Precarious Creativity: Working Lives in the British Independent Television Production Industry

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Abstract

Broadcasting is undergoing a period of profound change. Convergence and digitisation are reshaping production and consumption. In the multi-channel environment, public service broadcasting (PSB) finds itself under threat, as traditional funding models are threatened by increased choice, new modes of delivery, and, for commercial public service broadcasters, a reduction in advertising revenue. In the UK, the industry base has undergone significant restructuring over the last twenty-five years. This has occurred following the creation of Channel 4 in 1982, and the emergence of the independent television production sector (ITPS), coupled with a steady process of employment and industry deregulation. Labour in the sector is now predominantly freelance (Skillset, 2006a, 2007a), and increasingly concentrated in the ITPS, largely in London but with growing production bases at a regional level. Furthermore, the independent sector itself is reshaping, from a sector predominantly made up of small 'one-man band' lifestyle companies, to the more commercially facing, vertically integrated 'super-indies' which now dominate the sector (Mediatique, 2004).

In this context of transformation, this thesis is an investigation of creative labour in the ITPS in the UK, focused specifically on factual television production. Based on extended qualitative research of a group of twenty individuals over a six-month period, and supplementary interviews with company managers, the research examines the nature of work and production for individuals in this industry. The sample is cross-generational and includes a wide range of production positions, from researcher to series producer. The research focuses on the consequences of casualisation and risk for television workers, exploring how they manage their careers in the face of rampant insecurity. Drawing on Sennett's (1998) method of narrative sociology, the thesis explores the personal consequences of flexible labour markets (of which television is exemplary) on working individuals. It focuses on the subjective response of individuals to working in this area of the cultural economy, exploring the attractions of cultural labour despite the ontological insecurity and (self)-exploitation which often accompanies such work. It examines the emergence of 'network sociality' (Wittel, 2001) in the creative labour market, and the implications of this for recruitment and access to the television industry. Finally, it utilises the notion of 'craft' (Sennett, 2006), in order to explore the impact of flexible accumulation on television workers' production values.

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Acknowledgements

Chapter 1. Introduction

This thesis is an investigation of the working lives of a group of individuals working in the independent television production sector (ITPS). It focuses on the nature of creative work in the sector, within the context of industry transformation, driven by wider economic and social transformations. Theoretically, it is concerned with investigating the nature of contemporary cultural work in this industry, where such labour is often highly casualised and de-regulated, where careers are managed through dense social networks, and where creative occupations have become psychological sites of intense affective investment and self-actualisation. In short, this thesis aims to connect global sociological changes that have occurred in the last thirty years, including flexible accumulation (Harvey, 1990), reflexive modernisation (Beck *et al*, 1994) and individualisation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), to comprehensive industry transformation within broadcasting; exploring the effect of these transformations on individuals working in this sector, their ability to do creative work, and their subjective attitudes to this work. This chapter introduces the scope of the research, the theoretical rationale behind it, and the methodological approach taken.

1.1 Broadcasting in transition

Television production in the UK is undergoing a period of profound change. These changes are economic, technological and cultural, and represent a clear challenge to broadcast television's cultural hegemony in a period of increasingly diverse and rich digital, multiplatform media content. Economically, the means of funding broadcasting is threatened by disruptive technological innovation. In the commercial sector, broadcasting has traditionally relied upon television advertising to fund production and generate profit; however, multi-channel television means that there are fewer viewers watching specific channels, leading to a dramatic fall in advertising rates (Nesta, 2006; Ofcom, 2004a). Technologically, the rise of the Internet, and high bandwidth download capacity, means that fewer people are watching television, further impacting on the advertising revenues that commercial broadcasters can command.[1]

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[1] According to a recent research survey of more than 2,400 households in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Japan and Australia, there is growing evidence that internet usage

Public service broadcasting is also facing challenges. For the BBC, these are painful times. The latest licence fee settlement with the Government means that it is forced to make 3 per cent annual savings, to meet a £2bn funding gap; ironically at a time when it feels compelled to diversify its offer and launch new channels in order to remain competitive, and offer a full choice of programming in an age of digital content. To meet this shortfall, significant job cuts are currently being made in core public service areas such as news, current affairs and factual programming (Conlan, 2007). Announcements have been made outlining 2,500 job cuts, plans to sell off the corporation's West London headquarters in Shepherd's Bush, and reduce the amount of television it makes by a tenth (Gibson, 2007).

Culturally, television is also facing a challenge to its dominance. Increasingly technological innovations through the internet, computer games, social networking and other forms of rich multimedia content are attracting growing numbers of people. For example, television shows such as *Coronation Street* were able to command audiences of 27m at their peak (Barker, 2005). However, year on year television viewing figures are down, as new forms of delivering and receiving content proliferate, and new forms of entertainment, such as computer games, appeal to more people. Now, it is extremely rare for any televised event or programme to be watched by more than 10 million people (BARB, 2007). As Anstead has noted:

> The media market has become atomized, not only because many homes have many more than the five terrestrial channels, but also because of the development of DVDs, computer games and the Internet. (2007)

Indeed, describing the changing 'ecosystem' of media consumption, Naughton has argued that television, in the form that we know it (the broadcast to the many by the few) is slowly but surely being replaced by more interactive forms of entertainment and information, which are facilitated by online environments:

> Twenty years ago, a show like *The Two Ronnies* could attract audiences of 20 million. Now an audience of 5 million is considered a success by any television

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now rivals television consumption time. For example, 66 per cent reported watching 1-4 hours of TV per day, whilst 60 per cent reported the same levels of internet use (Berman *et al*, 2007).

channel. In five years time, 200,000 viewers will be considered a miracle. (Naughton, 2006)

Using the metaphor of an 'ecology', Naughton argues that television is not about to disappear (as he argues, certain events such as a World Cup final are best disseminated through the few to many model), but that it will become increasingly marginal as a media form. Although television is still the most popular leisure activity, new research from Ofcom shows that the number of people watching the main channels (ITV and BBC) has declined dramatically (Ofcom, 2004b). As such, Naughton argues:

> Broadcast TV is being eaten from within, by narrowcast digital television - in which specialist content is aimed at subscription-based audiences and distributed via digital channels. But waiting in the wings is something even more devastating - Internet Protocol TV (IPtv) - television on demand, delivered via the internet. And it's coming soon to a computer screen near you. (Naughton, 2006)

The phenomenal success of the BBC iPlayer, an internet based application which allows viewers to watch the majority of BBC programmes up to seven days after being broadcast, would appear to confirm this prediction. Since launching on December 25 2007 with the promise of 'making the unmissable, unmissable', take-up has been remarkable. The last available figures for this thesis show that in April 2008, the total number of requests for downloads and streams of BBC programmes was 21 million, rising from 17.2 million and 11.2 million in January (Kiss, 2008).

1.1.1 The continued significance of television

Despite this context of transformation and adaptation, television remains of huge cultural significance. This is reflected in terms of consumption; regardless of declining audiences, television is still hugely popular. Its significance can also be seen in the way that shows such as *Big Brother* become sources of national discourse and media speculation (e.g. Coleman, 2006; Kilborn, 2003). It is reflected in the fact that 'fakery' scandals around television production are so high-profile (Kilborn, 2003: 150; Sanders, 2003: 53-62). And crucially, in terms of the focus of this thesis, it is also evident in the fact that independent television production is one of the largest areas of cultural employment in the UK, employing over 20,000 people (Skillset, 2007).[2]

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[2] With a further 20,800 working in terrestrial television according to the latest census figures (Skillset, 2007a).

Furthermore, it is likely that much of the content which delivers high audiences will continue to be made by production staff within production companies that operate with the economies of scale necessary to employ individuals with the requisite production skills, and to afford the equipment and technology which ensures the production quality that many audiences expect. The means of distribution may be changing radically and rapidly, but the desire for high quality content remains.

