a stranger. At the same time researchers may have difficulty accessing knowledge because of the assumed familiarity that accompanies friendships (Cotterill and Letherby 1993; Letherby 2003; Reinharz and Chase 2003).

Similar to Cotterill (1992), when I interviewed women I had pre-existing relationships with, it was slightly challenging to know when to begin the formal interview. There were periods before the interviews began when the participant and I would ‘catch up’ with each other. However, unlike Cotterill (1992, 597), I did not experience ‘embarrassment’ or discomfort when switching from normal conversation to the formal interview. Rather, this transition seemed to be unproblematic for my participants and me. After a period of catching up, my participant or I would say something akin to: ‘Right. Should we get started?’, thus indicating the end of casual conversation. Before recording began I also informed these participants that at some points during the interview I might ask them questions for which I might already know the answers as a result of our friendship or previous interactions. I clarified that I would be asking such questions for the benefit of the research to ensure I would be able to transcribe such details from their interviews at a future date. This diminished the chance that I would fill in ‘gaps’ in my friends’/acquaintances’ narratives due to *ex ante* data, or prior outside knowledge, of their lives (Brewis 2014). I was going to analyse the data gathered from my friends/acquaintances in the same way as those from participants who were strangers—by relying on transcriptions of the interviews, of what was voluntarily shared with me. I was also careful when using data from friends’ interviews in the body of my thesis to ensure that what was written did not include any *ex ante* data. Similar to Joanna Brewis (2014), I knew things about my friends/acquaintances that might have made for ‘richer’ data, but I actively sought to eliminate any such reference from this thesis.

For example, two of my participants worked in an uncharacteristic film and television environment when compared to the other participants. This facet of their employment certainly offered exciting prospects for analysis that could have generated insight into how gender influences women's experiences of film and television work. However, I also knew that no matter how I tried to disguise and/or anonymize this aspect, an educated guess could be made regarding their workplace so I chose not to include any of this information. Furthermore, many of the companies that employed my participants have non-disclosure agreements that employees are required to sign. Not only were these women sharing their experiences with me, they were also risking potential termination and litigation if certain elements of our interviews were made public. For this reason alone, it was an easy choice to eliminate information that had the potential to affect my participants and/or their careers adversely.

Interviewing friends and acquaintances did not present particular difficulties during my time in the field. This may be, in part, because I was not interviewing women about traumatic or sensitive issues like Brewis (2014). It is, of course, possible that participants I had prior relationships with shared greater detail with me than they would have with a stranger (Taylor 2011a). However, the opposite situation in which a friend/acquaintance participant might have shared more with a stranger than with me because of the fear that they could be judged by me, is just as possible (Brewis 2014). As researchers, we can never predict how our human interactions and relationships with participants (or anyone else) will work out or evolve (O'Connell Davidson 2008). Nor will we ever be able to fully translate the complex lives of our participants sufficiently in text (O'Connell Davidson 2008).

Although I did not encounter any great difficulties when interviewing friends and acquaintances, there were some small challenges involved. For example, as Mariah was my primary source of interviewees in Los Angeles, she had some knowledge of the other participants in the study. This had the potential to compromise some participants' confidentiality. However, this was overcome by our mutual understanding that specific interview information and identifying facts or stories told during interviews would not be discussed between the two of us. If Mariah knew that

I had arranged an interview with one of her contacts we would only talk about the interview in general terms or not at all. The primary challenge I did encounter when interviewing friends was in arranging meetings. This is well illustrated in the following account of my interactions with Mariah, a long-time friend of mine.

Arranging an interview with Mariah took some additional effort. I was residing at her home during part of my stay in Los Angeles and despite seeing each other every day it was difficult to arrange a specific time to actually sit down and conduct the interview. While we repeatedly scheduled our interview to take place one evening after Mariah had finished work, we would typically abandon this endeavour in favour of catching up with one another over several glasses of wine. Finally, we had to schedule our interview to take place during the day at Mariah's office where there were fewer distractions. While it could be assumed that as a result of our mutual history my friends might have felt more comfortable sharing stories with me than other participants whom I did not know prior to this research, this was not reflected in the interview data. The majority of my participants readily shared their experiences to the extent that it is difficult to discern any demonstrable difference between the interviews with strangers and those with my friends and acquaintances.

Fieldwork

The interviews were conducted in a number of different environments. When arranging meeting times with participants I offered a few different options for locations to conduct the interview—their office, home, or a coffee-house of their choosing—and let them know that I would travel to them. I wanted participants to feel comfortable speaking with me and to make the interview process as easy as possible for them in terms of logistics. When meeting with individuals that were not directly referred to me through another contact such as Taylor, who got in touch with me through the Alliance of Women Director's listserve, and wanted to meet at her home, I informed family members of my destination and set up a telephone call with them to follow the interview. This ensured researcher safety. Of the 27 interviews, eight were conducted in participants' homes and only two of these eight were done with individuals who were not directly referred by other participants. A further eight

interviews were carried out in participants' offices and 11 were conducted in local coffee houses or restaurants of the participants' choosing.

Throughout the interview period, I maintained a field journal. In my field journal I kept notes about every interview and the research process in general. After each interview, I would take 15-20 minutes to write down any thoughts, impressions, or key events/topics I wanted to remember in addition to the date of the interview, the location, and time. This task was usually completed when I returned to my car after an interview under the baking sun of a Los Angeles and/or Chicago summer. I tried not to censor my thoughts during this process and attempted to make notes about the interviews in a stream of consciousness manner. I found that writing notes in this way was effective in capturing elements about a participant and our surroundings, but also a way for me to reflect on my experience of the interview (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). My field notes include comments about how I felt during the interviews (i.e. excited, fascinated, scattered) as well as reminders not to anticipate answers, to maintain reflexivity, and to recognize value in all the interviews, even the few that I did not think 'went very well.' For example, I found it a bit difficult to establish rapport with Danielle, a studio executive I interviewed in Los Angeles. Danielle was not particularly gender reflective about her experiences working in film and television and, according to my field notes, it seemed as if she were bored by the end of our interview. I remember feeling disheartened after this encounter and as if I had failed in some way because compared to other interviews, my time with Danielle seemed not as productive. However, the process of writing about this experience in my field journal acted as a tool to re-frame my impression of this interview. I wrote about what I thought was 'lacking' in the interview, but then followed this section with reminders such as:

Can't discount [her] experiences just because [she wasn't] very gender reflective. Must view sample as whole population, not only individual stories. It will be valuable to have these multiple perspectives [for analysis]. Do not prioritize your own viewpoint/expectations [during interview]. Avoid judgement during [interview]. Keep [an] open mind. All are valuable insights and results. Never forget to be reflexive. Never forget to appreciate and account for my own bias. Embrace situated knowledges [and] partial truths (Field Journal, 19/06/2013)

Looking back, it now seems ridiculous that I initially considered Danielle's interview a failure. Danielle spoke from her unique perspective of work in the industry and her interview provided a great deal of insight into her experiences, offered plenty of data for analysis, and ultimately made my thesis stronger. Based on my field notes, I was trying to remind myself of the value of Danielle's interview while still in the middle of my fieldwork and while experiencing the feelings of failure or disappointment. Upon reflection, I think my field journal was an invaluable tool that acted not only as a way of recording details about my participants, but also as a useful means for processing my own experiences and reactions to the interviews.

Conducting interviews in the field was a remarkable experience. Particularly during my brief time in Los Angeles I felt connected to and immersed in my project. Excluding travel days, I only had 19 days in which I could conduct research. I completed 17 interviews in those 19 days, sometimes by having two interviews a day. This was challenging. There was often very little time to reflect on one interview before I needed to prepare for the next. In future studies I would prefer to take more time when conducting interviews in order to create more opportunities for the data to continue to inform the project while it is still in process. Even though there was little time to reflect while in the field, there were advantages to my research schedule. By condensing the interviews into this short period of time, I was able to more or less memorize my interview schedule and tailor it to each individual participant with ease. This allowed me to concentrate on listening to my participants and helped maintain the conversational tone of the interviews. While my fieldwork occasionally felt rushed, I was able to gather a large amount of data for analysis in a short period of time. I encountered very few problems during my time in the field but in the following sections I discuss some of the power differences I observed during the interviews and the blurry lines between my status as an insider and/or outsider in relation to my participants.

Power Dynamics and Insider/Outsider Statuses

Feminists and other researchers often discuss the difficulties and challenges encountered in research settings when interviewing vulnerable populations, across cultures, or when the topic of research is particularly sensitive (Hesse-Biber 2012;

Letherby 2003; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002; Reinharz 1992). These were issues that I did not encounter in my interviews. Nevertheless, power within the interview setting is dynamic and fluctuates, making it important to acknowledge how power differences between researchers and researched may influence data gathering (Cotterill 1992; Hesse-Biber 2012; Letherby 2003; Reinharz 1992; Ribbens 1989).

As I was interviewing women of different ages and at diverse stages of their careers the power dynamics of the interviews varied greatly. When I met women at local coffee houses and restaurants it almost felt as if we were entering neutral ground and both parties were coming together in a relatively equal partnership. However, when I met women I did not know prior to this project in their offices or homes I was more conscious of the attendant power dynamics. I felt more like an interloper, or that my interviewees were doing me a favour by fitting me into their schedules. This was particularly evident in my interview with Gwen, a 57-year-old executive producer/writer/director. Gwen's offices were located on one of the major studio lots in Los Angeles and while I had done interviews in locations like this before, I was still a bit intimidated by my surroundings. This, combined with Gwen's presence and conversational style, made me very aware of my 'junior' status in relation to her time spent in the industry and her expertise. Additionally, our meeting deviated from the relatively standard format of the other interviews. Gwen started our conversation by asking what I was hoping to gain out of these interviews, what my career aspirations were, and what I planned to do following the completion of my doctoral degree. This was a surprising turn of events for me as these discussions typically occurred after an interview was complete. This set the tone for the rest of the interview with Gwen being the dominant, leading figure and me feeling as if I were trying to keep up. The power relations that I experienced during the interviews were never static (Cotterill 1992; Kelly, Burton, and Regan 1994; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002; Stanley and Wise 1993). While Gwen was the dominant figure during much of her interview, I still maintained the power that accompanied me as a researcher.

As mentioned above, my participants were not members of an especially vulnerable group and I was not conducting cross-cultural research that is often accompanied by more complex power issues (Hesse-Biber and Yaiser 2004; Reinharz and Chase

2003). My participants and I shared a common cultural knowledge and language and were discussing an industry in which we all had a background, although my personal experience in the industry was brief. However, there were occasions when I did feel like participants assigned me a certain level of authority. I was especially cognizant of these power issues when participants would make statements such as: 'I hope this has been helpful.' Grace, for example, who was not an especially gender reflective participant, said during our interview: 'I'm maybe a terrible subject for you.' I rushed to tell her that she was perfect and to reassure her that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to my questions. I was surprised by Grace's anxiety regarding her suitability for my research, especially considering that I was simultaneously experiencing anxiety during our interview. Grace was one of the first women I interviewed in Los Angeles and we met in her office, located on one of the large network complexes in the city. I was a little intimidated by the surroundings and by the fact that I was interviewing a woman I viewed as being highly successful. To then be confronted with the idea that I might be the party with more authority and power in the interaction through Grace's articulation of her worry was unexpected. It is possible that my own feelings of nervousness and potentially my unconscious expression of these feelings through subtle linguistic and body language cues influenced how Grace felt during the interview, thereby increasing her level of anxiety. Alternatively, I may have classified Grace's comment as an expression of anxiety because I was projecting my own feelings of nervousness onto her when she in fact may not have been experiencing any adverse feelings. My interaction with Grace reinforced my sense of the necessity to try to create interview environments as comfortable as possible for participants and to acknowledge that despite such attempts there would continue to be power differences between researcher and participant (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Wengraf 2001). I did not find these fluctuations in power to be especially problematic during my fieldwork; rather they were interesting and unavoidable facets of the research process and while I could never completely eliminate them, I attempted to 'even-up' the power between my participants and me as much as possible (Stanley and Wise 1993).

In addition to negotiating power issues during the interview, I also had the experience of being both an insider and an outsider during my fieldwork; these identities existed simultaneously and fluctuated. I am a white, heterosexual American woman who was 29 years old when the interviews took place and I was interviewing other women. This, in some ways, made me an insider. Feminists have wrestled with these insider/outsider issues and how they influence the research process (Bhavnani 2004; Hesse-Biber 2012; Hesse-Biber and Yaiser 2004; Letherby 2003; Oakley 1981; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002; Stanley and Wise 1990). In my case, I think that being a woman interviewing other women about their experiences of work was beneficial for two reasons. First, based upon the research information letter that I sent to potential interviewees during recruitment, my participants were aware of the fact that they were being interviewed precisely because they were women working in the film and television industry. This was largely met with little questioning or suspicion regarding why I was particularly interested in women's experiences. Similar to Letherby (2003) I think the fact that I was a woman investigating this topic gave me some immediate legitimacy in the eyes of my interviewees. My participants did not appear to find it strange that I, a woman, would be asking them about their experiences *as women* in the industry. Second, for the most part I found that establishing rapport with my participants was fairly easy and I suspect that this ease was in part due to our shared gender. My participants and I discussed their career experiences, but intertwined within these narratives were stories related to pregnancy, breast-feeding, parenting, dating, sex, discrimination, and sexism that were all important components of these women's lives and often influenced their careers. While I cannot say for certain, I suspect some of the topics which my participants and I discussed with ease would have presented more challenges for a male interviewer.

Having previous experience working in film and television production was another way in which I was something of an insider in the interviews. During my undergraduate education in Los Angeles, I interned for a daily entertainment television show performing a variety of functions. I also interned for a film and television production company in Hollywood. While in Chicago I interned and later worked as a freelance employee at a film, television, commercial, and print casting company. For the most part, I think having this insider status aided my investigations

because of my familiarity with industry jargon, some of the realities of behind-the-scenes work, and industry processes. However, it had been approximately five years since I had worked in the industry in any capacity when I conducted the interviews and I was approaching film and television production from a new perspective with different goals. I therefore also occupied an outsider position in relation to my participants. I was not a fellow industry professional interviewing these women. Instead, I came with the specific intent to do research on film and television work from an academic perspective. However, I think that by simultaneously occupying insider and outsider positions I was able to make the most of my interviews. As I was not employed in the industry, there were certain topics and processes that my participants explained to me in greater detail than they would have done to an industry insider. Furthermore, my position as an outside researcher allowed me to ask 'naïve' questions of my participants without negative judgements (Ryen 2003). This was particularly helpful when participants were not very talkative. I would ask them to walk me through a typical work day or a typical work year as a way to help my participants 'open up' to me by having them speak about a topic they were comfortable describing and then I would use probes throughout to gain more information.

Being an outsider also helped in two other ways. First, I think my participants were more comfortable speaking with me as an outsider because there was less risk to their professional reputations. As I do not work in film and television, the women I interviewed did not need to worry that I would share their stories with other industry workers through the everyday interactions I would have with coworkers. Had I been an industry insider I think my participants would have been more hesitant speaking about their work environments, particular individuals, and negative experiences, for fear of the possibility that the larger industry would trace stories back to them. My participants did not need to worry that they might inadvertently talk about someone I knew in the industry through my work nor would they have anxiety about coincidentally seeing me at an industry event and being connected to my study. Secondly, I think being an outsider allowed me to observe some aspects of the industry that an insider might not have because of high levels of exposure to and normalization of industry practices. Caldwell (2009) discusses some of the

advantages and difficulties that insider researchers may encounter stating, ‘The intimate working knowledge of production processes...pushes them beyond the sometimes rudimentary questions that scholars with little direct knowledge of film/television raise. Yet “straddling the fence” also forces them to regularly negotiate both their access and their critical distance from those granting access’ (214). I was not burdened by an extensive work history that heavily shaped my view of film and television work. In a sense, I was able to study the industry with a fresh set of eyes and to look at the normal, everyday experiences of my participants from an outsider’s perspective.

My status as an insider and/or outsider was never fixed; I was able to occupy both positions to differing degrees in each interview setting. I shared some characteristics and positions with my participants like my gender, in most cases my race, and similar educational backgrounds, but inevitably there were innumerable ways in which I was an outsider. Furthermore, while my own status fluctuated, that of my participants did as well, depending on context. We were constantly co-constructing and re-engineering our identities throughout our interactions. I do not view these acts as problematic, for they are the unavoidable consequences of human interactions. We all have been shaped by the individual experiences of our lives as well as the larger societal structures and cultural traditions that influence us on a daily basis. As a feminist researcher I do not seek to eliminate these positions, but to account for them throughout the research process including the transcription and data analysis aspects of my project which will be discussed in the following section.

Transcription and Data Analysis

I transcribed all 27 interviews myself. On average, this took approximately nine hours per interview (including transcription and proofreading). This work was tedious and sometimes seemingly endless, but ultimately I think it enhanced my knowledge of the data and my ability to recognize potential areas for analysis. I began transcribing the first interviews while I was still completing my fieldwork in the summer of 2013. I chose to do this for several reasons. I wanted to transcribe the interviews quickly in order to increase the likelihood that I would remember the specificities of each interview and could make notations in the transcription about a

participant's inflections (Kvale 2007; Wengraf 2001). Additionally, I found this process to be particularly helpful in my efforts to refine my interview schedule. There were some questions that seemed cumbersome or out of place when asked during an interview. I eliminated a small number of questions that were not particularly useful in eliciting information and re-phrased others in order to maintain the conversational tone of the interviews and to use the vernacular of my participants. For example, I rephrased the following question after the first few interviews. The original question was, 'In what ways do you feel included in (excluded from) the professional networks and/or associations for your field?' I found this question was inappropriate for the information I was seeking and also disrupted the flow of my interviews. I changed this in the following interviews and would simply ask, 'Do you think networking is important?' or 'Can we talk a bit about networking?' which elicited richer responses than the previous version of the question. As a result of adjustments like these I was able to engage more effectively and establish rapport with my participants, maintain the conversational style of the interviews, and adjust my approach based upon previous experiences. In these ways my research was reflective of Hesse-Biber and Leavey's (2011) characterization of qualitative data collection and analysis as an 'iterative process' as I was collecting and analysing data concurrently and the two processes were simultaneously informing one another.

I transcribed my interviews using a combination of Microsoft Word and ExpressScribe software to slow the speed of conversation and filter out background noises on a few particularly loud recordings. Transcription is an interpretive process that attempts to reflect an 'evolving face-to-face conversation' in the static written form of a transcript which is an 'impoverished, decontextualized' account of the live interview (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 177-178). Despite these shortcomings transcription allowed for in-depth analysis of the interviews making it a valuable, if imperfect, process. I included notations in the transcripts about participant tone (e.g. laughingly) and used ellipses to indicate especially long pauses when participants were searching for ways to articulate their answers or paused to consider their responses. In two transcriptions I left out portions of the interviews that were not relevant to my research and indicated this with a notation in the transcripts. For example, in my interview with Max we spoke rather extensively about her previous

work at a library. The story was interesting, but ultimately unrelated to my project and I therefore decided not to include it in my transcription.

In addition to these omissions, I did not include the actual names of my participants, their employers, their colleagues, or contacts in my transcripts. The women I interviewed spoke candidly about their previous and current work experiences and often referred to well-known individuals or organizations in the film and television industry. In order to maintain their anonymity and to protect their professional reputations I altered these details or omitted them altogether and as such there has never been a written record of these references. In cases where it would have been obvious to whom my participants were referring, or where educated guesses could be made regarding their employers I did not transcribe such details. The transcripts were only ever viewed by me and my thesis supervisor, and were otherwise kept in a secure office at the Centre for Women's Studies along with participants' consent forms and their information questionnaires. I offered my participants the opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms after the completion of each interview. The majority of my participants chose their own pseudonyms. Five women asked me to choose a name for them, which I did when transcribing their interviews.

I aimed to use an inductive approach when analysing my data and in the development of codes and categories. This could best be described as a generic inductive qualitative approach (Hood 2007; Maxwell 2012). This approach is characterised by purposeful sampling and allows for the use of existing theories to develop research questions and interpret results (Maxwell 2012). I also employed some elements of grounded theory in my analysis (Charmaz 2014; Corbin and Strauss 2008; Silverman 2011) particularly those concerned with coding and category development. Grounded theory methods have been employed by countless researchers since first conceptualised by Glaser and Strauss (1965, 1967).⁴⁰ My approach is more reflective of the constructionist arm of grounded theory methods as opposed to the objectionist arm (Charmaz 2003). The constructionist view of grounded theory methods reflects many of the central tenets of feminist methodologies, particularly regarding feminist views on the co-construction of knowledge, the need to situate knowledge within

⁴⁰ For an in-depth discussion of the development and evolution of Grounded Theory see Bryant and Charmaz (2007).

context, and to acknowledge the researcher's position in relation to interview participants by practicing reflexive research. This is particularly well put by Allen and Eby (2004):

[C]onstructivist grounded theorists see an interview as starting with the central problem (which defines suitable participants for the study) but proceeding from how the interviewer and the subject co-construct the interview. Their constructions are taken as the grist of the study, but constructionists frame much of this material as 'views,' rather than hard facts. Constructivists emphasize locating their data in context (678).

However, it would be unfair to claim that this research employed grounded theory from inception to completion. First, my initial research question (What are women's reported experiences of work in the contemporary US film and television industry?) was ultimately a 'how' question (How do women experience work in the contemporary US industry? How does gender influence women's experiences of work in film and television?) which is more typical of the generic inductive qualitative method (Hood 2007; Maxwell 2012). Second, my sample was purposeful and bounded by specific criteria (e.g. age, professional context, gender) as discussed previously in this chapter. Pure grounded theory methods aim to limit *a priori* purposeful sampling, opting instead to gather initial data in order to uncover emerging themes in the data and then seek new sources of data that speak to these themes, repeating the process several times throughout the data gathering period (Charmaz 2003, 2014; Hood 2007). I did not exactly follow this model. Thirdly, I had conducted a review of the relevant literature prior to my fieldwork that helped define my research question as well as my sampling decision. There are researchers who argue that when using grounded theory methods literature reviews should only be written following the data gathering process so that the process is not unduly influenced by pre-conceived notions of the researcher. However, I agree with Stanley and Wise (1993) who argue:

theory always and inevitably comes before research, if we use this word to mean the formulation of ideas which attempt to understand and explain something [...] The research experience itself, like all other experiences, is necessarily subject to on-going 'theorizing', on-going attempts to understand, explain, re-explain, what is going on (159-160).

From the very beginning my research was influenced by my theoretical and political perspectives. I wanted to gain an understanding of women's career experiences in the industry and thus my questions and the data I gathered were bounded within this focus. For these reasons I characterise my data analysis process as a combination of the general inductive qualitative method and grounded theory (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Miles and Huberman 1994).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, my qualitative interviewing and data analysis were processes that occurred concurrently. My field notes acted as a first round of analysis in that I wrote down some of the primary themes that were discussed in each interview. Re-listening to the interviews during the transcription process offered another opportunity to analyse my data. Following transcription I coded every interview individually. I referred to Charmaz (2014), Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), and Saldana (2009) throughout the coding process for guidance.

My first cycle of coding primarily consisted of descriptive, *in vivo*, process, and emotion coding methods.⁴¹ Coding and data analysis are inevitably interpretive processes (Charmaz 2014; Corbin and Strauss 2008; Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014; Saldana 2009). As discussed earlier in this chapter, my perspective created a filter or lens through which I gathered, coded, and analysed my data. A researcher investigating the intricate organizational structure of the industry would have asked different interview questions, coded transcripts differently, and analysed data through distinct filters and lenses. The same could be said of an education researcher, a management researcher, a social psychologist, or any other disciplinary background. Furthermore, even when presented with the same data, researchers will differ in their interpretations and decisions during the coding process (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014; Saldana 2009). My interpretations were coloured by my feminist research perspective along with my social characteristics and positionality as a doctoral researcher. As already discussed, elimination of these variables is impossible in the research process. Examples of each type of first cycle codes and second cycle codes are included below in Table 2.

⁴¹ For an extensive summary of the different coding methods available to researchers see Saldana (2009).

Table 2. Examples of First and Second-Cycle Codes

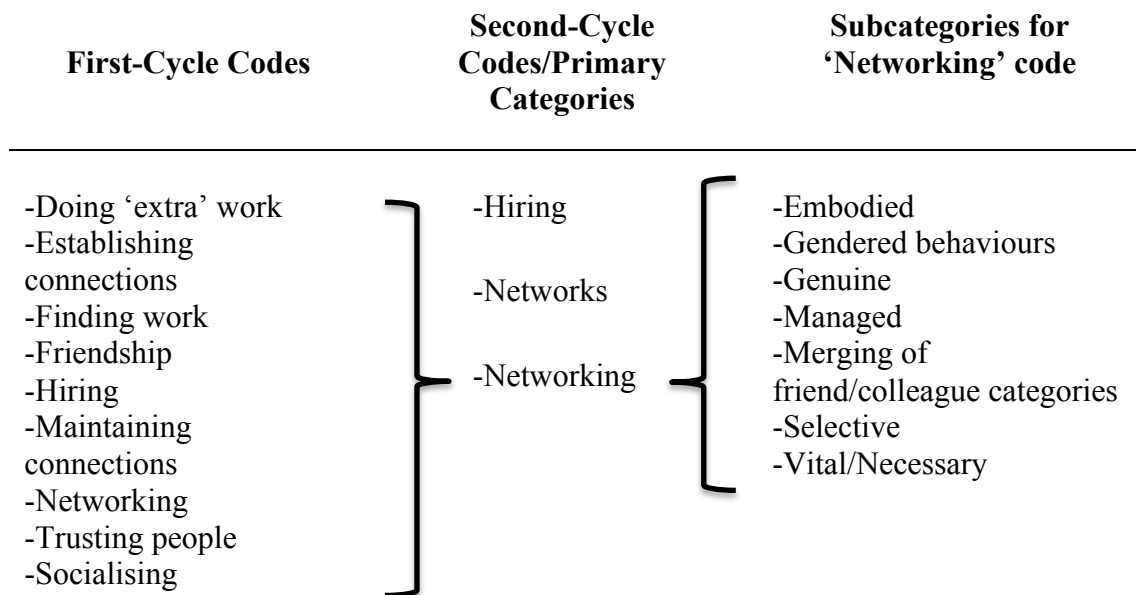
Coding Method	First-Cycle Codes	Second-Cycle Codes
Descriptive	Always knew, childhood interest, industry-adjacent, unanticipated, creative identity, epiphany moment, first job, internship, long hours, lack of benefits, assistants, bosses, risk/precarity, fast-pace, industry image, work/life balance, exclusion, children, pregnancy, networks, mentors, solidarity, career changes, future plans, sexism, racism, atypical work, job invisibility, boys' club	-Career entry narratives -Early years -Positive career attributes -Negative career attributes -Weighing good against bad
Emotion	Love, frustration, ambivalence, anxiety, connection, hate, anger, disbelief, worry, awe, joy, relief, gratitude, excitement, powerlessness, powerful	-Love of work -Frustration with system/industry practices -Connection with finished product/audience -Anxiety about job security
<i>In Vivo</i>	'Always at the mercy of other people,' 'I've never thought about being a woman in this industry,' 'I could be fired tomorrow,' 'We've learned to hedge our bets,' 'I love it, it's what I want to do,' 'It's not a career it's a compulsion,' 'Odd-man out' 'Navigate your womanhood,' 'harpy,' 'feminist,' 'Afraid of not being taken seriously,' 'Didn't feel supported,' 'I've been lucky,' 'You better be passionate about it,' 'Pop you head in the door'	-Precarity/insecurity -Strategies to mitigate career insecurity -Passion for/love of work -Feeling excluded -'Navigate your womanhood' -'I've never thought about being a woman in this industry'
Process	Seeking work, networking, establishing connections, maintaining connections, accepting risk, weighing risk, re-evaluating career goals, minimizing sexism, invoking meritocracy, denying sexism, acknowledging sexism, accepting bad parts of job, paying your dues, trusting people, hiring, keeping in touch, mentoring, finding mentors, being creative, working with creative people, socialising, doing extra work	-Network -Networking -Network characteristics -Experiencing sexism/discrimination -Accepting career insecurity as 'normal' -Denying sexism/discrimination -Hiring -Mentors/mentoring

Source: Interview Data, 2013.

Based on first-cycle codes, I developed broader second-cycle codes by looking for patterns and outliers when first-cycle coded transcript excerpts were analysed and compared. I then used the second-cycle codes as the foundation for developing the categories and concepts that would constitute the analysis dimensions of this thesis. The primary categories were based on industry characteristics (i.e. assistants, industry image, risk/precarity) or processes (i.e. accepting risk, experiencing sexism, networking). I did this for two reasons. One, I wanted to gain an understanding of *what* my participants reported when talking about film and television work and two, I also aimed to elucidate *how* my interviewees experienced these material realities of the industry. As discussed in the literature review, there has been little qualitative research conducted regarding contemporary US women's experiences of film and television work. It is clear from previous research that careers in film and television are usually accompanied by insecure, project-based work. I sought to examine how women in the US navigate this environment. As such, categories based on industry characteristics and processes were most appropriate.

Following the articulation of my primary categories, I developed subcategories based on an analysis of the interview transcripts with the characteristic and process codes acting as filters. For example, one of my second-cycle codes was 'networking.' This was a broader category developed from first-cycle codes such as 'finding connections,' 'making connections,' 'hiring,' 'keeping in touch,' 'networking,' 'popping your head in the door,' etcetera. I then re-analysed my interview transcripts looking specifically for how my participants reported their experiences with networking activity. This process is illustrated below in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Example of Coding Process



Source: Interview Data, 2013.

As illustrated in Figure 3, based on first-cycle codes I developed three primary second-cycle codes from this particular grouping. They were: hiring, networks, and networking. I then re-analysed my data using networking as a filter through which I sorted transcript excerpts. Both of the other second-cycle codes, hiring and networks, were absorbed into the larger networking process code due to the fact that both were enmeshed within the larger networking process as evidenced in the transcripts. The back and forth process of coding, data analysis, and conceptual development created a rich set of primary categories and subcategories to explore.

During analysis I found myself grappling with issues regarding my interpretations of participants' reported experiences and how these experiences could be used to analyse larger questions about gendered power in the film and television industry. It was occasionally tempting to view the experiences my participants described as factual, but I also knew that experiential data is open to interpretation and subjectively shaped by context. It became a kind of tug of war between multiple perspectives. On the one hand I wanted to treat my participants' reports as factual and to use these 'facts' as a way to comment on gendered issues in the film and

television industry. On the other hand, it was important to remember that these reports were my participants' interpretations of their experiences and that the positionalities of subject and researcher would influence how I analysed them (Letherby 2003; Maynard 1994). Ultimately, I attempted to balance these perspectives in my analysis. I think that grappling with such methodological questions and debates helps researchers to create more informed analyses and encourages us to continue to practice reflexivity.

The challenge of connecting experience to material reality is a topic that has been explored and debated extensively by feminist scholars (DeVault and Gross 2007; Hesse-Biber 2012; Hesse-Biber, Leavy, and Yaiser 2004; Letherby 2003; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002; Scott 1991; Skeggs 1995). The power I had to interpret my participants' experiences while also trying to maintain their subjective voices was sometimes difficult to reconcile. I was aware that I was making the choices when it came to representing my participants. I was choosing which themes I thought were important from the interviews and assigning them weight according to what I thought were the most salient points. I decided which interview segments to include in my analysis chapters because I thought they best illustrated what participants had talked about. While I used a wide range of viewpoints I refer to particular participants more often in my thesis than others and use extracts from their interviews with greater frequency. For example, I use segments from my interview with Anabelle throughout the analysis chapters of this thesis more often than any other participant. I know this. I use her interview frequently because her narrative style seemed to articulate common experiences among my participants extremely well. These were all choices *I* made according to *my* interpretations of the data. These are difficult realities of the research process to accept. Similar to Letherby (2003), I think that while this thesis does not, and indeed cannot, present the ultimate 'truth' of women's experiences in the industry, I nevertheless think that my work constitutes a valid, if only partial, analysis of an as yet unexplored topic. Furthermore, and again drawing on Letherby (2002), even though full representation of participants may be impossible, an incomplete representation is better than no representation at all.

Throughout my fieldwork and data analysis I was engaged in an on-going process of analysing the interviews. While there was a distinct period during which data analysis was my primary concern, in reality the data continued to ‘work’ on me, and still does. Through this on-going process I settled upon three main areas of analysis. The first of these was women’s entry into film and television work and why, despite its precarious nature, they continue to work in this sector. Next, I focus on the networking practices and mentoring experiences of my participants and the vital role these processes play in a career in film and television. Finally, I discuss how my participants reported experiencing sexism and discrimination in the contemporary industry and how they negotiated their encounters with these attitudes.

Conclusion

It was challenging and occasionally frustrating to grapple with the issues discussed in this chapter and to wrestle with debates regarding feminist epistemology, ethical research practice, participant recruitment, power relations, data analysis, and the myriad other decisions and issues that accompany a research project. However, through this process I learned more about my own theoretical perspectives and thus was better able to account for my own position in relation to the research. I have learned that I am not a postmodern and/or post-structuralist feminist. The contributions of these theoretical perspectives are important, especially when considering their influence on discourse analysis as well as queer theory. However, for my research I used feminist production studies as a lens because it accounts for the specific historical context of the film and television industry while integrating a gendered perspective into the contemporary material realities of this sector. I employed a combination of a generic inductive qualitative approach and grounded theory methods for data coding and analysis. This created the categories and subcategories that I explore further in the following chapters of this thesis.

In addition to the methodological choices and challenges discussed above, my own material realities also influenced this project. The time restrictions for completing a PhD and the fact that my fieldwork was self-funded imposed some limitations on my research. As with any research project, there were inevitable bumps along the way and my individual standpoints and perspectives as a researcher influenced the choices

I made and the analysis of my data. However, despite these limitations, my research helps to illuminate the experiences of women in the contemporary US film and television industry in a manner that has not been previously explored. The following three chapters explore the primary categories I developed during my data analysis process as described in this Methodology. I begin with an analysis of my participants' entry into film and television work.

Chapter 3. Women's Career Narratives: Industry Entry and the Appeal of Film and Television Work

There is no one way to get into film and television work. As Penelope, one of my participants, said, 'You go through a back door, you knock on a door, you break down a door, whatever it takes.' In certain ways the industry has low barriers of entry. Unlike professions that require specific advanced degrees, film and television work often does not require such a background. My participants had degrees in corporate finance, communications, film and television, journalism, English, business/management, as well as other disciplines and a couple of my interviewees did not have advanced degrees or had returned to higher education after working in film and television for many years. In a sense therefore, anyone can work in the industry. However, securing employment, choosing career paths, and navigating the hidden inner workings of film and television work are difficult and contribute to creating an industry in which the avenues of entry and advancement are highly obscured. In order to better understand women's experiences of work in US film and television, I decided to begin with an analysis of their career entry narratives.

The women I interviewed framed their career origin stories in several ways. Some women always knew that they wanted to work in the entertainment industry and worked from a young age to pursue this goal. Others had an interest in the area but little direction or knowledge of what types of jobs would be available to them in the business. Women transitioned into the film and television industry from other careers. Some held university degrees in the field, others took a single course at college that piqued their interest, several had had internships in the industry, some transitioned from acting careers and degrees, and a few made paths and inroads uniquely their own.

While there were, of course, intricacies and specificities unique to each individual, when looking at the larger group, origin stories could be categorized along three main lines:

- Women who were interested in the industry from a young age⁴²
- Women who transitioned into the industry after working alongside it in what I call ‘industry adjacent’ sectors and
- Women who did not anticipate a career in film and television but found their way to the industry

There is a great amount of overlap among these categories as the women I interviewed had rich and complex accounts of their decisions to enter into film and television work. My participants differed in their narrative styles, with some creating linear career storylines while others moved forward and backward in their timelines with ease. Interviewees would contradict themselves and sometimes were unable to recall certain events or their reasoning behind particular decisions, but nonetheless offered mountains of information for analysis. In this chapter I analyse my participants’ career origins through an examination of their recollections of entry into film and television work. Here I draw on the work of Taylor and Littleton (2012) who have analysed career entry narratives of artists. Following this, I bring my participants’ reports of the attributes of their chosen field into conversation with previous research on film and television workers, as discussed in Chapter 1. For now I turn my attention to the agentic manner in which my participants tended to describe their decisions to work in the industry.

Agency in career choice

The consequences resulting from the transformation of work in the creative industries, as detailed in Chapter 1, have been well documented⁴³. The rise of

⁴² This first category includes women who always knew they wanted a career in film and television as well as women who had been interested in the industry from a young age but were unsure how to gain entry into this field.

⁴³ Christopherson and Storper, 1989, Bielby, D. D. and Bielby, 1996, Dex et al., 2000, McRobbie, 2000, Thynne, 2000, Ursell, 2000, Blair, 2001, Gill, 2002, McRobbie, 2002, Murdock, 2003, Nixon and Crewe, 2004, Neff, Wissinger and Zukin, 2005, Menger, 2006, Deuze, 2007, Hesmondhalgh, 2007, Caldwell, 2008, Christopherson, 2008, Gill and Pratt, 2008, Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008, Curtin and Shattuc, 2009, Mayer, Banks and Caldwell, 2009, Buchmann, Kriesi and Sacchi, 2010, Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010, McGuigan, 2010, Banks, M. and Milestone, 2011, Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, Cohen, 2012, Lee, 2012, Taylor and Littleton, 2012.

neoliberal business practices in the creative industries has contributed to the creation of an employment environment that usually offers little job security and requires temporary, flexible, and mobile labour. Given these conditions it is unlikely that when looking for work people will just ‘fall’ into the film and television industry as there are other options and sectors that offer more security, higher pay, and clearer avenues of entry. This was evidenced throughout my participants’ career origin stories as only two women, Gwen and Grace, spoke about their careers in film and television as something they had ‘fallen into.’

Gwen’s initial engagement with the industry came out of a chance encounter resulting from the circumstances of her youth. However, Gwen spent several years working outside the industry in politics and then chose to re-enter and create a lifelong career in television. So while her early work in the field may have come about circumstantially, Gwen did decide to return to work in film and television. Unlike Gwen, Grace viewed her entire career in the industry as the result of luck. Grace said of her first job in television as an assistant:

I kind of fell into TV cause that was the first job I got and I needed a job and you know, I was sick of eating ramen, and I couldn’t pay rent, and I couldn’t put my car payment on my credit card one more month. So I took that job. It was a job with insurance. It was a very practical decision...but somebody...the universe was taking care of me in some way.

Grace, who years earlier had moved to Los Angeles lacking secure employment, attributed her career in television to luck and ‘the universe taking care of her.’ However, Grace did choose to apply for jobs in the film and television industry as opposed to a different sector. So while she remembered the initiation of her career as being the result of fate, she actually made certain decisions regarding the industry in which she would work. She needed a job that would give her the means to pay her bills and one that offered medical insurance, a decision she herself described as ‘very practical.’ I would argue that her choice of industry was also very practical, based upon the type of work environment she wished to be in, which will be detailed later in this chapter. While Gwen and Grace had clear career entry recollections, other participants’ narratives on this subject were more convoluted.

When asked why they chose to work in the film and television industry some of my participants did not have clear answers or recall a specific decision to enter their field. Penelope said, ‘I knew that I wanted to do something in film and television. I didn’t know what it was.’ This was not an uncommon sentiment among my participants. In addition to Penelope nine other women (Danielle, Jemma, Kathryn, Mariah, Marissa, Hallie, Samantha, Sasha, Susan) made similar remarks. While they may have been unsure about the specifics, these women nevertheless made very clear, conscious decisions to work in the entertainment industry per se. For example, Susan said, ‘it’s so weird because I don’t even know what made me want to get into television in the first place [...] it’s like, did I choose that or did it choose me?’ While she could not recall a particular choice that had led her to television, Susan did know from a young age that she wanted to have a career in the entertainment industry. After this decision it was a matter of moving to Los Angeles for college, participating in entertainment industry internships, seeking the advice of mentors, and eventually finding work in television production in Chicago—where she wanted to live following the completion of her degree.

While Susan had no specific role in mind when beginning her career in television, there were other women who began with clear career aspirations that evolved after spending time in the industry. Upon entry and after learning more about the inner workings of this highly opaque field, they made decisions to pursue particular career trajectories within the larger film and television industry. Occasionally participants discussed ‘falling’ into certain jobs within the industry, or taking certain work to pay off student loans or pay the rent, but Grace (quoted above) was singular in viewing her entire career in film and television as the result of luck or happenstance.

Rather than speaking about their careers as the result of serendipity, which Ruth Woodfield (2007) observed in her research with women teachers, my participants tended to use more active descriptions when discussing their choice of industry and early careers. In contrast to the opaqueness of film and television industry employment, a career in teaching often follows a path from university to a postgraduate certification in education to a school placement and eventually being hired by a school. While there are, of course, variations to this path, in general, entry

into a teaching career has relatively clear specifications that must be met prior to employment, which is not the case in film and television work. Woodfield (2007) found that many of the teachers in her study attributed their career choice to chance and external societal pressures and expectations based upon their gender, age, previous academic success, etc. The teachers who participated in Woodfield's research talked about how they ended up in their field by default after exploring other sectors or that a career in teaching made sense due to their background and/or their experiences with teachers growing up. Conversely, when my participants discussed gendered expectations regarding their careers, several spoke about choosing their careers *in spite* of these external pressures. Taylor said, 'My father's dream for me was to be a secretary on Capitol Hill or a nun,' and her parents 'tried to dissuade [her] every moment of every day.' In spite of these early challenges Taylor kept working toward her goal of becoming an actress and eventually a writer/director. Rather than leaving the industry, participants who discussed familial or societal pressures spoke about overcoming these challenges through perseverance, commitment, and strategic career decisions.

Unlike teachers who occupy a highly visible and dispersed role in post-industrial countries, film and television workers tend to cluster in specific geographic areas and offer few opportunities for the general public to observe their work, making access to insider knowledge more difficult to come by. As such, it is not surprising that many of the women I interviewed used agentic language when describing their career entry as their choice of field forced them to take an active role to gain knowledge of work practices in film and television. The remainder of this chapter analyses how and why the women I interviewed entered and continued work in the industry despite the difficulties associated with a career in film and television (e.g. insecurity, low pay, long hours) as discussed in the Literature Review.

Career Entry Narratives

Early interest in film and television

Quite a few of the women (12 of 27) I interviewed remembered developing an interest in the industry in their youth. While most⁴⁴ of these 12 women did not have specific occupations within the industry as a goal, or if they did, those goals changed over time, they talked about an early desire to work in the industry in some capacity. This is not uncommon in creative career histories (Taylor and Littleton 2012). My participants with an interest in film and television in their youth viewed their career choice as a logical progression and extension of their connection to the medium.

Several women framed their reasons for entering the industry as an inevitable decision based upon a deeply embedded part of their identity. Taylor and Littleton (2012), who analysed creative workers' narratives, argue that by constructing a creative life history that begins in childhood, individuals claim their identity as a creative person and are able to legitimate their career choices because they seem to be based on logical reasons stemming from early experiences and 'natural talents'. This was the case for some participants who linked their current employment with innate talents. Nell, a television writer, said, 'even if I was working a desk job or doing something like that I would still be writing [...] For me it's kind of like an eternal thing, like I just have to do it. My sister says it's not a career, it's a compulsion.' For Nell, creative writing was intimately intertwined with her identity and self-image; she would write in some capacity no matter what the circumstances of her life. She viewed writing as an essential activity that she had little choice but to follow through with. She *was* a writer and she simply *had to* do it. This belief was reinforced by her sister who referred to Nell's writing as a 'compulsion,' an unavoidable activity that Nell was fortunately able to translate into a career.

Lilly expressed similar views when she described how she began writing in her childhood. While she did not have aspirations to work specifically in television, she could not remember a time when she did not want to be a writer. When considering

⁴⁴ Kasey, who grew up with ambitions to be an actress, was the only one of my participants that did not transition out of acting later in life. Her primary income was from her work as an actress and acting coach. Emily, Kathryn, Nell, Taylor, and Valerie had either worked briefly as actresses or held degrees in theatre and later changed career paths.

her future and her retirement she said, ‘Maybe I go write books, but I don’t ever see myself not being a writer in some way.’ Taylor also brought up the inevitability of her career choice. She said:

I was a child actress and I loved it with all my heart and my parents tried at every turn to discourage me [...] But I’ve really found, I’m now also an acting coach in addition to being a director, I’ve really seen myself in a lot of these other kids. It’s in the bones, it’s in the blood. If you love it and you love performing, there’s nothing to dissuade you.

Taylor talked about her early career as a child actress not only as an act of defiance against her parents who did not approve, but as something she felt compelled to do when looking back on it. As an acting coach she saw herself in some of her young clients reinforcing her view that creativity is something innate that already exists within an individual and cannot be extinguished if they ‘love it’ enough. The talent or need to creatively express oneself is here constructed as bound up in a person’s nature.⁴⁵

Industry-adjacent careers

A few of my participants (5 of 27) transitioned to jobs inside the industry after working in fields that I refer to as ‘industry-adjacent.’ These women were exposed to the film and television industry after working alongside it in music, journalism, public relations, and advertising. They then used the relationships they had developed with industry insiders through their other work to change careers. Jemma spoke about her years as an editor for an online magazine and how this work created opportunities for her to make contacts in film and television. She said:

So I had been covering the entertainment industry as a journalist [...] and I had always loved television growing up...always, always, always [...] and so I always sort of knew that I wanted to write for television...or be involved in TV or film and so I, when I was working in that capacity as a journalist, I would come down to LA on business [...] and I just started talking people

⁴⁵This continuity-based career narrative is not limited to workers in creative fields. Kelan (2009) also observed this style of career history in her study of information and communications technology (ICT) workers.

about how I might get involved, just did informational interviews with people and a lot of people suggested that I consider grad school...

Despite having been interested in film and television from a young age, Jemma did not pursue a career in the industry after university. Instead she worked for years in journalism in close proximity to it. When she decided to change careers Jemma was able to use the connections she had made with people working inside the industry to help her navigate and plan her entry into the field.

Lucia had a similar experience and spoke about her transition from music licencing to reality television production. She said:

...one of my first jobs right out of college, I started working right away in music licencing for film and television [...] So I did that for, about, almost 8 years. And I was finally getting ready to leave, I just wanted a different... change of pace and different work experience and my friend...and I really wanted to travel...and my friend was working on [Reality TV Show] [...] and there happened to be an opening in the post-production department on location and it was exactly what I was wanting to do [...] and so I jumped ship and I just went right to that.

Lucia had been working very closely to the industry in music licencing but remained on the outside. When she decided it was time to change careers she contacted a friend of hers that worked inside the industry and used this connection to help her transition.⁴⁶

Isabella was working in public relations for the government when she started dating a man who worked in advertising. She said:

I had to wear this suit every day and be 8:00am-5:30pm and everything and he got to play ping pong at lunch and have beer and write cool stuff (both laugh) and I thought that is what I want to do! Something in that [...] I quit my job and I went to a temp agency and I said, 'I don't care what I do just get me to one of the big [advertising] agencies in town...'

⁴⁶ This is an example of the type of networking and informal hiring that occurs in the industry. An in-depth discussion of networking will be included in Chapter 4.

After working in advertising for several years Isabella realized that while she enjoyed some aspects of her job what she was really drawn to was writing, which she had done since her childhood, and more creative work. She used the network she had developed through her advertising work to position herself for film and television success. Isabella eventually started her own marketing firm and became a creative director and film director.

These women all referred to their first careers as lacking a certain something that they believed would be fulfilled by transitioning to work in film and television. Jemma had always wanted to write, but journalism did not satisfy this desire; Lucia wanted to travel and found a production job that allowed her to do so; and Isabella enjoyed certain aspects of PR, but felt it was not creative enough. Importantly, all of these women that worked in industry-adjacent careers had contacts with industry insiders whom they were able to seek help from when they decided to switch careers.

Unanticipated industry careers

As mentioned previously, many of the women I interviewed discussed their interest in or fascination with film, television, or the entertainment industry in general as rooted in their childhood or teenage years. However, the entrance of five of my participants into the film and television industry was unexpected. Grace said:

I just never knew there was a job for someone like me. I'm not an actress, I'm not a director, I'm not a writer [...] It wasn't until I got out here (Los Angeles) and there's plenty of people out here that aren't writers, directors, or actors. Most people out here aren't those people!

Grace reiterates the opaqueness of entry and employment in film and television. At least to outsiders it appears there are only certain types of jobs available in the industry, those directly involved in the creation of content. The image of the creative artistic individual is an enduring archetype when the reality is that the industry is much more complex and requires a highly diverse and interconnected workforce to create products (Caldwell 2008).

Gwen, a highly successful 57-year-old executive producer/director, had never considered a career in film and television. She grew up in a small town where if you were a woman, ‘you were either a nurse or you got married or if you were able to go to college you only went to be a teacher.’ Gwen’s family did not have the means to send her to college. She married at the age of 18 and moved with her husband to a university where he had an athletic scholarship and she ended up working in sports information. From there she made contacts at local television networks and began her work in the industry. A highly conventional start to adult life, particularly regarding gendered norms and expectations, had nonetheless led to a less conventional career.

Annie, a producer from Chicago, did not have childhood aspirations to work in the industry either. She said, ‘It was not my life’s ambition to be a television producer at all [...] I always thought I’d do more the PR/marketing thing.’ However, throughout her final year at university in California Annie had an internship at a large film studio and gained exposure to the business. Annie decided that she wanted to stay in the entertainment business, live in Chicago, and work for one specific company and she took steps to make that a reality. Mariah also entered college with a different career path in mind. She had intended to continue on to law school but began taking classes in the School of Communication and eventually decided to major in the subject. As a result she interned at a television network and a film production company which fuelled her interest in the industry. Looking back on her change in career ambitions Mariah said:

I kind of just figured it out along the way and now looking back, maybe subconsciously it was...the things that I really liked about law are the things that I love about my job which...our job is to help writers and producers tell a story and to tell a story that is believable and logical and there are no holes and you know, it’s a lot of problem solving, especially on set and it’s you know, it’s really like trying to find the most compelling narrative that you can and I think that’s what I liked about law too.

Mariah viewed her choice of career as a logical extension of her earlier interest in telling believable stories, solving problems, and finding the ‘most compelling narrative.’ Prior to her exposure to the industry through university coursework and

internships, Mariah was unaware of the potential these skills had for making a career in film and television. She entered university with ambitions to work in law, a conservative, well-established career option. Unlike entry into the film and television industry, law has a relatively straightforward career path in the US from undergraduate work, through law school, passing individual State Bar Association exams and finally practicing law. This is not the case for the film and television industry, which by and large relies on knowledge acquired through work experience rather than formal education.

Like Mariah, Melanie also talked about how in retrospect her choice to pursue a career in film and television made sense. Coming from a family of teachers, Melanie began university intending to follow in their footsteps. However, upon a recommendation from a friend Melanie enrolled in a radio/television course and fell in love with writing. She said:

I remember thinking when I was a kid, I remember wanting to do...work in advertising and do commercials, mainly because...I don't know if I had seen it in a TV show or somewhere, and I remember thinking that it would be fun, just coming up with ideas. But I never thought I could really do it. Knowing what I know now, there's a reason I wanted to do that because it was creative and I watched a lot of TV as a kid. I was the chubby kid sitting in front of the TV all day...tuning out the rest of the world and watching *Wonder Years*^[47] and *Full House*^[48] and all that good stuff.

Melanie, again, exhibited the belief that despite wanting to work in something like advertising and loving television, she never actually considered it a viable career option until taking her first course in college. For these five women film and television work was neither a lifelong ambition nor an envisioned possibility. It was only after exposure to the diverse tasks and job positions in the industry that they decided that film and television work was a career option. Their accounts further exemplify how 'hidden' careers in this sector are to industry outsiders. This reinforces that film and television is not a field people tend to 'fall into.'

⁴⁷ *The Wonder Years*. (1988-1993). [Television Series]. American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

⁴⁸ *Full House*. (1987-1995). [Television Series]. ABC.

Generational differences

Among the women I interviewed distinct differences in career paths could be observed across generations. While there is no one way to break into the business, the path from intern, to assistant, to more senior positions was one of the more ‘traditional’ paths, if such a thing exists, for above-the-line workers and creative executives in the contemporary industry. The notion of having to pay your dues or perform certain rites of passage was brought up by several women. Most of the women interviewed referred to their career progression as a process of proving themselves and creating legitimacy within the larger film and television industrial community. When I asked the women to tell me how they ‘got involved in the industry’ many walked me through their career origins in a linear manner and discussed their movement from intern to working as an assistant at an agency to being an assistant at a network, studio, or production company to higher level positions.

However, some women over the age of 45 did not experience this relatively linear career progression. Instead they spoke about their careers as a series of stops and starts, with some taking jobs outside of the industry in between stints of working inside. Penelope, a 47-year-old writer/director/producer, talked about how she had always wanted to work in the industry but had very little insider knowledge about how to make a career there. Instead, she pursued a degree in international relations with aspirations for a career in politics and it was only years later that she returned to graduate school to do a film degree. Max, a 49-year-old participant, first tried to have a career as a television writer following her time at university. However, she ended up working as a music journalist and comic book writer for many years until she returned to the industry as a documentary researcher. Gwen, who was 57 years old at the time of our interview, first began her career in sports television after following her high-school sweetheart, and then husband, to university. While he played football for the university, she worked in sports information. Following her divorce, she spent several years working in politics in Washington D.C. before returning to the film and television work world. For this older generation, there were fewer existing models of successful women working in the industry when they began their careers. Their narratives reflected the gender politics of their generation and they typically framed their career choices as atypical in relation to their peers.

This older generation of women also spoke about the differences between skills required for industry work when they began their careers versus the contemporary industry. Valerie, who had worked in public broadcasting for over 30 years, said:

I'm 57 years old now and I started as a writer/producer; producer/writer and then I went into management. But we didn't have to edit our own material. We didn't have to shoot our own material. And so much of what's being done now they want you to be able to play multiple roles because the equipment got cheaper, people were learning it, it's digital, it's fast so there's a huge cultural workplace shift that people my age needed to adjust to [...] Everyone needs to be an entrepreneur now.

Valerie had witnessed significant technology-driven changes in the film and television industry over the past three decades. In its contemporary post-Fordist version the industry increasingly requires workers to have knowledge of various fields and perform job functions that previously required multiple individuals. Furthermore, as Valerie indicated, workers in today's industry are more reminiscent of entrepreneurs as opposed to employees. This is increasingly common in the film and television industry. As discussed in the Literature Review, the disintegration of the vertically integrated film and television industry reminiscent of the studio and networks eras contributed to the establishment of a largely freelance labour market (Blair, Grey, and Randle 2001; Christopherson and Storper 1989; Conor, Gill, and Taylor 2015b; Hesmondhalgh 2007; Storper and Christopherson 1987; Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015). This transition has effectively transferred the responsibility for skills learning onto film and television workers themselves as opposed to the industry's employers. Grugulis and Stoyanova (2009) as well as Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle (2015) have observed this trend in the UK film and television industry as well. The need to constantly update one's repertoire of skills combined with the traditions of unpaid/underpaid internships undoubtedly creates obstacles for workers who cannot afford the burden of such education either through formal training or offering their time/services free of charge in exchange for opportunities to learn new skills. This exacerbates the difficulty of gaining entry and continuing to work in film and television for individuals from less privileged backgrounds. While participants across the generations spoke about the difficulties of overcoming gender-based career

barriers, Valerie's comments also highlight how intersectional aspects of exclusion may create challenges for career success in the contemporary industry.

From my participants' career narratives it is clear that Penelope, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, was correct. There are no pre-determined paths to enter into film and television work. Similar to the artists Taylor and Littleton (2012) interviewed, some of my participants traced their decisions to work in film and television to natural extensions of early-life interests or deeply personalized aspects of their creativity. Other women worked in what I have termed industry-adjacent careers prior to transitioning into film and television work with the assistance of contacts within the industry. Finally, there were five participants for whom a career in film and television was unanticipated. While their entry narratives were complex and often bucked categorization, there were clearer elements of commonality in my participants' descriptions of film and television career attributes, to which I now turn my attention.

Industry Career Attributes

The women I interviewed tended to construct their lifestyles around the demands of their careers, rather than the opposite. This is congruent with changing attitudes toward paid employment in the new economy. Work for these women was not simply a day job or a way to pay the bills. Rather, paid work was something they made sacrifices for, particularly at the beginning of their careers, in order to gain opportunities, achieve success, and work in a field they enjoyed. The Fordist model of employment has been replaced, especially in the cultural industries, with the idea that work should offer individuals a chance at self-actualization and independence (McRobbie 2002a). McRobbie (2002a) argues that these attitudes may be particularly pronounced in young women who are entering into a lifetime of paid work as opposed to women's work in previous generations which was largely a 'part-time or interrupted accompaniment to family life' (521). Similar to other studies of labour in the cultural industries (Gill and Pratt 2008; McRobbie 1998; Ursell 2000), these attitudes toward work and the satisfaction work should provide for the individual were apparent in my participants' narratives. The vast majority of the women I interviewed characterized their work as a 'labour of love'. My participants'

descriptions of their work reflect McRobbie's (1998, 2011) concept of 'passionate work' which was discussed in the Literature Review. They thought one needed to be passionate about work in film and television in order to mitigate some of the negative aspects of such work. Susan said:

...would I recommend somebody go into this business? It better be your passion if you want to go into it. That's what I would say. If you don't want to do this, go do something else....go to dental school or whatever, get your teaching degree [...] because if this is not your passion, even if you just like it a lot, you need to be very passionate about this, otherwise you're not going to last. You're just not gonna last, you're gonna burn out. It's gonna be...the hours are long, it takes a long time to get to a place where you feel comfortable with your pay and your title and if you don't love it, you're wasting your time basically (laughing).

Susan succinctly articulated a perception of work in the industry echoed by other participants. Passion and enthusiasm about film and television work was not an added benefit of employment in the industry, but instead a prerequisite for success according to interviewees. The hours are long and the individual input and effort required, particularly at the start of one's career, is intense. According to my participants attempting a career in film and television was not recommended without a passion for the medium as there are other career choices that offer greater benefits with less risk and fewer sacrifices.

Occupational risk: informed consent

With the increased casualization of employment in the film and television industries that has taken place since the decline of the studio and network eras combined with the adoption of neoliberal business practices, risk of unemployment or under-employment is a reality that my participants brought up time and again. Anabelle said:

You're not in this business if you are risk averse. If you are risk averse, you're not in production because you could be fired tomorrow and you could never work again. It's entirely possible and it happens. So I knew that it was a big risk especially since when I was graduating from college I had that lovely job offer which was very steady and very safe and so I recognized that this is the safe path and this is the risky path.

The riskiness and precarity attached to cultural work has been well documented (Blair, Grey, and Randle 2001; Christopherson 2009; Cohen 2012; Gill and Pratt 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; McRobbie 2002a; Pratt 2000; Ursell 2000; Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015). Individuals working in film and television are sometimes characterised as uninformed workers who have been ‘tricked’ into embracing these manic and insecure work conditions. However, as illustrated by Anabelle, those working in film and television are not ignorant of the realities of their career choices and make informed decisions regarding the level of precarity they are willing to tolerate. Workers may eschew the insecure employment conditions present within the industry, but ultimately they accept these risks as the price for their careers. At the least, this is often the reason that is cited by cultural and creative workers when considering the insecurity of their careers. Like Anabelle, other participants who also worked on the creative/production side of the industry spoke about career risk as an unavoidable reality of their career choices, but simultaneously talked about their acceptance of this risk. Anabelle continued:

On this risky path I might not be successful, and I might never get benefits, which I still have not, and I might never have any sort of safety net and that’s just how it’s gonna be. I knew that going in and I had my eyes open and I chose it because I was okay with it.

Here Anabelle acknowledges the chance that her level of job precarity, and the potential drawbacks associated with it—lack of success, lack of health and retirement benefits, living paycheck to paycheck—may never abate. This could be viewed as a daunting reality. However, Anabelle, like other participants, personalises this career insecurity by talking about entering film and television work with her ‘eyes open’ because she ‘was okay’ with such circumstances. In this way, creative workers themselves reinforce the creative industries’ prevailing narrative of the price of being able to do something they love. This reflects what other researchers have encountered when investigating the lives of creative and cultural workers (Jones and Pringle 2015; Taylor 2011b).

As discussed in Chapter 1, this acquiescence has been viewed by some researchers as a form of exploitation that workers are subjected to and constitute simultaneously

(Ursell 2000). This (self)-exploitation has arisen in response not only to neoliberal business practices including deregulation of the industry and the casualization of employment, but also because those freelance workers in film and television have adopted and been encouraged to adopt individualistic attitudes and regard themselves as commodities (Ursell 2000). My participants did engage in self-commodifying acts and marketing of themselves, or rather their professional reputations. Ursell's (2000) work focuses on television labour in the UK with its welfare state legacy and differing attitudes toward employment than those present in the US. If anything, these attitudes were amplified in my interviewees' reports due to my participants' location in the United States and the popularised narrative of the self-made (wo)man and the 'American dream.' Anabelle said, 'My sister has a big job in a corporation and she has things like time off and holidays and sick days. I mean, technically if I were sick, yes I could stay home, but I just make sure I don't get sick (both laugh).' In the US there are few, if any, guaranteed employee benefits for contract industry workers that are not members of a larger professional guild such as the Writers' Guild of America or IATSE.⁴⁹ At the time of our interview Anabelle's work as a writer's assistant did not qualify her for guild membership, similar to many positions for new entrants to the industry. Early career workers in this context assume these risks and participate in this type of labour market with an ambivalent willingness. They accept these industry practices as 'normal' and along with echelons of more experienced career professionals generally view this as an act of 'paying your dues' to the industry. Vacation and/or sick days along with shorter hours and health benefits are earned, not expected. Employee benefits and some semblance of career security are reserved for those who survive these early Hollywood days and even then they are rarely guaranteed for the long term.

Given this high-risk situation and the need to be ever vigilant regarding the next job opportunity, especially for contract-based workers in the industry, one would expect 'rational actors' to embrace this work model only if the rewards, either monetary or mental/emotional, balance this risk. However, this is not necessarily the case for film and television workers, nor, as Menger (2006) argues, is this logic applicable to

⁴⁹International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada.

artists more generally. While true that superstars and those with well-established reputations command high remuneration and benefit from greater freedom in terms of artistic and stylistic choices, the vast majority of workers in the industry are less well paid than their peers in other sectors with comparable levels of education and years of experience (Menger 2006). Menger (2006) writes:

The artist may be portrayed neither as a conventional rational actor well-equipped to survive in an ever more competitive market, nor as a myopic one induced to take occupational risks only because she forms probabilistic miscalculations of her chances of success or because she was programmed by her initial socialization to enter an artistic occupation. Rather, she may be portrayed as an imperfect Bayesian actor gathering information; learning by doing; revising her skills, expectations and conception of herself; building networks in order to widen her range of experiences; and acting without knowing her initial endowment of ability and talent or what she may be able to express over the course of her loosely patterned career (2006, 793).

Menger's (2006) characterization is relevant to my participants' experiences. My participants were hardly ignorant of the risk involved in their career choices and the unlikelihood of achieving superstar status. As Menger (2006) explains, the artist cannot be categorized strictly as a rational actor that accepts career risk purely in exchange for monetary or emotional rewards, as a worker that accepts career risk because s/he has overestimated the likelihood of success, nor as someone who chooses such work because of early socialization. Instead, my participants continuously re-evaluated their career positions and opportunities as they progressed, taking steps to mitigate risk and increase chances for success, as Menger (2006) describes above.⁵⁰

When asked if she had ever considered abandoning her aspirations to be a television writer for a more secure career Anabelle said:

⁵⁰My participants' reports support Banks, Gill, and Taylor's (2013a) call for researchers to avoid '...the various caricatures of either the cultural dupe or the rational maximizer of information or (economic) benefits, in order to develop a full notion of the creative worker as a subtly responsive and interpreting situated subject' (7).

No. I love it. This is what I want to do. I frame it as it's 'Survivor Hollywood'. Whoever lasts the longest, wins [...] I don't think I've reached that point like I've really exhausted all my avenues. It feels like each year I'm making more and more avenues for myself that I could take [...] and for me, I love it enough that I'm willing to put up with it for an indefinite amount of time at this point, but we'll see.

Anabelle viewed the precarity of her occupation as an aspect she was willing to tolerate at the time of our interview. As her career had progressed she felt she had not 'exhausted all of [her] avenues' and that she was moving forward. However, she did acknowledge that this might not always be the case by situating her attitudes in the present tense. Regarding her willingness to endure such career conditions in the future she qualified her unwavering commitment to her career by saying, 'we'll see.' For Anabelle, her career and resulting lifestyle were acceptable *at the current moment*. Her future in the industry was uncertain.

Anabelle's job insecurity is emblematic of the industry's labour structure, particularly for younger workers. However, this risk does not necessarily disappear with seniority as Lilly, a partner in a successful writing team with several television shows and seasons under their belts, described:

We've learned to always hedge our bets [...] this show that we're on now it was like a 70 percent, 80 percent chance that it was coming back and we were still like [speaking to our agents], 'No. Get us in every meeting we can possibly get in. Here's the samples we want to use, these are the pilots we've read. We know what we want to do, here are the returning shows we would really like to meet with.'

Even with a 70 to 80 percent chance that her current show would be returning the following season, Lilly and her writing partner were unwilling to take any chances. The risk of unemployment has ingrained itself into the discourse and culture of work in the industry and as Lilly illustrates, even if a job appears relatively secure, it is always better to increase employment options and proactively attempt to diminish this risk. When asked about the anxiety associated with the incessant risk of unemployment Jemma said:

Oh, it's like ever-present. Ever. For me, personally [...] And I think that's happening for every single person in the room, even the showrunner, even the head writer, is wondering, 'Is this show going to be a success? Are they going to kick me off the show? Am I gonna have a job? What's next?' It's like at every single level [...] I don't think you ever get used to it. Yeah, it's really unpleasant (both laugh).

Similar citations of anxiety have been observed by Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle (2015), Gill and Pratt (2008). For some of my interviewees the continuous risk as described above was not acceptable. There are occupations within the industry that offer greater career security. Several participants discussed the difference between careers on the content creation side of the industry and other more secure positions at studios, agencies, or in casting. Emily, who had had aspirations to be an actress, found that she was better suited to the work conditions of an agent's assistant and a future agent herself. She said:

I like that I get paid every two weeks on Friday (both laugh). Yeah, I wouldn't say that there's ever 100% job security, but I can pretty much say that I'm going to get paid the next two Fridays for as long as...you know what I mean [...] Like there's something very comforting for me in that...

Danielle, who was an executive in current programming at a network studio, said:

I like the stability of working at a studio network [...] I think when you're working in production, you're much more dependent on your show living or dying. I like that in my job, if a show goes down, I still have a job the next day [...] I'm neurotic enough to know the thought of possibly losing my job every season is not attractive to me.

For Emily and Danielle, the continual risk of unemployment was unattractive so they pursued careers that fulfilled their desires to work in the industry, but offered more security along with employee benefits. Danielle found comfort in the fact that even if a television show she was working with directly as an executive was cancelled she still went to the same job the following morning. Emily and Danielle characterized their preferences in terms of individual dispositions, of being 'a creature of habit' and 'neurotic' respectively. Participants like Emily and Danielle who worked in more corporate environments such as agencies, studios, and networks were guaranteed

more benefits by their employers than their freelancing peers. Additionally, the work environment, while creative in nature and heavily entrenched in the industry culture, nevertheless operated within larger corporate structures and in more traditional office settings.

The creative/production and executive sides of the industry can sometimes be framed as oppositional to one another. As can be observed in Emily and Danielle's excerpts, film and television workers are acutely aware of and reinforce the juxtaposition of the different levels of career security one can assume depending upon their occupation. The creative and production occupations are characterized as attracting the type of person who embraces risk-taking behaviour and places a high value on autonomy and flexibility while the executive track is thought to be more appealing for those who want to work in the industry but prefer greater levels of structure and career security (Henry 2009). While this may be partially true, based upon some of my participants' experiences personality traits were not always deterministic when it came to career choice. Anabelle said:

[P]eople are shocked when they hear this about me because I'm very cautious and I'm careful and I'm responsible. Like I'm your typical corporate worker bee. Everyone would expect me to be at a big corporation and have a continuous job like that and they're just beyond shocked but I'm like, 'Meh.' [...] and that mentality is true of a lot of people in television and if you are not that mentality you will probably have a lot of trouble on the production side of television so I mean, I know a lot of people who are more cautious and more worried about safety tend to go into the studio side or the network side because those jobs...those are secure. We have no security, zero. I could be fired tomorrow.

Anabelle describes herself as 'cautious', 'careful', and 'responsible' which suggests that she would prefer to work on the executive side of the industry which tends to offer a greater level of career security. However, despite these personality traits, Anabelle still sought out and preferred work on the less secure creative/production side of television work.

Some participants left secure positions within or outside of the industry in order to pursue careers on the creative side which increased their level of career insecurity.

Rachel, who had left a job on the executive side of the film business to pursue screenwriting, described the year following her career change thus, ‘It’s been a good year. It’s been a crazy year. A year of crazy ups and downs and absolute terror after terror and...the world is a very different place when you have to go out and kind of kill to eat.’ For Rachel, there was a shift in mentality when she changed jobs. Rather than working in the more stable and secure position of a film executive, she found her life as a screenwriter more precarious and completely dependent upon her own ability to produce work. The women I interviewed were hardly ignorant of the sacrifices they would have to make when choosing certain career paths within the industry. Some opted to increase or decrease their levels of precarity depending upon their goals, life circumstances, and personalities. My participants’ accounts demonstrate that people made considered choices, albeit within a limited range, regarding the level of precarity they were willing to accept in their careers.

Similar to other studies of work in the creative and cultural industries (Blair, Grey, and Randle 2001; Christopherson 2009; Christopherson and Storper 1989; Conor, Gill, and Taylor 2015b; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Randle 2011; Randle and Culkin 2009; Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015), precarity, long hours, low pay, and the perpetual search for paid work were often cited as the costs of employment in film and television. However, there were positive factors my participants associated with that work as well. When asked what it was they most enjoyed about their work my participants were especially articulate. While they were not always able to remember why they were drawn to the industry at the beginning of their careers, they were very conscious of what had kept them working in these environments and what satisfaction they gained from their work. These aspects are illuminating in that they can help further define what contemporary workers increasingly desire out of paid work and why people choose to continue in these careers even after they have learnt something of the potential costs. In the following section I explain the aspects of work in the industry my participants cited as the most rewarding.

(Extra)ordinary work

Work and employment environments in the creative industries have a reputation for being cool, fun, creative, and non-traditional and therefore desirable to potential

employees (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin 2005).

While my participants cited these aspects to varying degrees as positive features of their work, there were other reasons for their career choices raised in the interviews some of which have not been discussed in previous literature on employment in the industry. Grace, a 40-year-old drama development executive who left law school in her first year, described what she wanted out of work:

I mean, I knew in law school that I wanted to do something more creative and I wanted to do something more umm...something more fun, just to be very basic about it. I mean law was really, really dry and really rigid. I mean, it's the law. I knew that I wanted to do something...I always knew that I wanted to do something big and that I wanted to do something sort of extraordinary and special and not...I didn't want to work in insurance and I didn't want an ordinary life sitting behind a desk...

Whether based in reality or on the image it portrays, work in the entertainment industry has an atypical, fun, positive reputation attached to it. While Grace mentions these aspects, she does so in a way that suggests the desire to do something fun and creative already existed within her and that she found her way to television, a work environment that satisfied these needs. The drive to do something fun, to work in a non-traditional environment, is compared to her experience in law school which she viewed as 'dry' and 'rigid.' Grace also described her ambition 'to do something big,' when talking about her reasons for entering the industry. She did not want an 'ordinary life' as she put it. The notion of doing something extraordinary came up time and again throughout the interviews. Consistent with the narrative of work in the new economy the women I spoke with subscribed to the idea that work should not be a trial one must endure, but rather an enjoyment that adds to an individual's life experience.⁵¹ While Grace may not have aspired to a career in television, she knew what she did *not* want out of work. Similarly, Annie from Chicago said, '...I didn't know what I wanted to do, that's the thing. I wanted to do something exciting and something that always interested me...' The aspirations to work with creative people,

⁵¹ Of course, this type of work experience is predicated on the assumption that all individuals are capable of attaining such a position. This is based on the neoliberal, individualistic entrepreneur archetype that fails to account for gender, race, and class differences in access to the education, social capital, and funds that allow for this privileged work experience.

not to be stuck behind a desk, or work in an office from 9-5 were recurring themes in the interviews.

Speaking about artistic workers and labour markets Menger (2006) writes: ‘In its sheer essence, art has been celebrated and valued as the symbol of creative, innovative and non-routine work’ that offers social, emotional and mental gratification in equal proportion to the unlikelihood of individual success (789). The risk is high in the film and television industry but the trade-offs of participating in creative, unconventional and potentially popular work are enticing and offered many of the women I spoke with an opportunity to have the career experience they wanted. In order to contextualize and define what they wanted out of work, my participants compared their careers to jobs in other sectors that they had worked in previously, like Grace, or compared their situation to the work of their peers which they regarded negatively.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) discuss this trend as well in their study of workers in magazine publishing, music recording, and television. Workers in the creative industries often compare their jobs and daily lives to work in other sectors that they perceive as less desirable. Similarly my participants viewed their decision to enter the industry as an attempt to avoid labour in other fields which they saw as more conventional. Grace talked about what she wanted out of work *when compared* to a career in law or work in insurance. Marissa also spoke about the satisfaction she gained from working in the industry *compared* to other possibilities. She said, ‘I couldn’t imagine living in like a cubicle, paper coming in one side, paper going out the other side...’ Boring, monotonous office work was what my participants wanted to avoid. McRobbie (2002a) writes that there is a ‘euphoric sense’ among workers in the creative industries in that they have evaded traditional modes of work and the negative aspects of work in more conventional sectors. Most of my participants saw their work as distinctive in its practice. However, two women displayed some ambivalence regarding how unique or exciting their work really was. When discussing what she had in common with employees in other industries Grace said, ‘it’s the same actions in every other industry. We’re selling and you know, but it’s just that our product is very different than any other industry.’ In Grace’s view, the

potential product, a television series, was part of what made her work extraordinary and thus fulfilled one of her work prerequisites. Kasey said:

There's no sense of, 'Oh, I have to go to work again and do the monotony of a day job,' or whatever. I'm assuming lawyers might find it interesting to work on different cases in that way and doctors have different patients and problems to solve. So I wouldn't say that it's special necessarily to have that kind of variation...

Kasey acknowledged that workers in other professions might gain similar satisfaction out of their work as she did from her career. So while part of the initial attraction for many of my participants was that they viewed film and television production as a chance to do something extraordinary, fun, exciting, and different from their peers in other sectors, there was also some recognition that these elements were not necessarily unique to their industry. This is an interesting nuance that has not been discussed in other literature and suggests that while the women I interviewed did perhaps initially desire to work in a non-traditional field, this is not necessarily what kept them working in the industry. Instead, it was their enjoyment of this work, despite its drawbacks, that they viewed as extraordinary. My participants spoke about their 'love' for their work and in a way counted themselves as fortunate to gain such satisfaction, particularly when they imagined working in other sectors.

Creative work

As in other studies of work in the film and television industries, and other creative industries (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; McRobbie 1998; Menger 2006; Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin 2005; Taylor 2011b), one of the most frequent reasons participants cited for their initial career choices and continued career satisfaction was the desire to work in a creative field. Melanie said, 'When you come up with an idea that you had never thought about before, it's such a fucking awesome feeling...and just the creative side of it, period.' Lilly, a writer for television said, 'I love going in every day and making up stories. I mean, that is the best part of it.' These two interview samples are indicative of the love of working in a creative field that was brought up during interviews with writers. Ursell (2000) found similar invocations of the pleasure of creating content in her work. However, as in Ursell's (2000) findings,

creative satisfaction among my participants was not limited to workers such as writers, directors, or actors who are more typically thought of as content creators. This aspect was also cited by television executives, producers, and more technical workers. For example, Hallie, a gaffer in Chicago, said of her work in lighting, ‘It’s definitely an art form, it’s painting a canvas basically with your light...’