1.2 Studying creative labour in the independent television production sector

This thesis focuses on the production community and the nature of creative labour in the sector. More specifically, it is an investigation into the working lives of a small sample of individuals involved in the production of television, working in the independent television production sector (ITPS), largely as freelancers, some as staff employees or company managers, within this changing context. Furthermore, all of those studied work in the area known broadly as 'factual television' – encompassing current affairs, documentaries, 'reality' television, and factual entertainment shows.

The 'indie' sector has undergone rapid commercial growth and regulatory change in recent years (Hewlett, 2005; Martinson, 2005). Effectively brought into existence in 1982 with the creation of Channel 4, it is now one of the largest cultural production sectors in the UK (Skillset, 2006a). The ITPS is now a key sub-sector of the broadcasting industry, comprising of more than 800 UK-based companies (Mediatique, 2005).[3] Furthermore, the independent sector is an area of high growth set to generate revenues in 2005 of £820m solely from first-run commissions (ibid.: 3). Indeed, it is estimated that by 2011 the sector will be producing revenues from first-run commissions of over £1bn, not including programme and format sales (ibid.: 16). When other factors are taken into account, such as non-traditional sales, it is estimated that the sector could see revenues of £1.47bn by 2014.

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[3] The exact number of 'independent' production companies is a matter of some dispute. For example, Skillset, the sector skills council, assert that there are over 1,000 independent production companies (Skillset, 2006a). However, in their recent report on the sector, Mediatique (2005) have argued that there are in fact 800 companies that qualify for independent status under the relevant legislation, excluding those companies that have significant ties to a UK terrestrial broadcaster such as Talkback Thames (Five) and Granada Productions (ITV).

As chapter 3 will explore, the creation of Channel 4 in 1982, and the emergence of the independent production sector in its contemporary form, had a catalytic effect on the wider broadcasting industry, marking a movement from a relatively stable, highly unionised working environment, to a mode of production associated with flexible accumulation (Pratt, 1997; Saundry, 2001), notable for casualisation, a flexible network structure, and an absence of union activity (Sparks, 1994). Moreover, in recent years, the sector has changed again, away from the formative structure of a large number of small 'indies' – often known as 'one-man bands', that moved in a precarious fashion from commission to commission – to a more commercialised and consolidated sector, as evidenced by the rise of large production companies such as RDF and Endemol, who are able to corner a bigger share of the production market, and who can generate further income through the exploitation of intellectual property rights (Mediatique, 2004).

The rise of multi-channel television means that there are now far more outlets for independent production companies (IPCs) to produce content for. Regulatory change has also had an effect: the 1990 Broadcasting Act introduced the independent quota, under which 25 per cent of qualifying hours of broadcast television must be sourced from qualifying independent companies, creating a huge boost to the sector. More recently changes to the terms of trade between broadcasters and programme suppliers in the Communications Act 2003 now mean that IPCs are able to retain ancillary rights to the programmes they make. With non-first-run revenue sources such as merchandise, mobile, book tie-ins, and multi-channel TV now increasing, this is vital. Finally the BBC has announced a new initiative, the Window of Creative Competition (WOCC), which means that the broadcaster will make 50 per cent of its original programming budget available to outside suppliers.

These changes have significantly altered the structure of the independent television sector, bringing about the emergence of a small number of much larger IPCs producing content for an increasingly global market, with the smaller IPCs being squeezed out of the market. Research shows that we are witnessing a rapid commercialisation and growth of the independent sector, as global investors discover a rich source of profit (Mediatique, 2005). However, as the industry becomes more profit-

oriented, this research indicates that serious question marks hang over the future potential for creative innovation. In fact, recent research shows that there is an increasing 'innovation gap' between what public service broadcasters are delivering, and what the audience expects (Blinc Reseach, 2007).

1.2.1 Creative work in independent television

The independent television industry labour market is typical of those within the cultural industries, with a highly casualised, freelance workforce, characterised by precarious conditions of work.[4] Yet it was not always so. The television industry as a whole in the UK has undergone significant change to its employment structure since the late 1980s, having moved from being a highly unionised, stable labour environment, to a far more freelance, 'flexible' industry under the deregulating, de-unionising political dynamics of neoliberal policy reform (Sparks, 1994; Saundry, 2001). The structural reconfiguration of the broadcasting labour market was brought about, in part, as a result of industry-specific shifts such as the creation of Channel 4, which introduced an external commissioning structure to the industry, and acted as the catalyst for the growth of the 'indie' sector (Harvey, 2000). It also occurred as a result of a dominant 'neoliberal' policy environment from the 1980s onwards which favoured deregulation, deunionisation and free-market capitalism.[5] At a deeper level, this reconfiguration of the television industry has also occurred as a result of global socio-economic changes including the economic restructuration caused by flexible accumulation (Harvey, 1990) and the increased acculturation of the economy (Lash and Urry, 1994); the ideological impact of a deregulating, free-market enterprise culture (Keat and Abercrombie, 1991); and the sociological impact of 'reflexive modernisation' (Beck *et al*, 1994).[6]

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[4] See Miège (1989) for an overview of the historically precarious nature of employment in the cultural industries.

[5] The term 'neoliberal' has become highly confusing and problematic. Here, I refer to neoliberal as indicating policies which embody the belief that free unregulated markets are the most efficient way of organising capitalism. This will be explored further in the next chapter. However, suffice to say at this stage that there are many different versions of 'neoliberalism', some which are more radically in favour of total deregulation, whereas more recent iterations (most notably New Labour's version) favour a 'third way', encouraging free markets, with a focus on social justice (see Finlayson, 2000; also Harvey, 2005).

[6] These sociological issues and terminologies will be explained in chapter 2.

In recent years the digitisation of production, the rise of multiskilling, the continued growth of the indie sector, and increased multi-channel competition has increased the pace of change within the industry, arguably with a detrimental effect on production values and on the skills base within the industry (Ursell, 2003, Born, 2004: 194). Clearly, increasing casualisation has led to an erosion of training within the public service broadcasting environment, which was traditionally the training ground for the industry.

However, despite these shifts, there has been little academic research done into the independent television production sector, either in terms of analysing its structure and history, or in terms of examining its production environment and the nature of creative labour within it.[7] Addressing this gap, this thesis sets out to investigate creative work in the ITPS, in light of the transformations that have occurred within the broadcasting industry labour market from a more stable working environment, to the predominantly freelance, casualised, increasingly consolidated and highly commercialised industry that exists today.

1.2.2 Methodology

Methodologically, this study focuses on the working lives of twenty individuals working in the independent television production sector. This sample is cross-generational, and cross-occupational, ranging from junior researcher to series producer. The study is also supplemented by three interviews with a mixture of company directors and executive producers, who are responsible for hiring individuals, and were interviewed in order to gain a wider perspective on the labour market. The study is qualitative, with 'ethnographic intent' (Gray, 2003). The sample was studied between October 2005 and July 2006, with each participant studied longitudinally for six months by means of in-depth semi-structured interviews, diary and email evidence. The field research was concluded with a series of final interviews with my respondents. Although not an 'ethnographic' study in the conventional sense, the research was informed by elements of this methodology. Site visits were undertaken, as well as field visits to industry events. The research was conducted within the working milieu of these

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[7] For welcome exceptions to this trend, see Ursell (1997, 2000, 2003), Paterson (2001a, 2001b) and the British Film Institute (1999).

professionals, which included locuses of the informal 'night-time economy' (GLA, 2005) and café-culture, which constitute the environment where contacts are forged and deals done. Attention was paid to the narrative aspects of the respondent's talk about their work, demanding close listening and ethnographic attention to detail (Sennett, 1998). The site visits enabled this 'talk' to further be placed in the context of the workplace.