Grace, who worked in development, said, ‘I think I get to express myself so much more. There are certain products that are passion products for me, too. I find the idea or I find the book, I give it to a writer and it becomes something...that’s amazing.’ While Grace was not directly responsible for writing, producing, or directing a project, she still loved the creative aspects of her job. The above excerpt from Grace’s interview alludes to another positive aspect of work in the industry that other participants also discussed—collaboration.

Collaboration and sociality

Collaboration and social interaction among industry workers was another positive aspect my participants cited in relation to their work. Taylor and Littleton (2012) comment on the sociality present in creative fields and discuss the concept of the ‘connected creative’ worker. As they interviewed students and alumni of an art and design school, Taylor and Littleton’s (2012) study focused on creative workers that fall under the more typical archetype of the ‘artist.’ It was characteristic for the participants in Taylor and Littleton’s (2012) study to spend time in an immersive, solitary artistic state creating work(s) and emerge following this isolation to (re)connect, socialize, and network with other members of their community. This was not what I encountered with my participants who mostly worked in collaborative environments more regularly. There were certainly participants who discussed similar practices to those described above, particularly writers when they were working on a script on their own, but by and large the women I spoke with worked closely with other people as part of their regular career experience.⁵² In its daily practice, much of the film and television industry is based on collaboration and sociality. Danielle emphasized this aspect, ‘...it’s just a social business. If you can’t

⁵² This may be due to the fact that most of my participants worked primarily in television rather than feature films, which can be more solitary in its screenwriting practices and early development.

sit down in a meeting with someone [...] and just chat for an hour, like you shouldn't be in this business, in my opinion.' Whether it appears as networking with potential employers and partners, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, or working with multiple parties to bring a project to fruition, nothing in the industry stands on its own.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) also discuss the pleasure derived from social interactions and teamwork among production workers but qualify these claims stating that because the cultural industries (particularly the music industry) often include high levels of hedonistic socialising—cocktails after work, power lunches, networking events—this brought 'burdens for those not inclined to the dominant forms of sociality—and this had age, sex and ethnic dimensions' (158). While there are certainly implications for workers that eschew this type of socialising, the vast majority of my participants spoke about their enjoyment of the daily practice of collaboration that occurred at their workplaces. Furthermore, they differentiated between the collaboration and social interactions they experienced while working and other after-work social obligations like networking.⁵³ They spoke of strategies they used to overcome the pressures of traditional networking and socialising practices like the 'pub culture' that Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) discuss. Almost every participant cited collaboration and/or working with other creative people as a positive aspect of their work and I think it very much played a part in why my participants chose to enter into particular areas of the industry. Jemma said:

I love the collaborative aspect of it...TV writing in particular. And there's a certain flow in a room that happens and even if [it's] going badly, someone will pitch an idea and that will lead to something else which will lead to another thing you never thought of. It's just exciting to be a part of that process and see that happen.

Jemma referred to this collaboration as one of the best aspects of her work and other participants echoed her enthusiasm. She enjoyed that if things were 'going badly' there was always a chance that someone might suggest a new idea that propelled the story forward while raising morale in the writers' room simultaneously. Lilly also

⁵³ There was a blurring of the friend/colleague, work/leisure divide in my participants' narratives which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

spoke about her love of ‘the camaraderie’ that developed when she was working on a project and that she ‘loved being in a room with other people and bouncing ideas off of each other.’ The women I spoke with continuously referred to collaboration, teamwork, high levels of communication with their colleagues, and overcoming obstacles by working together with others as benefits of their work environments. Lilly said:

We’ve been on a couple shows where you’ve been like, time-wise, up against the wall and this is going to sound horrible, and I hate this term, but you do this thing where you gang-bang a script out⁵⁴ [...] I mean, clearly who came up with that term? (both laugh/roll eyes). Every writer takes an act or a character and goes and writes those scenes and you put together the draft, the Frankenstein draft as you call it, and then whoever the [primary] writer [of the episode] is kind of goes in and cleans it up and takes it from an 80 page draft down to a 47 page draft. But it’s like...that’s the stuff that you love. Where you know that you, in a day, have done this stuff with somebody else and gotten it in and they’re doing the notes on it and nobody is any the wiser, you know. You’ve all kind of worked on it.

This description of creative work is vastly different from the common cultural notion of the lonely artist, slaving away in his/her studio in isolation during the creative process. The women I interviewed enjoyed the sense of community that developed from their work relationships and environments. This does support research that has examined the differing work and leadership styles between men and women. Women are typically viewed as more communal in their work styles (Eagly 2007; Eagly and Karau 2002; Glover and Kirton 2006; Oakley 2000; Odih 2007; Perrons et al. 2006a). However, women still face the double bind of blending the communal traits typically associated with their gender—kindness, concern for others, community building, warmth—and more agentic traits—aggressiveness, confidence, assertiveness, self-promotion—that are stereotypically considered male (Eagly 2007). Furthermore, Williams, Muller, and Kilanski (2012) found the tendency for women to be more communal did not give them an advantage when working on teams dominated by men, which is typical of work environments in the film and television industry. In team projects an individual’s contribution can be obscured and according to

⁵⁴ This phrase is an example of how sexist terms and phrases have been integrated into industry jargon. Sexist and discriminatory encounters as reported by my participants will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Williams, Muller, and Kilanski (2012) team members must self-promote to receive credit for their work from peers and superiors. This is an act that women may find difficult or if they do self-promote they can be viewed as unfeminine because of their display of more agentic and stereotypically male traits. So while my participants definitely enjoyed the collaborative and social aspects of their work, they were not necessarily rewarded for their communal work styles.⁵⁵

Project-based and fast-paced work

Another aspect of work in the film and television industry that was brought up by my participants was a preference for the project-based nature of their work. The project-based model of work that dominates the film and television industry is often rightly depicted as problematic for industry workers as it contributes to the instability of careers for those employed in this sector. The reorganization of the US industry, as explained in Chapter 1, has created an employment market that increasingly relies on short-term, contracted workers and was evident in my participants' narratives (Christopherson 2008, 2009; Christopherson and Storper 1989). However, dissimilar to other research on creative and cultural workers there was an alternative, positive view of the project-based work characteristic of the film and television industry that presented itself when interviewees were asked about their favourite aspects of film and television work. The women I spoke with did not necessarily like the idea of constantly having to pursue new jobs as a result of this industry model, but they did enjoy the fact that they were able to work on one project and then move on to something else. My participants viewed this work style as a way to stave off the boredom and monotony they associated with labour in other industries. Grace said, '[In] TV our pace is so quick and we move on. We're working on projects, they either go or they don't [...] we have something tangible very quickly and that I love.' As Grace worked in drama development for a television network studio, meaning she had very stable employment when compared to other participants, this enjoyment of project-based, fast-paced work could possibly be attributed to enjoying projects within a stable employment lifestyle. However, this was also cited in my interviews with television writers who typically enjoy less career stability as well as producers.

⁵⁵ A further discussion of gendered expectations regarding women working in the film and television industry, and working women more generally, will be included in Chapter 5.

Melanie said of her writing that she really enjoyed that she could finish a script and put it away and move on to a new project. Susan also appreciated the project-based aspect of her work in the industry. Comparing her work as a television producer to one of her first jobs in public relations she said:

I remember [...] when I was working in PR and being like ‘oh my god, how am I gonna log 8 hours a day doing this stuff?’ Like 4:45 every day, looking at the clock like, ‘Is it time to go yet?’ And my job now, I never look at the clock like ‘is it time to go,’ it’s like, ‘oh my god! It’s already 6:00, what happened to the day?’ And so I feel like I’m constantly moving.

Annie also brought up this characteristic of her work as a television producer, ‘I also just like that things are always changing. Like what I’m working on is always changing. Never get bored, you know.’ Danielle said:

...when you’re in current, stuff you’re working on goes on air for the most part [...] 99% of the time you’re working on stuff that eight weeks later is on air no matter what, and that’s I think super cool [...] For me it’s definitely the pace...

My participants were fond of deadlines, high-pressure environments, fast-paced work, and what was coming up next. So while some did discuss the need to constantly seek work and the anxiety that accompanied such an employment model, when they were employed they greatly enjoyed the pace and project-oriented nature of their work.

Potential for extensive impact

The creative, collaborative and project-oriented aspects of work in the industry mentioned above were important to my participants. However, film and television are not unique in offering these characteristics to their employees. So why did these women choose this business as opposed to work in new media or technology which evoke similar descriptions of work environments (Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin 2005)? Google, Facebook, and Apple are all companies whose managerial styles have been examined and emulated by other corporations with their unconventional office spaces, elaborate cafeterias, ample employee benefits and at least publicly, a

corporate policy that openly embraces creativity, innovation, and non-hierarchical work relations and organizational structures. Why, when options such as these exist, options potentially with more career security, did the women choose to work in the relatively unstable marketplace of film and television? Participants cited two reasons: the product they helped to create and the opportunity to connect with and potentially influence large audiences through a creative piece of work.

The women I spoke with enjoyed the idea that the projects they worked on had the potential to reach vast audiences and influence large populations. Anabelle said:

Television is our modern story telling device [...] There's always been this need to tell stories. The fireplace has been replaced by the television, for good, for ill, that's just the way it is. So we're creating our modern mythology and that's amazing [...] I find the ability to explore different characters wonderful and seductive and amazing and almost subversive in a lot of ways [...] you can take the modern world and twist it and change it and show how it could be and how it could be better. You can provide an example of a superior world and that's incredibly cool because it means you can change people's minds. You can influence how people think in a very non-aggressive way, but in a very thoughtful way [...] being able to put something in front of millions of people and maybe influence how they think, that's amazing.

Here, Anabelle brings the potential reach and power of stories into the discussion. Her connection to television writing and love of her work is exemplified in her use of words like 'wonderful,' 'amazing,' and 'seductive,' but she also talks about how her writing can be a political act and 'subversive.' She describes how she, as an individual, can shape the world around her through the use of this medium in a 'non-aggressive' but 'thoughtful' way.

Lilly also found it satisfying to be able to create a product that had a vast reach and the potential to raise social issues that were important to her. She said of one of her first jobs in television working for a showrunner:

...they had a character on [the show] that was really like one of the earlier, super openly gay characters on TV and [my boss] got a letter once from this kid that was like, 'I never thought I would see this. I never thought that I

would be able to look on television and see someone like myself.’ And even now I tear up about it. That’s the kind of thing you can do. You’re writing a character and it changes some kid’s life. Like, *come on*, that’s awesome! [...] And I’ve had that happen [...] on the show we were on a couple years ago, we had a young boy character that it was like you knew he was gay, we never really talked about it, his mom and his family was super accepting of him and we had...there was another letter that we got from a mom that was like, ‘I was watching the show with my son one day and I just turned to him and said, “you know if you needed to tell me that you were like him, I would be okay with it.”’ And I was like, ‘Awww!’

Here, not only was Lilly able to help construct a character that everyone ‘knew’ was gay, a potentially political act in itself, but she also enjoyed the idea that she had helped a mother, whom she would never meet, to have a discussion with her son about the acceptability of perhaps identifying as homosexual. Both Lilly and Anabelle relished the potential connection and influence they might have over their audiences.

These experiences were not confined to the writers I interviewed. Mariah, who worked in drama development, liked that she had a chance to choose to develop programming that depicted powerful women characters and bucked traditional gender stereotypes. Valerie, who had worked in performance art broadcasting for public television, was deeply connected to the mission of making opera, classical music, and theatre performances accessible to diverse audiences. Susan also talked about her connection to audiences. She said, ‘I connect with people every day, I don’t see the people I connect with, but they’re connecting to the work that I did and that’s very gratifying. I like that a lot.’ The women I interviewed considered their work an opportunity to influence the world around them positively on a large scale because of the extensive reach of film and television as a medium. Writers could construct storylines and characters that questioned the status quo and provide alternative perspectives on social and political issues to their audiences while executives could advocate greenlighting particular projects with less conventional characters and storylines over others with more traditional tropes. Their work offered these women a chance to integrate aspects of their moral, social, and political perspectives into their daily practices. Jobs provided the opportunity for mental and emotional satisfaction.

Industry image: a red herring

Only a few women mentioned the notion that other people viewing their jobs as ‘cool’ and ‘glamorous’ was a beneficial aspect of their work, which was interesting as it is cited in much of the literature as being a primary benefit people gain from their association with the cultural industries (Henry 2009; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Menger 2006). Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) discuss how their participants enjoyed and revelled in the fact that other people thought their work in television was interesting and cool. This is very different from what I encountered in my interviews. My participants tended to view the industry image with ambivalence or even as problematic because of its association with celebrity culture. The women I interviewed did discuss the glamourized image associated with work in the industry but the vast majority only did so when I asked them how other people reacted when they talked about their careers as opposed to citing it as a primary benefit of their employment.⁵⁶ Individuals, particularly those who lacked insider knowledge of the industry, were quick to make assumptions and ask questions about the ‘glamorous’ aspects of my participants’ work, but for the most part these queries had very little to do with what my participants actually did on a day-to-day basis. So while the image of the film and television worker may conjure up a fun, cool, glamorous stereotype, my participants by and large did not necessarily view this as a positive aspect of their work, but rather discussed how they navigated these conversations.

Two women went so far as to invent different occupations for themselves when talking about their employment with acquaintances. When asked how people typically reacted when she discussed her work, Susan said:

Oh god, they think it’s the best thing in the world and they want to hear...I try not to tell people that I work in television. When I meet strangers I tell them I work at a bank, because they won’t ask me any questions about it. I’m not even kidding, I’m dead serious.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) discuss the appeal of work in the creative industries and claim that the external image of working in a cool industry is part of what draws

⁵⁶ The actual interview question was phrased, ‘When you talk about what you do for a living how do other people typically react?’ Or, ‘How do people typically react when you tell them what you do for a living?’

workers to this sector. This may be true regarding the initial appeal that draws newcomers to film and television work. However, based upon my data, the appeal of the industry image fades and is replaced by ambivalence and/or outright rejection. When Susan lied about her work, particularly to people from outside the industry who do not usually possess insider knowledge regarding the daily realities of this work and therefore simply associated Susan with working in an exciting environment, she actively rejected the fun, glamorous image associated with her job. When I asked Susan what questions she was trying to avoid she replied:

‘Oh my gosh, do you know so and so? What celebrities do you know? Oh that must be the best job ever! What’s it like? What’s it like working in TV? Tell me everything!’ Just questions that you would never....that’s like me asking you if you work at a bank, ‘How’s the vice president of your bank? Is he cool? Is he a nice guy?’ (both laugh). And it’s like, ‘uhhh.....why are you asking me about work? I just spent all day at work, I don’t want to talk about work.’ And I get it, it is an exciting thing. I think it’s much less....people that have never worked in TV think that TV is the most glamorous thing there is and they don’t realize that it’s a job just like everybody else’s job. There’s a lot of stuff going on behind-the-scenes and we’re the people doing the behind-the-scenes stuff. But, yeah, I avoid the conversation at all costs.

Susan distinguished between the popular image people attach to work in television and her lived experience. She found that what people thought about her work and the questions she was asked could be attributed to her close proximity to production and celebrity culture. She said:

S: [I]t’s very flattering and I love that people are interested in my job and want to know more, but sometimes I feel like they want to know less about me and what I do and more about kind of the dirt and gossip and.....

SC: What they think your job is?

S: What they think my job is. Exactly. And they think they know what my job is. And they tend to romanticize and it’s like the Carrie Bradshaw^[57] syndrome....there’s nobody who lives in New York and writes a sex column for a New York newspaper who is buying thousand dollar Manolos and living

⁵⁷ Carrie Bradshaw was a character on the popular television show *Sex and the City* which ran on HBO in the United States 1998-2004.

fabulous in a disastrous, relationship fuelled, never-working sort of situation...it's just not reality (both laugh)! But they think of me as the Carrie Bradshaw of TV...

Rather than capitalizing on the popular image associated with her job, Susan downplayed this part of her work. While she admitted to being 'flattered' that people find her work interesting, she was also quick to explain that people tended to be interested in her job because of the 'romantic' image attached to television work, instead of her actual role in making television. In her words, she found the incessant questions and assumptions about her work 'exhausting' and she chose to avoid these conversations when possible. Annie talked about similar instances and said, 'I mean, sometimes I would lie to strangers because people would be like starry-eyed over it and ask me a million questions and sometimes I didn't want to talk about it [...] Just wanted to like not talk about work.' Both Susan and Annie worked in Chicago, where the film and television industry is much smaller than in Los Angeles and thought their location and the rarity of their work in Chicago was a contributing factor to people's fascination with their jobs. However, the pervasive external image associated with work in film and television was still present and occasionally challenging for some of my participants that worked in Los Angeles. They did not completely deny their ties to the industry like Susan and Annie, but they tailored their responses to what people were expecting to hear from them. Anabelle said:

I mean people who are not in the industry are just completely clueless. It's such a wide divide. In the industry, totally supportive [...] Outside of the industry, it's like, 'You do what?' [...] I tend not to get into specifics unless people really ask me because it's very complicated and very inside Hollywood and people don't really care, frankly.

Anabelle recognized that her daily work practices were of very little interest to industry outsiders. She emphasized the 'wide divide' between those with inside knowledge of Hollywood labour practices and members of the general public. She continued:

So I can walk into a room where I don't know anyone and I could say I work for this TV show and everyone's interested. Everyone wants to know...generally they want to know about the actors...but they want to know

how does it get made and who makes it and there's a lot of curiosity about it and excitement and people think it's very glamorous when it's really very not.

In a social situation, as soon as Anabelle mentioned that she worked on a specific television show, interest in her immediately increased and she was perhaps awarded increased social status, but it was only because of her connection to the specific product rather than her actual work. While their work may have afforded them some increased social standing my participants were ambivalent about the effects or benefits this might give them. Lilly said that when she told people what she did for a living they were inevitably more interested in which celebrities she had met and what gossipy stories she had. She said, 'A lot of times it's, "Oh my god, what celebrities do you know?"' And then you tell amusing stories that you have in your back pocket that you've told a hundred times.' Particularly when discussing their employment with industry outsiders, the women I spoke with found that people were less interested in their actual daily work experiences and more in what insider information or gossip they could pass on.

Such disconnects even occurred when my participants' discussed their work with their families. Kathryn, an associate casting director in Los Angeles, said:

My parents don't really understand what I do, but the other day my mom was like 'well, we're just living vicariously through you guys.' And I'm like, 'through us not having any money and me working like 50 hours a week' and so...but they were...my dad was an engineer at [car manufacturer] and my mom was a teacher and so we lead like very romantic-sounding lives I think to a lot of people. Especially people back in Michigan where we're from. The economy's tanked and we're living out here and it's a more exciting thing to be doing [...] I try to be like 'oh, no' and be realistic about it with them but that's not what they want to hear so I'll sort of throw them a story. Like I worked with [male celebrity actor] who is....coo-coo for cocoa puffs (both laughing)...umm very nice, but the ego...is like crazy. And I had several very strange interactions....so I'll sort of throw stuff like that.

Kathryn's experience of telling people what they want and expect to hear about work in film and television was not unique. Even when she tried to deny the 'romantic' image associated with her work and her life in Los Angeles she eventually gave in, so to say, and stuck to the stories about her work that would satisfy her conversation

partners. It is possible that my participants were denying the appeal of the industry's image and the satisfaction it gave them to be viewed by others in this way during our interviews. However, even if this were true, the reality is that the industry image and how workers in film and television relate to it is more complex and nuanced than previously discussed in the literature. The monolithic image of the industry is assigned to those who work in this sector regardless of their actual career experiences. However, as demonstrated by my participants' accounts, this image, its association with celebrity culture, and the expectations industry outsiders have regarding film and television work can create a divide between industry workers and their acquaintances, friends, and even their families. In a way, this can serve to isolate industry workers from communities outside of film and television. This image is accompanied by social expectations that my participants would, in a sense, 'perform' for their 'audiences' by recounting stories about celebrities and industry gossip. Rather than a benefit, the image associated with film and television work served to silence many of my participants' narratives regarding their experiences of work, particularly when speaking with industry outsiders.

Conclusion

The career origin narratives of my participants were varied and highly individualised. Nevertheless, they did exhibit some common themes that I explored in this chapter. The women I spoke with referred to the beginnings of their careers as processes of trial and error and learning from experience. I developed three categories that best described my participants' career entry stories—women who had been interested in the film and television industry from a young age, women who transitioned into the industry after working alongside it in what I called 'industry-adjacent' sectors, and finally, women who had not anticipated a career in film and television.

In addition to their career entry stories, I also analysed how my participants negotiated the insecurity that tended to accompany their careers. I found that my interviewees were not ignorant of the risk associated with their chosen field. Instead, they actively engaged in on-going career assessments that took this precarity into account. Some women left more 'secure' positions on the executive side of the industry or in industry-adjacent sectors in order to pursue 'riskier' work in

creative/production positions. Contrarily, other women left precarious careers in order to have more predictable work within the industry. These decisions were made in an on-going fashion and were based upon individual preferences as well as life circumstances. Despite the precarity that tended to accompany their careers in film and television, the women I interviewed cited several positive aspects that also came with their work including: the opportunity to participate in work that was (extra)ordinary, creative, collaborative and social, fast-paced and project-based, and which had the potential to reach and connect with vast audiences.

One of the key findings of this chapter was that my participants' relationship to the common image associated with industry work was more complex than has previously been considered by scholars. As opposed to gaining pleasure from their association with the film and television industry, my interviewees spoke about how they negotiated their identities as industry workers depending upon certain contexts. Two women went so far as to completely deny their connection to the industry and others explained how they tailored discussions of their careers to specific audiences. They differentiated between industry insiders and outsiders and found that outsiders were often interested more in their association with celebrity culture as opposed to their actual work.

Avenues of entry and paths for career progression in the industry can be vague and largely unknown to outsiders and new entrants. Consistent with the transformation of work in the new economy, more often than not, individuals in the industry are responsible for creating and incessantly *re-creating* their own careers. Even for those women who knew from a young age that they wanted to work in film and television it still took time to find their niches in the industry. Extensive professional and social networks and the assistance of mentors were cited as crucial for career advancement. I will discuss the nature of these relationships, how they contributed to and/or hindered my participants' career progressions, and the strategies the interviewees used to navigate their murky waters in the following chapter.

Chapter 4. Women's Networks, Mentors, and Career Progressions in the Industry

As discussed in the previous chapter, the career origin stories my participants shared were rich and complex. Following their entry into the industry, my participants branched into different occupations but there were common themes in their narratives of career advancement. One of the most prominent topics discussed was the development and use of professional and/or social networks for increased career success. Other film and television researchers have observed similar trends in their studies (Blair 2001, 2003; Christopherson 2009; Christopherson and Storper 1989; Grugulis and Stoyanova 2012; Hesmondhalgh 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Lee 2011; Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015; Wreyford 2015). As briefly discussed in the Literature Review, networking relationships tend to develop among homophilous individuals (Ibarra 1992, 1993, 1995; McGuire 2000). This can serve to exacerbate intersectional axes of exclusions making it more difficult for women and minorities to gain access to such networks in film and television work, as the majority of senior roles continue to be filled by white, heterosexual, men. In this chapter I will discuss the development of my participants' professional networks, how these professional networks intersected with personal/social networks, the collapse of the friend/colleague divide, why participants viewed networks as absolutely vital to career success, and how participants maintained these relationships.

In addition to their networks, the women I interviewed spoke about the influence of one or more mentors on their careers. The relationships my participants developed through their professional networks and with career mentors are compelling in their intricacies and their constant (re)construction. The mentoring section of this chapter examines my participants' preferred methods of developing mentor relationships and the types of support they received from mentors while bringing my participants' accounts into conversation with other scholarly works on mentoring relationships. To demonstrate the influence of networks and mentors on careers in the film and television industry I shall conclude with an examination of a common career path for industry newcomers as described by my participants. Networks and mentors are hardly unique to the film and television industry. However, as will become evident in

this chapter, the contemporary structure of the US film and television sector means that these relationships are hyper-important for an individual's career success. I begin this exploration with a discussion of relevant networking concepts and literature in order to contextualize my participants' reported experiences.

Networking

The reliance on networks and their importance for individual careers, both within and outside of the film and television industry, has been well documented; networking has increasingly become a necessary career practice in the new economy (Benschop 2009; Berger, Benschop, and van den Brink 2015; Blair 2003, 2009; Christopherson 2009; Deuze 2007; Hesmondhalgh 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Lee 2011; Menger 2006; Randle and Culkin 2009; Renzulli, Aldrich, and Moody 2000). In Chapter 3 I discussed the precarious nature of the industry (Deuze 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Ursell 2000) and why, despite this risk, my participants chose to work in film and television. I now turn my attention to the tools industry workers use to diminish the likelihood of experiencing periods of unemployment. Project success and stability were things over which my participants had very little control; a current contract, a hit television show, a promising pilot could all fall apart with little warning. In order to counteract this precarity and exert some form of control and self-direction over their careers, my participants relied heavily on developing extensive personal and professional networks to expand their options and mitigate the risk of unemployment.

Networks have been examined in the literature both from managerial and sociological perspectives. One of the most cited authors on networking is Mark Granovetter (1973), who researched the ties between individuals within networks. According to Granovetter (1973) 'weak ties' are more useful in an individual's network as opposed to closer relationships with friends and family because 'weak ties' with a diverse group of individuals have greater heterogeneity and therefore provide greater access to more information and resources. In other words, a large network of weak ties gives an individual a broader network of people to draw upon, whereas a network of strong ties may offer more depth, but less breadth of available knowledge. In their examination of network composition and outcomes for entrepreneurs, Renzulli,

Aldrich, and Moody (2000) came to similar conclusions. Weaker ties create more opportunities for connections to diverse interests as opposed to strong ties, which are likely to be shared between people with similar interests, thereby diminishing access to new information. However, the advantages gained from weak ties are not necessarily the same for women and men, and the transition to a largely contract-based employment model in film and television work has created a more variegated networking environment in which, I shall argue, network tie strength is an evolving and fluid status. As such, Granovetter's (1973) rather static concept of tie strength fails to adequately explain my participants' reports of their complex network relationships.

In addition to structural makeup and tie-strength, some research has examined how gender affects heterogeneous networks (Benschop 2009; Berger, Benschop, and van den Brink 2015; Ehrich 1994; Forret and Dougherty 2004; Ibarra 1993) as well as women-only networks (Bierema 2005; Perriton 2006). Networks have long been used in the world of work, but as women continue to enter the workforce for lifelong careers in increasing numbers, networks have come under new scrutiny, since it has become clearer that women tend not advance as quickly as their male peers. The exclusionary practices that often accompany network formation and use are a contributing factor to this trend (Ibarra 1992). One key barrier often cited in networking literature is women's lack of access to traditionally white male professional networks and the information and career support they provide (Ibarra 1993; McGuire 2000). Organizations and individual employees have addressed this imbalance through the creation of women-only networks and company-sponsored mentoring schemes aimed at connecting younger working women with established professionals (Perriton 2006). The effectiveness of these formal networking and mentoring practices is still being scrutinized by researchers (Forret and Dougherty 2004; van Emmerik et al. 2006).

Initiatives aimed at helping marginalized groups gain access to professional networks and mentors have taken place within organizations with relatively traditional career hierarchies (Ibarra 1993; Linehan and Scullion 2008; McGuire 2000; Oakley 2000). Recently there has been more research conducted regarding the networking practices

of freelance workers, entrepreneurs, and film and television workers (Anderson, Dodd, and Jack 2010; Blair 2003, 2009; Christopherson 2009; Durbin 2011; Grugulis and Stoyanova 2012; Lee 2011; Renzulli, Aldrich, and Moody 2000; Smith and Lohrke 2008). Yet despite the increase in research, networks are still difficult to conceptualize and quantify. The contributions of the quantitative study of networks has given insight into the size, scope, density, demography, and level of activity present in networks (Jack 2010). Qualitative studies, on the other hand, have provided deeper understandings of the inner working of networks, the fluidity of their relations, how members view specific networks, and the complexity of networks that serve multiple functions simultaneously (Brass et al. 2004; Forret and Dougherty 2004; Ibarra 1993). As a result of this complex interaction of multiple variables, analyses of networks are largely dependent upon the specific network under scrutiny, the particular relations of its members, as well as the epistemological and methodological standpoint of the researcher. In the following sections I will examine the views my participants expressed regarding their professional networks, how they developed and maintained their networks, the specificities of networking in the film and television industry, and the delineations and overlaps of professional and social contacts. As will be discussed in greater detail throughout this chapter, my participants' reports regarding networking echo characteristics observed by other film and television industry researchers. In order to further contextualize my participants' experiences, I now turn my attention to a discussion of some relevant theories surrounding networking in the new economy.

Theories of networking

Networking research has been criticised for its lack of overarching theory, definitional inconsistencies, unclear findings, and treatment of networks and their participants as static, closed-system entities (Blair 2009; Borgatti et al. 2009; Erikson 2013; Jack 2010). Analyses have examined the structural characteristics of networks in addition to their relational aspects in order to determine how such factors influence the participatory outcomes for network members (Blair 2009).

Difficulties have been encountered developing an appropriate all-encompassing theory of networks, as they are inevitably specifically situated within their contexts

and are shaped not only by their participants, but also by the subjective manner in which members experience activity and relations within the network (Blair 2009; Jack 2010). An in-depth examination of these debates is beyond the scope of this thesis⁵⁸ but broadly, networking theory operates from the position that individuals are embedded within socially constructed networks that influence their actions, and the ability of one particular individual to influence a network is dependent upon their position in the structure of said network and their social capital (Blair 2009; Granovetter 1973). Researchers can analyse the positions and social capital of network members by comparing individuals and by creating detailed mapping documents to illustrate a particular individual's location and connections within the network. This was a useful starting point during the initial stages of my analysis, but ultimately it was unable to articulate the intricacies and fluidity of my participants' experiences of networking.

Unlike a concept of networking which attempts to isolate deterministic variables in order to predict the outcomes of networking behaviour, I found Blair's (2009) 'active networking' framework more helpful when considering my participants' experiences of networks. My interviewees reported participating in open system networks in which most variables fluctuated. Blair (2009) developed the idea of active networking as a result of her analysis of the UK film industry and is particularly useful in my analysis. When considering employment with high levels of worker mobility and job precarity, active networking is an applicable framework as it accounts for and integrates the fluidity of networking relations, the influence of social structures on the networking process, and accounts for individuals' agency within their networks. According to Blair (2009), active networking is 'the consciously enacted activity of initiating, building and maintaining a network of informal personal contacts with the purpose of influencing the outcome of actions, but which is conditioned by social structure (i.e. the outcome is the product of more than the personal relations of a network)' (122). In other words, Blair (2009) views active networking as an agentic and participatory process in which individuals seek out informal relationships for both professional and personal purposes within and through

⁵⁸ For a more in-depth discussion of such debates see Jack (2010), Blair (2009), and for a brief and interesting summary of networking research history and theories as compared to networks in the physical sciences see Borgatti et al. (2009).

different social structures. Active networking is a more appropriate conception of the networking practices my participants engaged in, and I use it as a foundation for my analysis.

Blair's (2009) active networking concept pertains to informal networks. The distinction between formal and informal networks is important when considering my participants' experiences. Formal networks are those recognized by a larger organization, like a corporation, with clear structures and procedures for participation and/or membership (van Emmerik et al. 2006). In the US film and television industry one example of a formal network is UNIDOS at NBCUniversal. UNIDOS is:

an employee-resource organization dedicated to attracting, developing, retaining, and promoting Hispanic talent within NBCUniversal. UNIDOS measures success through greater leadership penetration; improved employee retention; increased talent pipeline; and effective execution (NBCUniversal 2014).

UNIDOS operates within the larger NBCUniversal organization and has clear goals and measures to track the influence and success of its initiatives. Informal networks, on the other hand, are based upon voluntary participation between members with personal ties, have fluid boundaries, and are not subject to oversight by a larger organization (McGuire 2000). Furthermore, the purpose of informal networks can be professional, personal, social, or a combination thereof (Ibarra 1993).

Traditionally, more formal networks, which are often components of larger equal employment opportunity policies within larger organizations, have tended to be more beneficial for women's careers as there tends to be a greater degree of accountability in such environments (Jones and Pringle 2015). However, this model does not work as well in film and television due, as explained in the Literature Review, to the fractured and project-based nature of industry. As Jones and Pringle (2015) point out, traditional interventions do not succeed in the film and television industry 'where projects are ephemeral and the creative subject is framed as entrepreneurial and individualized, a free agent, not an employee' (Jones and Pringle 2015, 38). This was reflected in my participants' accounts of their networking practices.

My interviewees overwhelmingly participated in informal networks which consisted of friends, former and current co-workers, mentors, and other connections.⁵⁹ In addition to informal networks, my interviewees participated in ‘quasi-formal’ networks,⁶⁰ a term I use to describe the organizations and non-profits that advocate for increased opportunities for women in the industry. Quasi-formal networks include organizations such as Women in Film (wif.org), the Alliance of Women Directors (allianceofwomendirectors.org), and Women Make Movies (wmm.com) to name a few. These organizations support women in the industry through project funding, educational workshops, networking events, mentoring schemes, etcetera, but are not affiliated with larger corporate organizations. They form their membership from voluntary participants and are not subject to oversight except that of their own making.

Informal networks, sometimes termed ‘emergent’ networks, are categorized as being instrumental or expressive (Ibarra 1993). Instrumental networks are mostly born in the workplace with the purpose of information exchange and access to resources for professional purposes, whereas expressive networks provide friendship, social support, and usually closer relationships (Ibarra 1993). Importantly, these two categories of informal networks are not mutually exclusive and my participants’ reported experiences most certainly illustrated this point. The line between personal and professional network contacts is blurry in the film and television industry sometimes to the point of being all but invisible. Networks and the relationships within them often buck clear categorization. They are nevertheless an absolute necessity for a career in film and television.

Why do women in the industry network?

When asked if they thought networking was important to their career success, my participants overwhelmingly reported that it was not only important, but essential.

⁵⁹ Interestingly, the women I interviewed continually referred to many members of their networks as ‘friends’ as opposed to colleagues. The relationships that composed my participants’ networks ran the spectrum from purely professional to close friendship, a spectrum that will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

⁶⁰ According to the literature these quasi-formal networks are still categorized as informal networks. However, as there were distinctions in the ways my interviewees participated in and conceptualized these quasi-formal networks, I decided to place them in their own category.

Grace said, ‘Definitely. Networking is like number one. Number one, number one, number one.’ Jemma replied, ‘Very, very, very, very, very, very, very, important.’ My participants cited the importance of developing extensive networks early in their careers and maintaining such networks throughout their professional lives. This reflects what scholars have observed in their research on film and television workers (Blair 2003; Christopherson 2009; Grugulis and Stoyanova 2012; Wreyford 2015). Participants talked about how they used their networks to try and find connections that would be helpful when searching for employment. Jemma spoke about some of her strategies to increase her chances for success when submitting a script for development or applying for an open writer’s position. She said:

[S]o you want to move your script to the top of that pile, cause they are only going to read so many scripts. And so the way you do that is you have people put in a good word for you and how you do that is you network. And you [...] are friends with other writers and you keep in touch with people you’ve worked with on other shows, but it’s like...it’s a game of sort of checking IMDB for the show that you’re up for and figuring out what shows that person worked on, so you can see if anybody you know worked on any other shows with that person and can put in a good word for you.

Jemma knew from her previous experience of working on the executive side of the industry that there are a staggering number of scripts that are submitted for development. She remembered walking through ‘knee-high’ piles of scripts when she was working as an assistant and knew that she would need to increase her visibility within those piles if she hoped to be hired and/or move forward in the development process. Jemma used different tools like the professional version of the Internet Movie Database (IMDB)⁶¹, which compiles relevant data regarding individual productions, to determine if there was any connection she could find that might be able to put in a good word for her during the submission process.

⁶¹ IMDB Pro lists the employees that worked on films or episodic television shows in more detail than the regular free version of the website. Importantly, it lists relevant data for upcoming projects as well. For Jemma, this would mean she could click through the hyperlinks of all the names listed on particular projects to see their previous work, and then make a connection to someone in her own network that she could approach to act as an intermediary for introductions.

Lucia, who was relatively new to the industry at the time of our interview, had learned about the necessity of networking quickly. She said:

[I]t's at the point where I look up stuff online but it's so pointless [...] I shouldn't even really bother with it half the time. Like, it's all just word of mouth. Anything I've ever gotten has been because my friends ask me to come along from the last job or friends' friends. Like, I've never gotten a job on a show from a posting online....ever. I don't know why I even look. I feel like I'm always at the mercy of other people, you know.

Lucia, who had transitioned into the freelance world of television production after working in a stable position in music licensing for eight years, found the hiring practices of the industry disempowering. She felt she was 'always at the mercy of other people' and completely dependent upon her relationships when seeking employment. Even though she acknowledged the futility of the act, Lucia still tried to take control of her career experience by looking for industry jobs on the internet, while simultaneously categorizing this act as 'pointless.' As discussed in the previous chapter, Lucia had enlisted the help of one of her 'oldest' friends when she transitioned from music licensing to film and television. As she described above, her subsequent employment was also based upon her relationships with her 'friends'⁶² (both old and new). While Lucia was on location during her first production job she became 'buddies' with another woman who worked alongside her in the post-production department. After the first project ended, Lucia's 'new friend' then recommended Lucia to her next employers. All of Lucia's work in the industry had been a result of 'word of mouth' through her network and, importantly, referrals from friends who also worked in the industry as opposed to responding to employers' advertisements.

While Lucia mentioned applying for some work through online postings, by and large, available positions in the film and television industry are rarely advertised (Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015; Wreyford 2015). Hiring in the industry relies heavily on the use of personal network connections and takes place outside of formal recruitment schemes, making the process particularly susceptible to perpetuating

⁶² My participants' categorization of some colleagues as 'friends' will be discussed later in this chapter.

exclusionary practices (Jones and Pringle 2015; Wreyford 2015). Anabelle said of her position at the time of our interview:

It's almost impossible to get a writer's assistant position unless you've worked for the exec producer or you know someone. So it's not just like you can just apply for one of these. They're never announced anywhere. It's kind of like before a show even gets picked up, you know who your writers' assistant is going to be. So in that respect it's, they're very hard to get...