1.3 Research questions

The focus of this study is on the working lives and identities of these individuals. It is concerned with a number of key issues, which guide the empirical analysis in chapters 5–7. The research questions are directed at understanding the nature and implications of new forms of creative labour in the independent television industry. How do creative workers deal with such high levels of insecurity in their working lives? What is the impact of contemporary discourses such as 'creativity' and 'talent' on the work-based subjectivities of television workers? How important are personal qualities such as cultural capital in negotiating this precarious terrain? How does the 'network sociality' that is at work in the sector impact on the labour market, and on cultural diversity? What is the impact of a growing commercialisation and a changing production environment on production values? From these initial research questions, the empirical analysis is focused around specific areas, which are described below.

1.3.1 Insecurity, exploitation and emotional labour

The immediate focus of the research is on the material reality of an highly individualised, precarious working environment in the independent television industry. Drawing on sociological theories of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983, 2003), governmentality (Rose, 1989, 1999) and the 'humane workplace' (Ross, 2004), the research attempts to understand these individuals' subjective responses to the working conditions they find themselves in. A number of writers have pointed to the centrality of the cultural industries not only as the providers of symbolic content, but also as industrial sectors that act as templates for new models of production and labour in contemporary society (Florida, 2002; Leadbeater, 1999; McRobbie, 2004). Whether or

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not this is actually the case,[8] it is certainly true that work in the cultural industries labour markets is marked by a number of features which are becoming increasingly prevalent across all sectors of the economy. Cultural production tends to take place across mutually interdependent networks of production, where micro companies, or sole traders, provide services, often on a freelance basis for large media conglomerates. Production largely occurs within geographical 'clusters' within a creative ecology of small independent production companies, working to flexible arrangements for larger, often international companies, with a global reach. Under such conditions, creative labour markets are largely project based, freelance and insecure.

These features of work are all evident in the ITPS. Risk is devolved in this situation from the company to the individual, so the response to this insecurity is highly individualised. Self-exploitaiton is rife, hours are long, the work is deunionised, and there is no clear demarcation between work and leisure time. However, whilst there exist tremendous financial and creative rewards for the lucky few, it is also clear that the majority of workers in this sector put up with (and indeed often embrace) extraordinarily high levels of risk and self-exploitation, for the self-actualisation that comes from working in a 'creative industry'.

This thesis explores the material reality of working in the television industry, and then seeks to understand the attractions of this form of creative work. It is concerned with the individualised and subjective response of these workers to making a living in such a casualised sector of the cultural economy. If 'creativity' has become a discursive regime within late modernity, then how does this discourse work with disciplinary effect, as a highly effective 'technology of the self' (Foucault *et al*, 1988)?[9] Here, culture and economy elide, for it is increasingly clear that this discourse has an economic purpose, in that it works to validate particular ways of working, and as a disciplinary tool used to extract maximum efficiency and productiveness from cultural workers. As du Gay (1996)

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[8] Recent sociological evidence suggests that the 'portfolio career' as the future model of work across all sectors of the economy appears increasingly untenable. For example, the ESRC's Future of Work programme, which reported in 2002, actually noted that permanent employment was increasing in the UK, and the length of job tenure rising. See Taylor (2002).
[9] The concept 'technology of the self' comes from the work of Michel Foucault, and refers to the ways in which discourses have a regulatory effect on individuals through the process of subjectivisation, so that an individual's very subjectivity, their desires and needs, are shaped by these 'discursive regimes'. See Foucault (1988).

has shown, organisations make use of key discourses in order to embed particular values that are aligned with their economic interest at the level of subjectivity.

The ambivalence that creative workers feel about their work is also explored: on the one hand they feel the structural pains of uncertainty, risk and exploitation. On the other hand, they are enthused about the potential for creativity and self-actualisation that their work gives them. It is clear that increasingly cultural labour in post-industrial society has become a self-reflexive site encompassing values such as personal meaning, autonomy and self-fulfilment. These workers are not the traditional subjects of alienation and 'false consciousness' (Marx and Engels, 1959), rather creative labour offers them the opportunity to find 'pleasure in work' (Donzelot, 1991). Therefore, understanding labour processes in the independent television sector means understanding how powerful cultural discourses operate in the formation of economic subjects 'who have been configured to perform in, and understand, particular modes of discipline, subjects that are both subject to particular discourses and creators of them' (Amin and Thrift, 2004: xxi).

Therefore the research is concerned with analysing self-identity for these creative workers, exploring the tension between building a 'creative persona' (Nugent, 2004) within the neoliberal post-Fordist economic structures of late capitalism. As Slater and Tonkiss note, 'being a knowledge worker or cultural intermediary requires aestheticised work on the self and its presentation' (2001: 178). The culturalisation of the economy (Amin and Thrift, 2004; du Gay and Pryke, 2002) is particularly noticeable in the structuration of advanced capitalist labour markets, so that the creative, the affective and the emotional aspects of human experience have become part of a new mode of organisational management, closely linked to the exploitation and control of the workforce (du Gay, 1996; Heelas, 2002; O'Connor, 2004).

1.3.2 Network sociality, cultural capital and diversity

The thesis also investigates issues of access and exclusion to the television labour market. In common with other creative fields, television labour markets are increasingly organised through networks, where access can be highly opaque. My research shows that in the independent television industry one's 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1984) is

paramount as a determinant of success or failure.[10] High levels of cultural capital seem almost to be a precondition of success in the television industry, favouring individuals from better-off backgrounds, and from particular social class groups.

However, this research suggests a shift from the 'old boys club' which was evident in earlier studies of television (Tunstall, 1993). While social class and educational background still clearly play a role in terms of access to these industries, my research suggests that a networking dynamic now dominates, where new communication technologies elide with an emergent meritocratic subjectivity (Finlayson, 2000), and where advantage is clearly gained through the active exploitation of one's 'loose ties' (Granovetter, 1973). The 'network sociality' (Wittel, 2001) that is evidently in play within the labour markets of the cultural industries, and which functions as a way for my respondents to find work, in the place of transparent employment policies, means that job-finding, and ultimately success in this field becomes a highly opaque process.

Furthermore, the necessity for the majority of people entering the industry to work for nothing also favours individuals with high levels of economic capital, who can afford to undertake unpaid work experience for extensive periods of time (Skillset, 2005b). Clearly, this impacts negatively on the diversity of the television workforce, as it remains largely a white, middle-class dominated industry (ibid). In turn this impacts on the creativity of the sector, as it is widely recognised that creativity occurs in diverse and open contexts (Jeffcut and Pratt, 2002). In this thesis I explore the implications of a network culture on the cultural diversity of the industry, and the subsequent questions this raises for creative expression.

1.3.3 Production values

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[10] The issue of cultural capital will be outlined in greater depth in chapters 2 and 6, but in brief, Bourdieu argues that cultural capital is accumulated over a lifetime and is transmitted through numerous processes of formal and informal education and membership of social groups (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993). As Johnson notes, cultural capital 'equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts' (Johnson, 1993: 7). Cultural capital, when legitimated, is converted into symbolic capital and gains prestige and recognition. The conversion of cultural capital to symbolic capital occurs for the middle classes, and is a means by which their tastes and dispositions are coded as inherently 'correct'. This works to exclude different (working class, minority group) cultural tastes and competencies as hierarchically inferior to those of the middle class, which translates into a pervasive form of inequality (Lawler, 2000: 116).