Anabelle's work as a writer's assistant on a television show was one example of an early-career position for aspiring television writers. Writers' assistants are in the writing room every day taking notes on potential story ideas, character development, concurrent storylines, and anything else discussed in the room relevant to the show. After the writers leave for the day, the writers' assistant organizes all the notes into a coherent document that can then be distributed to the writers and executive producers. This position gives aspirants the opportunity to observe the inner workings of a writing room, learn how story ideas are translated into television shows, gain an understanding of the relationships between creators and industry executives, and expand their professional networks. It is a useful position for a future career as a writer and an advantageous entry to have on a résumé. However, as Anabelle said, these open positions are 'never announced anywhere' and are usually filled by someone who has a pre-existing relationship with the executive producer (or with someone in the executive producer's network), meaning that a key position in the early years of a writing career is dependent upon the aspirant having the right connections. This in turn depends upon that individual's ability to gain access to networks and their members within the industry which, as cited in Chapter 1, is influenced by an individual's gender, race, and class background (Acker 1990, 2006; Ibarra 1992; Wreyford 2015).

One exception to the lack of public job postings is an industry job list compiled by United Talent Agency which is emailed out to contacts of employees of United Talent. Officially, United Talent does not acknowledge the existence of the list despite the fact that innumerable people receive it via email once or twice a week (Boyd 2005). For industry insiders it is a relatively good source to find early career level jobs (usually assistantships), but for a newcomer, gaining access to the job list

can be difficult⁶³ as it is not officially published anywhere and legally cannot be reprinted without United Talent's permission.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the positions that are published online receive an overwhelming number of applicants, making it unlikely that an unconnected individual would be invited to an interview. Just as Lucia (quoted above) had never received any work from responding to an online job posting, even with her relevant experience, individuals applying for a position on United Talent's job list are fighting an uphill battle. Despite the fact that some job openings are posted on online forums or lists, work in film and television still operates as a closed system with opaque avenues of entry. Because of practices like these, workers need to establish and maintain a diverse network of contacts in order to secure work, trade industry information, and call in favours when needed.⁶⁵ As networks were such a vital component to my participants' careers, in the following section I analyse how these networks were constructed and how my participants' reports contradict elements of Andreas Wittel's (2001) notion of 'network sociality' that he developed following his observations of the networking practices of new media labour. Similar to film and television workers, those Wittel (2001) researched were employed in an industry that has been heavily influenced by neoliberalism and work trends in the new economy, making his concept of 'network sociality' a framework that is potentially applicable to my participants' reports.

Networking in practice: embodied, genuine, managed, and selective

According to Wittel (2001), the rise of the new economy has been accompanied by an ongoing transition from community sociality built around common histories and narratives, physical proximity, and belonging, to what he has termed 'network sociality.' Network sociality is based upon the exchange of information, 'intense but ephemeral' relationships, and the commodification of relationships (Wittel 2001). Building upon Castells' (2000) concept of the networked society, Wittel (2001) examined the networking practices of individuals working in the new media sector

⁶³ It is possible to be added as an email recipient of the job list as an individual. When I lived in Los Angeles I used to receive the emails although I genuinely cannot remember how I managed to get on the email list.

⁶⁴ In recent years the list has been republished online anonymously in blogs, e.g. <http://www.anonymousproductionassistant.com/uta-joblist/>.

⁶⁵ For those in the industry who are represented by agents, it is largely the agent's responsibility to find potential jobs. However, even represented individuals still maintain networks and use connections to find work and to trade industry information.

and argues that their social interactions are based on networks rather than on the shared narratives and enduring physical proximity more typically associated with traditional lifelong careers. Similar to film and television, work in new media is often project-based which contributes to the development of a more mobile workforce. Wittel (2001) suggests that as a result of such high mobility, individuals carry their own biographies and experiences with them rather than developing a shared history with colleagues within one organization over time. Individuals are nomadic as opposed to stationary in their working practices. I will use Wittel (2001) as an entry point to discuss my participants' experiences with networks as it is a good illustration of some western theories regarding sociality in the new economy (Bauman 2000; Castells 2000; Sennett 1998) grounded in the micro-practice of career networking.

Wittel's (2001) theory of sociality builds upon and complements the work of scholars like Sennett (2006) and Deuze (2007) who view the new economy as the primary force in the disintegration of relationships and the rise of the individualized worker. Unlike Sennett (1998), who argues that the transformation of work organizations diminishes workers' abilities to develop long-lasting relationships and extract a sense of community from their workplace, Wittel (2001) does not view this transition through such a pessimistic lens. He does, however, suggest that network sociality 'increases the perception of social relationships as social capital' and transitions sociality from 'having relationships towards doing relationships and towards relationship management' (Wittel 2001, 72).

The concept of network sociality seems relevant and explanatory when considering work in the film and television industry which, as previously discussed, has been transformed in the new economy. After all, much of the work is project-based, creating a perfect environment for the development of 'intense but ephemeral' relationships as described by Wittel (2001). Additionally there is a ceaseless exchange of industry and personal information through networks, and workers in film and television are especially reliant on these connections and information channels for securing employment. While I agree with some of Wittel's characterizations of sociality and networking, such as its close ties to advances in technology and the blurring of the lines between public/private and work/leisure, ultimately I take

Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) view and do not think it fully explains sociality in the new economy of film and television. The need for relationship management and use of social capital were certainly present in my participants' narratives, but their social interactions were more nuanced than Wittel's (2001) concept suggests.

My participants' sociality was highly variable and dependent on a number of factors including but not limited to, current life and work circumstances, specific relationship histories, geographic locatedness, future career aspirations, and age. Some of my participants' relationships were managed with high levels of attention while others seemed effortless; some social relationships were maintained to increase participants' social capital while others could have been considered invaluable or useless but were tended to nevertheless because of the personal friendships that had developed. Wittel (2001) acknowledges that his concept of network sociality is incomplete and calls for more research. However, he hypothesizes that 'network sociality will become the paradigmatic social form of late capitalism and the new cultural economy' (Wittel 2001, 71).

Wittel (2001) discusses the ongoing transition from traditional physical locations as sites for professional interactions to a largely disaggregated practice based upon relationships formed over the life of a project rather than through shared long-term professional spaces. According to Wittel (2001) people are no longer developing networks as a result of enduring physical proximity and lengthy working histories, but instead they are actively constructing and reviving relationships as they move from project to project (Wittel 2001). So while initial contact is usually an embodied encounter, albeit perhaps a brief one, Wittel (2001) views the project-based nature of new media work as inhibiting people's opportunities to develop relationships based on longer, shared narratives built around consistent physical work environments and the shared history that develops in such locations.

I did not observe this inhibition of opportunities for relationship development in my participants' reports of networking and sociality. While it is certainly true that the changes to paid work that have accompanied the ushering in of the new economy have greatly influenced the film and television industry, the development of my participants' professional networks remained an embodied, physically located

experience, often built on shared historical narratives. Face-to-face interactions and in-person observations of people's work acted as the foundations of my participants' networks which they then maintained through email, phone calls, and in-person social interactions. The following account from Mariah demonstrates this.

After finishing her year at an agency Mariah took a position as an assistant at a major studio network, a job she interviewed for as a result of a connection she had made while working at the agency. She said: 'the reason I even got the meeting is because an agent that used to always come by my boss's desk and we kind of formed a relationship, [...] and he sent them my résumé and then I got the interview....' Similar to other work in the industry, the position Mariah applied for was not advertised in trade publications or online job boards. Instead, the woman that eventually hired Mariah let members of her network, including Mariah's co-worker, know that she was in the market for a new assistant. Then, as a result of the relationship Mariah had formed with the agent who would 'come by' her boss's desk, she was recommended for the new assistant position. It was precisely because of the continuous face-to-face interactions Mariah shared with her colleague and the relationship they developed during her year working at the agency that she was able to move into her new position. In contrast to Wittel's (2001) argument, these are embodied interactions that still take place within specific work environments. They may not be locations where employees work for their entire lives, but they are, importantly, still based in face-to-face relationships.

It was through actual time and physical presence spent at the agencies as assistants, in the writing rooms, at the studios, and on location that my participants expanded their networks. Lucia, who had worked in reality television in locations around the world, described the time during production as 'summer camp for grown-ups.' She said:

Especially on location, when you're like, in the middle of nowhere for months at a time, it's very like...lot of relationships happening, lot of ex relationships happening right in front of you (both laugh). It's really weird. It's fucked up, actually (both laugh). It's not good for your head...at all, but...I mean it can be fun, but it can be really difficult too [...] You're with the people all the time and on [location] you're like working, playing, living with everybody and that's like all you have.

The intensity of relationships on set, on location, in production offices and writing rooms creates opportunities for people to establish relationships that may be difficult to maintain after the project ends. Wittel (2001) calls these bonds ‘intense’ but ultimately ‘ephemeral’ because of these characteristics. Again, based upon my participants’ reports I have to disagree with this aspect of Wittel’s (2001) characterisation of sociality in the new economy. Instead, I argue that *some* of the relationships established during the life of a project are ephemeral, but others develop into long-term connections.

The fact that my participants’ reports do not support much of Wittel’s (2001) concept of network sociality may be partially attributed to the types of networking activities he observed. Wittel (2001) developed his concept of network sociality after examining the interactions and reports of individuals who participated in events which had the principal purpose of networking.⁶⁶ My participants for the most part did not attend such events and if they did or had in the past, they described these experiences in negative ways. Instead, my participants’ networks were primarily informal in nature and developed organically through time spent at work or through shared interests and leisure activities with others. They viewed these organically formed relationships as more genuine and reliable. Kasey said:

[T]hey have to be real friendships. They can’t be, ‘I’m networking with you at a party and now you have to help me.’ So there’s a weird thing about that term ‘networking.’ I think, yes, go out, meet people, make friends, but that’s kind of like a person thing. I think a lot of people are like, ‘I gotta go network,’ and it always feels fake and cheesy and like they might meet somebody and trade cards, but [...] if it’s not genuine, if the connection isn’t a friendship, if the relationship isn’t genuine, I just don’t think it helps. So, I like meeting people in the industry, but I don’t like going to networking events, that are geared toward networking. I think it’s phoney.

Kasey illustrates a commonly expressed view among my participants: ‘genuine’ relationships established through shared embodied work experiences and/or friendships were more valid and useful to participants than set-up networking events.

⁶⁶ These included official networking events put on by different industry organizations, a dinner party where none of the invitees knew each other personally, and a monthly salon consisting of 90 people hosted by a woman in London.

Through her juxtaposition of ‘genuine’ relationships and ‘phoney’ encounters that are ‘fake and cheesy’ we can see how Kasey ascribes legitimacy to certain network ties and not to others. Events that were organized with the specific purpose of networking were not viewed as particularly helpful or worth my participants’ time. Rather, they preferred network ties that had been tried and tested in their previous work experiences or that came from trusted sources. Wittel (2001) argues that networking events attempt to hide the ‘highly obvious’ commodification of relationships by creating an appropriate ‘frame’ for these events. Networking events often involve simultaneous ‘fun’ activities (e.g. drinks after work, networking breakfasts) that aim to make people more comfortable with the commodification of relationships by creating an environment that ‘suggests a somehow “authentic” interest in meeting people’ (56). My participants did not appreciate these types of networking events precisely because they could see through the attempt to gloss over what they viewed as the inauthenticity of the events. They preferred organic networking and genuine relationships as opposed to the imitation of authenticity enacted at events like those Wittel (2001) examined.

Anabelle highlights how participants talked about the division between genuine and inauthentic relationships. She said:

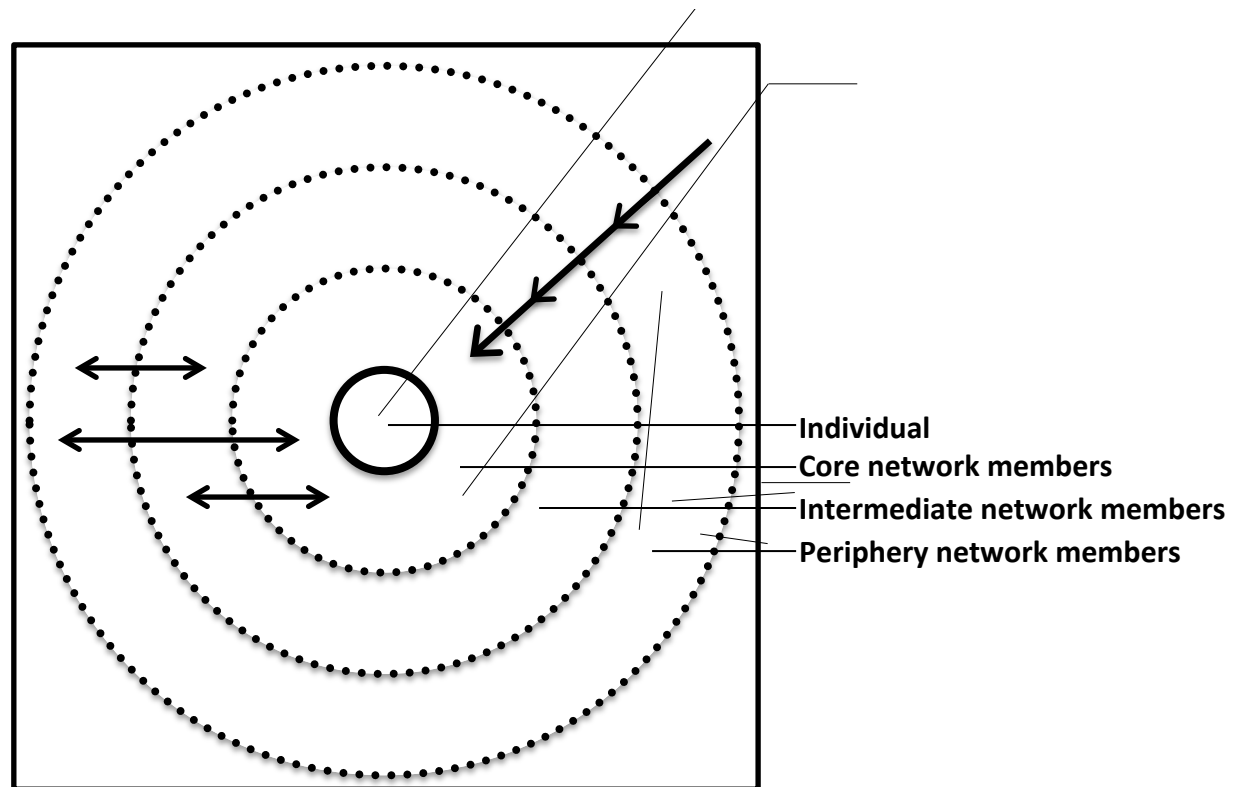
You always want to be meeting people. It’s Hollywood, it’s how it works [...] I find the most comes from people you’ve actually worked with. Just by virtue of time, it’s a deeper relationship. They know how you work under pressure. You spend more time with each other. They really know you. I mean, anyone can give good meeting. You can be trained to be good in a meeting, but really seeing how they work on a show or whatever tends to be more impactful...

Here, Anabelle again emphasizes the importance of embodied encounters for the relationships she developed through work. She distinguishes between ‘deeper’ relationships that have been forged in high-pressure environments over time and those that do not stand up to scrutiny. As she said: ‘you can be trained to be good in a meeting.’ According to Anabelle anyone can appear capable, interesting, talented, and friendly during a brief encounter (like those that occur at networking events).

However, genuine relationships that had developed over time spent working with others were granted greater legitimacy and preferred by my participants.

In addition to their pursuit of genuine relationships, the women I interviewed managed their networks based upon their current work and life situations. Their networks involved different tiers or levels of relationship attentiveness. In their everyday lives, it was impossible for my participants to tend to all the members of their networks equally. Instead they divided them according to the importance of the relationship for professional and/or social purposes at particular times in their lives. My participants' involvement in networks was difficult to quantify as individuals participated in and constructed multiple networks simultaneously and moved within and across these networks with ease. Attempting to map my interviewees' networks as static systems would be near impossible and ultimately of little use as they changed depending upon context. Instead, I set out my participants' networks as a set of concentric circles with each woman at the centre of her own networks. Moving outward from the centre I created three tiers (core, intermediate, periphery) to which members of my participants' networks belonged based upon several characteristics including frequency of contact, type of contact (face-to-face, phone, email, incidental), friendship status, and types of support provided to a participant. This model more accurately represents my participants' experiences of networks because it allows for network members to move across the three tiers as the relationships with the central individual fluctuate. Additionally, due to the high level of mobility of workers in film and television this circular view of networks is more appropriate as it is based around one individual. When a woman transitions to a new job in the industry she carries her networks with her rather than plucking herself out of her previous networks and adopting those of her new workplace. Figure 4 illustrates this model of an individual's social/professional network(s).

Figure 4. Model of Participants' Professional/Social Networks.



Source: The author.

The individuals my participants contacted most often made up their core networks. These consisted of current co-workers, friends from previous work or schooling, and mentors. These relationships were actively maintained by my participants on a regular basis through face-to-face interactions, phone calls, emails, and social media.⁶⁷ These were people whom they said they actively supported and were supported by in return. This core network was where my participants sought professional advice, psycho-social support, and frequent social interaction.

The intermediate tier of my participants' networks comprised current co-workers, previous colleagues, and friendly acquaintances. These relationships were still tended to by the women I interviewed, but less so than those in their core networks.

⁶⁷ The use of social media was not widely discussed in the interviews. It would be interesting to analyse industry workers' social media activity in relation to their real-life networks in a future study.

Members of the intermediate tier were usually considered more professionally instrumental as opposed to people they would turn to for psycho-social support. My participants would schedule lunches/dinners/drinks with members of their intermediate tiers occasionally throughout the year, attend some social events, and keep in touch through less frequent emails. Lilly described one such instance saying:

There are times when you're like, 'I really don't want to go to this person's birthday party, but I know that we want to try and sell something at their studio, so we'll go.' But it's...I think any industry that has a lot of money going through it, you're gonna be doing that [...] those are the obligations that you have. And they're fun, I mean, seriously... 'oh my god, twist my arm, I have to go to somebody's party and drink free booze...oh, okay.' (both laugh).

As Lilly illustrates, networking in the industry is a strategy individuals use in an attempt to proactively influence their professional futures. Despite the fact that Lilly was currently employed as a television writer, she was simultaneously pursuing potential future opportunities. While she may have been reluctant to attend the birthday party of this intermediate tier network member, Lilly reasoned that because she was hoping to sell a television show to the studio at which this individual worked it might ultimately be beneficial to her career to attend the party, and as she later said, it would be enjoyable. In order to increase her employment opportunities, she wanted to keep this relationship alive and current. Maintaining a friendly relationship with her colleague made sense to Lilly even if they were not the closest of friends. If this person had been employed in a different industry would Lilly have felt as much pressure to attend? There is no way of knowing, but because film and television work is so dependent upon the relationships individuals develop and maintain, my participants did make decisions regarding social activities based upon current and anticipated work-related issues.

Lilly also highlights one particular aspect of Wittel's (2001) network sociality that I did encounter in my interviews—the collapsed boundaries between the traditional public/private, work/leisure dichotomies—through her description of the interweaving of professional and leisure activities. As discussed in the previous chapter, my participants' work experiences were often described as 'fun' and as Lilly

illustrates, the relationships developed within and through these fun environments crossed over into the non-work time of employees in the industry. I agree with Wittel (2001) when he argues that there can be a lack of separation between work and play in environments emblematic of work in the new economy. As an extension of this, and based upon my participants' accounts, there has also been a blurring of the line that traditionally separated colleagues from friends.⁶⁸ For Lilly, attending the birthday party of a colleague that she was friendly with perhaps would not have been her first choice of activity, but because of the blurring of the colleague/friend distinction such a choice was not as straightforward as it might have been when the line separating colleague from friend was more defined. Other participants also reported negotiating the colleague/friend divide, or rather the lack thereof. Bosses, co-workers, subordinates, former colleagues, and occasionally even clients were, depending on the individual being discussed, referred to as 'friends' by my participants. By no means were all colleagues friends, but my participants still emphasized the need to be 'friendly' with everyone and 'make friends' with as many industry people as possible. Taylor said, 'You can't have too many friends in Hollywood. You can't.' When my participants categorized an individual as a friend, they may have indicated a certain level of trust within the relationship. This trust may help when a participant turns to a 'friend' to find employment or seek career advice, for, as will be further explained in the following chapter, hiring 'trustworthy' candidates to fill positions is often used as a rationalization for the continued exclusionary informal recruitment practices currently used in the film and television industry (Grugulis and Stoyanova 2012; Jones and Pringle 2015).

The final tier in my participants' networks, the periphery, was comprised of contacts and relationships my interviewees tended to the least. The contact they had with members of their peripheral networks was largely through occasional emails, phone calls, or coincidental encounters at industry events. These were people with whom my participants wanted to maintain a connection, albeit a minimal one. They did not view these relationships as particularly useful at the current stage in their careers nor were they sources of psycho-social support. Instead, these were people they could contact, would feel comfortable contacting, should the need arise in the future for

⁶⁸ Wittel (2001) does briefly mention the blurring of the line between friend and colleague.

themselves or on behalf of others they knew. Lilly spoke about such a relationship which she used not for her own personal gain but to recommend a fellow writer:

I mean, the show that I was an assistant on, that made me become a writer, had two female writers on it that were the staff writers on that show, and they had a pilot this year that was going and we met with them before we knew that our show was picked up for another season and [...] we went in and met with them and they were like, 'We want you guys,' and that was a relationship that I've kept up for 10 years basically, and known them for 10 years and you never know when that's gonna happen⁶⁹ and you run into each other at parties and stuff like that and you're like, 'Oh, hey, you're working on this project right now, and it's not something I'm gonna do or I'm on another show, but I know somebody who'd be great for that, here's her name, here's her agent, you guys should totally consider her.'

The relationships my interviewees formed were not abandoned but rather were maintained more or less actively by my participants depending upon where these contacts were located in their respective network levels. As previously stated, my participants' networks were primarily formed in the contained environments that accompanied their project-based employment. I agree with Wittel's (2001) assessment of these interactions as intense because of the long hours, high pressure, and familiarity workers develop in these focused environments. The relationships could be intense, but ultimately they were not ephemeral. After the end of a project or a transition to a new job, the contacts and friendships my participants had developed did not disappear but were integrated into their existing networks moving from the core to the intermediate or periphery levels. My participants' networks were thus constantly being reshuffled based upon current circumstances but contacts were rarely altogether abandoned. In this way my participants did not experience the 'intense but ephemeral' sociality described by Wittel (2001). Their relationships may have been formed in intense work environments, but it was this very intensity which helped cement these relationships and made them last in one form or another. Contrary to Wittel's (2001) claims, the intimacy and mutual experiences of working in highly demanding, fast-paced environments established bonds that developed out of shared historical narratives in these micro-communities of industry workers.

⁶⁹ As will be explained in the following chapter, this 'never knowing' if one will need a contact for potential future employment may make it less likely that individuals will confront sexist/discriminatory behaviours for fear of potential future repercussions.

In addition to the ways my participants managed the differing tiers of their networks they were also selective in their formation. Taylor said:

I actually started something in the Alliance of Women Directors. It's a list that we compile as directors of women that we've worked with on a set in any capacity, from art director to make-up artist to any capacity, but the contingency is that you have to have worked with them to really be able to vouch for them [...] Don't hire [her] just because she's female, hire her because she's female and she's good and I can vouch for that.

As Taylor illustrates, in order to be admitted to this network, an individual needed to have a sponsor who was willing to act as a guarantor for the individual's ability to perform a job. This is dissimilar from the connections and business card exchanges that Wittel (2001) analysed in his research. Wittel (2001) describes an encounter he had at a new media conference where one individual lamented the fact that he only managed to obtain approximately thirty business cards from new contacts. Rather than the shotgun effect of getting your information in the hands of as many people as possible, my participants tended to prefer a more precise mode of creating new relationships for their networks. As Taylor brought up, women were not interested in hiring other women in the industry simply because they shared a gender⁷⁰ nor were my participants willing to attach their names and reputations to anyone who asked. They were always open to meeting new people and recommended contacts but they did their due diligence first.

While Wittel's (2001) concept of network sociality was developed following his observations of the networking practices of individuals working in new media, an industry that includes similar neoliberal employment characteristics as those of film and television, for the most part my participants' reports did not reflect Wittel's version of sociality. Instead, I found my interviewees' conception of and preferences regarding sociality and networking to be more embodied, genuine, selective, and managed that the intense but ephemeral relationships Wittel (2001) encountered in his research. Some of the relationships my participants formed through work did not endure as long as others, but importantly, the networks they continued to participate

⁷⁰ My participants did express a more general solidarity with other women in the industry which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

in and constitute were by and large longer-lasting and involved embodied interactions based in shared work environments. One aspect of network sociality that was reflected in my participants' accounts was the blurring of the separation between friends and colleagues, to which I now turn my attention.

Networking and friendship

Friends were important components of my participants' networks, and as already indicated, defining the boundaries between friends and colleagues has become increasingly difficult as the worlds of work and leisure continue to merge in the new economy. While the concept and the experience of friendship is clearly important in relation to the organizational entities and cultures of the industry, friendship has rarely been discussed in literature concerned with organizational analysis (Grey and Sturdy 2007). When it is discussed in relation to employment, friendship is more commonly analyzed from a functionalist position, meaning that aspects such as the social capital that friendships afford and how this may influence careers is considered, but it rarely moves beyond this scope (Grey and Sturdy 2007). Social capital in friendships and networks is pertinent to my participants' experiences of searching for, securing, and carrying out work in the film and television industry. However, similar to Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) I think it would be inappropriate to categorize my participants' friendships in purely functional terms, especially when the collapse between the public/private, work/leisure, and friend/colleague divides was so evident in my participants' narratives.

As Grey and Sturdy (2007) argue, when friendship has been addressed in research it often occurs in two forms, the first being that friendship in workplaces is not relevant when considering the 'formal' organization, or secondly, that when friendship in organizations is examined it is still viewed as part of the 'informal' practices of the workplace, something that occurs under the surface of organizations but outside of work functions. Friendship as it occurs in paid work is thus often lifted out of its contextualized existence to be examined as separate, or cast aside as irrelevant (Grey and Sturdy 2007). This approach cannot be applied to the contemporary film and television industry. Instead, an account of friendship and its intersection with

employment in film and television is not only appropriate, but necessary to create a full picture of my participants' reported experiences.

Friendship has been neglected in analyses of paid work in part because of the traditional divide between public and private in social science (Grey and Sturdy 2007). However, as illustrated in this chapter and throughout this thesis, the lines and boundaries between work/leisure, public/private, and friend/colleague are being blurred in contemporary organizations and industries. As a result of the merging of these two formerly separate spheres, there has been a transition toward 'de-differentiating' the public and private which has created a renewed interest in analyses of friendship (Grey and Sturdy 2007). Friendship has always been difficult to define, but with the traditional line between friend and colleague collapsing it has become even more difficult to delineate. I found it particularly challenging to categorize members of my participants' networks as being either friends or colleagues. My participants' friendships originated in many ways: colleagues often became friends, former coworkers could be referred to as friends, former romantic partners were referred to as friends, superiors and subordinates were friends, mentors were friends, etcetera. An explanation for why my participants categorized some members of their networks as friends and not others is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the ways in which friendships influenced hiring practices illustrates how this type of hiring model contributes to gender inequality in the industry.

In the film and television industry, the divide between such aspects of people's lives has been heavily eroded to the point where friendships not only occur within organizations or through the life of projects, but often act as the foundation upon which projects are built. Anabelle reiterated the integral part networks and friendships play in the hiring practices of the industry. In a system that is deeply based on relationships, people refer and hire friends, or they hire people with whom they can imagine themselves being friends.

It's because people hire their friends. And I mean Hollywood is a boys' club. There's no other way about it. I mean that's just how it is. People hire who's easiest, who they know, and for male writers, it's other male writers (Anabelle).

The ‘choices’ we make about friendship are made within cultural and societal structures, and as evidenced in the literature, friendships usually develop along race, gender, class, and sexuality boundaries (Grey and Sturdy 2007; Ibarra 1992, 1993, 1995). People tend to make friends with those they view as similar, which in turn affects with whom they imagine themselves being friends.⁷¹ As a result, in the film and television industry where many hiring processes are informal, it is more likely those doing the hiring are likely to employ people with similar race, gender, and class backgrounds (Acker 2006; Grugulis and Stoyanova 2012).

The preference for working with friends in film and television is often rationalized as a proactive strategy to diminish the chance of acrimonious and inefficient work environments causing problems or delays for projects.⁷² Lilly spoke about her desire to work with friends and former colleagues with whom she knew she worked well. She said of her former work environment:

We had a super tight staff and we have tried to work with various people from that show again, and again, and again. And we’ve worked with a couple of them and it’s...we’re like, ‘hey wouldn’t it be great to go work with the guys,’ there was a male writing team on that show and we had a great time with them and worked really well with them. So we’re always like, ‘let’s try to get on the show they’re working on this year,’ or ‘what show is so and so doing this year,’ so those are the ones you focus on because you’re like, ‘I know going into this that there’ll be people on my team.’

Lilly’s quote makes it clear that while she did use her friendships in instrumental ways to open up career options, this was not her only motivation for seeking out work with particular people. Importantly, she was friends with them and knew from experience that they would work well together. She and her writing partner Olivia followed the careers of some of their previous colleagues, not merely because they were talented, but because, as Lilly said, they ‘had a great time with them,’ and were part of a ‘super tight staff,’ meaning a staff that was not only functional, but intimate as well. Lilly also spoke of having a certain level of trust with members of this

⁷¹ A more detailed account of how these hiring practices can lead to discrimination is included in the next chapter along with an exploration of my participants’ reported experiences with such encounters.

⁷² Again, a more in-depth discussion of how the networking and hiring practices of the industry exclude women and other minorities, and how these practices are rationalized by those doing the hiring, is included in the following chapter.

particular staff, and knew that if she and Olivia went to work with some of them again, there would be people ‘on her side’ from the beginning of the project. The language of trust and intimacy is not something typically associated with work colleagues, but because of the nature of work in the film and television industry and the continued blurring of the friend/colleague divide, these terms were applied to individuals who were colleagues and friends simultaneously. This is not unique to the film and television industry, but it may be exaggerated in this world of work because of the heavy reliance on personal relationships for securing employment and succeeding in this work environment. Unfortunately, the preference for hiring and/or working with friends can contribute to the continued exclusion of individuals from diverse backgrounds. In the following section, I examine my participants’ reported experiences of one of the so-called ‘solutions’ to such exclusions—the establishment and participation in women-only networks.

Women’s networks and gendered networking

Perriton (2006) writes: ‘The “how-to” leadership literature peddles a simplistic, but seductive, line—the key to overcoming barriers to women’s career progression is to identify the barrier and then implement an appropriate winning strategy’ (102). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the strategies developed to address women’s traditional lack of access to networks was the promotion of women-only and women-focused networking groups. Based upon my participants’ reports, some of the networking groups specifically designed for women in the film and television industry were viewed as beneficial organizations in which to participate, while others were not regarded as particularly helpful. These differences were largely dependent upon participants’ preferences, friendliness to or having a sense of solidarity with other women in the industry, and past experience with women-focused networks. The following section analyses my participants’ reported experiences with these types of networks as well as their views concerning some gendered aspects of networking behaviours and practices.

Interestingly, two chapters of the same women-focused industry organization were viewed differently depending upon where my participants lived. Women in Film (www.wif.org) is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing, educating, and

empowering women working in entertainment with more than 6,800 members spread over 23 chapters in the United States (WIFC 2014; WIFLA 2014). Participants that I spoke with in Los Angeles appreciated the value of this organization as well as its mission, but did not view it as especially helpful to their careers, nor was it a preferred way to socialize with colleagues. Penelope, who had found Women in Film Los Angeles useful when she was first getting started in the industry, had not participated in the organization for many years. She said:

I hate to say it this way, because I'm sure you're going to hear this...women complain a lot and you go to these meetings and you go like, 'Okay we can just keep complaining about the opportunities we don't have but, we have to make opportunities, we have to support one another, we have to give opportunities to one another or it's not going to change.' And I just got exhausted, frankly...

Penelope did not like the 'complaining' that occurred at meetings. She wanted this group to offer solutions rather than reiterate problems and to create professional opportunities both for herself and for her fellow members. Taylor, who had also belonged to Women in Film Los Angeles in previous years, shared Penelope's impressions of the limited usefulness of this particular women's network.

According to Taylor and Penelope, Women in Film Los Angeles failed to deliver on one key component for a quasi-formal network, particularly one marketed to be for the professional advancement and networking of women—instrumentality. According to Perriton (2006) contemporary women's networks are viewed as 'mechanisms to advance the individual' rather than collective action groups (102). My participants did express opinions that support Perriton's (2006) assessment of contemporary women's networks, however, their reports also partially contradict this idea. Some women I interviewed did view women's networks as potentially beneficial to their individual careers, but several participants also described a commitment to the larger cause of advancing women in the film and television industry as a reason to participate in such networks. They wanted instrumentality and solidarity from women's networks and they often considered both in their evaluations of these quasi-formal groups. This is illustrated in Isabella's account of her association with Women in Film.

Isabella had long been an active participant in the Chicago chapter of Women in Film (www.wifchicago.net). She said of her first experience as a board member of Women in Film Chicago years before:

[W]hen I was first on [the board], meetings would go on for three hours and people would be like, ‘Oh let’s just order pizza and have some wine,’ and I’m like, ‘I don’t have time for this bullshit. Let’s go! Why am I here? I could do this at home, I’d rather do this at home.’ And so now there’s more of a focus and there’s more of a punch to it which makes me very excited and I want to make a difference...

Isabella was beginning her second stint as a board member of Women in Film Chicago at the time of our interview. When recalling her previous board experience years earlier, she disliked the fact that board meetings seemed to turn into extended social occasions rather than focused meetings with clear agendas and goals for the organization. In contrast, she was excited about her upcoming term on the board because she thought the organization had more specific goals and a tighter focus on advancing women in the industry in Chicago. At the very least my participants wanted to feel that their involvement in these organizations was supporting the general advancement of women in the industry even if they did not gain personal, tangible career benefits. The leadership of these organizations and the effectiveness at accomplishing tasks as well as their ability to communicate successes to their membership were important. My participants did not join these women-only networking groups primarily for social reasons but rather to contribute to their own careers and the careers of other women in the industry. In this they were utilitarian and solidaristic.

Three of the women I spoke with in Chicago were actively involved in their chapter of Women in Film and viewed it as a useful network and support system. Liana said:

I will say this for the rest of my life, I feel like I owe my career to Women in Film [Chicago]. Because they were...I literally had no direction [...] So I was looking for a way to get in [to the industry] and Women in Film [Chicago] were *amazing*, like truly they were so accommodating and they just made me feel super welcome. And I say all the time that I’m a true success story of this organization. It helped me get to LA, I’ve kept those relationships going and I

met a lot of great people when I was just networking there and then when I moved back [to Chicago], yeah I ran for the board, because I wanted to give my time back to the organization that helped me.

Liana credited much of her success to the inclusive and supportive community she had found at Women in Film Chicago when she first started her career in the industry. Furthermore, it was through the membership of Women in Film Chicago that she was introduced to her future employer in Los Angeles. The organization provided community and connection to other industry professionals in the Chicago area, but also offered tangible benefits for Liana's career. Consequently, when she returned to Chicago after living and working in Los Angeles for several years, she thought she had the experience and time to help run the organization. By serving on the board of Women in Film Chicago, Liana felt she was 'giving back' to the organization, using her experience to contribute to its mission.

Looking at the different reported experiences of women participating in the same organization but in different cities demonstrates some characteristics that may indicate differences in the ways women network. Women in Film Los Angeles has a much larger membership base than Women in Film Chicago. Additionally, the industry, and the number of people employed in it, is larger in Los Angeles than in Chicago. With this in mind, Granovetter's (1973) concept of the strength of weak ties in networks would indicate that individuals who are members of Women in Film Los Angeles might gain more from their membership because of the larger, more diverse pool of available contacts. However, based upon my participants' experiences this was not the case. Alternatively, the size of the network and the number of potential contacts did not matter as much as the quality of the interactions between members.

Women in Film Chicago seemed to be more helpful for my participants, in part, because of its lower membership numbers. Because the size of people's Chicago-area networks was limited by the size of the industry in Chicago, fewer intermediaries were required to establish a connection with another industry worker. If a member of Women in Film Chicago sought an introduction to another industry professional in the city it was likely that a member of the organization could provide that connection

or find a way to do so. Women in Film Chicago members also used their ties within the organization to recruit potential industry employees. Isabella said, ‘if I’m on a job I will ask Women in Film, “Okay, I need a make-up artist,” and I’ll use that pool of members. Because you want to help [other members], you want to make them feel like they’re a part of an organization that makes a difference.’ The women I interviewed that were members of the Chicago chapter of Women in Film were more likely to participate, socialize, network, and recruit within the organization than their counterparts in Los Angeles. There was a greater level of commitment to the organization in Chicago.⁷³ It may be that quasi-formal networks become less useful when the size of the organization crosses a certain threshold. The increased size of the quasi-formal network does not equate to increased functionality. It is possible that the network becomes too diffuse to maintain communication and familiarity among members to foster the levels of intimacy and trust that my participants preferred to have in their networks. This may be a key difference in the networking practices between women and men. Granovetter’s (1973) concept of the ‘strength of weak ties’ may be applicable to men’s networking preferences, but my research suggests that women prefer more familiarity with network members or at the very least they categorize and label these relationships in ways that suggests more intimacy. More research is required to explore this, but my participants’ reports offer an interesting entry into such an investigation.

This preference for smaller, more intimate networks was also exhibited in my participants’ reports of the gender differences they observed in their own and other industry women’s networking behaviours. The following account from Gwen includes references to these gendered behaviours. After participating in many public speaking events and realizing she was often the only woman present on otherwise male panels, she decided to act. She said:

I was always the only woman on the panel and it was almost always men in the audience. And these are smart men, they’re great men, it was great to share strategy with them, but for every one of those smart guys, there was a smart woman we weren’t hearing from [...] So I started creating this network thing, so I do this dinner thing that’s been going on for the last three and half

⁷³ It is possible that active members of Women in Film Los Angeles have similar views on the organization in their city, but this was not reflected in my interviews.

years, so every month I bring together these 12 women and they're leaders [...] from different businesses and we get together every month, and then we also bring in really fascinating special guests...

Gwen's monthly dinner group pulled in professional women from healthcare, law, fashion, finance, media, and other industries because she thought it was important to support and advance women across sectors. Again we can see that networking in the new economy for these women was not a disembodied experience, nor one that was 'intense but ephemeral' as Wittel (2001) argues. Gwen's dinner guests were comprised of a central group that was familiar with each other. It was small and manageable, but simultaneously expanding through the introduction of 'special guests' at every monthly dinner. She continued:

[S]o with my networking what I've done is I've connected all of these 12 women and then we connect it with 80 of these women [...] through our dinners by bringing them in as special guests and then I've done dinners in New York and connected the LA and the New York dinners and then I'm gonna do it in Washington [D.C]. And it's not so much about, you know, that I want to know all these women [...] but what it is really valuable in is the networking because now all of these women pick up the phone and call each other [...] I don't think that is a natural thing, because I think women have... if a guy needs something he'll pick up the phone and he'll call somebody and say, 'Can you do this for me? I need you to do this one thing.' Right? We don't do that. We have a really hard time calling and saying, 'Can you do this for me?' Right? [...] but if you've got a network of people that you feel comfortable with or somebody can connect you to somebody else, it's an easier way to ask.

Gwen illustrates several interesting points. First, she suggests that women are not as comfortable as men with 'picking up the phone' to make a new connection. What Gwen articulates so well, and what other participants echoed, is that women may be more comfortable calling upon a network member for instrumental purposes if there is a pre-existing connection with someone. Whether this is through a personal relationship or based on the recommendation of a trusted source, in Gwen's experience the lack of a pre-existing connection was a barrier to women's successful networking.⁷⁴ However, with strong core and intermediary networks women may feel more comfortable calling upon a wider group for support and resources. In

⁷⁴ This may be true regardless of gender. More in-depth research is required.

Gwen's words, 'it's an easier way to ask.' Gwen effectively helped create a diverse network of women with medium-to-strong ties which may work better for women when networking. A strong tie did not necessarily exist between all members of the network, but nevertheless the strong ties acted as the foundation upon which it stood. It is possible that medium-to-strong ties create a network in which women are more likely to participate.⁷⁵

Lilly also touched on these gendered elements of networking and spoke about the confidence she gained in this arena from having a writing partner. She said:

I think women are much less likely to push themselves out there themselves. They're not going to call in their favors as much. That's something that Olivia and I do every week a lot, we're like, 'Hey, these are the people that we know who are on this thing that we want,' we make those calls, we tell our agents to make those calls, we call our friends that know the people, and say 'hey, can you book this call in for us.' I think that happens a lot more with guys [...] Women I think are just like, 'Well I really wanted to be on this show, so I wrote this and I thought maybe it would get me there,' and it's like, 'Dude! You gotta...you have to sell yourself constantly.' And I think it's something that women just aren't taught as much, you know, to kind of force themselves in that door, that foot in the door and...it helps to have a writing partner, because you always have that person that has your back, that's like, 'Okay, let's go do this together. We'll go be bossy together' (both laugh).

Lilly's opinion that women are 'less likely to push themselves out there' and that women are not taught to 'force themselves in the door' is supported in the literature on early gendered socialization and its lasting influence on behaviours. According to Oakley (2000), throughout early socialization boys are encouraged to highlight their capabilities and strengths while girls are more likely to downplay their accomplishments. Boys are expected to promote themselves and take ownership of their accomplishments whereas girls are often ostracized for similar behaviours and prefer to maintain more communal happiness by weighing their own needs against those of the larger group (Eagly and Karau 2002; Oakley 2000). Unfortunately for women, these early socialization practices influence the communication styles of adults in the work world. This is especially disadvantageous for women as the

⁷⁵ More research into women's preferences regarding tie strength in informal networks is called for.

standards against which they are measured, as discussed in Chapter 1, are reflective of the male-gendered model of the individual of the new economy. Lilly is correct. Women are less likely to highlight their abilities and ‘force the door open,’ in work environments. Women are not encouraged early in life to participate in self-promotion and they are sometimes actually punished when they do self-promote and/or exhibit more ‘masculine’ work styles (Eagly and Karau 2002; Eagly and Wood 2011; Gherardi 1994; Oakley 2000).⁷⁶ However, as observed in Gwen’s comments above, Lilly also found the resistance to performing such acts decreased when she was able to rely upon the previously established relationship she had with her writing partner, Olivia. Lilly appreciated that she ‘always ha[d] that person that ha[d] her back,’ that she did not have to do this work alone, and that she could be ‘bossy,’ together with Olivia.

Networking was viewed by participants as vital, even for those who did not particularly enjoy it. Danielle found the drinks-after-work ritual tiresome so she made it a priority to network during the day. She said: ‘Sometimes I go to lunch with a manager or agent or showrunner or writer on a show. Lot of lunches. I try not to do dinner or drinks; it’s just not my thing. I’d rather just go home and walk my dog and watch something on TV...’ Danielle, who was single at the time of her interview, preferred to avoid extending her work activities into the evening. Many participants reported similar preferences for networking locations and times. Emily discussed her attitudes toward after-work socializing, saying:

I’m not good at it. I’m good at it when I actually get there, because I can talk to people and be social, but actually setting up drinks...it’s like, ‘Ugh, I just want to go home.’ And when I go I have a really good time, but sometimes I’m just like I want to go home and see my husband. So sometimes I’m lazy and I don’t set up drinks and I know there are a lot of guys who...I guess I think men do this more easily. I don’t know, maybe just the men I know are social, but they’re like, ‘Oh I go out for drinks every night.’ Every night? I can’t do that.

Emily recognized the value of networking or going for drinks after work, she was ‘good at it’ and enjoyed her time once she arrived, but she found she needed to

⁷⁶ Gender stereotyping and its impact of women’s careers is discussed in the following chapter.

overcome her initial resistance to these events as she would rather spend time at home with her husband. Furthermore, she commented on the distinct networking and socializing behaviours she had observed between the men she worked with and herself. When it came to grabbing drinks after work she said ‘men do this more easily’ and admonished herself for being ‘lazy’ when it came to ‘setting up drinks.’ Emily stated very plainly that there were times when she would rather return home after work to spend time with her husband, but because the ‘drinks after work’ routine was so ubiquitous as a socializing activity among her male colleagues she viewed her own behaviour as lacking. As many of my participants reported similar attitudes as Emily regarding evening socializing for work, it is possible that women in film and television have distinct networking preferences.⁷⁷ My interviews suggest this possibility, but more research is called for. There has been research that compares the outcomes of networking practices for men and women that participate in networking behaviours which is reflective of the white male norm (Benschop 2009). For example, Forret and Dougherty (2004), whose work was discussed above, compared women and men’s networking participation but failed to account for the possibility that women might also engage in distinct activities. So while men may have been found to exhibit greater networking proficiency (Ehrich 1994) it may also be possible that men are better at networking according to the established (male-centred) rubric that has been employed to categorize and research networking behaviours and outcomes. Berger, Benschop, and van den Brink (2015) have also conducted interesting research regarding how gender is performed and reinforced in networking interactions by largely unreflexive participants. Micro-level analyses like those of Berger, Benschop, and van den Brink (2015) have helped demonstrate how gender presents itself in everyday networking practices, even though gender is often rendered invisible in contemporary organizations. More research is called for relating to women’s gender-specific networking practices and preferences particularly as the reliance on networks for successful careers is becoming more prevalent across industries.

⁷⁷There have been several popular publications in recent years that have delved into women’s networking practices which have reported similar trends. One example is Ryckman’s (2013) *Stiletto Network* which discusses women’s networking practices within the USA.

Isabella recognized a pattern regarding women's networking behaviours that was also observed in Forret and Dougherty's (2001) research which found that there was negligible difference between men and *single* women's networking behaviours. Isabella spoke about the difficulty of maintaining relationships and developing new contacts within the industry. This became more pronounced after she had children. She observed that many of her female colleagues with families were no longer attending industry events as often. She said:

It's a lot harder and I do see other women who are like, 'I'm not gonna go to this event, I know I need to go to this event,' because so much especially in this industry is networking, you know [...] I see [women not attending as often] and it sucks or they have to leave early and I have been fortunate, if my parents weren't close enough to help, I would not have been able to continue the networking as much as I have which I know is essential to my job, to move forward in business [...] but it's really difficult because it's like, okay I've worked, I've worked until 4:00 or 5:00, and my kids are home and the babysitter left and I'm there from 4:00 or 5:00 to 6:30 and then I gotta go pick up my husband, we'll trade the car and then I have to go to my event, I don't feel like going to my event cause I'm fucking tired, and then from 7:00-10:00 it's that. That, I have seen some people do but most women will let that part of it go...

In Forret and Dougherty's (2001) analysis, networking behaviours consisted of: 'maintaining contacts, socializing, engaging in professional activities, participating in community, and increasing internal visibility' (Forret and Dougherty 2001, 420). However, when comparing men to married women or women with children, they found that women still participated equally in all activities *except* socializing. It appears that men and women were equally inclined to participate in networking up until marriage, and that parenthood impacts on women's networking behaviours more than on men's, because of women's traditionally greater involvement in caring responsibilities (Linehan and Scullion 2008).

As Isabella had a support network for after-hours child care from her parents she was able to maintain the socializing aspect of her networking behaviours. However, even with this support Isabella still found the act of attending such events, particularly after working a full day, going home to spend time with her children, and then negotiating transport to and from an event bothersome. She knew the vital function that

networking and socializing played in her ability to secure work, while simultaneously resenting the need to participate in the act. This was a common sentiment among my participants who often spoke about the difficulty of establishing a work-life balance, particularly when networking was an additional activity they needed to integrate into their routines. Anabelle said:

It's just very exhausting. It's another job. Especially at my level, because I'm an aspiring writer, I'm writing on my own time and then I'm also maintaining these relationships on my own time [...] It's like having two jobs and you just accept that. It's one of the things you do.

As Anabelle described, networking was essentially a second job she had to perform in addition to her already long hours working as a writer's assistant and the time she spent working on her own scripts. However, she also reported that networking was not, in her opinion, an optional activity and that working in film and television simply meant one had to accept the necessity of this aspect of the industry. My interviewees persistently cited how vital networking was to their work, going so far as to describe it as a necessary 'second job' but there were other key relationships that many of my participants also viewed as significantly helpful in their career journeys, namely the influence and assistance of one or more mentors.

Mentors

Mentors were unique members of my participants' networks and had more specialized roles than other network members. Definitional divisions and confusions have arisen, but I found Bozeman and Feeney's (2008) description of the mentor/protégé relationship relevant to the relationships my participants described. According to these authors mentoring is:

A process for the reciprocal, informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and psycho-social support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development: mentoring entails informal communication, usually face to face and over a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor), to a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé) (Bozeman and Feeney 2008, 469).

As opposed to formal mentoring schemes, which often take place within organizations and with company sponsorship, my participants' mentoring relationships, like their networks, were primarily informal. Mentors and mentees tended to meet in work environments and then entered into mentoring relationships voluntarily. Additionally, a key component of my participants' mentoring relationships was often a reciprocal, though not necessarily equal, exchange of support. The roles of mentor and protégé have greater fluidity in Bozeman and Feeney's (2008), definition making them more accurate descriptions of the mentoring that my participants reported. The exchange of knowledge/wisdom/insight/opinion can simultaneously travel from mentor to protégé and vice versa, although generally, more knowledge and advice originates from the mentor than the protégé.

Anabelle had developed a long-term mentor relationship with her employer after she began working as his assistant. She said:

After I left the agency, I took a job as an assistant to a creator of a TV pilot [...] he and I met and loved each other [...] it was the longest interview I've ever had in my life. It was fantastic. And so it was just kind of one of those things where we clicked and so ever since then I've kind of been working with him on an informal basis. I read his scripts, I give him notes [...] every year he does a pilot so I've basically worked with him every year on his pilots [...] I've been working with him for five years.

To the outsider this relationship might seem exploitative as Anabelle offers her time, talent, and feedback to her mentor free of charge. Anabelle would arrive at the office early to read her boss/mentor's work and give him her opinions for which she might or might not be given credit. However, Anabelle did not view her relationship with her mentor as exploitative. Instead she saw it as a valuable relationship she had developed with an older, more experienced writer from whom she could learn while she continued to hone her skills.

In addition to their working relationship, Anabelle had close personal ties with her mentor that spanned several years. She attended family dinners at her mentor's home and the two maintained this relationship even during periods when they were not working on the same television show. After his pilot was picked up for development,

Anabelle's mentor hired her as a writer's assistant, and they gave each other feedback on different projects. She said:

Because I have this relationship with him, I'm given much more access to information as well as much more input than someone in my position should really have. He treats me like I am a writer. He treats me like I'm kind of the co-creator. So it's great. I go in early and we have an hour or whatever where we talk and he tells me what's going on and I tell him how his outline sucks (both laugh), and then he agrees to change it. I say it nicer than that, although sometimes not because after five years I can tell him anything.

Anabelle's relationship with her mentor provided her with a greater amount of access and influence on the television show and in return her mentor gained an opinion of his work from someone he trusted and whose work style complimented his own. Anabelle and her mentor provided reciprocal, although perhaps unequal, professional and psycho-social support. Anabelle benefitted from having her mentor critique her work and observing five rounds of the intricacies of the television pilot season in addition to gaining access to her mentor's network.

Melanie had also benefitted from working with a mentor. She said of her relatively new relationship with a more experienced woman in the industry: 'she's been really good to me and a really, really good mentor and reads anything I write and talks to me and meets with me and you know, and just helps me out whenever she can.' Melanie's relationship with her mentor developed outside of work and informally. She had moved to a new home and lived across the street from her mentor's ex-husband who was also involved in the industry. He read her work and then passed it along to his ex-wife, who in turn took Melanie under her wing. In addition to gaining professional advice related to her writing for television, Melanie also benefitted from her mentor's social capital. At the time of interview Melanie was interviewing with multiple television shows that were hiring writers and was also in talks with an agent about potential representation. All of this was the result of Melanie's mentor using her name and reputation as a stamp of approval for Melanie's talent. Melanie's abilities were in effect legitimized by her mentor who acted as a guarantor of sorts, which Ibarra (1993) found was an effective method for women in their networking and mentoring practices. According to Ibarra (1993), since women lack legitimacy at

higher levels in an organization because they deviate from the white male norm, women are less likely to gain as much advantage as men from a network made up of primarily weak ties. Rather, women (and other minorities) are more apt to gain network instrumentality when they have strong ties to important individuals within a larger network, individuals who can in a sense authenticate a woman's skills and potential (Ibarra 1993; Perriton 2006). Melanie was able to translate her mentor's social capital and reputation into opportunities and avenues of entry into places that might have otherwise remained closed.

My participants' reports did not demonstrate a significant preference regarding their mentor's gender. In the 27 interviews, nine participants⁷⁸ referred to current or previous mentoring relationships and only eight made reference to their mentors' genders. Among those nine participants, there were six male mentors and five female mentors (Melanie, Jemma, and Nell reported having both men and women as either current or previous mentors). As opposed to gender homophily between mentor/mentee, the success of the mentoring relationships my participants discussed was more dependent upon the compatible personalities, areas of interest, and communication styles of mentor and protégé.⁷⁹ This is congruent with Bozeman and Feeney's (2008) work which argues that creating a 'goodness of fit' between mentor and protégé increases the likelihood of both parties viewing the dyad as effective and useful. According to Bozeman and Feeney (2008) 'goodness of fit' between mentor and protégé is optimal when:

The mentor has the knowledge preferred by the protégé, has a value for transmitting that knowledge, and does so effectively to a protégé who has the capability to understand knowledge transmitted and the learning skills to fully expropriate the knowledge being transmitted. In return, the mentor receives the benefits of training a colleague, furthering his or her role as a leader in the organization, expanding his or her own professional networks, building social capital, and possibly advancing the organizational mission.

⁷⁸ Most participants reported the importance of having mentors (or mentor-like relationships) for career success in the industry, however only nine discussed their specific relationships with mentors.

⁷⁹ This is not to say that gender does not influence mentor/protégé interactions, only that my participants did not exhibit a marked gender preference for mentors. Allen and Eby (2004) found that male mentors reported providing more career advice to protégés while female mentors reported providing more psychosocial support. More research would be needed to assess if these trends occur in the film and television industry.

This was reflected in my participants' reports of mentor/protégé relationships. Melanie predominantly wrote drama scripts and her mentor had experience and network connections in drama television. Similarly, Anabelle preferred science-fiction writing, a genre that matched with her mentor's preferences and experiences in development. Importantly, these relationships were never static and would change depending upon the needs of the protégé and the areas of expertise of mentors at the time when my participants were seeking advice. My research cannot speak to the preferences my participants' mentors may have had regarding protégé gender, but based upon my interviewee's reports, creating a good fit between the two parties mattered more than mentor gender.⁸⁰

The Influence of Networks and Mentors on Career Progression

The importance of networks and mentors in film and television work is irrefutable. Similar to Lee's (2011) findings regarding networking practices in the British independent television sector, my participants displayed some ambivalence in relation to the necessity to network. However, for career success and advancement my participants knew that these relationships were vital and even when they expressed ambivalence regarding the constant need to tend to their networks they accepted this as an unavoidable component of their jobs. Every woman interviewed cited networking as integral to their career strategies.

In the following section I will discuss how networking and mentoring manifested itself in my participants' daily work lives and examine some of the locations and circumstances in which these practices developed. Starting with the assistant's position and then following my participants' advancement in the industry, I will analyse some of the strategies my interviewees employed to navigate their industry relationships. For now I turn my attention to the common narrative of the industry that begins, for many above-the-line workers, with an assistantship.

⁸⁰ My data cannot comment on the race, class, sexuality, or age preferences of my participants regarding mentors.

Assistants

A typical career move for industry novices in Los Angeles, particularly if they are unsure of a specific industry career path, is to work at one of the large talent/literary agencies in Los Angeles as an assistant.⁸¹ The rationale behind this well established practice is that an individual gains exposure to several facets of the industry (film, television, literary, packaging, etcetera) and then has time to develop a professional network while gaining experience in a more specified area of the entertainment business. In order for women to gain a foothold and potentially advance, they need these assistant positions. As Anabelle stated:

You may not think it matters who your secretary is, but it does in *this* industry. In this industry, it does because that is the door; that is the gateway to get to anything. So if you're not the assistant to the EP, you're not gonna get to be the writer's assistant, if you're not the writer's assistant, you're not gonna get to be the staff writer...

The 'gateway' Anabelle referred to was the exposure to potential network connections and mentors. The assistant position was a vital initiation into the larger film and television community. These first steps in a career were crucial precisely because they created opportunities to establish relationships with industry insiders.

Beginners start in the mailroom at a large agency and then are assigned to an agent as his/her assistant. They typically occupy that position for approximately one year and then hopefully leverage their connections for a better position, usually outside of the agency. Mariah said of her time working as an agent's assistant in her first year out of college:

When I worked for the agency I worked for this guy who is a VP of television literary [...] I worked for him for about a year, no not about, like exactly a year, had a black X calendar and I would mark every day off, because being an agent's assistant is horrible. And, you know, now we have a good relationship, but it was just coming out of college and you know, registering people's children for school and deciding how to make...the design to make

⁸¹ This process is not as common in Chicago where agencies and the industry in general are smaller. My participants in Chicago did more unpaid internships at the beginnings of their careers rather than assistantships.

on a birthday cake, and stuff that wasn't yours, so it was really far from the material and really bad.

Mariah's experience as an agent's assistant was typical of many young workers' first experiences of the industry. Agents' assistants do the grunt work and as Mariah indicated this work often has very little to do with learning about the film and television industry. Registering people's children for school and designing birthday cakes are hardly essential skills in film and television work, yet the year Mariah spent working as an assistant proved vital for her career advancement because she made contacts with people, one of whom recommended her for her next job.

Interestingly, Mariah did not think she would have been doing such feminized work if she were a man. When asked how she thought being a woman had influenced her career at that stage she said:

The general treatment of assistants at agencies is pretty abhorrent. At least it was when I was there [...] and so I don't think that was necessarily the fact that I was a woman. But it certainly was with things like... I don't think he would have asked his male assistant to register his kids for school or plan his wife's birthday party and that kind of thing ...

It is impossible to know whether or not a male assistant in Mariah's position would have been asked to do these tasks, but Mariah doubted it. Other participants also commented on the gender dynamics that came into play when they were assistants to men. Rachel said: 'a lot of bosses and assistants have this relationship, but it became this really weird relationship type thing cause you're managing every aspect of that person's life and it's this weird like ersatz spousal relationship almost.' Rachel and Mariah were managing aspects of their male bosses' lives that they viewed as feminized work. Mariah did not think a man in her position would have been given the same work while Rachel went as far as describing herself as a substitute spouse for her former male boss.

This is similar to what Pringle (1988) found in her research when examining the relationship between secretaries and their superiors. Pringle (1988) describes the 'ersatz spousal relationship' that Rachel mentioned as it existed between male bosses

and female secretaries. Secretaries were often considered ‘office wives’ in the work they did managing daily schedules, acting as gatekeepers, and being trusted with sensitive information (Pringle 1988). Interestingly, when women were in the superior position and/or secretaries were male, the relationships were not as characteristic of heterosexual romantic couplings (Pringle 1988). Pringle (1988) explains that when one typically asks ‘what is a secretary?’ the answer is usually to assume a secretary is a woman working for a man which in turn creates assumptions about what kind of work is appropriate to assign to secretaries. So when Mariah and Rachel indicated that they thought their gender had influenced the work they were asked to do as assistants and the relationships they had with their bosses, they may have been correct. As a result of the legacy of gendered norms surrounding women in assistant positions it is possible that Mariah’s and Rachel’s bosses acted in ways that they viewed as appropriate in relation to female subordinates, but would have exhibited different behaviours had their assistants been male. As I did not interview men I cannot say how men experience their gender in assistant positions in film and television, but it would certainly make for an interesting future study.⁸²

My participants held differing views on the value of the everyday work involved in the assistant’s position, but most thought that the years spent in the assistant world were something to survive and move out of as quickly as possible. Grace did not view assistant work as challenging or important in any way except for the relationships she developed. Grace described the assistant position as:

It’s the dumbest job in the world, it’s the easiest job. I was terrible at it even though I was like....I phoned it in cause it was a terrible job, but it was amazing at the same time. It was just so boring and so mindless and so....answering a phone and that’s it. It’s a secretary. Glorified secretary.

Grace characterized the work as ‘mindless’ and ‘boring’ to the point where she could not maintain interest in the work and she ‘phoned it in,’ meaning she put in the least amount of effort possible because she wasn’t gaining much personal satisfaction from the work. Rachel said, ‘that’s what the assistant world is, just like 4 years of bullshit,

⁸² Pringle (1988) did analyse men working as subordinates (secretaries) to women in superior positions. However, with the assistant position being a ubiquitous entry point for men and women beginning in film and television, it would be interesting to gain better understanding of how men experience gender in relation to this work in this specific field.

of like horrible bullshit, like untenable tasks that you just can't believe you went to college to perform.' The true value of the assistant role is hardly its work, which is similar to an administrative assistant's role in any other industry. Its true currency takes the form of the relationships and networks fostered during the time spent working in the position. Anabelle said:

So the way television production works is it's an apprentice system. So it's not really stated outright [...] you start working as an assistant. You're not like a secretary, you're an assistant who's learning how to do the business and then hopefully if people like you, you get promoted etcetera. And so people take you under their wing and mentor you. So it's all very ad hoc, informal, based on personalities, which obviously can open it up to a lot of abuse and can be very frustrating, but can also be very good if you work with good people.

Anabelle characterizes the industry as an apprentice system, but from an outsider's perspective, career progression for above-the-line film and television workers seems somewhat unlike a traditional apprenticeship model. Typically, apprentices work with a more experienced professional to learn a trade and after a period of time they may gain their own certifications and move out on their own to work in the same trade. For below-the-line workers such as directors of photography, costumers, and production designers, such apprenticeships which, as discussed in Chapter 1 originated in the Hollywood studio system, are more common (Caldwell 2008; Christopherson and Storper 1989). Young entrants may be taken under the wing of experienced workers and move from project to project with them to gain hands-on experience and skills. The apprenticing that takes place for above-the-line workers is often less well defined (Caldwell 2008). For above-the-line workers, rather than learning-by-doing, it may be more accurate to say they learn, as Anabelle said, 'how to do the business.' They accomplish this through observation of experienced professionals, immersion in an active industry working environment, and partial participation in day-to-day business. This is effectively what I would term an 'ethnographic apprenticeship' as new entrants are immersed in the environment of which they wish to gain a better understanding. They observe the behaviours, skills, relationships, and conduct their subjects (experienced professionals) participate in and construct in their daily lives in an active industry setting. This is similar to what

ethnographic investigators do when they undertake fieldwork. Hence I have coined the term ‘ethnographic apprenticeship’ to identify the distinct learning practices of above-the-line industry workers.

Newcomers participate in this ethnographic apprenticeship to familiarize themselves with the customs of work in film and television while developing their understanding of industry culture and practices. Following this initial period novices increase their active participation in work in the production office, agency, studio, or other workplace and combine the acts of observing and doing into a simultaneous practice that constitutes their work. As Grugulis and Stoyanova (2009) write, ‘In this model newcomers are not just taught how to do a job, they are socialised into a way of life with its own particular values, priorities and forms of social behaviour’ (140). As will be discussed below, the tangible skills my participants reported learning in the early stages of their careers were similar to those of any executive assistant, but the socialisation and initiation into the industry’s culture that took place during the time spent in these entry-level positions was particular to their sector.

Regardless of an individual’s education or qualifications when entering the industry, many had to begin their new careers in the assistant position. Jemma who had worked for years in journalism prior to returning to graduate school for film in order to change careers still started as an assistant in the industry. For the most part this sector seems to be impervious to the notion of transferrable skills, opting instead for putting workers through their paces.⁸³ According to Menger (2006):

Performance in non-routine activities does not depend on skills that could be easily objectified, transmitted and certified in the training system [...] Insofar as non-routine activity refers to a wide range of changing and challenging work situations, it therefore implies that abilities may be revealed and skills acquired only progressively through a process of learning-by-doing which is highly informative and which cannot be perfectly anticipated ab initio (789-90).

⁸³ There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. Some transplants to the industry had successful careers in other sectors that they then translated to the film and television industry. Aaron Sorkin is often cited as an example of this type of industry entry. Sorkin translated his success as a playwright into a career as a screenwriter and writer for television. His credits include: *A Few Good Men* (1992), *The American President* (1995), *Sports Night* (1998-2000) and *The West Wing* (1999-2006). (Source: Internet Movie Database. Accessible at: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0815070/?ref_=nv_sr_1).

As discussed above, this learning-by-doing process is only partially relevant to the modern film and television industry which has evolved greatly since the demise of the studio and network eras and as a result of the current freelance work environment. Prior to the casualization of the film and television workforce that took place in the USA from the late 1970s onward, young entrants were hired by companies that were vertically integrated and offered relatively secure employment (Christopherson and Storper 1989; Curtin and Shattuc 2009). During the studio and network eras individuals began work in low-level positions and through their immersion in a work environment and the long-term relationships they developed with their colleagues they were able to learn a trade, be it camera operation, editing, directing, etcetera, over several years (Grugulis and Stoyanova 2009). In the contemporary industry, this is no longer the case. After the breakup of the studio and network oligopoly, freelance employment on a project-by-project basis became the norm, with small independent companies taking shorter-term contracts and then moving on to the next project. In this environment, new entrants are still expected to learn skills on the job but there is little structure or standardization in this process (Grugulis and Stoyanova 2009). Instead, those that wish to learn are reliant upon the willingness of more experienced workers to instruct and answer questions. With the highly mobile workforce of film and television this process is ad hoc and unstandardized.

The first job as an assistant either at an agency, a large television network, a boutique production house, etcetera was often framed as the key to my participants' success. Grace said of her first job as an assistant:

So that was my first gig and it actually...everything, my whole career, kind of hinged on that one job [...] Cause everybody I met that's ever helped me with my job started there. I ended up working my way up. About six months after I started there I started working for the head of drama development and moved over to her desk and worked for her for almost two years and then the president of the network needed an assistant and I ended up moving over to her desk. So I ended up being the president's assistant which was amazing and then she ended up starting her own production company and brought me with her and promoted me and sort of every door opened for me then. She introduced me to my next boss, and it just sort of all fell into place. From that one tiny job, from one, it was incredibly lucky.

In Grace's words her 'whole career' developed from her first job in the industry. She attributed her career success to luck, in that she worked in the right place at the right time and was fortunate to meet the right people who were able to help her advance.

Similar to other participants, Rachel maintained the relationships she had developed when working as an assistant and kept up with these contacts as they all advanced in their careers. As she and her cohort of former assistants moved up the rungs of their careers they continued to share information.

We do this thing where all the assistants kind of get drinks together and are tracking.....this thing called tracking boards which is like little pockets of information sharing in google groups, and so I had made at this point a lot of assistant friends, my assistant network was really, really strong. And it still is. All those people have now grown up in the business and are running companies or doing like really fancy shit, which is awesome cause they're still all my friends [...] all boats rising together, lifting the tide or whatever that metaphor is.

The relationships Rachel described are based upon the exchange of information *and* the friendships she had developed with her fellow colleagues. People who were assistants together, despite moving into different positions and sectors of the industry, maintained these early relationships. They used tracking boards,⁸⁴ which are private online groups that exist mainly to exchange information (Caldwell 2008). My participants reported that the relationships they established with fellow assistants in their early professional lives in the industry were largely maintained over the course of their careers. As they aged they moved into different areas of the industry thereby creating a diverse network of contacts with relatively strong ties. This practice increased the lateral reach of my participants' networks. The relationships cemented during the assistant years endured as my participants would often turn to their immediate peers for advice about promotions, first drafts of scripts/screenplays, and difficulties with supervisors.

⁸⁴ As Caldwell (2008) explains this information can be related to potential scripts and screenplays available for development, anonymous evaluations of producers and their work-styles ranging from glowing reviews to horror stories, as well as a place for assistants to commiserate with others about their working conditions.

Next steps

This career path, if one can call it that, while not exactly the same, is similar for many new entrants into the business regardless of gender. However, as they progressed in their careers many participants encountered hindrances based upon their gender.⁸⁵ Aside from the well documented difficulties women across industries face trying to combine careers and parenthood, a topic continuously addressed in my interviews, there were other, sometimes unexpected, factors mentioned by participants that further disadvantaged women in their career advancement. Anabelle said:

I've never not gotten a job because I'm a woman, but I've definitely been told not to apply [...] So there are certain people in power, men in power, who cannot have a female assistant. Like that's just the policy. Which is incredibly sexist and illegal! But that's just how it is. For example, when I was at the studio there was a job opening for the showrunner of a TV show, a guy, and everyone was talking about, 'oh we need to find him candidates blah, blah, blah, blah' and you know I raised the spectre of myself and basically was told by his assistant at the time that 'I can put your résumé forward, but you won't get the job so you might as well not even try because his wife will not let him have female assistants.'

While Anabelle's experience with this particular male showrunner may not be common practice, it does have implications for women's career advancement in film and television when combined with other factors. If this male showrunner and his policy concerning female assistants was an isolated incident, women could manoeuvre around such practices. However, as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, there are numerous sexist and discriminatory practices and attitudes women face as they try to climb the career 'ladder' in film and television.

Conclusion

It is clear from my participants' reports that establishing, maintaining, and continuing the expansion of professional networks was vital to their career success in the film and television industry. The networking my interviewees participated in was reflective of Blair's (2009) concept of 'active networking' which acknowledges the

⁸⁵ Sexism in the industry will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

fluid nature of open-system networks and the influence individuals and larger social structures have on this practice. Primarily, these networks were developed organically through time and physical presence in participants' workplaces and then maintained by the individual. My participants preferred genuine relationships derived from actual, embodied collaborations that had developed over time as opposed to the 'intense but ephemeral' relationships that Wittel (2001) argues have become prevalent in the new economy. There were elements of Wittel's (2001) 'networked sociality' exhibited in my participants' reports, including the collapse of the friend/colleague and work/leisure divides (my participants' professional networks were intricately intertwined with their friendship networks) in addition to the reliance on advanced telecommunications technology in these networks. However, ultimately I found that my participants' networks, unlike as Wittel (2001) argues, were based in mutual experiences and shared histories rather than mere 'information exchanges.' Furthermore, Granovetter's (1973) 'strength of weak ties' concept was not exhibited in my participants' reports, as they tended to prefer stronger network ties. The women I interviewed were selective regarding their networks and would often seek out new work and/or employees through the women-only networks they participated in. The core, intermediate, and periphery tiers of my participants' networks were not the static, closed systems described in some networking literature, but rather constantly fluctuated depending on individual circumstances.

In addition to their networks, several interviewees reported the importance of mentorship in the film and television industry. Mentors offered professional and psycho-social support to protégés over the course of several years in some cases. Again, similar to their networks, these relationships developed organically and often grew out of relationships with former and/or current superiors. My participants did not demonstrate a marked gender preference for mentors. However, as I did not have an adequate sample size upon which to draw conclusions on this matter, a further examination of the gendered differences in mentor behaviour with women protégés in the industry would make for an interesting study.

The final portion of this chapter demonstrated the importance of networks and mentors to career progression in the industry. Film and television workers often

begin their careers in an assistant position. For above-the-line workers these assistantships serve as ethnographic apprenticeships which immerse employees in an industry work environment, giving them the opportunity to observe industry practices while simultaneously developing their understanding of the larger culture of film and television work. Rather than the actual skills learned in these assistantships, it is the exposure to potential network contacts and mentors that make up the true value of assistant positions. Workers then use these connections to help them advance in their careers. However, as will be demonstrated further in the following chapter, even with robust networks and effective mentors, women continue to experience sexism and discrimination in the contemporary film and television industry in ways that can potentially hinder their career progression.

Chapter 5. Discrimination and Sexism in the Contemporary US Film and Television Industry

In the previous chapter I examined women's networking and mentoring practices in the film and television industry and how these relationships played vital roles in the employment market, particularly in relation to hiring. Following on from that discussion, in this chapter I examine the discriminatory practices my participants reported encountering throughout these processes, in their workplaces, and within the industry in general. Women working in the film and television industry occupy fewer and lower-status positions than their male counterparts (Lauzen 2008, 2012, 2013; Smith 2008). Similarly to women working in other industries, women employed in film and television experience gender stereotyping, the gender wage gap, the difficulties of creating a work/life balance, in addition to discrimination based upon gendered expectations regarding behaviours and sexuality. On top of these, the employment model of the film and television industry, as well as the products it creates, has generated unique additional challenges for women to navigate as well. I use Denise Bielby's (2009) work as a foundation for this discussion.

Following on, I explore the different methods my participants reported using to diminish the frequency of their encounters with sexism and how sexism and discrimination in film and television are often normalised and/or rationalised by industry practitioners. I also include a discussion of the participants who did not view their gender as problematic in relation to their careers and who often invoked a narrative of meritocracy to explain their views, reflecting the discourse of neoliberalism as discussed in Chapter 1. Finally, I examine how my participants advocated for other women working in the industry and how they sought to establish solidarity among women in film and television work. In order to contextualize these discussions, I now turn my attention to the ways discrimination and sexism have been treated in the wider literature, particularly regarding how discrimination has evolved since the implementation of equal employment opportunity statutes, and how gender stereotyping and discrimination continue to influence women's careers across industries.

Discrimination that Crosses Industry Lines

A brief note on discrimination terminology

Women's encounters with gender discrimination in the workplace have the potential to lower self-esteem (Schmitt, Branscombe, and Postmes 2003), negatively influence job satisfaction and commitment to organizations (Foley, Hang-Yue, and Wong 2005), and decrease productivity. Thanks to the civil rights and women's movements of the mid-20th century, legal changes such as anti-discrimination statutes and equal employment opportunity policies have been made to ensure women's equal treatment in the workplace. However, as is well known, even decades after the enactment of such policies gender discrimination in the workplace continues to occur. Many contemporary expressions of workplace discrimination are categorized as 'second-generation,' as opposed to 'first-generation' discrimination which was usually more blatant, and addressed in the United States beginning with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequently by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Sturm 2001). Second-generation discrimination, on the other hand, is often more subtle, insidious, and perhaps most importantly, more difficult to prove in court (Sturm 2001). By and large my participants reported more encounters with second-generation types of gender discrimination. Such discrimination has been labeled as 'subtle sexism,' 'neo-sexism,' 'everyday sexism,' and discriminatory 'micro-aggressions' (Basford, Offermann, and Behrend 2014). As I explain below, I find all of these terms problematic as a way to categorize my participants' reports.

Categorizing discrimination as either first- or second-generation implies that there has been a linear succession and/or diminishment of discriminatory behaviours in the workplace. Generational claims suggest that we have moved beyond the days of overt discriminatory actions and settled firmly into the second generation of more subtle expressions of these attitudes. However, this is not what I was told by my participants. Instead, the encounters with discrimination and sexism that my participants described encompassed a broad spectrum of behaviours and attitudes from more blatant incidents to less obvious ones. The label 'subtle sexism' therefore fails to encompass the sometimes overt discrimination my participants described while 'neo-sexism' implies a newness to such behaviour when sexism is in fact not at

all new. I am sure my participants encountered acts of everyday sexism in their lives, but this term also falls short of adequately describing my participants' reports because of the range of experiences discussed. Finally, while Basford, Offermann, and Behrend (2014) explain that the term 'micro-aggressions' does not exclude acts of overt discrimination, I think the phrase could lead to confusion due to the ambiguous use of 'micro', which could easily be applied to either the act itself or the context in which it takes place (at the level of the individual). As a result, I have decided simply to use the terms 'discrimination' and 'sexism' in reference to the situations and encounters my participants reported.

The legacy and continued influence of gender stereotypes

As mentioned above and as will be made clear in this chapter, the women I interviewed talked about a range of experiences of sexism in their work lives. Despite the increasing presence of women in paid employment, gender discrimination continues to plague women's careers across industries and professional fields. In order to understand the contemporary context of my participants' reports an explanation of the expectations and attitudes regarding gendered behaviours is helpful.

Social role theory posits that stereotypes concerning gender develop out of the different roles men and women tend (or have previously tended) to occupy in society (Bosak, Sczesny, and Eagly 2012; Eagly and Karau 2002). For example, because middle-class women were traditionally homemakers, they are viewed as possessing the qualities that make an ideal homemaker.⁸⁶ On the other hand, as men typically worked outside the home and were the primary breadwinners, men are stereotyped as having qualities that are particularly useful in this capacity. The qualities and gender typically associated with these specific societal roles (e.g. men as breadwinners) are applied to all members of the particular gender (e.g. men should be breadwinners because men possess the qualities that make a good breadwinner) (Bosak, Sczesny, and Eagly 2012; Diekmann and Goodfriend 2006).