Finally, I investigate how the transformed production environment within the ITPS impacts on the production values and the content being produced. In considering the nature of production in this sector, I explore the impact that this production environment has on the production values of the production community, and on the possibilities for the development of craft skills over time.[11] My research shows two key forces impacting acting to constrain certain forms of creativity and innovation within this sector. The first is a structural shift: as the industry becomes more commercialised, there is less space for innovative, challenging, risk-taking programming. This can be seen in the endless production of derivative 'reality' programming, as broadcasters are forced to take fewer risks in a far more commercially competitive multi-channel and multi-platform environment. The second force is microcosmic, at the level of production and the individualisation of risk within creative labour markets. Here it is evident that the structure of the labour market within this sector has a clear impact on the individual ability to be creative, and on the production values within organisations. As Ursell has commented:

> There is a relative silence on the issue of what happens to media production arrangements under different regulatory regimes. In particular, there seems to be a failure to consider that changes in conditions of work and employment have consequences for the extent to which television workers find themselves able to meet professional goals and standards, or perhaps begin redefining their notions of professionalism. (2003: 34)

In addition, my research indicates that a more precarious working environment produces a less diverse, more homogenous workforce (Holgate and McKay, 2007). Paradoxically, this study shows that the culture of risk-taking that is evident in building a creative career, does not seem to extend to creating the programme content itself, as more producers are forced to 'play it safe' in order to secure their next contract. Therefore, despite the rhetoric associated with the notion of the 'creative economy' (DCMS, 1998; Smith, 1998a, 1998b; Florida, 2002), there is evidence that the growing penetration of market forces into this cultural industry are impacting on the very conditions that breed creativity and innovation.

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[11] This follows Ursell, who has argued that casualization and flexible labour market conditions have had a significant impact on the production 'values' of factual television (2003: 44); and Sennett (2006), who argues that contemporary flexible capitalism militates against the development of craft skills at work.

1.4 Re-evaluating creative work

This study positions itself within the wider academic re-evaluation of creative labour that is currently occurring within media studies, sociology, cultural studies, economic geography and associated disciplines. Since 1997, with the rhetoric of the 'creative industries' becoming a central pillar of the UK Government's focus on a 'knowledge economy', much emphasis has been placed on the 'creative industries' as drivers of economic growth *and* social policy agendas (such as education, social inclusion and urban regeneration).[12] The growth in the number of people entering into creative labour fields is dramatic; as is the number of young people undertaking degrees in the hope of entering these fields. The latest statistics from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) show that the number of students enrolled in media courses has grown between from 13,600 to 26,700 between 2001 and 2006 (Dewsbury and Vincent, 2006). These sectors have become glamorised sites of intense affective investment – perceived by some as spheres for the attainment of self-actualisation (Ross, 2004; McRobbie, 2002b). Yet the reality of work in these sectors has been widely neglected by policy-makers, and to a certain extent by academics, who have often focused on media consumption and forms of macro-political economy.

This situation is now changing. In recent years, there has been an explosion of interest in creative work. The findings of numerous writers have provided evidence of an emerging broader picture where creative work is now understood as an exemplary site of post-Fordist labour, in that it is highly casualised, often exploitative, deregulated, a sphere for affective investment, where work-based subjectivities are oriented towards embracing the discourses and practices of contemporary capitalist accumulation and production (e.g. Gill, 2002; Neff, 2005; Ross, 2004; McRobbie, 1998, 2002b; Hesmondhalgh, 2007).

Therefore, studying cultural production in this manner raises broader questions about the nature of work in what Sennett (2006) has called 'the new capitalism', an age of deregulated global capital flows which intensifies individual insecurity and exploitation,

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[12] The Department for Culture, Media and Sport divides the creative industries into thirteen sub-sectors, which comprise of advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer-fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, television and radio (DCMS, 1998).

unsettling the life narratives of individuals, whilst seeking to deliver shareholder return. The nature of work in the ITPS is paradigmatic of a new mode of flexible labour, where the 'spectre of uselessness' hangs over many of its workers, as craft skills are displaced by 'potential', 'flexibility' and mobility (Sennett, 2006). It is the networker, able to move between different spheres and make deals, who is now the feted figure within capitalism, and so too within the cultural industries.

Indeed, it is the restless, dynamic, anti-authoritarian, creative figure of the 'network-extender' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005), who is the contemporary ideal-type worker that has been so relentlessly promoted within management discourse since the 1970s. With the promise of 'autonomy', work within the new capitalism becomes a zone for internalised control, where individuals actively invest in the accumulation of personal capital through engagement with project-based work. The kind of work epitomised within the 'creative industries', and the enthusiastic response of insecure, exploited individuals to this kind of work, is of growing theoretical importance. It is in this mode of work that we can see how capitalism has managed to produce a new ideology and modality of work which incorporates the 'artistic critique' of capitalism that emerged in the 1960s, in that it advocates authenticity, self-expression and *freedom*, whilst simultaneously creating a more ruthlessly efficient, individualistic and asocial mode of capital accumulation than ever before. Therefore, studying television workers also provides an opportunity to see how individuals in such labour markets respond to the prevailing conditions, and to speculate on what this means in terms of work and capitalism in the creative economy.

1.4.1 From public service to privatised growth?

Finally, in studying the television production labour market, I am concerned with the importance of the cultural industries as spheres of cultural and political influence, which form a crucial part of the 'public sphere' (Habermas, 1989). I should preface any discussion about the public sphere in relation to this study by saying that my sample is small, and therefore any conclusions must be tentative. Moreover, it was beyond the scope of this study to examine television content, as my focus was on working lives. However, despite that, the evidence from this research chimes with other recent reseach in this field (e.g. Born, 2004; Ursell, 2003) which suggests that a deregulated,

commercialised environment is detrimental to creativity within the broadcasting industry, which in turn must surely impact on the nature of the public sphere?

This need to examine the conditions of contemporary cultural production is therefore not purely a matter of theoretical interest, but also a pressing issue for the health or otherwise of the public sphere and on the quality of commercially produced cultural products. For example, recent research has shown that the often exploitative and deregulated working conditions faced by television workers has had a direct impact on the quality of content produced and on the creative health of the industry (Ursell, 2003). As Ursell has pointed out, 'the values of completeness and factualness have already been tested and damaged by tightened budgets, reduced manpower, raised workloads, and accelerated production schedules' (2003: 44). Similarly research by Gitlin (1994) has shown that rampant commercialism coupled with a corporate desire to avoid risk in contemporary cultural production (in prime-time television in the US) leads inevitably to creative stagnation and formulaic repetition. Moreover, McRobbie's (1998) work on the fashion industry again shows the damaging impact that a hyper-commercialised environment has on creative incubation. This relationship between the working conditions of cultural production and the creative content produced is a key area of this research that is explored in the analysis chapters to follow.

An empirical analysis of the impact of new modes of production and a transformed labour market on the public sphere is beyond the scope of this thesis. But it is important to signal that it is an issue that pervades the entire rationale for this thesis. Ultimately, the research is not concerned with an analysis of television's working conditions for the sake of it, but rather because of the significance of this area of employment at a cultural and political level. Ironically, this thesis describes a field – television production – that many have argued is on the verge of vanishing, under the impact of digitisation, interactivity and transformations in the structure of audience demand. Moreover, television production, as it has been known, is facing new and highly powerful threats as outlined at the start of this chapter. Yet if by television we mean the production of visual content for a wider audience, then this will surely remain, even if the medium for watching it is no longer the television set as we know it.

For that reason, I believe it remains crucial to study the conditions under which this form of cultural production occurs, as the forces of commercialism push out older public service ideals. Ultimately we must question the cultural cost of heading relentlessly down such a path. As Sussman notes, 'As an institution that links citizen to civil, state and economic society, television cannot be entrusted to motives that serve only profit and that inevitably lead to insatiable commercialism and tabloid excesses' (2002: 10).