⁸⁶ For a more in-depth discussion of how class and race influences women's attitudes and expectations regarding paid work see Damaske (2011).

Gender stereotypes and expectations can be divided into descriptive and prescriptive subcategories (Diekman and Goodfriend 2006; Eagly and Karau 2002; Heilman 2001; Heilman and Okimoto 2007; Prentice and Carranza 2002). Descriptive stereotypes are built around beliefs of what men and women are like (Diekman and Goodfriend 2006; Eagly and Karau 2002; Heilman 2001). Prescriptive stereotypes, on the other hand, originate in the expectations of what men and women *should* be like (Diekman and Goodfriend 2006; Eagly and Karau 2002; Heilman 2001). According to Diekman and Goodfriend (2006) descriptive stereotypes encompass those traits that are most likely to be associated with a specific group of people (e.g. women), while prescriptive stereotypes attach a value judgement to these same traits. An example of a descriptive belief would be that women are more nurturing than men, whereas the prescriptive version of this belief would be that women should, or are supposed to be, more nurturing than men. Other gendered prescriptive stereotypes commonly encountered in the contemporary United States are included in Table 5, which is based upon the research of Prentice and Carranza (2002).

For their work, Prentice and Carranza (2002) drew in part on the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) that categorizes traits as masculine or feminine depending on the degree of desirability for a man or woman to exhibit such characteristics. The top 20 desirable traits for men and the top 20 desirable traits for women yielded the characteristics on the BSRI which was developed in the 1970s and 1980s (Prentice and Carranza 2002). Prentice and Carranza (2002) updated this research and also assessed prescriptive gender stereotypes. Traits were assigned to one of four categories for women and men. The first set of traits were the desirable characteristics that participants assigned significantly more often to one gender. The second category comprised socially desirable characteristics that were not significantly gendered. These were the 'nice-to-have' traits. Third were undesirable, but permissible, traits for women and men. The final category was made up of traits that were undesirable and more or less unacceptable based on gender. These were the traits that men and women should not possess. Table 3 presents the traits that made up the first and final categories for women and men.

Table 3. Contemporary Prescriptive Gender Stereotypes in America.

Gender	Desirable Traits	Undesirable Traits
Women (Feminine/ communal)	Warm, kind, interest in children, loyal, sensitive, friendly, clean, attention to appearances, patient, polite, cheerful, cooperative, wholesome, expresses emotion, spiritual, flirtatious, excitable	Rebellious, stubborn, controlling, cynical, promiscuous, arrogant
Men (Masculine /agentic)	Business sense, athletic, leadership ability, self-reliant, dependable, ambitious, high self-esteem, assertive, decisive, strong personality, disciplined, rational, competitive, willing to take risks, consistent, aggressive, intense, forceful	Emotional, approval seeking, impressionable, yielding, superstitious, child-like, shy, moody, melodramatic, naïve, gullible, weak

Source: Prentice and Carranza (2002).

Both descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes influence the ways in which individuals are viewed and evaluated in work environments, particularly when individuals are seen as deviating from these norms (Eagly and Karau 2002; Heilman 2001; Heilman and Okimoto 2007; Heilman et al. 2004; Prentice and Carranza 2002). My participants' reported experiences of discrimination in the workplace illustrate that descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes continue to be relevant in the new economy even though, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, the discourse of the new economy tends to ignore gender altogether. However, despite the gender-neutral discourse of neoliberalism and the new economy, the supposedly 'genderless' standard against which women are compared is inherently gendered male (Connell 2005b). This immediately 'others' women (and anyone who is not a white, heterosexual, middle-to-upper class cisgender man) and effectively creates the need for them to 'overcome' their femininity in order to succeed in professional settings.

Several women I interviewed discussed the pressure they felt to diminish or alter their femininity. Mariah talked about the continual need to tailor her femininity based upon how she was viewed by the different men with whom she worked. She said:

It's really frustrating. It's frustrating [...] because every situation where you're dealing with a male director or a male producer you kind of have to navigate your womanhood in a different way [...] So for example, on the show we're doing right now [...] The producer is very respectful, but he calls me sweetheart and you know, I'm a child to him basically...

Mariah brings up an important point. She talks about how when working with male directors and producers she had to 'navigate [her] womanhood in a different way.' This is an interesting turn of phrase. Mariah articulates the idea that the burden to negotiate the gender divide is placed upon women and that they must evaluate and adjust their behaviours depending on the men they encounter. In some instances, like Mariah's, women are placed into a parent-child type relationship with older men. Other participants were cognizant of engaging or disengaging their more feminine characteristics and sexuality depending upon the particular situations they faced. Mariah indicated that when working with men her reaction to the gender dynamics at play was a two-step process. First, she considered what type of man she was working with and then she decided what aspects of femininity she needed to embody to create successful interactions. The expectation was that she would adjust her behaviour to accommodate male preferences and needs.⁸⁷

As in Mariah's navigation of her femininity, many of the women I spoke with discussed how they thought being women influenced men's perceptions of them and their capabilities. Kasey commented on how she managed her image as a woman when interacting with 'powerful Hollywood men.' She said:

I think the main thing that I've noticed is being in a, in terms of like producing and writing, you're around a lot of men, because men still dominate the behind-the-scenes world for sure [...] I mean there's still this sort of what I like to refer to as the 'swinging dick club' of you know, powerful Hollywood men out there. I think as a woman there's a thought of they're not going to respect me right off the bat so I need to, I need to make sure that they are aware of my intelligence and my talent and my fortitude and I need to....I think the pressure is to make sure that they're seeing past you being a woman.

⁸⁷ This is not to say that men do not perform similar personality and gender gymnastics when interacting with the opposite sex at work, but this issue needs further research.

As Kasey described, she thought her gender would automatically diminish the respect she was afforded by powerful men in the industry. As a result, she actively tried to demonstrate her ‘intelligence,’ ‘talent,’ and ‘fortitude’ in order for these men to see her not as a woman, but as an equal individual. Kasey wanted the men she worked with, particularly men in positions of power, to ‘see past’ her physically female form. Similarly, Kathryn and several other participants mentioned anxiety about being ‘taken seriously’ at work. This referred to the pressure they felt to ‘overcome’ their femininity and the expectations associated with being women.

Many women, particularly in content creation, talked about the need to ‘fit in’ with men in their work environments. This is reflective of what other scholars have encountered in research on women and work. Reinhold (2005) argues that women are forced to be ‘bicultural’ in the workplace, meaning they must ‘learn the male language of leadership, power, communication, and influence without any expectation that their male colleagues will return the favour’ (44). In other words, women need to actively pursue fitting in whereas men do not. When I asked Melanie if she thought being a woman had influenced her career she said:

I probably try to downplay it more so than anything over the years because....I don’t know if it’s a combination of the industry and me feeling like I will be taken more seriously if I’m not as womanly. If I let them know that I can hang with the boys, and I’m just like them, and I’m one of them, and be comfortable around me and say whatever you want to say, and you’re not offending me....then I’ve succeeded...

Here again, we can see that in the industry men are already considered insiders whereas women are perceived and measured against this male status quo. In order to ‘fit in’ in the workplace or to be ‘taken more seriously’ as Melanie said, she thought she had to behave and appear less ‘womanly’ while at work. To accomplish this, she ‘downplayed’ her feminine characteristics and looked for ways to demonstrate that she could ‘hang with the boys.’ Melanie also described her experiences when interviewing for different staff writer positions:

[W]hen I go to work, what I’m seeing is male writers and I found myself sort of saying, ‘Okay, well in order to get into the room, not only do they have to

like your writing, but they have to like you, and they have to want to be in the room with you.’ That’s why a lot of people tend to hire friends or people they know, because they know they’re going to get along with them, they know they’re gonna be able to talk to them in the room and disagree with things and agree with things and figure things out and break pieces of puzzles apart and put them back together. So you have to be comfortable with that person. And I found myself wanting to...you have to kind of, ‘Hey, look at me, I’m that person. You can relate to me. We can get along. I can be your best friend too.’

Melanie wanted her potential employers to view her as ‘fitting in’ with the work culture and personalities present on a particular television show. As Melanie points out, and as discussed in the previous chapter, people in the industry hire friends because they rationalize that doing so increases the chance for the workplace to come together cohesively. As people tend to socialize and develop friendships with others from similar race, sex, and class backgrounds, this contributes to the creation of an exclusionary environment. Melanie, who was interviewing for several staff writer positions at the time of our interview, wanted her potential employers to view her not only as a valuable employee who could produce good material, but as friendly too. Melanie was managing her image in these job interviews in order to increase the likelihood of being hired.

This is not an uncommon or unique practice. Job interviews in various fields often involve applicants using impression management techniques with the goal of demonstrating a good fit between employer and employee (Barrick, Shaffer, and DeGrassi 2009; Gilmore and Ferris 1989; Stevens and Kristof 1995). However, after Melanie continued to meet with showrunners in interviews for staff writer positions on television shows, she soon found this performance tiresome. She said:

Cause being 30 or 31-year-old, black female, I’m coming into it...I’m an odd man out, right off the bat. So I’m very much, ‘Okay, how can I relate to this person?’ How can I be more like them? How can I make them more comfortable with me? [...] I don’t want to be pushy, but I have to walk that line of being pushy, but I don’t want to do anything to set them off and you’re my boss, but look at me as your friend cause I want you to see me sitting next to you in the room. So it’s all this shit that is just playing your mind of, how am I supposed to act, how am I supposed to dress, am I supposed to be more

formal, should I be more informal, how can I make him more comfortable...but now I'm like, 'Fuck it,' (both laughing) 'I can't do it anymore, I'm so fucking tired of this shit.'

As Melanie put it, as a black female, she was the 'odd man out' as soon as she walked into the interview setting. Melanie struggled with trying to predict what people wanted to see in her and then adopted and mirrored such attitudes and behaviours. Her articulation of the internal 'self-talk' she participated in during these interviews may be explained in terms of Erving Goffman's (1959) work on the dramaturgical aspects of everyday life. Melanie was actively attempting to manage her 'audience's' impression of her because she had a specific goal in mind—she wanted her interviewers to like her enough to hire her. However, as time wore on and after she continued meeting on different shows she found this practice burdensome.

Melanie reported experiences of both gender and racial discrimination in the workplace, highlighting the intersectional aspects of exclusion that, as previously discussed, often manifest themselves in work environments and professional networks. In her interview, she talked about how people would speak to her in a certain way because she was a black woman. She said:

I try to be a blank piece of paper. I did not want people to look at me and say, 'African-American female' [...] It felt like such a title. And I've had like coworkers to whom I've said nothing but, 'Hey, how's it going?' say to me, 'What up, girl? What's going on?' And I'm like, I know you don't talk like that, and I know you've never heard me talk like that, so... (both laugh). I got that early on, and I remember thinking to myself, and it only took that one time for me to realize, 'Okay, I have to watch my mouth around certain people.' Cause maybe they heard me talking to a friend in the office saying, 'Girl, I'm so tired,' but that doesn't mean you have to come up to me and say, 'Giiiiirrrll, I know. Why you so tired?' (both laugh). It's just like, 'Really? Really? Come on, man.' I remember from that point on I remember thinking, 'Okay, when I go to work this is how I talk and that's it. When I'm on the phone, this is how I talk and that's it. The only personality that you will get from me will be the words and it's not my inflections and I'm professional and this is just how I talk.'

Melanie was attempting to diminish the impact of her appearance and the behavioural expectations that accompanied her racial background. She wanted to be viewed by

her coworkers and superiors as ‘a blank piece of paper,’ because she did not want the label ‘African-American female’ that described her racial and ethnic background, and the stereotypes and expectations that tend to accompany such a label, to influence her work life. When, despite these attempts, Melanie still had experiences of coworkers speaking to her differently because of her race, she developed and adopted a specific set of behaviours and practices that she enacted in the workplace. She altered her speech patterns and inflections while at work and actively managed her professional identity. According to her, these practices were part of a work costume. When asked how it made her feel that she needed to behave in such specific and monitored ways, Melanie said she felt:

Stifled. It was.....like I gotta put on a costume before I can go to work. I’ve let that down, only because, now I know how to deal with someone that comes to me like, ‘I’m gonna talk to you like this,’ for whatever reason you decided to come and talk to me like that. I now know how to deal with that situation, but in my early twenties I had no idea how to deal with that. All I wanted to do was not offend anyone, so all I’m gonna do is laugh it off and then go home and be like, ‘Ugh!!! Why did I laugh that off? Why didn’t I say something?’ Well, it’s because you could be let go the next day and you’re not really a factor and you make copies, but I need this gig.

Again Melanie’s description invokes aspects of Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical analysis of everyday interactions. She says she felt as if she had to ‘put on a costume’ before entering her workplace in order to manage her coworkers’ impressions of her. However, Melanie was very conscious of her performance while at work and differentiated between, as Goffman (1959) would put it, her time ‘on-stage’ in front of an audience and the time she spent ‘backstage’ when she was able to take off her work ‘costume’. Melanie had experienced racial discrimination and sexism, but as she said, in her early career she would ‘laugh it off’ because she knew she was highly replaceable. Her decision not to confront people directly who had exhibited sexist/racist behaviour toward her was not a reflection of her internal reaction. Melanie may have wanted to confront this behaviour, but she weighed this against the potential cost of losing her job. This kind of rapid decision-making in the context of confronting racism and/or sexism is a common experience for target

individuals/groups and will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter (Good, Moss-Racusin, and Sanchez 2012; Swim and Hyers 1999).

The practices discussed above are not necessarily limited to women looking to get a foothold in the industry. At the beginning of their careers it is possible that men experience similar difficulties in defining themselves, managing the impressions they communicate, and creating rapport with potential employers. However, as Melanie was a woman and black, she was two deviations away from what was viewed as normal, namely white, male, and heterosexual. Quantitative data about the industry show that many of the people interviewing Melanie would be white men as they are the most commonly encountered demographic for showrunners and executive producers on television shows (Hunt and Ramon 2015; Lauzen 2012, 2013; Smith 2008). Based upon the discussion in Chapter 4 regarding homophily among individuals and its influence on the informal recruitment practices of the industry, it could be argued that another white man interviewing for the same position would already be an insider because of his shared race and gender with the interviewers. There are fewer barriers for a white man in such a situation to establish connections through shared cultural experiences to create rapport with those who are hiring. Melanie, however, had to overcome her double outsider status as a black woman in order to begin to establish a similar rapport.

In addition to ‘overcoming’ their gender and race characteristics (i.e. being a woman, being African American), several interviewees also discussed behavioural lines women are forced to walk in the workplace between being viewed as appropriately assertive or crossing into the ‘bitch’ category. This is not unique to the film and television industry and has been observed in other sectors (Eagly 2007; Eagly and Karau 2002; Oakley 2000; Prentice and Carranza 2002). Reflective of the lack of gender diversity at senior levels in other industries, Emily’s boss was one of very few female partners at the talent agency where she worked. When Emily was first assigned to be this woman’s assistant, several of her colleagues expressed opinions that this woman was particularly difficult to work for and warned Emily this woman would be trying. However, after working for her for a period of time Emily did not

view her boss in such a light and offered the following explanation why this woman was not particularly well regarded by more junior employees:

And you know what it is, it's that she's not warm. She's not. She's not very forgiving if you don't do your work. She doesn't tolerate excuses. She doesn't suffer fools, which is how she got to be in a powerful place. But she's also not like, 'Hi honey, how was your weekend? Let me give you cookies.' She's just not like that. You know what I mean. She's just fine [...] but I feel like that's off-putting to other people. She's the most successful woman at our agency and that's...and I think there's definitely jealousy from some of the younger men.

Emily's boss was viewed as not exhibiting 'appropriate' feminine behaviour in the workplace and was thus deemed to be unlikeable. Emily described her boss as not being 'warm' while at work. The prescriptive stereotype that women are supposed to exhibit more communal and nurturing traits such as kindness, warmth, inclusiveness, and caring were attributes that Emily's coworkers viewed her boss as lacking. As such, these coworkers regarded Emily's boss as deviating from their expectations of how a woman should act and therefore derogated and disliked her.

These attitudes toward successful women who do not exhibit communal traits has been documented as damaging to women's likeability in the workplace as well as potentially damaging to their continued career success (Eagly and Karau 2002; Heilman and Okimoto 2007). Heilman (2001) asserts that even when women prove themselves competent in work roles that are considered more typically masculine, women are viewed as transgressing descriptive norms. Furthermore, if a woman has crossed these descriptive gender boundaries and does not exhibit the more supposedly traditional feminine communal qualities simultaneously, she is more likely to be judged as being cold, bitter, bitchy, and selfish compared to her male counterparts who, having violated neither descriptive nor prescriptive norms, are viewed as competent and effective.

As women in general have moved into the workplace and continued to climb organizational ladders they have exhibited more agentic traits. Over time it has become more acceptable for women behave in such ways because agentic traits are

viewed as prerequisites for effective leadership (Heilman 2001). However, women are still required to be more communal than men and maintain many of the more traditional feminine traits alongside their newly adopted agentic characteristics (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001). In this way, women are expected to temper their agentic/masculine characteristics with their communal/feminine traits in order to be viewed as competent while maintaining their likeability (Diekmann and Goodfriend 2006; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001; Prentice and Carranza 2002; Rudman and Glick 2001).

Men, on the other hand, largely maintained their traditional prescriptive and descriptive characteristics in both agentic and communal traits (Diekmann and Goodfriend 2006; Prentice and Carranza 2002). In the workplace, this means that while women have had to integrate traditionally masculine qualities into their behaviours, men have not needed to adopt more feminine qualities in order to succeed. Rather they have maintained their already masculine/agentic traits that have long been associated with successful leadership and management (Diekmann and Goodfriend 2006; Eagly and Karau 2002; Heilman 2001; Prentice and Carranza 2002; Rudman and Glick 2001). The standard against which success is measured and upon which prescriptive beliefs about the characteristics of a good leader are based is a male norm (Connell 2005b, 2008; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Some of my participants were cognizant of the behaviours they had been socialized into as women and the potential affects such socialization had on their careers. Kathryn said:

I think it's hard to be taken seriously. And I also think it's hard to learn how to be assertive and actually state your opinions in a work place. Because my whole life, that model hasn't really been there for me to see. Hasn't been on TV, hasn't been in movies for me to sort of learn [...] And I think that sometimes people don't really listen or they assume that you're nagging if you're a woman or not being constructive or you're being bitchy when you're saying the exact same thing that your coworker would be saying. I think that there's sort of a standard there that's hard to break. And most of the time when I'm on conference calls or running sessions I'm the only woman in a room full of men.

Because feminine qualities are still viewed as atypical in that they deviate from the male norm, this creates an added pressure for women to prove they can keep up with

the boys, so to speak, or accomplish tasks as well as their male counterparts. Kathryn acknowledged the difficulty of not having female models that exhibited assertive behaviours in her youth. She had internalised this model of socialization, but was fighting to overcome its legacy while simultaneously recognizing that there was a tendency for assertive women to be categorized as ‘bitchy’ even when they expressed similar opinions to those of their male coworkers (Heilman et al. 2004).

Emily also recognized that her socialization into womanhood had included some attitudes and behaviours she thought were not particularly helpful for her career. She said:

I don't feel that I am viewed as like a 'woman' or that being female is a hindrance, but I do feel that some of the qualities I have...like sometimes I will speak in a soft voice or [...] won't use declarative statements or kind of noticed that I do, and that is not helpful to my career [...] You can't be passive or passive aggressive. You have to be direct, you have to be honest, you have to be assertive. At least in the agency [...] and it's just that I feel like women are raised and told to kind of be passive.

Emily did not think she was particularly hindered or actively excluded or punished for being a woman in her workplace, but she was aware of the fact that she had to fight against years of socialization regarding appropriate feminine behaviour. She actively pursued ways to alter her behaviours in the workplace in order to further her career. She mentioned the need to be ‘direct’ and ‘assertive’ which are agentic characteristics that are more typically associated, not only with men, but with successful leaders as well. So while Emily did not think her being female was a disadvantage, she nevertheless was working against her gendered socialization in order to be more successful in the workplace. Susan said something similar to Emily:

I think if I were a guy I would be more successful. Not necessarily because I would do anything too differently, I mean I would do some things differently, but more so that the expectation and the norm would be for me to put my job first, therefore it would not be a question of whether I was choosing to put my job first or not at any given point. Therefore I think I would have been more focused on putting my career first and not so focused on, ‘Well I want to take a job that gets me out of the office at 6 so that I can be home for the kids,’ you know. I just feel like guys don't think about that in general [...]

subconsciously kind of what we're ingrained to feel about the maternal and paternal roles in the workplace.

Susan reiterates the gender divide in socialization and what are deemed acceptable and desirable workplace qualities based upon gender. In her view she would have advanced more quickly had she been a man, not only because masculine qualities are more often associated with successful leaders, but because she herself would have been socialized to put her career before other priorities.

While women have had to learn how to navigate their femininity in combination with more agentic qualities to succeed in the workplace, men have not needed to assume the opposite burden. Instead, men in work environments are viewed as the norm, as neutral. According to Collinson and Hearn (1994) men perform masculinities at work, but these performances often go unnoticed or unquestioned because they are highly normalized. This normalization can result in a kind of gender blindness or ignorance by those who are themselves enacting these gendered behaviors (Collinson and Hearn 1994; Connell 2005b; Martin 2001). For these reasons, I doubt that men in the film and television industry consider their gendered behaviours in similar ways to my participants. It would certainly make for an interesting future study to examine if men in the film and television industry participate in such navigations of their masculinities and if they do, whether it is something they consciously engage with like some of my participants, or not. It is possible that for men, such behaviours and gendered adjustments are obscured by the assumed male norm.

Work/life balance, pregnancy, and childcare

As described above, my participants faced a number of challenges when negotiating their gendered identities and behaviours as women in their work environments. This was also evident in their discussions of work/life balance issues, experiences and expectations regarding pregnancy, and the demands of childcare. Kathryn, who was working as an associate casting director, enjoyed acting and teaching acting. For a time she attempted to combine both, but ultimately she found that she could not maintain this manic schedule of working until six or seven in the evening and then trying to attend classes or rehearsals. Anabelle said, 'I have no social life. I have NO

social life [...] Any socializing I do is for work. I mean I don't even do drinks anymore these days because I'm working so late and my hours are crazy.'

Establishing a work/life balance was difficult for participants, especially during the early years of their career due to the long hours and multiple demands on individuals' 'leisure' time. These challenges seemed to increase for women as they advanced in their careers, particularly if and/or when they became parents.

Similar to women in other industries, participants with children struggled to negotiate the dual demands of paid work and childcare (Grant-Vallone and Ensher 2011; Perrons et al. 2006b; Stone 2007; Stone and Lovejoy 2004). As Wreyford (2013) and Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle (2015) discuss, when examining women and work, it is difficult to exclude a discussion of children. However, this discussion also

[B]rings to the fore one of the dilemmas for feminist analysts in addressing the role that parenting plays in perpetuating gender inequalities: on the one hand, one needs to recognize the continued reality that caring for children is largely undertaken by women, yet on the other, by doing so, one risks re-cementing the relationship between women and children and perpetuating the very gender inequality one wants to critique (Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015, 59).

Parent and non-parent participants consistently brought up the difficulties associated with combining work and childcare in the interviews. While I do not wish to reify the assumed relationship between women and childcare, to not include such a discussion would ignore a significant theme that presented itself in the interviews. As such, this section examines the issues my participants reported when discussing their experiences or observations related to gendered elements of parenthood.

Jemma, who had been conflicted about revealing her first pregnancy during the hiring process, was advised by her agent at the time not discuss it during the interviews.

She said:

I don't know, it just didn't feel right to not say anything about it. But at the same time, when you suspect that if you say something that it's going to take you out of the running, you know, I mean my agent wasn't telling me, 'Go in, take this meeting and tell them you're pregnant because it doesn't matter.' He

was telling me, ‘Go in, don’t say you’re pregnant, and then if you’re made the offer, we’ll deal with it then.’

As Jemma said, she ‘didn’t feel right’ about keeping her pregnancy a secret from her potential employers during the interview process. However, she was concerned that should her status be known, it would immediately eliminate her chances of being hired as a writer. Furthermore, her agent advised her to remain silent on the issue during the interviews. It is possible that her agent, potentially having dealt with such issues previously in his career, knew that Jemma’s pregnancy might keep her from getting the job. It was in his best interest to advise Jemma not to reveal her pregnancy because, as her agent, if she failed to be hired as a result of her pregnancy he would not be able to collect agency fees from her for booking that job.

Information from other participants suggests that it was probably better for Jemma’s career that she did not reveal her first pregnancy during her interviews. Anabelle said, ‘On various pilots I’ve been on, where they’ve been interviewing female writers, and [they will say], “well, she’s great but we can’t hire her because she’s pregnant.” Which is, again, illegal! But you know, these are private conversations and it’s the realities of the show.’ As Anabelle said, when showrunners do not hire women because of pregnancies, ‘it’s the realities of the show,’ meaning that commonly held descriptive beliefs about working women and pregnancy, structure and potentially restrict women’s work opportunities. This is an example of the rationalization of discriminatory behaviours that other scholars (e.g. Jones and Pringle (2015) have observed in their work on the film and television industry which will be discussed in greater detail further along in this chapter.

Alternatively, the expectation for men was clearly very different when it came to their partners’ pregnancy in that pregnancy and parenthood were not expected to influence their work (Bass 2014; Damaske 2011; Grunow, Schulz, and Blossfeld 2012). When asked if she thought men were as concerned about how a partner’s pregnancy could influence their careers in film and television Jemma said:

I don’t know if they have the same issue about being open about their wives being pregnant, because I don’t think that there’s an expectation that it would impact their job, even though the reality is that they’re not getting any sleep. But I don’t think, like I have several friends, many many friends, who have

worked through and had new jobs when their wives were pregnant and just.....it wasn't an issue. And also when their wives just gave birth, they just made it work.

Jemma's quote exemplifies common gendered descriptive and prescriptive expectations regarding pregnancy, childcare, and the division of labour. As Jemma said, she did not think men were as preoccupied with strategizing about how to negotiate their partners' pregnancies because there was no expectation that pregnancy or childcare would impact on a man's career as much as on a woman's. In other words, based upon prescriptive beliefs and norms regarding gender, pregnancy and childcare *should* not negatively impact on a man's ability to function at work. However, the other side of that same gendered coin was the descriptive belief that pregnancy and childcare would affect how a woman was able to function in the workplace.

The negotiation between prescriptive and descriptive beliefs regarding work and childcare continued for those women I interviewed who returned to work following the birth of a child. They spoke about how they tried to balance careers with parental responsibilities. Isabella talked about the competing drives she encountered when she combined work with having children. She said:

And so I have now both of these drives to do both of these things 100 percent and it's impossible [...] and it's frustrating because I'm used to doing everything 100 percent and so it's really frustrating as that kind of person to be like it's only gonna be 80 percent and this thing will only be 40 percent right now and I know I can be doing 90 percent and it's just like.....that's hard. Just the complete change, complete shock to my nature is what has been the hardest thing with having kids and having my own business and wanting to direct and do good work.

Isabella, who was pregnant with her third child at the time of the interview, found the requirement to split her focus between work and childcare frustrating because she was unused to the notion that she could not attend to both tasks to her full capacity. She was unaccustomed to limiting her expectations regarding her ability to accomplish projects, be they professional or personal ones. She personalized these limitations by viewing them as failures or as reflecting a lack of commitment on her

part. She was also uncomfortable with the idea of bringing in full-time help because she did not want ‘the first person [her children] look to for something being a nanny.’

Other women expressed similar attitudes regarding their need to divide their time between work and caregiving. Jemma spoke about the difficulties of maintaining her career while expecting her second child. She said:

I was on staff on a show, and I was pregnant working on that show, worked right up until I went into labor, like literally until my water broke, and then took two and half months off and then came back [...] you know, I think about the reality of it now and [...] I just feel a little conflicted about knowing that I’m not going to spend that much time with my kids.

As Jemma said, when she was pregnant with her first child, she worked throughout her pregnancy, only taking limited time off after she gave birth. For women in positions like Jemma, taking longer parental leave is difficult because of the general lack of flexibility from employers. Being a television writer is a location-focused occupation and entails long hours working in collaboration with coworkers in person as well as the time spent on location when their episodes are being filmed. As a result, combining parenthood with paid employment in the industry creates difficulties for parents and particularly for women as they remain the predominant care-givers (Bass 2014; Grunow, Schulz, and Blossfeld 2012; Perrons 2003; Sanchez and Thomson 1997).

Other women, like Lilly who had two young children at the time of our interview, were less conflicted about combining work and parenthood. When asked if she had ever considered taking time off after the birth of her children she said:

It’s not who I am as a person. I really...I feel like I have a very...I feel like working is a very big part of who I am, my identity. And, just my personality myself, like, I love my kids, but spending all day with them...No [...] they’re happier having a lot of people in their lives. My eldest son goes to day care, he has a million friends and teachers and they’re doing a far better job of raising him than I would (both laugh).

Lilly’s ultimate career goal was for her and her writing partner to run their own show.

While in the quote above we saw that she was content with her combination of parenthood and work, Lilly was cognizant of the greater time investment that would be necessary should she and her writing partner secure their own show. Despite the fact that she had never wanted to stay at home with her children, she did enjoy the time she was able to spend with them at her career level at the time of our interview. When considering the future of her career and being the co-executive producer/writer of a show with her writing partner Olivia she said:

I think the biggest challenge with that is balancing family life and that time [...] I mean, you're basically signing up and saying, 'I'm going to see my kids very limitedly for the run of this show.' [...] So to me, that's like the hardest thing. Even if you're letting your staff out at [6:30 PM], you're working late, or you're going home, putting the kids to bed, and then working until midnight to finish the stuff you need to get done and then you're up with [the kids] and then you're going [to the office] at 8 and your staff is coming in at 10 and it's a lot less sleep (both laugh) [...] I know that'll be the biggest kind of balance for us from here on.

With advancement would come extended work hours, less time to spend at home, and the need to further negotiate how to combine such a career with other responsibilities. Some of the women I interviewed brought in paid help so that they and their partners could both work or like Lilly, they used day-care facilities or had support from family members. Interestingly, although perhaps expectedly, the women I interviewed did notice some distinctions between their work/life balance and that of some of their male coworkers.

Working women continue to face the burdens of combining employment and parenthood in ways that men, for the most part, do not (Damaske 2011; Grunow, Schulz, and Blossfeld 2012; Sanchez and Thomson 1997). Though she did not have children, Anabelle saw female coworkers and other women in the industry struggle to create a work/life balance. However, when considering how men in the industry dealt with such issues she said:

In that respect it is a lot easier for guys. For example, this creator that I work for, he has two kids, his wife does not work, she takes care of the kids and that is true of many of the writer/producers that I've worked for. They have stay-at-home wives who take care of their houses, their kids, their dogs, their lives.

And so they can focus on being creative, on writing, on their job in a way that if you're a woman, if you are a single parent you're totally screwed.

In Anabelle's experience many of the male writer/producers were in relationships with partners who managed their private lives. The contributions of stay-at-home partners allowed the working partner, as Anabelle said, usually heterosexual men, to invest greater time, focus, and energy into their work which is consistent with previous findings (Grunow, Schulz, and Blossfeld 2012; Sanchez and Thomson 1997). Contrary to expectations some scholars have of the emancipatory power of individualization that I discussed in the Literature Review (Castells 2000), gendered expectations regarding paid work, child care, and household responsibilities continue to influence contemporary heterosexual partnered relationships (Bass 2014; Crompton 2006; Kelan 2009; Schoon 2010).⁸⁸ Lilly echoed Anabelle's comments, saying:

I think.....women have to think about that stuff a lot more. Like, how does this work with my family, how does it work with finances and stuff like that. So, it's interesting. I definitely see a lot more....I think it's very rare to find a female writer who's married that the husband doesn't work, whereas you see a lot of male writers where the wife doesn't work.

The male breadwinner family model may be in decline as women continue to enter and remain in the workforce for life, creating two-income households, but the gendered expectations that accompany parenthood are still robust (Bass 2014; Crompton 1999; Damaske 2011; Grunow, Schulz, and Blossfeld 2012; Perrons 2003; Sanchez and Thomson 1997; Stone and Lovejoy 2004).⁸⁹ This further emphasizes the staying power of traditional gendered prescriptive stereotypes discussed earlier in this chapter and supports the findings of other researchers who have examined gender in relation to the creative industries. Despite the meritocratic, neo-liberal language that is often used to describe work in such sectors, the evidence points to the fact that

⁸⁸ Socioeconomic class also plays a large role in gendered expectations surrounding work. My participants displayed relatively little variance in class and could be categorized as middle and/or upper-middle class. For greater explanation on how socioeconomic class influences women's gendered expectations and attitudes regarding paid work see Crompton (2006), Crompton and Lyonette (2010).

⁸⁹ Samantha was unique among my participants in that she was the primary breadwinner in her family and her husband stayed at home with their child. Of the other twenty-six women I interviewed, if they were in a relationship, their partners also worked.

women's and men's experiences of paid work, particularly when combined with parenthood, continue to be unequal (Banks and Milestone 2011; Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015; Wreyford 2013)

The impact of children on women's long-term careers in the industry was also often contrasted by participants with the lack of impact children had on men's careers in the industry. Lilly said:

So it's hard [...] women are just in general more likely to take that two years off and stay home with the kids than men are. So it's an industry where that hurts you more, I think. I think that contributes to the numbers for sure. Especially since that happens usually right when you're in the middle of the climb up the ladder. I mean, there are basically 7 rungs of being a writer at different levels and it usually happens somewhere between executive story editor and producer [...] So, if you're not in the game for 2 years, it's hard. Your contacts disappear, the people you know at shows disappear...it's tough.

In Lilly's experience women with young children were more likely to take a break from their careers to care for children than their male partners. This practice is not unique to the film and television industry. Women's and men's career trajectories tend to take distinctly separate paths after becoming parents (Bass 2014; Grunow, Schulz, and Blossfeld 2012; Sanchez and Thomson 1997; Stone and Lovejoy 2004). Lilly said that she thought that this practice was particularly detrimental to women's careers in film and television precisely because of the network-based hiring model of the industry.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the women I interviewed actively maintained their professional networks through repeated contact with members of these networks. They viewed networking as an essential practice to succeed in the industry. However, if women left paid work for a time to care for children, the act of maintaining their professional networks could become more difficult. Leaving a work environment diminishes a stay-at-home mother's ability to benefit from the interactions that occur in the everyday-ness of the work environment. Additionally, when these women attempted to re-enter the workplace, the gap in their résumés could negatively influence their prospects because the industry also relies upon

successful recent work experiences as an indicator of an employee's competence. Women looking to re-enter film and television work needed to overcome the 'staleness' of their professional networks and negative connotations of the break in their work experiences.

Clearly, there are tangible consequences that women face when attempting to combine work and childcare or re-enter work in film and television after taking time off. However, anxiety concerning the integration of work and parenthood was not limited to participants who were pregnant or already had children. Women who did not yet have children but wanted to in the future also worried about how they were going to manage a career and a child simultaneously. Melanie said:

I think that's the case with women in any industry. How do you work and have a family, but that's never asked of a man [...] I'm thinking about, 'Okay, when would I get married and when would I have kids, and I need to schedule it around hiatus, can I get pregnant around hiatus?' and I'm like, 'I cannot even believe I am thinking about this right now,' but it's always first instinct you think of that it's the woman's responsibility to make sure that the kid is okay.

At the time of our interview Melanie was in a serious monogamous relationship. She was mentally calculating the most opportune time in her career when she should get married, or perhaps when she would best be able to plan a wedding without it taking time away from work. Despite the fact that Melanie did not want children for another few years she was already negotiating and planning a career and motherhood timeline. She considered the logistics of combining work and family and wondered if she could plan to have her child while her theoretical future television show was 'on hiatus'⁹⁰ so she would not miss work during the writing season.

This type of planning for anticipated parenthood has also been observed among women in other professions. Brooke Conroy Bass (2014) analyzed the gender differences in expectations regarding future parenthood of 30 heterosexual couples

⁹⁰ In the television industry the term 'on hiatus' refers to an anticipated break from work or a period of less intense work while the television show is not producing new episodes to air. Many shows go 'on hiatus' in the late spring and early summer months. They then return to their normal heavier work schedules mid-to-late summer to begin producing episodes for fall television series/season premieres.

who were either newly married, engaged to be married, and/or cohabiting. Bass (2014) interviewed couples separately and discovered that anticipated parenthood and its expected effects on careers were highly gendered. When asked how they imagined their work life in the next five to ten years, 77 percent of the women interviewed mentioned child care as components of their imagined future careers without interviewer probing (9). Interestingly, a mere ten percent of the men in Bass' study (2014) brought up potential future child care responsibilities. Furthermore, as Melanie articulated, it is usually the working woman who is expected to deal with these family planning issues. Bass (2014) also encountered these gendered expectations in her work, writing: 'Men, for the most part, viewed their future careers through an unclouded career-focused lens while women viewed it through the lens of future motherhood' (9). When Bass (2014) explicitly asked the men in her study about how parenthood might influence their or their partners' work lives the men gave answers that indicated that they had not considered this issue at great length. As demonstrated by Bass (2014), in addition to the difficulties women face in combining work and parenthood, even hypothetical future children influence how women imagine their future careers and in turn this can cause women to adjust their career aspirations downward, whereas men, for the most part, did not engage in such anticipations or adjustments.

Industry-Specific Difficulties

It is clear that women working in film and television face many of the same challenges present in other work environments. However, the film and television industry (and the cultural industries in general) has some particular practices that create distinct challenges to success for marginalized people (Bielby and Bielby 2002; Hesmondhalgh 2007). According to Denise Bielby (2009), the marketization of the film and television industry that has taken place over the previous forty years, which was discussed in the Literature Review, altered the ways in which creative personnel and their skills are evaluated as appropriate and desirable for projects. These changes include:

- a heavy reliance on reputation and post-hoc project evaluation,
- a switch from mass to niche marketing,

- the fact that the products created often embody and perpetuate existing gender stereotypes and attitudes, and
- the use of agents as employment ‘brokers’ (Bielby 2009; Bielby and Bielby 2002).