1.5 Overview of chapters

The following outline of chapters is intended to guide my reader through this thesis. In Chapter 2, I outline the theoretical and empirical work that contributes to an understanding of creative labour within contemporary society. I engage with three strands of literature here. First, I outline television production studies as a key field within media studies, first discussing key texts from the early generation of production studies, and then turning to the more contemporary studies which serve to contextualise my own work. I then provide an overview of the central social, political and economic transformations that have occurred within recent decades and which are central to an understanding of contemporary creative labour markets. This section engages with contemporary theoretical debates to do with neo-liberalism, reflexive modernisation, individualisation and governmentality. Finally, this chapter engages with those texts which have analysed cultural production in the wake of these transformations, where issues such as networks, affective labour, and casualisation have become prominent.

Chapter 3 then focuses on the field of study, presenting a historical and political economic account of the emergence of the the independent television production industry in the UK. As well as describing the key policies and events that contributed to the emergence of the ITPS, this chapter also provides a detailed account of New Labour's policies towards creativity and the creative industries, which have been central to shaping broadcasting policy since 1997. Chapter 4 assesses methodological and epistemological issues. This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of my methodological approach, my epistemological location during the research process and the ways in which this has shaped my methodological framework. This chapter also describes the research sample, the methods of analysis and the longitudinal approach of the study.

Chapters 5–7 present the empirical findings of the fieldwork, in the areas outlined earlier. Chapter 5 is concerned with insecurity, exploitation and emotional labour within the ITPS. Chapter 6 describes the centrality of network sociality for my participants, and analyses the importance of cultural and social capital in this field. Chapter 7 then investigates the impact of the precarious working conditions and the dominant discursive values of the industry upon my participants' production values.

Finally, the thesis concludes with an overview of the key findings and contributions of the research. While acknowledging the limitations of a small-scale study such as this, it then reflects on the implications of the findings for the wider broadcasting industry. Finally, it tentatively considers the implications of the 'creative turn' not only for the ITPS, but for wider society under conditions of contemporary capitalism.

Chapter 2. Creative labour and social change

This chapter explores the theoretical concerns of this thesis, providing an intellectual context for the study of television production. First, it provides a brief overview of foundational theoretical engagements with the cultural industries, demonstrating the continued relevance of studying cultural production. Second, it examines the key literature specific to television production in order to illustrate the scale of the transformation that has occurred within the industry during that period, exploring the shift from a heavily regulated, highly unionised, secure sphere of employment, to the deregulated, commercialised and casualised industry that exists today. Third, it provides an account of the macro-sociological and structural changes that have occurred globally since the 1970s, which necessitate a renewed look at creative labour as a focus of intense sociological and political interest. Finally, it provides a critical analysis of the key research which has looked afresh at emergent features of creative labour in recent years, where questions of emotional labour, autonomy, subjectivity and exploitation coincide.

In order to make sense of the dynamics of production within the independent television industry, this chapter undertakes three different levels of analysis. First, at the organisational level, specifically focused on television production, it is vital to recognise and understand the significance of specific changes within the broadcasting landscape that have underpinned the formation of the independent television industry as we know it. In terms of labour processes, this is the shift from a heavily unionised, stable working environment, based around a duopoly between the BBC and ITV, to a flexible, casualised, precarious labour market. This chapter focuses on the literature that has examined television production, in order to demonstrate the scale of the changes that have occurred within this area.

Second, at a 'macro' level, the chapter then puts these transformations in a broader context by assessing the significance of global economic, political and sociological transformations, including flexible accumulation, the rise of neoliberalism, and the emergence of new modes of selfhood and society as a result of 'reflexive modernisation' (Beck *et al*, 1994). This provides an outline of the structural, ideological and sociological changes which have accompanied the transformation of cultural labour.

The shift from a Fordist economy based around mass production, to a post-Fordist economy based around an advanced service economy (in the wealthy developed world at least), is central to understanding the valorization of creativity in the contemporary historical juncture. As Castells (1996) has argued, society is increasingly organised around global networks of exchange, both culturally and also economically, leading to supra-national organisations, and institutional actors who operate on a global scale. As the economy becomes increasingly networked, so too has labour become more precarious, as network processes constantly threaten to 'switch off' unproductive nodes in the circuit.

The ideological shift towards a free-market, deregulating mode of politics, known as *neoliberalism*, underpins these structural changes, and its influence can certainly be detected in broadcasting policy decisions that have impacted on the restructuring of the television industry, as explored in the previous chapter. At the sociological level, it is argued that the emergence of an increasingly 'reflexive' modernity has brought about a dynamic of *individualisation*, where, in the context of the accelerated disembedding of individuals from traditional social structures, they increasingly seek to fashion their own selves from a bewildering plethora of lifestyle possibilities, seeking self-actualisation in both their personal and professional lives (Giddens, 1991). In this chapter, I argue that individualisation and the compulsion to be an 'autonomous' choosing individual can also be understood as a form of 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1991), which encourages the subject to act upon herself in ways that are aligned to neoliberal values, through the practices of 'freedom' (Rose, 1999).

Third, at the 'micro' level of individual identity within creative working environments (and the 'cultural economy' more broadly), I analyse the literature that has looked at questions of identity, subjectivity, individualisation and emotional labour within the cultural industries. There, the issues of autonomy, affect, precariousness, exploitation and exclusion emerge consistently in the more recent research on the cultural industries. In attempting to make sense of the significance of new modes of work in the cultural industries, researchers have drawn on a number of theoretical approaches, and explored a variety of pressing features including: the re-emergence of class and gender divisions in cultural production, as new hierarchies emerge which exclude particular groups from creative labour (McRobbie, 2000; Gill, 2002); the

significance of 'immaterial labour' (drawing on the work of Lazzarato, 1996), where creative industries are seen as representative of a new mode of capitalist accumulation with labour increasingly based on knowledge, skills, and affect (Neff, 2005; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005); the importance of *individualisation* and *reflexive modernisation* as tools for understanding new modes of creative labour, where such work offers opportunities for self-actualisation and the reflexive shaping of the self as an ongoing project (McRobbie, 2004; Ursell, 2000); the concept of 'precarity' and 'risk' in increasingly insecure cultural labour markets (Deuze, 2007; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005; Tsianos and Papadopolous, 2006); the emergence of 'network sociality' as a mode of interaction and recruitment (Wittel, 2001); and the importance of subjectivity and identity in the new cultural economy, where the discourse of creativity operates as a mode of governmentality, shaping individual identities in ways that make them amenable to the demands of neoliberal capitalism (McRobbie, 2002b; du Gay, 1996; Ursell, 2000). Research such as this stresses the importance of *affective labour*, as a mode of governing subjects through their most intimate desires, aspirations and emotions.

In critically engaging with this literature, I hope to show the pressing need to re-evaluate the production process in the British television industry, in the face of organisational, structural and sociological change. There is a clear gap in the literature that studies television production in the context of such forceful changes, and that provides a basis for understanding the changes that are occurring within television production at a grounded level, one which engages with identity, subjectivity and affect. In the argument that follows I shall explore the scale of these changes, and then consider how a number of emergent studies in the field of cultural economy point towards a new direction for understanding creative labour in the present juncture.

2.1 Studying cultural industries

The study of cultural industries has been of great interest to scholars ever since the publication of Adorno and Horkheimer's (1973) critique of the 'Culture Industry', written in 1947. Cultural industries are seen as important within society for a number of diverse reasons. It has been argued that they are the primary means within society of producing symbolic goods and texts within a capitalist society (Garnham, 1987;

Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 3).[13] As Garnham argues, '"cultural industries" refers to those institutions in society which employ the characteristic modes of production and organisation of industrial corporations to produce and disseminate symbols in the form of cultural goods and services, generally, although not exclusively, as commodities' (1987: 25). Furthermore, cultural industries also play a key a key role in the constitution of a 'public sphere' (Habermas, 1989), being the dominant intermediaries in the processes of democracy, allowing a mediation point for the transmission (and contestation) of dominant ideological values.

Moreover, Hesmondhalgh has argued that they are 'agents of economic, social and cultural change' (2002: 6). The argument here is that the cultural industries are not only increasingly important sources of wealth creation in modern economies, but in an informational age, where symbolic content is increasingly central to social and economic life, they arguably provide a model for transformations in other industries (Lash and Urry, 1994). In terms of public policy, this has been connected to an instrumentalist view of cultural industries (and creativity) as being central to economic growth, evident in a range of UK government policy documents, and academic work (DCMS, 2001a, 2001b; GLA, 2002; Florida, 2002). Furthermore, it has also been argued that cultural and creative industries foster social inclusion (DCMS, 1999; Arts Council England, 2003; Reeves, 2002); regenerate economically deprived cities and regions (Evans and Shaw, 2004; Florida, 2002; Minton, 2003);[14] and may even help tackle physical and mental health issues (Health Education Authority, 2000).

Adorno and Horkheimer's orginal thesis was a critique of the commodification of culture, far removed from the celebratory tone of the 'creative industries' which has its linguistic antecedents in this term. They denounced what they saw as the industrialisation of culture under modernity. Influenced by Marxism, and appalled by the consumerist nature of post-war America, they argued that culture had become intensely commodified, shallow, and standardised. Putting their theoretical approach within a historical context, it is important to remember that this was a time of industrialisation, mass production, and Fordism. Much as the assembly lines were producing identical cars and other standardised products, they believed that the Culture Industry was also

[13] However, others have argued that all industries are involved in this process, and that cultural labour is no different from other work (Wolff, 1993).
[14] See Nathan (2005) for a discussion of why Florida's theory does not work.

producing standardised cultural products, marked by pseudo-individuality, but devoid of any depth or complexity. Standardisation, then, provides cultural products with the veneer of difference, whilst essentially ensuring their easy duplication in a process of mass-production:

> The public is catered for with a hierarchical range of mass-produced products of varying quality, thus advancing the rule of complete quantification. Everybody must behave (as if spontaneously) in accordance with his previously determined and indexed level, and choose the category of mass product turned out for his type. (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997: 123)

Worse still, the Culture Industry was seen as the ideological conduit of capitalism, with the pernicious effect of transmitting the values of consumerism and capitalism to the population, thereby suppressing any radical critique of capitalism as a system. The Culture Industry, for Adorno, was a crucial ideological site of academic interest, acting as the means by which capitalism was able to reproduce itself ideologically. It turned viewers into passive consumers, and stopped them taking collective action or thinking radically. The Culture Industry was a tool of the State, and of the ruling class, functioning as a means of controlling the masses, acting as as an impediment to radical social transformation. For Adorno and Horkheimer '…it seemed as though the possibility of radical social change had been smashed between the twin cudgels of concentration camps and television for the masses' (quoted in Strinati, 2004).

Therefore the study of the cultural industries has a Marxian background. Yet, Adorno's analysis was too severe for many critics, leaving no room exploring the more positive aspects of contemporary culture. Meanwhile, the evident success of capitalism forced Marxists to provide cultural accounts of its persistence and of the potential for resistance to it. As O'Connor contends, 'In this context Adorno's Culture Industry, as cultural collapse or as total system, was subjected to increased scrutiny; on the one hand the Culture Industry had grown enormously in scope and visibility since his first writing, but on the other, it was clear that his account of it was simply not adequate' (2007: 18).

In the 1970s and 1980s a loosely connected group of academics began to re-evaluate Adorno's thesis (Miège, 1987; Garnham, 1987, 1990; Ryan, 1992). They felt that it was too economically deterministic and elitist. They were interested in examining cultural industries as sites not just of economic and ideological determination, but of

contestation, complexity and struggle. Questions emerged about the value differentiation that was implied in Adorno's work between 'high art' and 'low culture', with questions being asked about whose interests high culture served, and what funding arrangements might allow it to be produced. There was a stronger engagement and positive evaluation of popular culture, no longer seen as the ideological conduit of State power, but recognised as a space for resistance and play (de Certeau, 1984).

Examining the specific and differentiated features of the 'cultural industries', these theorists explored issues such as why a cultural industry would produce a text that was antithetical to capital's interests. They asserted that cultural industries primarily seek to produce texts as profit-generating commodities, but operating within a context of great risk, and so needing to do what they can to get a 'hit' (Garnham, 1987: 25). Strategies used by cultural industries to ensure profit are numerous and include the following: maximising the repertoire to produce product differentiation, which provides a greater assurance of a hit among the many sure misses, in order to deal with the 'uncertainty principle' (Caves, 2000; Curran, 2000: 20; Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 19); the creation of artificial scarcity through strategies such as retaining copyright on the cultural product, and vertical integration, allowing the company to control the release of cultural products (Garnham, 1990); and through corporate strategies such as 'concentration, internationalisation and cross-sector ownership' (Curran, 2000: 20). Such political economic analysis enabled scholars to take a more sophisticated approach to cultural industries.

Therefore, the term 'cultural industries' itself was a response away from the 'culture industry', which had become a shorthand for discussing the shortcomings of contemporary cultural life. As O'Connor points out:

> It involved a conceptual shift that by the early 1980s had given rise to a much more sophisticated and empirically based understanding of the complex structure and variable dynamics at work in the cultural industries. (O'Connor, 2007: 27)

The use of the plural term 'industries' is significant, because this school of thought rejected the use of the singular term, which implied a 'unified field', 'where all the different forms of cultural production which co-exist in modern life are assumed to obey the same logic' (Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 16). Miège (1987) also rejected Adorno and

Horkheimer's nostalgic attachment to pre-industrial forms of cultural production. For Miège, whilst cultural production had brought about a greater commodification of cultural goods, it also offered the possibilities for culture to develop in new, innovative directions. The commodification of culture was also seen by these writers as incomplete, as *contested*, rather than the always already complete process suggested by Adorno and Horkheimer. The 'cultural industries' approach seeks to research the experiential terrain of labour for cultural producers and examines the distinctive features of cultural commodities. This approach is more successful, because it acknowledges the complex, contested nature of the cultural industries , one that allows for both structure *and* agency. As Garnham argues, 'the cultural market...cannot be read as a destruction of high culture by vulgar commercialism or as a suppression of authentic working-class culture, but should be read as a complex hegemonic dialectic of liberation and control' (1987: 61).

Simultaneously, there was an increasing interest in creative labour, an issue totally ignored by Adorno. Sociologists such as Miege (1989) and Ryan (1992) explored the features of creative work. Ryan was able to show how cultural industries have to give artists relative freedom and autonomy, as opposed to other workers within capitalism, because this was needed for the artist to produce a successful product. In this sense capital seeks ways to control other aspects of the production process but is forced to grant (limited) autonomy to cultural producers (1992: 44). Miege showed that as a result of the autonomy given to creative workers, there was a massive oversupply of labour for creative jobs, explaining why artists tend to suffer from underemployment, and insecurity (1989: 82-3).

The cultural industries approach is central to my research in that it is concerned with studying cultural producers who are almost entirely absent from much media political economy research from Adorno onwards. As Hesmondhalgh argues, in a period of media conglomeration, deregulation and concentration 'the cultural industries approach has emphasised the conditions facing cultural workers as a result of these processes' (2002: 34). The cultural industries approach is at pains to stress the link between the conditions of labour on the ground for cultural workers and the cultural texts that are produced within those working conditions. Indeed, as McRobbie has argued, there is now a pressing need to consider the connection between the new

reconfigurations of cultural and media labour markets, and the type of media that we consume (McRobbie, 2000: 256).