My participants discussed these factors to differing degrees. In the following section, I explore the ways in which my participants experienced these industry practices and how gender informed these processes.

The importance of professional reputations

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 4, in the world of film and television, precarity and uncertainty of both projects and careers are the norm. With this high level of uncertainty, those in charge rely on who and what has worked in the past. Bielby and Bielby (2002) write: ‘When nobody knows anything, reputation is everything’ (22). As detailed in Chapter 4, securing employment in the film and television industry is largely dependent upon an individual’s professional and social networks, previous working relationships, and past achievements (Ursell 2000; Wreyford 2015), in other words, on reputation and connections. My participants were acutely aware of the need to manage their professional reputations and maintain positive relationships with members of their networks.⁹¹ They even did so when they encountered discriminatory attitudes and/or actions in the workplace, particularly at the beginnings of their careers. When discussing how she reacted when she witnessed discriminatory behaviour in the workplace, Anabelle had at some points called attention to her male superiors’ comments or actions. However, as a writers’ assistant at the time of our interview, Anabelle had relatively little power in her work settings. She, like many of my other participants, worried that she would gain a reputation for being difficult if she addressed sexism in the workplace too often or too forcefully. Anabelle said:

⁹¹ This is not a claim that professional reputations do not matter in other industries. However, the hyper-importance of reputations in the film and television industry (and other cultural/creative industries) makes those employed in the sector particularly aware of maintaining and advancing their professional reputations.

The guys who run things, they're...they run things and they are set in their ways and I don't know how you change that. I mean you can raise [sexism] as an issue, but there's no....you have no recourse. Nor would you want to raise it too strenuously because too strenuously and you don't get hired again.

Anabelle had occasionally tried to address sexist comments she overheard in the workplace. However, her questioning was met with attempts to diminish the seriousness of the comments by characterizing them as humorous and/or harmless. The characterization of sexist remarks as humorous is a common response when such remarks are challenged (Czopp and Monteith 2003). Czopp and Monteith (2003) also argue that compared to racism, sexism tends to be perceived as 'less severe and more tolerable' and that people are much more likely to feel shame and guilt when they are confronted about racial stereotypes whereas confrontations regarding gender stereotypes are more likely to be met with patronizing humour, dismissal, and invalidation. This was evident in Anabelle's narrative. When asked how her superiors responded when challenged on a sexist comment, she said:

[They said], 'Well, come on....you know what I mean.' It's like because you're a buddy and it's also hard because in that situation that person is above you and usually is your boss and usually has the power to fire you, not that they would over something that small, but you don't want to get a reputation as, you know, the harpy who's always calling people on stuff and there's this notion of 'creator free-zone' where you can say anything, which has its place, absolutely. You should be able to say anything in a creative context. But the response was like, 'you know what I'm saying.' Be a mensch, kind of a thing.

Anabelle's confrontation was met with dismissal and patronizing amusement. On the one hand, Anabelle was viewed as an insider of this masculine environment because these comments were made in front of her despite her gender. Her gender differences were glossed over and she was expected to act 'like one of the guys.' Anabelle's male colleagues dismissed their sexist comments and basically asked/forced Anabelle to excuse their behaviour. This put Anabelle in a precarious position in that she felt she had either to concede to being co-opted into this sexist behaviour or continue to challenge a particular sexist comment, thereby possibly endangering her reputation for being easy to work with. When she did offer challenges she called attention to herself in a potentially negative light. If she was viewed as being difficult to work with because she was 'calling people on stuff' she created difficulties for her own

career success. Women in other industries have had similar experiences regarding the difficulty of addressing sexist and discriminatory comments and the risk to their reputations (Dodd et al. 2001; Good, Moss-Racusin, and Sanchez 2012; Swim and Hyers 1999). However, these problems are exacerbated in the film and television industry due to the high level of reliance on professional reputations for hiring purposes. Anabelle also brought up the idea of these work environments being ‘creator free-zones,’ meaning that people did not want to stifle creativity by worrying about politically correct language and avoidance of taboo topics. The creative process was given special license to break the so-called rules of behaviour; people should be allowed to say anything during the creative process and not be punished for it. However, as Anabelle pointed out, this mentality permeated other work processes such as hiring. It contributes to the creation of an environment that is understood to operate outside the standard rules that may apply in more traditional work environments.

As illustrated by Anabelle and echoed by other participants, the decision to address discrimination head-on was made while keeping reputations in mind. As the employment model of the industry is contract-based, individuals are acutely aware of the need to be continually hired onto projects. With such high levels of replaceability, employees are reluctant to raise issues related to discrimination because they may be viewed as ‘rocking the boat’ or creating problems in their workplaces. As Anabelle implied, if you gain a reputation for being a ‘problem’ in the workplace, you risk not only your professional reputation but potentially your future income as well. This is consistent with research that has explored how, when, and why women confront sexism in other industries (Dodd et al. 2001; Good, Moss-Racusin, and Sanchez 2012). When women believe that the costs of confronting sexism outweigh the benefits, they are less likely to engage in such behaviour (Good, Moss-Racusin, and Sanchez 2012). Furthermore, while women are more likely to be respected and liked by other women when confronting sexism, unfortunately they are also liked less by men for the same act of confrontation (Dodd et al. 2001).⁹² For women in the film and television industry, the potential cost of gaining a negative

⁹² Men in this study did not respect women less for confronting sexism, but they did like them less (Dodd et al. 2001).

reputation that could affect their future work was usually too high to merit a direct confrontation for themselves or on behalf of others. Mariah talked about this dilemma when discussing how her boss at the time of our interview dealt with sexist behaviour from producers or directors. She said:

The way that my boss deals with it, or at least the way that I see her deal with it, is that she doesn't face it head on, she kind of just lets it lie or lets it slide, but I don't want to be that kind of person and I don't think that we should have to be. It's tough cause you also don't want to be the person that's like, labeled a feminist in that way...actually you're not gonna be labeled a feminist, you're gonna be labeled a bitch...

Mariah did not like the manner in which her boss addressed sexist behaviours that they encountered in the course of their work. She never saw her boss challenge people who exhibited sexist attitudes directly, but rather let such instances occur without redress. While Mariah did not, herself, want to let things 'lie' or 'slide,' she simultaneously admitted the difficulty women face when deciding how to address such attitudes. Mariah, like several other participants, was worried that addressing sexism directly could lead to her being labeled a feminist, but then self-corrected her statement saying that being labeled a feminist was unlikely. It was far more likely that she would risk gaining a reputation as a bitch. This is an interesting distinction. Being labeled a feminist could be viewed as an epithet regarding Mariah's views on gender and politics. However, being labeled a 'bitch' is far more obviously demeaning and personalized. The term 'feminist' signals an ideological disposition while 'bitch' dehumanizes an individual and invalidates their opinions.

Apart from the risk to reputation, participants commented on another difficulty in addressing sexism in the industry. There is little protection offered by organizational bodies in cases of discrimination and even when there are measures in place to support people who experience discrimination, they are rarely used. Research has demonstrated that women tend to make greater gains toward equality in work environments where there are larger organizations through which non-discrimination policies can be implemented and monitored (Heery 2006; Jones and Pringle 2015). However, due to the fractured nature of the film and television industry, that developed following the disintegration of the studio system and the marketization of

the television sector, these types of equality interventions are not particularly effective (Jones and Pringle 2015). This was reflected in my participants' reports.

Penelope said:

I mean, the other thing that's weird about this industry is that there really is no labor law protection, I mean maybe if you're in a union of some sort [...] But really what can you do? Every time you do something it's like you're burning a bridge.

As Penelope states, in her experience there is relatively little protection offered through labour laws or equal opportunity employment statutes for employees in the industry. Technically such legislation does exist and trade unions such as the Writers' Guild of America, the Directors' Guild of America, and The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada (IATSE) offer some protection for their members. However, these organizations tend to be more useful for wage negotiations through collective bargaining, ensuring that members receive benefits, and establishing best practice standards for work environments. Furthermore, as indicated by Penelope, there are potential consequences for individuals who use such labour law protections, amounting to 'burning a bridge.' Like Penelope, participants weighed the costs of reporting sexist individuals to superiors, organizations, and/or trade unions against the damage such reporting could inflict upon their professional reputations. As a result, even when women and minorities are legally protected from discriminatory and sexist behaviours through their work, violations tend to go unreported, at least officially.⁹³

Niche markets and stereotypical representations in industry products

In addition to the need to protect professional reputations, participants also discussed the ways in which women in the industry are often stereotyped into working in particular genres. Lilly said:

⁹³ Participants did discuss sexist and discriminatory encounters with friends and colleagues. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

I have heard showrunners of incredibly popular shows say, ‘This is a show about guys, why would I ever hire a woman to write that?’ [...] And they said this to the media, not like, in a room in front of friends. And you’re like, ‘Okay you’re an ass,’ and it’s rare but it definitely exists and it definitely exists on the more prestige shows. If you look at the writing staffs of the cable shows, the shows that are winning Emmys, there’s very few women. And if they’re there, they’re at very low levels.

According to Bielby (2009) attitudes like that of the male showrunner Lilly discussed above, contribute to women’s lack of equality in this sector. In addition to old-fashioned sexism and stereotypes, women’s relegation to specific genres is partially due to how film and television works are increasingly marketed to niche audiences in the contemporary industry (Bielby 2009).

During the heyday of the three big networks (CBS, NBC, ABC) the goal was to appeal to as wide an audience as possible in order to gain more viewers for the primetime television time-slots, and thus more revenue from advertisers (Bielby 2009). However, after the introduction of new networks like Fox and the two networks UPN and the WB which eventually merged into the CW, and the increase in original programming from cable networks and premium subscription networks like HBO and Showtime, the mass-market appeal model of the previous era no longer worked. Instead, networks began diversifying their programming into more specific genres in order to gain viewers through niche marketing (Bielby 2009). While this created more opportunities for women because of the increased demand for new programming, women were and continue to be type-cast into certain genres aimed at predominantly female audiences (Bielby 2009). Inevitably, this influences women’s careers by limiting their access to diverse social and professional networks and by denying women a chance to build up experience in certain genres.

While it seems that heterosexual white men can write, produce, and direct for any demographic, women continue to be relegated to films and shows that are considered more female-friendly in subject, genre, or distribution (Thynne 2000). As illustrated by Lilly’s quote, these attitudes and stereotypes regarding appropriate work for women are still present in the contemporary industry, and in the particular case she refers to, not only are these stereotypes present, but they are consciously used as

reasons not to hire women. Francke (1994) observed similar trends in her work on female screenwriters, whom she found tended to be stereotyped into writing female-driven pieces and more sentimental works, even when they did not necessarily want to bring such emotionality into a script. Women are often pushed into more marginal programming as a result of these tendencies. As Bielby and Bielby (1992) point out, this marginalization affects female writers' career trajectories because so much of the hiring that occurs in the industry is based upon previous work and an individual's reputation. If women are type-cast into certain positions, positions that have less prestige than those of their male counterparts, this contributes to a system in which women encounter more barriers to advancement (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2015).

Agency representation

Showrunners and others responsible for hiring in the industry are not alone in stereotyping women into particular roles. Agents can also fall into these traps when matching talent and/or creative personnel to potential projects. Agents may view their female clients as appropriate for certain genres and un/consciously limit the options for the women they represent. Even if agents are not guilty of stereotyping their clients and do submit women for 'non-traditional' genres, showrunners and executive producers may eliminate qualified women candidates in the end. Agents are also just generally less likely to represent women.

Women don't make as much money as men in the industry, so agents are less inclined to represent them. And it's not necessarily because people are paying women less for the same job or whatever, it's that if you have a family you take a year off so you're not advancing as quickly as men are and you're not working for as long as men are. So you have other considerations that affect your career and affect your earnings potential. Now, representation is all about your earnings potential. So, frankly, agencies are representing more men than women and that's just how it's going to be unless there's some radical shift. That's just how it is. So the representatives, that's how you get the names in front of the studios. So everything is connected. (Anabelle)

Agents are cognizant of the fact that, generally speaking, women have less earning potential than their male counterparts. This is due to a combination of factors.

Women in the industry are still more likely than men to take time out of their careers

to care for children, and quite often this break from work is in the middle of the climb up the career ladder. As already stated, having a two-year gap in a résumé is difficult enough to overcome when returning to work, but there is also the fact that women lose those two years of experience and potential advancement and have to begin from where they were at the time they left work, which in turn makes them a less desirable asset to agents because it diminishes the agents' earning power in those two years, and subsequent years when the woman client is trying to make up for the 'lost' years of advancement. Furthermore, because change is rapid in film and television, if a woman takes time out of her career for caregiving responsibilities, some of her connections in her professional network may have moved on and she may be unable to keep up with these changes, thereby forcing her to re-establish and integrate herself into the working world network. All of these factors contribute to women's difficulties in achieving equality within the industry. In order to counteract these disadvantages and to diminish the likelihood that they would face discrimination and sexism my participants used several tactics.

Strategies Used to Avoid Discrimination and Sexism

While the women I interviewed tended not to confront sexism and discrimination in the workplace at the time of their occurrence, they developed strategies for dealing with the mental and emotional effects of discrimination as well as strategies to diminish the frequency of their encounters with individuals or organizations that exhibited such attitudes. Gwen said of an encounter she had had with a male director working on a show she produced:

I don't really care what [he] think[s] and I know the only reason [he's] treating me like this is because I'm a woman because [he] wouldn't talk to my husband like that. So, you know, he's off the show (both laugh).

Gwen, whose husband was also her professional partner, referred to an incident with one of the episodic directors for her show that was shooting at the time of our interview. As a result of Gwen's status and power she was able to take immediate action to ensure the director did not continue to work on her show. However, several of my participants who were still in the process of climbing the career ladder pointed out that their power was more limited. One way the women I interviewed attempted

to diminish the frequency of their encounters with sexist and discriminatory individuals was through after-the-fact reports to superiors. Lilly said:

L: We had an episode of a show that we did and it shot back in New Jersey, I was seven months pregnant, so [my writing partner] went out for the shoot of it and the director was a guy and he was awful to her.

SC: Really?

L: Aw-ful. Super demeaning, didn't want to listen to her, was like, 'You're just a little girl,' basically. 'You don't know what you're doing, I've been doing this forever.' And you run into that and you just have to manage personalities and sometimes managing a personality is saying, 'Okay, I'm gonna step back, let this person be an asshole, let them run their set for these ten days and then let my boss know what happened and that person will never be hired on our show again.'

As this exchange illustrates, when my participants did face discrimination on the job, they might not address it straightaway while in the middle of the project. Instead they expressed their views after their work with that individual was completed. If they worked with people that were demeaning and/or insulting they made strategic choices not to cause problems on-set, or in writing rooms, but after the work was completed they did let superiors know of their difficulties and aimed to avoid working with such individuals in the future.

My participants' reports illustrate the industry attitude of 'don't rock the boat.' Do not be the person that causes delays or problems while on a project. Get through the project and then perhaps you can voice your opinions. This is consistent with other research on film and television workers (Jones and Pringle 2015). As discussed earlier in this chapter, my participants talked about how one never wants to gain a reputation as 'difficult' or a 'problem' when working on a project because this endangers your opportunities for future work. However, as Jones and Pringle (2015) point out, women in the industry are required to put in greater levels of emotional labour in order to fit into the male-dominated industry and be viewed as 'easy to get along with' (43). While workers in the industry use this strategy in attempts to avoid sexism and discrimination, it does nothing to directly engage with and challenge

discriminatory behaviour from industry professionals. This tactic may help people avoid discrimination and sexism, but does not encourage the eradication of these behaviours and requires greater levels of emotional labour from those already experiencing discrimination.

While they may have been reluctant to address sexism and discrimination when they encountered it in the midst of a project for fear of damaging their ‘easy to get along with’ reputations, my participants did not necessarily let it occur without some form of consequences either. Instead, they often distributed this information as best they could. As discussed in Chapter 4 the industry relies on networks to hire employees. If my participants had worked with a particularly difficult individual and/or company, they told members of their networks about their unpleasant experiences and relied upon those same contacts for similar information when pursuing work or employees themselves. When discussing how she and her writing partner used their networks to find potential employers that were ‘good’ to women and working mothers Lilly said there were showrunners that she never wanted to work for based upon reputation.

L: I mean there are shows that [we say to our agents], ‘No. Don’t ever put us up for this. Ever, ever, ever.’

SC: Yeah. And are your agents pretty good about that?

L: Oh, yeah. And we’re lucky, we have two female agents and so they...and one of them’s a mom and they’re both very...if we’re like, ‘Hey we kind of like this show,’ they’ll say, ‘Just so you know, so and so is running it and here’s the deal with them.’ They’re really good about keeping us in the loop just...they don’t want us being crazy and quitting in the middle of the year cause it’s money out of their pocket, you know (Lilly).

As Lilly illustrates, women may use their networks and, if represented, their agents, to proactively pursue work environments that are friendly to women. In this case, Lilly and Olivia specifically told their agents never to ‘put them up for’ meetings with certain shows because they had learned through their collective networks that particular showrunners were problematic, especially for working mothers. This was one of the ways in which women could proactively try to avoid potentially unfriendly work environments. The dominant tactic seemed to be avoidance of particular

individuals or environments. Avoidance, however, does not eliminate discrimination, rather it creates an environment of unwilling acceptance. My participants manoeuvred within the employment structure of the film and television industry as best they could and shared/sought information through their networks but even with these efforts there were times when they felt more or less forced by superiors to work with individuals known to be discriminatory and sexist. While they might or might not have expressed their opinions about such individuals to their superiors, they nevertheless would have to endure sexist and discriminatory encounters.

Just like Lilly, Mariah discussed how she relied on her network and information from coworkers to avoid working with particularly sexist and/or discriminatory people. However, this power only extended so far. She said:

[T]here's conversations that happen about like certain directors or certain development people or certain writers being misogynist or being sexist or you know. And we won't really work with them [...] until we have to, basically [...] and that is the thing that says to me that we should have more power. If [my boss] doesn't like this person because they are an asshole and he is rude and sexist then we shouldn't have to make a deal with him for like hundreds of thousands of dollars [...] We should be able to more clearly outline what we want if we're the ones that have to work with these people in the long run.

Mariah, who worked in development at the time of our interview, articulates an important issue in film and television. Women do have some agency regarding who they want to work with and those they want to avoid, particularly if they know certain people can be problematic, discriminatory, and/or sexist. However, they operate within a larger industry structure that often overrules and discounts their objections. Mariah qualified her statement about avoiding sexist/misogynistic individuals by saying, 'we won't work with them until we have to, basically.' Ultimately, if a superior in the company wanted to offer someone a development deal for a television show, Mariah was forced to work in a hostile environment until the project was over. There was very little recourse against sexist behaviour and/or discrimination particularly if the individual involved had a reputation and history of ties to lucrative, successful projects within the industry.

For the women who were contract employees, the level of equality and friendliness varied greatly and was largely determined by the industry equivalent of senior management. Employees might in fact work for larger corporate entities, but be hired on a contract-based model. The larger corporations that finance and distribute projects do have non-discrimination policies and can make suggestions to showrunners about hiring more women onto a project, but ultimately there is very little oversight, particularly if a project is successful. As most of my participants worked in television, they said that decisions and attitudes toward hiring women, particularly mothers, were ultimately made by the showrunner: ‘I’ve been really lucky since I was pregnant with our first kid, back in 2010...the shows that I’ve been on, and definitely we have looked for it, have been super cool with families’ (Lilly). Interestingly Lilly framed her experience with pregnancy and parenthood at work as the result of luck, rather than a benefit to which she should be entitled. Lilly and her writing partner Olivia, ‘looked for’ shows that were run by individuals/teams friendly to employees with families and as discussed above, they took steps to avoid work environments that were difficult for women and/or parents. Rather than being the responsibility of the employer to provide everyone with such benefits, individuals had to take on their own investigations in order to assess each projects’ attitudes toward hiring women, minorities, or people with families. This is not a simple task. People rely on individual showrunners’ reputations, industry gossip, their network of contacts, and advice from mentors in attempts to uncover how a particular show would or would not fit with their lifestyle. This serves to perpetuate an employment model that is highly variable when it comes to equality in the workplace and does not encourage eradication of discrimination.

Normalization of sexism and discrimination

Gender stereotypes, the issues my participants faced that are common for women across sectors, and the industry-specific discriminatory practices discussed above have been normalized and regarded as an unfortunate reality of creative work. This is similar to what other researchers have encountered when examining gendered aspects of film and television employment (Jones and Pringle 2015). Several women I interviewed acknowledged the presence of damaging stereotypes, gendered expectations, and problematic industry practices. They lamented the sometimes

inequitable treatment they were subjected to while simultaneously accepting these difficulties as challenges they hoped to overcome. When considering the future of women working in film and television Lilly said:

L: I think there's nowhere to go but up, really, in a lot of ways and I also think that...I'm really hopeful that it's a shifting universe. I feel like the nice thing about kind of being, what is it, post-feminist now, is like most women don't feel like something is never an option for them. So they're feeling that way and they're coming in and doing this stuff. So as long as they're gonna fight and fight and fight and that's what you have to do, again, work for six years before you get your first job, don't let it discourage you. Are four guys you know with less experience than you gonna be hired before you? Probably.

SC: Oh really?

L: Oh yeah. Every young female writer that I know has at least two guy friends who have...went through a lot less to get their first writing job.

SC: Why do you think so?

L: Guys are promoted from the assistant level a lot more. For sure. But it's.....

SC: How does that make you feel?

L: Oh, it sucks. But it's also just like, 'Fine.' That's the reality of it. Knowing that that exists makes it easier to say, 'Okay, well maybe it didn't happen for me this time, but I'm going to make it happen some other way.' So you have to be very adaptable. I think that's a huge thing. Have tough skin, be very adaptable, and stick that foot in the door.

One aspect of this exchange that I found particularly interesting and reflective of other participants' attitudes was Lilly's rather quick moving on from the idea that men are promoted from the assistant level more than women. This was an off-the-cuff comment that she glossed over. She had become so used to this reality that she did not view this blatant discrimination, something she and many of her women writer friends had experienced, as unusual. Instead of assuming a level playing field Lilly expected to have to work harder and longer than her male counterparts in order

to achieve similar results. However this did not appear to be an unexpected or particularly problematic aspect of her work. Instead, Lilly immediately moved on to discussing her strategies for overcoming such difficulties rather than unwrapping the larger issues of discrimination within the industry. Ultimately this was the way many women dealt with such discrimination which is similar to other researchers' findings on women in film and television (Jones and Pringle 2015; Taylor 2011b).

Rationalization is often used in the industry as a means of perpetuating discrimination under the guise of logical decision-making. As discussed earlier in this chapter, one of the prime examples of this practice occurs when pregnant women are moving through the hiring process. Pregnancy and childbirth are viewed as variables that will negatively affect a project. When a man or non-pregnant woman is hired over a more talented and accomplished pregnant woman, those in charge often rationalize away the clear discrimination that has occurred by citing the demands of work in film and television. This also happens when women are passed over for traditionally male roles, particularly in some below-the-line occupations, where the heavy physical demands are used as reasons to hire a man instead of an equally qualified woman. It occurs when showrunners hire only male writers because they are producing a show with predominantly male characters, citing the rationality of hiring men to write for men. In all these ways women are rationalized out of paid positions in the industry. Unfortunately, discrimination and sexism continue to be normalized and/or rationalized away in film and television work. Many of the women I interviewed accepted this as a reality of their chosen field and looked for ways to circumscribe its effects on their careers. Most of the women I interviewed were quite gender reflective and knowledgeable about the inequality present in the industry. It was generally viewed as an unavoidable, albeit unfortunate, circumstance that they would most likely encounter in the course of their careers.

Gender Denial

While the majority of my participants acknowledged the lack of gender equity in film and television work, there were several women who reported that their gender was not something they usually considered or viewed in relation to their careers. At some point in their interviews Danielle, Grace, Hallie, Jemma, and Becca made statements

that diminished or completely denied the idea that being a woman had influenced their careers, and a few made statements that characterized the industry in general as being meritocratic and more or less gender-blind. However, in the course of their interviews some of these women also made statements that, from my point of view as a researcher focused on gender, conflicted with their claims and that I view as being a result of their position as women. In this section I will outline some potential explanations for these contradictory statements.

When discussing her career as a writer for television Jemma said: ‘I honestly think that writing is a meritocracy with respect to gender. Honestly [...] I’ve never thought, “Oh, I got passed over because that person was a guy.”’ According to Jemma, being a woman had never prevented her from being hired as a writer. Rather it was the strength of her writing that determined whether or not she would be invited to interview for a position and potentially be staffed onto a television show. However, as discussed previously in this chapter, Jemma was advised by her agent not to mention the fact that she was pregnant while interviewing for writer positions. In my view, this is clearly a gendered issue, but Jemma did not frame her fears that she might not be hired because of her pregnancy as an issue related to her gender.

Disconnections like Jemma’s may occur for several reasons. One, it is possible that Jemma did not view her pregnancy and reluctance to reveal her status as related to workplace practices that carry a patriarchal legacy and are generally unfriendly to working mothers. Some aspects of sexism, particularly those that are subtle or have been highly normalized, often go unnoticed because such acts or attitudes are not recognized as sexist and/or are not attributed to sexism (Becker and Swim 2011; Swim, Mallett, and Stangor 2004). As such, Jemma may have viewed her pregnancy and her choices about her career as personal and individual, rather than reflective of larger gender issues. She may have viewed her pregnancy as a Jemma issue, rather than a gender issue. Second, as Jemma said, she thought that writing for television was a profession in which hiring and advancement were based on individual merit. This view is emblematic of the discourse of the new economy where individualism and the image of the self-made (wo)man is pervasive and has been observed by other cultural labour researchers (e.g. Jones and Pringle, 2015).

Overemphasis on individual merit is not limited to discussions of gender. Solomona et al. (2005) encountered similar attitudes in their research on white privilege. The belief that individual effort and agency were the predominant determinants of success, regardless of race, was a commonly expressed position in their research (Solomona et al. 2005). The five participants that generally denied gender as having affected their careers expressed attitudes congruent with this focus on the individual. It is possible that this narrative of individualism and the concept of success based on merit and individual effort is particularly pervasive in the United States where the rhetoric of individualism has been integrated into the idea of the ‘American dream.’ McCoy and Major (2007) found that members of disadvantaged groups tended to justify discrimination and systemic inequalities when primed with ideas of meritocracy. It may be that Jemma and the other participants that invoked the ideals of the new economy were reflecting a common narrative associated with success in the United States.

Several participants viewed their career experiences through this neoliberal, individualistic lens and used the discourse of the new economy to describe their work. Despite the fact that analyses conducted by organizations and researchers both inside and outside of the industry continue to demonstrate gender inequality behind-the-scenes in film and television (Lauzen 2012, 2013; Smith 2008; WGAW 2011), Jemma did not view her gender as a limiting factor in her work or in how potential employers might view her capabilities. She saw writing for television as a ‘meritocracy’ in which the quality of work was dependent upon the individual, namely the non-gendered individual.

Later in her interview Jemma discussed her experiences with pregnancy and breast-feeding while working. During her first pregnancy Jemma did not inform her future boss of her condition until after she had been hired because she was afraid it would diminish her chances for employment. In her words, when she did notify her employer of her pregnancy he was ‘great’ about the news and was ‘very accommodating’ when it came to shifting the schedule around so she would be able to write a script earlier in the television season to work around her due date.

However, Jemma did experience greater difficulty when she was breast-feeding and would need to use a breast pump at least twice a day in the workplace. She said:

I just did not feel particularly supported. I mean, the show got me a refrigerator to sit in my office to store the breast milk and there was always a place, like I had my own office, that I could pump in and I was never stopped from leaving the room, but I got this distinct vibe that my boss did not appreciate my leaving.

So while Jemma viewed the writing world as meritocratic, her fear of announcing her pregnancy before she was hired and her experience during breastfeeding speak to the continued inequality in the industry in terms of hiring practices and work environments. It may be true that regardless of gender, great writing is simply great writing. However, when confronted with tangible gender differences that inevitably impact on work environments, an individual's merit and the quality of their work are weighed against and/or in conjunction with other factors that vary based upon an individual's gender, race, sexuality, and age and how those in charge view such characteristics.

The denial of discrimination and sexism can also occur because individuals may not want to acknowledge that attributes they cannot change (sex, race, sexuality, etc) may be influencing their career success. Barreto and Ellemers (2005) found this to be particularly true for women when they encountered more subtle forms of sexism. They write, 'It seems that because of the general reluctance to acknowledge that the self may suffer from disadvantage due to unfair treatment of one's group, one may become less able to recognize prejudice that is expressed in politically correct ways' (Barreto and Ellemers 2005, 83). People do not want to view themselves as victims of unfair treatment because of their innate characteristics. Women are less likely to confront subtle expressions of sexism because they are more difficult to recognize than blatant sexist incidents and in this way, subtle sexism often goes unchallenged and can reinforce gender stereotypes and discrimination (Barreto and Ellemers 2005). Hallie, who was 20 years old at the time of our interview, reported that she had not experienced discrimination in the industry and did not like being associated with the Women in Media program at her film school. She said:

I found it to be pretty sexist in the sense that they would kind of shove it down our throats. That we needed to be there because we were women and I was really offended by it personally and decided to stop showing up to the meetings [...] I know it's important to be aware of it and we already are because you only see that there's three other girls in our major, but I thought that it was pretty insulting that they would shove it down our throats and make it such a big deal when really, I don't think it is...

Hallie reported she had not personally experienced discrimination because of her gender and found her school's attempt at addressing the topic of women in the industry oppressive and unnecessary. She thought the faculty at her school were making a 'big deal' when she did not view women's position within the industry as particularly problematic even while acknowledging the unequal representation of women in her area of study. She goes so far as to call the Women in Media group 'sexist' because she thought she was forced to participate simply because of her gender. Hallie's experience is reflective of the views and/or experiences some women expressed regarding participation in women's networking groups. As Perriton (2006) points out, some women fear that by participating in these groups they will draw further scrutiny from coworkers while others, like Hallie, do not appreciate being categorized as victims of sexism and discrimination when they do not view gender in the workplace as being problematic.

Finally, it is possible that the women who did not think their gender had ever influenced their careers had not experienced or observed any sexism or discrimination. If they had encountered difficulties when dealing with certain people they did not view these interactions as related to their gender. Grace said:

I'm sure I've come across people who have treated me differently because I'm a woman and I never even noticed [...] I just assumed they were treating me differently because they thought I was a jerk or they thought...or didn't like me or whatever. But I've never approached anything in the workplace like, 'Oh, I'm a woman and I have to do something different.' Never, never occurred to me to do that. Never occurred to me [...] I haven't noticed cause that's not the way I'm coming at the situation.

Grace had never viewed her gender as an inhibiting factor regarding her career and it is possible that as a result she did not observe sexism in her interactions with others.

Instead, she thought people might have treated her differently because they did not ‘like’ her. Interestingly, Grace did say that she probably had interacted with people who treated her differently because she was a woman, but that she had never categorized these encounters as sexist or discriminatory. Gender was not a frame through which Grace viewed her interactions in the workplace. Similarly, Danielle did not think being a woman had ever been problematic at work, but she did think her young age and appearance had caused issues in the past. Danielle became a current programming executive relatively early in comparison to her peers and she recounted experiences in which she thought she was being treated differently because of her young age. Grace, Danielle, Becca, and Hallie did not tend to consider gender in relation to their careers and were generally less gender reflective than other participants.

Solidarity among Women in the Industry

Despite high levels of competition for positions, the vast majority of the women I interviewed were invested in championing the role of women in the industry. This is a characteristic not often discussed in relation to the film and television business. My participants were certainly invested in their own career success and were constantly seeking new opportunities, but most expressed the desire to establish solidarity (in one form or another) with other women working in film and television. Interviewees spoke about the importance of mentoring, both upward and downward and the ways they shared information about potential jobs with friends and colleagues. Gwen, who had spent more than 25 years working in film and television, was hopeful when considering the current and future status of women in the industry. She said:

I think that the days of the queen bees with the sharp elbows are kind of gone. I think that’s gone by the wayside. I think with more opportunity, women are more inclusive and I find women, for the most part, some of the older women it’s a little bit tougher, but for the most part I find women more supportive of each other than they used to be. There doesn’t seem to be a desperation. There’s an inclusive element.

Gwen’s opinion regarding the transition from women competing against women to women advocating for women is encouraging. In Gwen’s words, there was a less acute sense of ‘desperation’ regarding women and their careers in the industry. The

increased visibility of women in the industry and the fact that women were continuing to gain ground, albeit a small amount, created, in Gwen's view, more opportunities for women to be more inclusive. This was an element touched on by several women in the interviews, particularly women over 45 years of age, who had begun their careers working for some of the barrier-breaking first wave of women in Hollywood.

In addition to reflecting on the gains women had made in industry work and discussing a transition from the 'days of the queen bees with the sharp elbows' as Gwen put it, to a more inclusive environment, my participants, for the most part, were advocating for women in their current jobs as best they could. Anabelle said:

I worked on the pilot with the creator and my focus was 'I am reading all the women first.' The way you staff a show is agents send you 350 scripts and you have to read them and decide who you want to meet with. So basically I prioritize women over the men, frankly, because I knew that that was gonna be a big deal and important so I read all the female submissions first, frankly, and made the creator meet with all the women first and so then we ended up bringing in the two show runners, it's a writing team, they're two female showrunners. Which is amazingly rare in Hollywood.

Anabelle, who was an assistant at the time, a low-status position, used the power she had because of the role she occupied to put her effort and time into women writers first. In this way, she was doing what she could to advance women in the industry despite her junior position. She was the gateway to her superior. She often had first looks at scripts and writing samples, and made it a priority to read women writers and then recommended those she liked to her boss.

Several women I interviewed talked about ambitions and plans for increasing women's representation behind-the-scenes and on screen as they continued to advance in their careers and gain more power within the industry. In fact for those at the beginning of their careers, this act of future planning appeared to be a way of coping with their own encounters with discrimination. When asked about how she confronted discrimination in the workplace, Anabelle said, as previously indicated, that she had occasionally challenged it, but she did not want to gain a reputation for

being problematic in the workplace and risk her future in the industry. She said: ‘then you’re screwed and then you’ve actually worked at cross purposes because you’ve taken yourself out of the industry when you could be a force for good in the industry.’ Instead of always confronting discriminatory behaviours from coworkers and/or superiors head-on, Anabelle used the experiences as lessons for the future, saying, ‘A lot of it is banking mental lessons. “This is what I will not allow in my room if I were ever a showrunner. These are the things that I would not do. These are the things that I would do.”’ Similarly, Rachel who was in the relatively early stages of her career as a screenwriter said:

What do you do? How do you begin change? Again, you have to work your way up and get a degree of power in this business and then you can like do things like hire more women directors and hire more women cinematographers and write more stories about women that prominently feature them. That would be fucking awesome, but you have to get to that point first.

Rachel was very supportive of women working in the industry at the time of our interview, but ultimately thought that she had limited power at her level in the larger industrial hierarchy. She offset this lack of power and influence through her aspirations for her own future and in turn her ability to help women advance in the industry.

In addition to their own individual efforts to advance women in the industry, many participants called for their peers and superiors to do the same. Liana said:

Women in high positions should be donating their time to foster upcoming women. Be on panels, be visible, write an article, do interviews [...] If you’re going to share this information, if women are going to be reading this [thesis] I just think they should help other women [...] I really do feel like there is a movement for change and maybe I’m just clued into it more, but I feel like I keep seeing articles about women directors and women heads of studios, women, women, women. And I know the numbers are staggering....but the mind-set hopefully is changing.

Liana, who was an active member of the Chicago chapter of Women in Film, wanted women, particularly those with power, to be visible within the community and

actively engaged in advancing women in the industry. She thought that there was a certain level of momentum present in the larger industry around this goal. Despite the continued low number of women in key positions in film and television, she, along with most other participants, was hopeful for the future of women in the industry.

The new economy prizes individualistic self-interest and some researchers have claimed this transformation of work has been accompanied by an erosion of loyalty, connection with others, and social responsibility. However, most of my participants were cognizant of the challenges facing women in the industry and were doing what they could, where they could to diminish the effects of these difficulties and aid other women with their careers. While they may not have been able to influence economic and political policies regarding their work, they were searching for ways to champion women, and other minorities, in their daily practices as most of my participants knew that discrimination and its consequences are still impediments to many women's industry careers.⁹⁴

Conclusion

Similar to women working in other industries, discrimination and sexism continue to plague women employed in film and television. My participants' reports suggest the persistence of gender stereotypes as well as the prescriptive and descriptive attributes commonly associated with men and women continue to create difficulties when trying to establish equitable work environments. The women I interviewed spoke about navigating their femininity and altering their behaviours in the workplace in order to succeed in this male-dominated industry while simultaneously maintaining their likeability and feminine attributes. As in other sectors, the challenge of establishing a work/life balance, particularly around childcare or anticipated future children remained largely a women's problem. The specific employment model of the film and television industry created additional challenges for my participants. The need to maintain a reputation as a good worker who did not cause problems while employed on a project largely prevented women from addressing

⁹⁴ It is possible that because these were the women that responded to my request for interviews that the role of women in film and television was already important to them, or rather, occurred at a higher rate than among the general population of women working in the industry.

discrimination head-on or ever seeking recourse through official channels. This led them to adopt strategies to avoid encounters with sexist individuals, but did not contribute to the eradication of such behaviours and attitudes. While there were some participants who did not think gender had influenced their careers, the vast majority of my participants reported repeated incidences of sexism and thought that gender discrimination was a problem that affected the entire industry. Despite these challenges, most of the women I interviewed continued to advocate for the advancement of women in film and television and sought ways to aid other women in their current positions with ambitions to do so in the future. It is clear that women have made inroads in this male-dominated business that is emblematic of work in the new economy. However, they continue to encounter discrimination and sexism in their careers and these seem difficult to challenge or avoid, with little redress and much to lose.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore women's reported experiences of work in the contemporary US film and television industry from a feminist perspective. Following a review of the relevant literature and an articulation of my methodological and theoretical choices I turned my attention to analysing my participants' reports. Based on 27 in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in the summer of 2013, I chose to focus my analysis on three central areas that emerged from the coding process as explained in Chapter 2: first, I examined how and why the women I interviewed entered paid employment in film and television, an industry characterised by project-based, precarious work. Next, I explored my participants' networking practices, how they conceptualised these relationships that were vital to their career success, some gendered networking practices that emerged in my data, and my participants' reports of experiences with professional mentors. Finally, I discussed my participants' accounts of discrimination and sexism in the workplace, which despite years of anti-discrimination and equal employment opportunity legislations are still prevalent. In this final chapter, I will summarize the key findings of my research and discuss how this thesis contributes to the fields of feminist production studies, women's studies, and employment studies. I will also discuss potential future areas of research based upon this project and its findings.