By deepening our understanding of the cultural industries, and through providing an account of the features of creative labour, the cultural industries writers were vital in bring cultural producers back under a theoretical gaze. It is through a political economic and sociological interest in cultural production that the study of television production first emerged, an area I shall now explore. Yet as we shall see, social and economic transformations have meant that new theoretical questions have had to be added to the list of concerns that preoccupied the early television production scholars.

2.2 Television production studies and organisational change

Television production in Britain has changed fundamentally in the last thirty years, just as significantly, if not as visibly, as the type of content that gets produced. When the early researchers of the industry were writing about television production, they described a relatively stable labour market environment where television professionals appeared to be in possession of a job for life (Schlesinger, 1987; Silverstone, 1985; Burns, 1977). Such professionals were invariably working within the duopoly system of the BBC or ITV, large bureaucratic organisations with deeply embedded public service obligations and values. As Paterson notes, 'those recruited into the industry before the early 1980s had usually entered a relatively stable sector in the industry and were trained and employed either by the BBC or one of the ITV companies' (2001a: 498). It was a highly unionised environment, where labour was organised, and occupational identities were protected and fixed (Burns, 2001; Sparks, 1994; Saundry, 2001). As a result, entry to the industry was often very difficult, entrepreneurialism was discouraged, and labour mobility was low (cf. Darlow, 2004; Paterson, 2001b).

Today this has changed radically. Paterson notes that 'Where before the 1980s, there was controlled entry and a high level of staff jobs in broadcasting organisations, the onset of independent production and the end of a "closed shop" in television led to a profusion of new entrants willing to work within the freelance employment mode' (2001b: 203). As the following chapter will explore, constant deregulation throughout the 1980s and 1990s led in part to the introduction of multi-channel television, greater

competition, and a steady erosion of the power of the unions active in this field. The emergence of the 'indie' sector is integral to this shift. Television production is now highly casualised, flexible and deunionised (Ursell, 1997; Paterson, 2001a). Many television workers are freelance, shuttling between the 'indie' sector and the increasingly casualised BBC and ITV companies, working on a project-by-project basis. Indeed, 'the working lives of most creative personnel in the television industry are marked ... by uncertainty' (Paterson, 2001a: 498). Today's television workers are compelled to find work in a labour terrain of short-term or non-existent contracts, sometimes even having to work for free in order to build up their portfolio for the possibility of paid work.

In this context, new studies of television production have emerged which engage with this transformed environment, armed with new theoretical approaches and research questions. Clearly, there are parallels between the research interests of the earlier television production studies and those carried out more recently. Decision-making, constraints on creative expression, effects of ideology, temporal demands of production, cultural and production values are all shared themes of research. Contemporary television production research continues to be concerned with such issues, as they are pivotal to an understanding of production. However, as I shall show, there are also significant theoretical differences, with contemporary research in television exploring emerging issues of subjectivity (and subjectivisation) (Ursell, 2000), casualisation (Paterson, 2001a, 2001b; Saundry, 2001; BFI Publishing, 1999), deunionisation (Sparks, 1994), the impact of flexible working environments on production values (Ursell, 2003), commercialisation (Daymon, 1997), gender issues (Willis and Dex, 2003) and ethnic diversity (Holgate, 2007).

In contrast, the earlier work on television production exhibits an overwhelming theoretical interest in sociological questions of structure, and the impact of those structures (institutional, ideological, professional), on the production process. This structuralist approach echoes the wider theoretical preoccupations of the day (Althusser, 1971). Analysing this earlier literature enables us to see how the television production environment has changed, and also how the theoretical and empirical concerns of research in this area have also shifted. As I shall argue, the changes which have occurred in the industry necessitate a return to an examination of creative labour in this industry.

2.2.1 Early television production studies: structure and agency

Schlesinger's (1987) study of BBC News, *Putting Reality Together*, is an exemplary sociological study of media production. Undertaken using participant observation and interviews, drawing on 90 days of field work carried out between 1972 and 1976, he describes the production process inherent to television news production in minute sociological detail. Schlesinger's main empirical focus is on the decision-making process of media professionals working in news production, where he explores the impact of ideology and institutional culture on the decisions that are made about the content of the news.

Schlesinger uses a Marxian analysis, drawing on Althusser's account of 'ideological apparatuses' (1971) in order to attempt to show how the mass media is part of the system of disseminating and normalising capitalist ideology. Schlesinger is concerned with how the news journalist's notion of news-judgements and news sense is shaped by a dominant ideology that is naturally resistant to radical dissent. Schlesinger and other sociologists from this period are concerned with what Althusser (1971) would call the 'hidden codes' – the ideological apparatuses by which power reproduces itself by shaping subjects to the demands of a dominant capitalist ideology. In this sense, media workers are seen to be 'interpellated' by the 'rules of the established order' (ibid.: 127) and become part of the wider process of reproducing the dominant ideology. As Althusser argues:

> All the agents of production, exploitation and repression, not to speak of the 'professionals of ideology'... must in one way or another be 'steeped' in this ideology in order to perform their tasks 'conscientiously'. (ibid.: 128)

Therefore Schlesinger is concerned with understanding how a dominant ideology is unconsciously inculcated within BBC professional journalists. In assessing how BBC journalists establish a certain 'know how', he is also concerned with how 'know-how must take place in forms of ideological subjection' (Harris, 2002).

Other production studies of this early period also raise important questions about the way that the structural constraints within which they work tend to impact on the cultural producer's prized perceived autonomy. For example, Silverstone (1985)

examines how the expectations of a particular format impact on the autonomy of the production staff, through a focus on the production of one *Horizon* documentary.[15] In contrast to Schelsinger's study, Silverstone focuses on the actions of an invididual producer, and appears to be less interested in the structure of the BBC. Silverstone exposes the tension between creative autonomy and the difficulties of attaining that autonomy within the political economic circumstances of a commercial media organisation. Silverstone concludes that it is difficult for a filmmaker to realise his artistic and intellectual ambitions beyond the demands of a formulaic strand:

> He is faced by a narrowly bounded, deeply entrenched and persistently reinforced set of constraints and expectations which if he is like Martin he well understands; the result of political and economic and more broadly cultural imperatives which he will ignore consistently at his peril. (1985: 165-6)

The research shows how the producer Martin sets out to make a different kind of *Horizon*, one that is creative and challenging (1985: 40). However, much to his own surprise, he ends up making a programme very similar to all the others. As he says after the programme is completed:

> Its an absolutely straight up and down *Horizon*. I have never done it before…no, I don't mean in message… the message may be more critical than many *Horizon*s often are, but, no, in terms of format. (1985: 140)

Burns (1977) also examines how structural forces within the BBC impact on production. Like Schlesinger and Silverstone, Burns is interested in the complex interplay of factors involved in getting television onto the screen, but Burns' study is much more concerned with the internal culture of the entire BBC, the rise of 'professionalism' as a discourse within a practitioner community and how the internal culture of the BBC impacts on the production of the news that is reported. He shows how the BBC was obsessed with 'professionalism' and the impact of that on the 'private world' of the corporation. As with the other research, it is useful to see how values which are used to drive organisational restructuring become part of the language within the private world of cultural industries, as with other industries, and are taken up by the workers as norms which must be adhered to. This is something that is important to bear in mind when one considers the complex process of identity formation at work in the cultural industries, a

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[15] *Horizon* is the BBC's flagship serious science documentary strand.

concern that becomes central in the more recent production studies (for example, see Ursell, 2000; Ross, 2002). Moreover, through a focus on professionalism, Burns hows how people turn an occupation into a profession, as broadcasting shifted from being a rather more amateurish affair concerned with public service values above all else, to an occupation concerned with professionalism: 'in which the central concern is with quality of performance in terms of standards of appraisal by fellow professionals; in brief, a shift from treating broadcasting as a means to treating broadcasting as an end.' (1977: 125).