The definitional, theoretical, and epistemological debates within the larger fields of cultural studies, political economy, media studies, and film and television studies can sometimes seem overwhelming and attempting to locate yourself within these debates can be difficult. However, from the inception of this project to its completion one idea has remained constant: the individuals and communities that produce media products are, like the texts they create, fascinating. They offer a rich and complex world full of opportunities for research. While in the past political economists and cultural studies scholars have tended to ignore labour in their analyses, since the end of the 1990s research in this area has seen a surge of interest. Furthermore, there have been calls in recent years to move beyond the traditional divide between political economy and cultural studies to create research projects that account for the

macro, meso, and micro structures and practices that influence the content of media as well as how it is produced and received.

As such, I found the production studies approach to studying labour in film and television, which developed from a cultural studies perspective but also integrates political economy, most appropriate for my research for several reasons. Production studies accounts for how macro-level structures, policies, histories, and traditions inform the contemporary and localized material realities of the individuals and communities that produce media. However, while production studies does place labour at the centre of its analyses, it failed to adequately account for gender.

Therefore, I turned to Banks' (2009) concept of feminist production studies as my primary framework for analysing women's reports of work in the contemporary US film and television industry. Feminist production studies is still a young field but it offered the most promise for my project by simultaneously placing labour and gender at the centre of its analysis.

In the Literature Review I contextualized my participants' stories within the larger narrative of work in what is commonly called the 'new economy.' Employment in the new economy is characterised by neoliberal policies and business practices, a mobile workforce, extensive use of global telecommunications technology, movement away from traditional Fordist economies toward more knowledge-based work, increased casualization of the workforce, and a focus on individualism and personal merit (Banks and Milestone 2011; Caves 2000; Connell 2005b; Crompton 1999, 2006; Crompton, Lyonette, and Scott 2010; Florida 2002; Gill and Pratt 2008; Perrons et al. 2006b; Sennett 2006). Research concerning labour in the cultural industries is increasing in frequency and many of the findings in previous work have interesting implications for this particular sector and the world of work in general. The organizational changes that have influenced the labour environment in film and television production, as detailed in Chapter 1, have often been hailed as a vanguard for what other industries will increasingly operate like in the future (Blair 2001; Deuze 2007; Hesmondhalgh 2007; Jones and Pringle 2015; Murdock 2003). The increased casualization of the workforce, the internationalization of projects and labour, technological advances that enable increased interconnectivity, changes to consumers' attitudes and preferences, and the rise of the individual in the new

economy have all contributed to a labour environment that is constantly adapting to uncertain realities. Given that the organizational nature of work in film and television has been seen as reflective of many of the trends transforming the wider world of work, my research helps fill a lacuna in the literature and extends feminist production studies in order to bring women's voices and experiences into the larger discussion of contemporary women's relationship to paid work. The existing literature, much of which focuses on the experiences of creative workers in the UK and Europe, has examined some aspects of employment in the film and television industry (Conor, Gill, and Taylor 2015b; Deuze 2007; Hesmondhalgh 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Thynne 2000; Tunstall 1993; Ursell 2000). However, when considering a gendered perspective regarding film and television work there have been few contributions that examine women's experiences of work in a broad range of occupations in this particular sector, exceptions being Thynne (2000) and the recent collection edited by Conor, Gill, and Taylor (2015b). There have been studies that focus on women working in particular jobs within the industry like female writers (Bielby and Bielby 1996; Bielby and Bielby 1992) or female directors (Lane 2000; Levitin, Plessis, and Raoul 2003) as well as historical accounts of women screenwriters (Francke 1994) and gendered examinations of the industry are indeed increasing in frequency. But as previously stated, many of these works focus on film and television labour markets in the UK and Europe, which when compared to the size of the US industry, are relatively small. Additionally, the opportunity to analyse the reported experiences of women who work in film and television in diverse occupations offers insight into the varied and/or similar gendered experiences of this segment of the US working population.

As detailed in Chapter 2, I interviewed women television writers, directors, producers, executives, and others from varied organizational levels at different points in their career lifecycles and in distinct locations. This is a break from previous studies of women working in the industry, which have tended to focus on women working in a particular occupation within the sector. My approach, and the use of in-depth interviews created the opportunity to find commonalities not just among a population of women in one singular occupation, but across different positions within the industry. Within the framework of the new economy and with the marketization of the film and television industry, as explained in Chapter 1, my choice to interview

women in a variety of occupations allowed for an exploration of how these macro-level changes to film and television labour have impacted on women's careers in the industry across occupations. The women I interviewed had distinct entry narratives and career paths in the industry thus illuminating how the evolution and current employment model of the industry resonated in women's micro-experiences of paid work in film and television. Through this endeavour, my study has both built upon existing literature and created new knowledge. In the following section I explicate the specific contributions of this thesis.

Key Findings and Contributions

Following the Literature Review and my methodological explanation, in Chapter 3 I analysed how and why my participants chose to work in the precarious field of film and television. I wanted to understand the appeal employment in this industry had for my participants and how the women I interviewed constructed the narratives of their entry into this arena. The precarious nature of work in the film and television industry as well as other cultural industries has been well documented (Gill and Pratt 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Menger 2006; Ursell 2000) and my participants reported similar experiences with uncertain employment. Interestingly, as I interviewed women that worked on both the 'creative' and 'executive' sides of the industry I uncovered that my participants viewed precarity in the industry in a way that has not yet been discussed in the literature. My participants made informed choices regarding the level of career uncertainty they were willing to accept. Some participants transitioned from the more secure 'executive' sector to work on the 'creative' side of the industry which offers less career stability while others made the opposite journey (from less to more secure work). In the literature, the experience of precarious work in the film and television industry tends to be treated as ubiquitous, but my participants' accounts illustrate that there are ways that people negotiate around precarity while still working 'in' the industry. This represents a new articulation of how women in the industry deal with career risks not just by extending their professional networks and perpetually seeking work (i.e. as a television writer) which has been encountered in previous research, but also by moving from one 'side' of the industry to the other. Future studies could examine these shifts in greater detail in order to develop a better understanding of how career choices are informed by

precarity, and, indeed, how that precarity is understood and interpreted by gendered labour.

In addition to this original finding regarding women's choices around precarity, I also found that my participants assigned themselves greater agency in their career choices than researchers like Woodfield (2007) encountered in her study of women teachers, for example. Rather than framing their current occupations as a result of serendipity or luck, most women I interviewed described their early years in the industry as the result of active and ongoing choices. I suggest that because of the highly opaque nature of the industry in general in addition to a lack of a clear career path, work in film and television was not something my participants 'fell into.' In order to enter and succeed in the industry my participants were constantly evaluating their current work positions in relation to their future career goals.⁹⁵

Following on from discussions of how my participants entered the industry, I turned my attention to an examination of what *kept* them working in the industry even after experiencing the precarity and difficulty of establishing a career in this field. My participants cited several aspects of their work as key to this. Similar to other research on labour in the cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Taylor and Littleton 2012), my participants enjoyed working in non-traditional environments where they were able to express themselves creatively and have 'fun' while at work. The women I interviewed often spoke about their work as a 'labour of love' which chimes with McRobbie's (1998, 2002a; 2002b; 2011) concept of 'passionate work.' In addition to the enjoyment of non-traditional work about which they were passionate, the women I interviewed cited their opportunities to collaborate with coworkers and the sociability of their work environments as reasons why they loved their work. This is an aspect of work in the film and television industry that has not been adequately accounted for in the literature, one exception being Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011). There was a genuine enjoyment of the social and collaborative aspects of film and television work expressed by my participants. The sociality that

⁹⁵ As my participants were largely from what in US terms is described as middle to upper-middle class backgrounds, their experience of actively choosing their careers in this ongoing manner may differ from the experiences of women from lower socio-economic classes when attempting to enter into film and television work.

occurs in creative industries, like film and television production, has been framed by some scholars (e.g. Wittel 2001) as ephemeral. This is not what I encountered in the interviews. It would take more research to determine if there is a gender component that accounts for why collaboration and sociality have not been explored in other studies of film and television work.

My participants also liked the fast-paced, project-based work in the film and television industry and viewed these aspects as insurance that they would rarely ‘get bored’ while working. This trend in the interviews supports McRobbie’s findings regarding the comparative language creative workers often use when considering their careers alongside those of their peers. Finally, participants enjoyed the idea that a project they worked on could have extensive impact and reach wide audiences and similar to other studies, they discussed having an attachment to the completed media product (Caldwell 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011; Mayer 2011). While other researchers have found that film and television workers enjoyed working on projects they themselves found important or significant, my participants also cited the potential to impact on others’ lives as a rewarding aspect of this work. They enjoyed that the projects they worked on were not only personally rewarding, but that they could also connect with audiences, set positive examples, and potentially subvert the status quo through film and television.

Other researchers (Henry 2009; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011) have claimed that the cool and fun image attached to industry work is a positive aspect of employment in the cultural industries. However, based upon my participants’ reports their experiences with the common image of a film and television worker were more complex than previously considered. This is an original finding and a key contribution to knowledge. My participants reported having fun in their work environments and enjoyed the fact that they were able to ‘do cool things’ as a result of working in film and television, but when asked how people reacted when they learned what my participants did for a living, their answers illuminated an as yet unexamined aspect of work in this industry. The commonly held image of work in film and television was sometimes problematic for the women I interviewed. Rather than enjoying the image others, especially industry outsiders, often assigned to them

and their work, my participants reported that they tailored their career narratives to their particular conversation partners. They differentiated between industry insiders and outsiders and quite often would change their career narratives and/or titles when talking about their work with outsiders. Two women occasionally went so far as to deny their association with the film and television industry altogether because they wished to avoid attracting the high interest they found people often expressed in their work. Others obfuscated their careers because they found that industry outsiders were not interested in their actual work, but rather in industry gossip and stories about celebrities. My participants reported instances of ‘giving up’ trying to diminish or deny the glamorous image associated with their work when talking with outsiders and instead ‘threw them’ a story about a celebrity to satisfy their audience. It is clear from my interviewees that the popular image associated with their work was not necessarily viewed as a benefit, but rather as something they had to negotiate and selectively alter depending upon whom they were speaking with. Rather than enjoy the status working in film and television afforded them, this image often served to silence my participants’ narratives regarding their actual experiences of work. Future research could investigate to what extent this is influenced by gender-based differences in the experience of the industry image.

Building upon my analysis in Chapter 3 and given the precarity of employment in the industry, I wanted to analyse one of the primary methods my participants used to secure work. In line with other research (Blair 2003; Christopherson 2009; Lee 2011), I found that the act of establishing and actively maintaining a robust professional network was an aspect of work in the film and television industry that my participants cited as essential. Networks were not merely a helpful tool to augment a career in film and television, but rather a foundation upon which success was built. I began Chapter 4 with a review of theories regarding networking, particularly in the new economy, and found that my participants’ reports differed in some ways from what would be expected based upon the existing networking research. I found Blair’s (2009) concept of ‘active networking’ a useful framework upon which to build my own analysis as it takes into account the agency of the individual who seeks out relationships within and through different social structures. Rather than treating networks as closed systems with isolateable variables for

analysis, Blair (2009) views networking as an active, on-going process that accounts for and integrates the fluidity of network memberships and interpersonal relationships as well as the influence of social structures and socialization on the networking process.

For my participants, networking was a vital activity. Confirming other scholars' observations (Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015; Wreyford 2015), my participants talked about how open work positions in the industry, particularly those above the assistant level, are rarely advertised. The informal networks my participants developed and maintained were based largely upon relationships they had developed in actual physical work locations over the life of a project. This is one of several ways in which my participants' experiences with networking and sociality differed from and did not support the concept of 'network sociality' articulated by Wittel (2001) who argues that with the rise of the new economy communal sociality has been transformed. According to Wittel (2001), communal sociality based upon shared historical narratives, close proximity, and a sense of belonging has been replaced by a 'network sociality' that is characterized by 'intense but ephemeral' relationships, the exchange of information, and the commodification of relationships. I did not observe many aspects of this new sociality in my participants' reports. Instead, I argue that the rise of the new economy has not altered the fact that networking in the film and television industry remains an embodied process that builds upon shared historical narratives. My participants developed their networks primarily in actual work environments and then actively maintained those relationships even after the completion of a project, contradicting Wittel's (2001) concept of 'intense but ephemeral' relationships.

In addition to the embodied nature and continued maintenance of my participants' networks, I also found that they distinguished between genuine relationships based upon actual shared work experience and/or friendship and 'inauthentic' imitations of such relationships. My participants preferred to develop their networks through work or based upon recommendations from trusted sources and generally avoided networking events like those Wittel (2001) researched, precisely because they could see through the inauthentic premise of such meetings. Ultimately, I found Wittel's

(2001) version of ‘network sociality’ to be mostly inapplicable to my participants’ experiences and argue that networking in the film and television industry is an embodied, genuine, managed, and selective on-going process. As such, I found that the existing models for mapping networks could not accurately represent my participants’ multi-layered, complex networks. Instead I developed a new model that places the individual at the centre of a set of concentric circles. Moving out from the individual at the centre, each circle represents a different tier (core, intermediate, periphery) of my participants’ networks. The boundaries between tiers are permeable and members of my participants’ networks often moved across these tiers depending upon their work and life circumstances. As my participants were also mobile workers, this model demonstrates that they carried their networks with them when they changed jobs or locations and thus better reflects how networks in the film and television industry operate. This new model places the individual at the centre of their network rather than portraying them as a member of an existing network with static boundaries.

Friends played a large role in my participants’ networks. As discussed in Chapter 4 friendships are not often accounted for in organizational analyses and hence my thesis makes a contribution to the understanding of how friendships influence and constitute work environments in the new economy. When friendships have been analysed it has been from functional standpoints (Grey and Sturdy 2007). However, friendship relationships made up a large portion of my participants’ networks, illustrating the blurring of the traditional friend/colleague divide. The women I interviewed worked with friends and socialized with colleagues to the point that distinctions between the two became less discernible. Friends often played key roles in helping participants secure employment and as such this is an aspect of work in the film and television industry and in paid employment in general that deserves greater scrutiny and future study. Understanding the process individuals use when deciding to recommend friends for certain job positions, and how they decide whom of their friends to contact within specific contexts would lead to a greater understanding of the hiring process within the industry. As part of this it would be useful to study how gender influences this process. As discussed throughout this thesis, people have a tendency to hire and develop networks with others who are similar to themselves in sex, race, age, and

class. In the future, I would like to map more specifically men and women's career histories and analyse from a gendered perspective who suggested them for new positions to gain greater understanding of networking decision-making in relation to gender.

My research also suggests that women may prefer networks comprised of medium-to-strong ties. This differs from Granovetter's (1973) thesis regarding the strength of weak ties in networking. Several of my participants cited gendered socialization and behavioural norms as potential reasons why women might find it easier to network through pre-existing relationships. However, more research would be needed to discern whether or not this is a gendered preference. It is possible that men also prefer to network in this way. I also argued that the size of my participants' quasi-formal networks may influence the instrumentality of the network, based upon the reports of participants who belonged to different local chapters (Los Angeles and Chicago) of the same larger organization (Women in Film). Once quasi-formal networks cross a size threshold, they may lose the ability to facilitate communication and maintain a sense of community among their members, making it difficult for individuals participating in these networks to place trust in an organization with low levels of familiarity among members. Furthermore, some of my participants preferred the women-only quasi-formal networks they participated in to be both instrumental *and* solidaristic. This represents an original finding. They were interested in furthering their own careers, but they also wanted these quasi-formal networks to advocate for women in the larger industry.

In addition to their networking practices I also analysed my participants' reports of mentors. The mentoring relationships my participants took part in were rarely established through formal mentoring schemes that can be found in more traditional work environments. Instead, mentors and protégés tended to establish their relationships informally, usually, but by no means exclusively, through shared work environments. Mentors gave my participants access to information and feedback they might not have otherwise received in addition to extending my participants' networks. As discussed in Chapter 4, based on my data it was not possible to discern my participants' preferences regarding a mentor's gender. I think it would make for

an interesting future study to analyse these informal relationships from both the protégés' and the mentors' perspectives of the relationship. Based upon my research, it appears that gender may be less important than matching communication preferences, compatible personalities and work styles, as well as relevant knowledge. My research supports Bozeman and Feeney (2008) 'goodness of fit' model to a limited extent, as I did not have access to my participants' mentors nor could I observe the two parties interacting together. However, given my participants' reports of what worked well for them in mentoring relationships future studies might find Bozeman and Feeney's (2008) model useful as a starting point as it is particularly focused on informal networks and therefore well-suited to the mentoring that occurs in the film and television industry.

As networks and mentors are important, even vital, components of a successful career in the industry, I concluded Chapter 4 by analysing a common career path in the contemporary industry for new entrants in order to demonstrate how these relationships were used by my participants. My research supports Caldwell's (2008) characterization of above-the-line career paths in that avenues of entry are difficult to discern, particularly for outsiders and newcomers. As opposed to the more traditional apprenticeships many below-the-line workers participate in, which are more reminiscent of the on-the-job skills training characteristic of previous industry eras, the women I interviewed participated in what I call 'ethnographic apprenticeships,' a new term that I think more accurately describes the kind of apprenticeships above-the-line workers experience. They participate in the ethnographic apprenticeship through their immersion in an active work environment and their subsequent socialization into the practices and culture of the film and television industry. Interestingly, some participants commented on the gendered nature of the relationships they had with male bosses and the feminized tasks they were asked to complete while working as assistants. One participant reported being assigned tasks she did not think a man in her position would have been expected to do and another described the assistantship as an 'ersatz spousal relationship' echoing Pringle's (1988) research on secretaries. It would certainly make for an interesting research project to further investigate how male and female assistants in the film and television industry experience gender in relation to their work and how the gender of

a superior affects the interpretation of task assignment. While the tasks associated with assistantships were not especially unique to the industry, the assistant position's actual value was in the network contacts my participants made during this time which enabled them to take the next steps in their professional careers.

In Chapter 5 I analysed my participants' reports of their encounters (or lack thereof) with sexism and discrimination in the film and television industry. The sexism and discrimination my participants described ran the spectrum from subtle to overt. I used social role theory as a starting point for my analysis and paid specific attention to the prescriptive and descriptive gender stereotypes and behaviours that my participants discussed. Through this interweaving of social role theory and feminist production studies, it became clear that, similar to women in other industries, the women I interviewed faced gender-based barriers to career success that are often rooted in out-dated stereotypes. My participants' reports demonstrate that traits typically associated with women, communal traits, continue to influence how women are viewed in the workplace. Similarly to women in other industries, when my interviewees were viewed as 'violating' these norms by exhibiting more agentic qualities and not simultaneously maintaining their communal traits, my participants noticed that they, or their coworkers, were considered less likeable. This supports the work of Diekmann and Goodfriend (2006), Prentice and Carranza (2002), Rudman and Glick (2001), Bosak, Sczesny, and Eagly (2012), and Eagly and Karau (2002). The women I interviewed discussed how they 'navigated' their womanhood and tailored their femininity to specific situations and individuals they encountered in their work environments, further evidencing that organizations and work in the new economy continue to be informed by conventional gender norms despite the gender-neutral narrative of neoliberalism.

Similar to women working in other sectors, pregnancy and childcare were two primary issues my participants had difficulty negotiating in conjunction with their careers. Women who did and did not have children spoke about the difficulties of combining a full-time career with parenthood. Those who anticipated having children and combining a career in the future pre-emptively considered the impact of pregnancy, birth, and childcare on their work lives. Interestingly, several of my

participants shared the view that this was a gendered issue in that they did not observe parenthood impacting on their male counterparts' careers to the same degree. Furthermore, my data at least partially supports Bass' (2014) research concerning couples' expectations of future parenthood. I did not interview my participants' partners about anticipated parenthood, but the women who discussed this issue exhibited similar views to the women in Bass' (2014) work. Several of the women I interviewed who expected to have children in the future were already pre-emptively attempting to anticipate and mitigate the impact of children on their careers. This was an activity they did not see their male peers participating in. These observed gender divisions contradict the supposed emancipatory powers of the new economy demonstrating that despite the gender-neutral, meritocratic narrative associated with work in the new economy of film and television, women continue to confront and deal with particular gendered assumptions that accompany parental responsibilities.

Some of the industry's practices (reliance on reputation, niche marketing, gender stereotyped products, the use of agents) created additional challenges for my participants (Bielby 2009; Bielby and Bielby 2002). My participants reported that they were reluctant to address sexism in the workplace too strenuously because they did not want to damage their professional reputations which in turn would diminish their employment opportunities. Instead, the women I interviewed talked about their strategies to avoid sexist and discriminatory individuals and work environments. They sought information through their networks and agents in order to increase their chances of working in a 'woman friendly' environment. They also used their networks to disseminate information regarding their experiences with particularly problematic coworkers and/or organizations. While my participants tried to avoid sexist and discriminatory encounters, there were times when this was unavoidable due to decisions made by superiors. Overall, there appeared to be little recourse when sexism and discrimination occurred in film and television work environments. The inequality present in the industry has become highly normalized and is viewed as an unfortunate but given reality.

Despite this normalization, the majority of my participants sought to establish solidarity among women working in film and television. They acted as advocates for

women in the industry in their current positions with the power they possessed. Furthermore, they reported ‘banking’ mental lessons regarding workplace practices that they liked and disliked with the anticipation that they would be able to act upon such lessons in their future careers when they had more power and were higher in the industry hierarchy. They acted as mentors and support networks for one another and were hopeful for the future of women in film and television work. In general, my participants advocated for the increased presence of women in film and television work in ways that were congruent with their current career positions. This represents an original finding. While previous research in the field has examined the continued unequal gender representation behind-the-scenes in film and television and has also investigated women’s experiences as well as the high reliance on networks for hiring purposes, this is the first time solidarity among women in the industry has been researched. The women I interviewed were, by and large, committed to empowering and increasing the presence (both on and off screen) of other women in the industry.

My research has made contributions to the fields of media studies, feminist production studies, women’s studies, and film and television studies through a critical analysis of women’s reported experiences of work in the contemporary US film and television industry from a feminist perspective. As previously stated, the majority of my participants were white, heterosexual, middle to upper-middle class, and educated. Future research should be expanded to include more experiences of minority women working in film and television, paying particular attention to how race, ethnicity, sexuality, and socioeconomic class influence the ability for individuals to enter into work in film and television, and how these intersectionalities impact on individuals’ inclusion/exclusion from networks, which as discussed are by far the most prominent means of recruitment and hiring in the industry. The primary contribution of this project has been the illumination of how women in varied occupations negotiate paid employment in the contemporary US film and television sector, a masculinized industry that is emblematic of paid employment in the new economy. The subjective experiences of women working behind-the-scenes in film and television in the contemporary US industry is a topic that has not been widely explored in the literature. Quantitative studies and reports on the gender inequality present in the industry help illustrate this fact, but rarely have studies articulated the

reported experiences of women actually working in this male-dominated environment, particularly from a US perspective. Ultimately, I think continued study of this industry that pays particular attention to the subjective experiences of minorities as well as investigating how the white, heterosexual, male majority considers these issues is necessary in order to adequately address the inequalities in film and television work. My research suggests that sexism and discrimination continue to inhibit women's equal representation and success in this industry, despite popular claims citing the meritocratic, gender-blind nature of film and television work in the new economy. The fact that inequality exists within the industry is relatively common knowledge, but this project has helped articulate *how* this inequality impacts on women's career experiences in the US and what inequality in the industry looks like to the women who work in these environments on a daily basis.

Over the life of this project inequality in film and television, both on and off-screen, has become a hot topic. Campaigns such as #AskHerMore, from the team behind the documentary *MissRepresentation* (<http://therepresentationproject.org/>), encourage journalists to ask female celebrities and producers substantive questions as opposed to the ubiquitous 'Who are you wearing?!' Individual actresses, producers, writers, directors, and executives are increasingly calling attention to the gender pay gap in Hollywood as well as the limited range of projects that highlight women's and other minorities' experiences. These initiatives continue to gain attention with celebrity backing and popular support. Organizations such as The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (<http://seejane.org/>) have funded and publicized studies on inequality in the industry in cooperation with academic institutions, written opinion pieces, created programming, and organized conferences. It has been incredibly encouraging to observe the transformation from very little examination of these issues to the increased public and industry-based awareness of the lack of diversity in this sector. This project has helped illuminate the subjective experiences of women working in film and television in the US and these articulations contribute to the continued efforts aimed at establishing equality in the industry.

Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Professional History

Could you tell me about how you first got involved in film/TV production/work?

- When did you first realize you wanted to work in this industry? Was it something you were always interested in?
- What were your expectations of working in the industry when you first started? Have they changed? If so, how?
- What has helped you advance in your field and/or the wider industry?
- Have you ever considered a different career? If so, what were some of the reasons?

Current work environment/Gendered aspects of current work

Is your current position the role you imagined yourself in or was/is it something else?

Could you tell me a bit about your current workplace? Or if freelance, your area of the industry?

- Size?
- What is the hierarchy like?
- Are most of your colleagues men or women?
- What are your relationships with co-workers like?
- How do you find new jobs/hear about different opportunities?

In what ways do you think being a woman impacts on your career?

- Could you talk about how you think being a woman influences the projects you work on?
 - Have you ever thought these opportunities might be different if you were a guy?
- Could you tell me about any pressures that you think are unique to women working in your field?
 - If/When you talk about these issues, what are some of the ways people react? Men vs. women?
 - Have you ever wanted to talk about these issues, but held your tongue? Why/Why not?
- How do you think men and women in your area of the industry compare in terms of opportunities for success? For advancement?
- Do you recall an instance in your career when you were suddenly very cognizant or aware of being a woman? Heard of this happening to other female colleagues/friends?

In what ways do you think production work is woman-friendly?

What do you think are some of the best aspects of working in this industry? What do you love about your job?

What satisfaction do you get from working in this industry that you might not find somewhere else?

- How do you find ways to express yourself creatively within the current industry structure?

Could you talk a bit about what people you know/meet outside of the industry think about your job vs. what the daily reality of your job is?

In what ways do you feel included in (excluded from) the professional networks and/or associations for your field?

How do you take care of your professional reputation?

Future career/views on the wider industry

With all the changes affecting the industry, how do you envision the future of women in film/TV production/work?

What do you think some of the biggest challenges will be for your future in film/television?

What advice would you give to a woman that is just starting out in your profession?

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Letter

Hello,

My name is Sara Cait Rogan and I am a doctoral researcher in the Centre for Women's Studies at the University of York in the United Kingdom. I am inviting you to participate in a research project that examines women's professional lives in the production of film and television works. My aim is to illuminate women's lived experiences of working in this business across different occupations. As a woman employed in this industry your expertise and specific knowledge will contribute to a greater understanding of how women negotiate the unique environment of film and television production work. Your participation will not only aid my individual research but will help future students and researchers gain a valuable perspective on a largely ignored aspect of labour in film and television production.

I would like to interview you about your experiences as a woman working in this industry. The interview will last approximately one hour and will be recorded with a digital voice recorder. This recording will then be transcribed into print form for use in the development of my doctoral thesis and subsequent publications. Any personal identifying features, professional associations, or references will be changed to maintain your anonymity and you may refuse to answer any questions, ask to speak off the record, or stop the interview at any point.

If any questions arise please feel free to contact me at any time. Furthermore, should you know of anyone else that may be interested in participating in this study, please let me know so that I may contact them.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sara Cait Rogan
Doctoral Candidate
Centre for Women's Studies
University of York, YO10 5DD, United Kingdom
email: scr514@york.ac.uk

Appendix C: Consent Form

I, _____, confirm that my participation in this study is voluntary. I understand the purpose of this study and give the researcher (Sara Cait Rogan) permission to use recordings and transcriptions of my interview in the development and publication of her doctoral thesis and any subsequent publications. I also understand that the thesis and any other publications will be available in libraries (both physical and electronic) and in academic journals in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

I understand that every effort will be made to maintain my anonymity, that the information I give will be used for research and educational purposes and that this project has gained ethics approval from appropriate bodies. I confirm that I have the researcher's (Sara Cait Rogan's) contact information and will contact her should any problems arise and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions.

Printed name of participant: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Printed name of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Participant Information Questionnaire

All information you provide will remain anonymous and shall only be used by the researcher (Sara Cait Rogan) for the purposes of this study and subsequent publications.

Name:

Date of Birth:

Race/Ethnicity:

Marital/Partnership Status:

Children (number and ages):

How many years have you worked in production?

How many distinct job titles have you held during your time in the industry? (circle 1)

1 2 3 4 5+

Current job title:

Do you intend to continue working in film/tv/video production/work in the future?

Appendix E: Participant Mini-Biographies

(Interviews conducted June-August 2013)

Los Angeles

Anabelle, who originates from Orange County, California, was 29 years old and worked as a **writer's assistant** in Los Angeles. She had worked in the business since graduating from university in 2007. Anabelle began her career in the industry as an assistant and intended to have a successful career as a television writer. She typically put in twelve-hour days at her office in addition to working on her own writing on the weekends. Anabelle was single, had no children, and joked that she had absolutely no social life. Anabelle was Caucasian.

Danielle was a 33-year-old Los Angeles native and was a **vice president of current programming** at a major US network television studio. She had worked in the industry for 8 years. Danielle fell in love with television in her early teens and interned at several different entertainment organizations during the summers while she attended university. Danielle was single and had no children at the time of interview. She intended to continue with her career in the industry as she joked that she really wasn't qualified to do anything else, and she couldn't imagine another career where she would get to have as much fun. Danielle was Caucasian.

Emily, a 26-year-old Caucasian woman, worked as an **assistant to a talent agent** in Los Angeles. She was married with no children and had been working in the entertainment industry for three and half years as of 2013. She intended to pursue a career as a talent agent herself. A native of the American Midwest, Emily knew from an early age that she wanted to be an actress, but during her undergraduate degree in Los Angeles she discovered that she wanted to go in a different direction.

Grace, a 15-year veteran of the industry, worked as a **vice president of drama development** at a major US television network studio. Grace did not have childhood dreams of working in television, but she did know from an early age that she wanted to do something extraordinary. Grace was 40 years old and intended to continue working in television in the years to come. She was single with no children and Caucasian.

Gwen worked as an **executive producer/director** and had co-founded a production company and digital media company with her husband and partner. She had worked

in the film and television industry for over 20 years at the time of interview. She was Caucasian, 57 years old, married and had two children (one of whom was a step-child). Gwen intended to continue her career in the entertainment industry and was hopeful about the future of women in the business. Gwen was featured in a book about powerful female networks, which she referred to throughout the interview. She was a self-confessed serial mentor for young women in the industry and she knew how to rock a pair of red platform heels.

Jemma worked as a **television writer** in Los Angeles. She made the transition to Hollywood in 2002 after having a career in journalism. When she first started working in film and television, Jemma was on the executive track, but she eventually ‘confessed’ that her true passion was writing and made a transition. She was Caucasian, married, had one child, and was pregnant with her second at the time of the interview. She was 41 years old and intended to continue with her career as a television writer.

Kasey, a 36-year-old Caucasian woman, was a working **actress** in Los Angeles. In addition to performing on-camera, Kasey wrote and produced her own original work and was the Executive Director of an acting studio in Los Angeles where she also taught. She was married with no children at the time of interview and had been in the industry for 13 years. Kasey intended to continue working as an actress and coach.

Kathryn was 29 years old and worked as an **associate casting director**. She was from the American Midwest and graduated from university with a degree in theatre performance. She had 8 years of experience working in casting both in Chicago and Los Angeles. Kathryn was considering a return to school for her Master’s degree, but at the time of interview she intended to continue working in the entertainment business. Kathryn was engaged to be married, had no children, and was Caucasian.

Lilly, originally from the San Francisco Bay area, worked as a **television writer** in Los Angeles. She was 37 years old, married, and had two young children. She had been in the film and television industry for 14 years and had worked in several different capacities, always with the goal of writing in mind. Lilly did not remember a time in her life when she didn’t want to write and loved the fact that she got to go into work every day and make up stories. She worked with a partner, Olivia, as part of a writing team and joked that when the two first met they actually hated each other, but eventually became best friends. Lilly was Caucasian.

Lucia worked as an **art director** in reality television. She was of Costa Rican and Finnish decent. She was 33 years old and had worked in production for approximately 3 years following a career change. Her experience in reality television included travel abroad for extensive periods of time for location shoots as well as work in Los Angeles. Lucia worked on a freelance basis, was single with no children and intended to continue her career in production.

Mariah, a 28-year-old Caucasian, worked as a **manager of drama development** at a US network television studio. She had been in the industry for 5 years and had worked her way up from the assistant level. Mariah first became interested in the industry after taking several courses at university and had several internships before graduation. She lived with her boyfriend in Los Angeles and had no children. Mariah intended to continue working in television and thought it was important to not only have well-rounded female characters on television, but also have more talented women on staff behind-the-scenes.

Max was 49 years old at the time of interview. She was a **writer/producer** and a participant in the Producers' Guild of America Diversity Workshop. Max had been in the industry for 12 years and during that time had worked in research and non-fiction television. She was married with no children. In 2013 Max was developing a documentary project on the history of marriage. She also wrote television and movie scripts, some in partnership with her husband. Max was Caucasian.

Melanie, a 31-year-old African American woman, worked as the **executive assistant** to a successful writer/producer. She had worked in several capacities during her 11 years in the industry. Melanie did not grow up with the goal of working in television, but during her years at university she took several classes that piqued her interest in the industry. Melanie aspired to be a writer for television and was in the process of meeting several potential employers at the time of interview. She was in a long-term relationship with her boyfriend and had no children.

Nell worked as a **television writer** in Los Angeles. She was 33 years old and made the transition to working behind the scenes in 2010 after several years spent as an aspiring actress in New York and Los Angeles. She had worked on two different television shows as a staff writer at the time of interview and intended to continue her career as a television writer. Nell was engaged to be married, had no children and was Caucasian.

Penelope was 47 years old and worked as a **writer/director/producer** in Los Angeles. She had more than 25 years of experience in the industry and had worked in scripted and non-scripted television, feature films, development, production, and at a network. She was single with no children and Caucasian. At the time of interview Penelope was in the process of deciding whether or not she intended to continue her career in the industry.

Rachel was 31 years old and worked as a **screenwriter** in Los Angeles. She had worked in the industry for 8 years and made the transition from development work to writing. She had always been interested in writing and practiced in secret until she sent her work to some industry friends to read and make sure she 'didn't suck.' She was married with no children and was Caucasian. Rachel planned to continue her career as a screenwriter in the future.

Taylor was 48 years old and worked as a film and television **writer/director** in Los Angeles. She had been in the industry for over 25 years at the time of interview and intended to continue her career for as long as humanly possible. Taylor originally got into the industry with aspirations to be an actor and began writing her own material as a way to create roles for herself. She eventually began directing as well and had several projects in development in 2013. Taylor was Caucasian, single, and did not have children.

San Francisco

Marissa was originally from the Philippines where she started working in **video production**. She immigrated to San Francisco in 2003 and had since started her own video production company and worked as a host for a weekly television programme for the Filipino Channel. She was 35, married and had recently given birth to the couple's first child in 2013. At the time of interview Marissa was looking for work with a more predictable schedule and paycheck in the marketing sector, a field in which she also had previous work experience.

Chicago

Annie worked as a **senior producer** at a cable network. She was 27 years old and had worked in the industry for 5 years. Annie went to university in the Los Angeles area but did not want to live and work in the city after graduation. She was single with no children and Caucasian. At the time of interview Annie intended to continue her career in the industry but was unsure what that future looked like.

Becca had recently graduated from film school at the time of interview and was working as a freelance **director of photography** in Chicago. She was 22 years old and had worked in the industry for 2 years. Becca was interested in working in film from a young age and intended to continue her career in the industry in the years to come. She was single with no children and Caucasian.

Hallie worked as a freelance **gaffer** in the Chicago area. She was 20 years old and at the time of interview she had just graduated from film school. Hallie first developed an interest in film and television during high school when she worked for a local television station. She was single with no children and Caucasian. Hallie was primarily doing commercial projects in 2013 and looked forward to a time when she could get back into more narrative work.

Isabella was 37 years old and worked as a **director** in Chicago. She was also the **founder and creative director** of her own creative content agency. Isabella had worked in the industry for 12 years. She was married and had two young children at home and was pregnant with her third at the time of interview. Isabella was of Hispanic and Caucasian decent and intended to continue her career in the industry as of 2013.

Liana was 33 years old and worked as a **field-marketing specialist** for one of the industry's leading providers of production technology. She had worked in and around the industry for 11 years, mostly in the Chicago area. Liana was single with no children and Caucasian. Liana intended to continue working in the industry as of 2013.

Samantha was 35 years old and worked as an **executive producer** for a production house that did commercial and advertising work for global companies. She had worked in the industry for 14 years at the time of interview and began her career while still attending university. Samantha was passionate about having more women involved in the industry and worked with different organizations in Chicago with this aim. She was married, had a young child and was Caucasian. Samantha intended to continue her career in the industry.

Sasha was a 15-year veteran of the industry. She worked as a **documentarian** and as an **associate professor** of film and television at one of Chicago's universities. Sasha

was Caucasian, 41 years old, married and had a young child at the time of interview. She had a PhD in Film and Media Studies and was the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship for her documentary work. Sasha was working on her own projects in addition to her teaching responsibilities and intended to continue her career in the industry.

Susan was 31 years old and worked as a **supervising producer** in Chicago for a non-fiction television show. She went to college in the Los Angeles area and had worked in the industry for 8 years. Susan was married with no children and African American. At the time of interview Susan intended to continue her career in the industry.

Valerie had worked for 34 years in the industry. She spent much of her career as a **producer** in **public television** and worked as a lecturer in the film and television department at one of Chicago's universities at the time of our interview. Valerie was always interested in the arts and began working for public television when she graduated college. She was 57 years old and married with an adult stepson. Valerie intended to continue her career in the industry in one form or another as of 2013. She was Caucasian.

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