These and other studies of the period are vitally important for providing insights into the study of television professionals, who are often unconscious of the structures that impact on the decisions that they make, and ultimately the content that they produce.[16] However, there is a very strong sense in which these studies not only depict a world that has now vanished – that of the stable career within a media industry – but also a theoretical approach which now seems outmoded and slightly old-fashioned. The explicit focus on structure as a determinant of content is important, but much as Adorno's work on the Culture Industry was accused of economic determinism, there is a sense in which some of this work is equally deterministic, refusing to allow cultural producers any significant agency in the production process. Structure seems overwhelmingly powerful, and agency is diminished. Yet as Bourdieu (1993) has shown us, in his work on the sociology of culture, the habitus of production is not over-determining, but rather indicates a range of possibilities that can occur within it. Here we can begin to understand the tension between the demands of the 'field' of cultural production and the agency of the social agent who operates within this field but who cannot be reduced to a mere automaton in the process of production (see Bourdieu, 1993).

Indeed, Bourdieu offers a vital theoretical model for understanding cultural production and consumption that is crucial for my research, one that complexifies the relationship in this sphere between structure and agency, and that conceptualises the relationship between culture and the reproduction of social power: 'art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social

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[16] For example, see Alvarado and Buscombe's (1978) study of the making of a television drama series, which explores decision-making within a creative environment; other earlier work in production studies reached similar findings about the hugely powerful influence of institutional norms on individual agency for cultural producers (see Gans, 1980, Tunstall, 1971).

function of legitimating social differences' (1984: 6-7). For Bourdieu the field is the discursive and social space that 'grounds the agent's action in objective social relations, without succumbing to the mechanistic determinism of many forms of sociological and "Marxian" analysis' (1993: 2). The habitus is the total ideational... environment of a person, part of a system of 'durable, transposable dispositions' (Bourdieu, 1990: 53) and shapes how the agent will behave in the field, without ever determining it, for it allows for some flexibility, for the 'creative, active and inventive capacities of human agents' (Bourdieu, 1993: 5). As Johnson argues:

> Bourdieu's work in the sociology of culture attempts to reinsert issues such as the meaning and value of works into the multiple and complex set of historically constituted social relations which authorise and sustain them. (Johnson, 1993: 25)

Holding Bourdieu's concept of habitus in mind is helpful when considering decision-making in cultural production, which acknowledges the powerful shaping effect of the field (the structure of the organisation, ownership, ideology, capitalism) without reducing the agents involved in production to automata, mere subjects. As Murdock writes:

> [H]abituses are not habits. They do not entail the application of fixed rules and routines. Rather, they provide the basis for structured variations, in the same way that jazz musicians improvise around... a theme. (1989: 243)

2.2.2 Contemporary television production studies.

More recent work in television continues to be concerned with questions of structure and agency, of creativity and constraint, and of changing professional norms. But crucially this research takes place within a transformed production environment, where deregulation has led to a massive casualisation of the industry. This research is therefore highly concerned with the structural changes to the organisation of creative production, and the implications of those changes for creative work. The new production environment in television is far more commercialised and precarious, a shift explored in the previous chapter. Some of this research explores the implications of this shift. Moreover, new research questions have emerged within the field, connected to issues such as gender, diversity, subjectivity and emotional labour. As chapter 3 will argue, the change in television is partly as a result of internal political dynamics and debates around public service broadcasting, as well as policy decisions that were taken

which led to the creation of Channel 4, and the formation of the indie sector. But these changes have also taken place within a broader context of economic, political and sociological transformation, a question I shall return to in the following section of this chapter. This research examines the impact of these changes on the ground, and how have they impacted on factual television production in particular.

Born's (2004) ambitious ethnographic account of the BBC during a particularly turbulent period in its recent history examines the impact of massive corporate and cultural change within the organisation from the mid-1990s to 2003, a period spanning the leadership of John Birt and Greg Dyke.[17] The study looks at the effect of political, economic and structural change within the corporation, with case study examinations of particular production environments such as the current affairs programme *Newsnight*, and the BBC Drama department. Born investigates the impact of casualisation, 'new managerialism', corporate change and constant restructuring on the internal culture of the BBC and in particular on the production process. Significantly, she spends some time describing the transformed labour market both within the BBC and the broader television sector (179-211). What moves her account on from previous accounts of the BBC is her focus on working conditions, where she describes the 'casualisation of creativity' (180-85); the erosion of skills (193-97), and employment diversity (and the lack of it) (197-208). Examining the impact of neo-liberal deregulatory policies on broadcasting production, she concludes that 'the last decade has seen a general degradation in the output of Britain's television system' (11); and places the blame firmly at the internal restructuring that occurred under Birt, concluding that 'Birtist management was responsible for eroding the BBC's creativity' (6).

Born's anthropological approach reveals rich details which are crucial to the examination of the internal values and competing discourses that are shown to exist within the BBC. Vividly, she describes the discursive tension at the heart of the new BBC between the 'older' values of public service broadcasting, and the entrepreneurial, market-facing values of the 'new managerialism' which was introduced by John Birt during his tenure as Director General. As I shall explore in chapter 7, through an examination of production values in the industry, a similar discursive tension is evident in the ITPS.

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[17] John Birt was Director General of the BBC from 1992 to 2000; Greg Dyke from 2000 to 2004.

A rich strand of recent work has examined the implications of an increasingly casualised broadcasting industry. The British Film Institute (1999) carried out an extensive tracking study of 450 production workers between 1994 and 1998. The authors of the report found a highly casualised environment, causing production workers high levels of stress. Increasing numbers of people left television in their thirties and beyond, as the pressures of insecurity and constantly moving from contract to contract became too much. The authors found that the pivotal factors motivating their decision to leave the industry included a growing need for security, as well as the incompatibility of getting a mortgage, and having children, with a television career. Existing research suggests that deregulation and the increased casualisation of the industry have also been shown to impact negatively on equal opportunities, albeit in ways that are more connected to the need for security and a less stressful lifestyle, rather than direct discrimination. For example, as Dex and Willis (2003) show, gender barriers to career progression appear as a significant factor in this context, as many women face difficulties returning to the industry after childbirth.

This research is vital as an empirical and theoretical backdrop to my study. Indeed, many of the trends that were discovered in this work have intensified since the 1990s. Following this research, a number of publications have explored issues emerging from the data. For example, Paterson examines the implications of a transformed labour market within television, which he describes thus:

> The television labour market in Britain has been significantly transformed since 1980 with an increase in freelance employment as a consequence of new labour laws and reduction in union power and membership, the rapid pace of technological change, and the emergence of a large, but poorly capitalized, independent production sector. (2001b: 202)

Paterson argues that this new labour context of freelancing, particularly in the independent sector, has opened up access to the industry, which was previously very much a 'closed shop' (ibid: 204). This has led to a huge rise in freelance employment, with 60 per cent of an estimated 28,000 people working in the British television industry working as freelancers (ibid). Paterson contends that casualisation has created a paradoxical situation where 'firms require the trust and commitment of their employees to sustain creativity and provide a competitive advantage in the search for commissions',

yet shows that this is undermined as a result of the uncertainty that exists within the labour market (ibid: 205). Deconstructing the 'glamour' of the industry, he describes a sector with high levels of poorly paid young entrants,[18] and a long hours culture amongst all workers, with 36 per cent of the sample working more than 50 hours a week (ibid: 206). Casualisation is shown to mean a lack of benefits for many workers, including pensions, sick leave, holiday pay, maternity benefits and the ability to get a mortgage (ibid: 208). Multiskilling, exploitation and gender issues all emerge as key considerations (209-13), and Paterson considers the implications of this insecure working environment for encouraging creativity (213).

Meanwhile, also using the BFI data, Dex *et al* (2000) have explored the impact of uncertainty on production workers, and investigated the strategies which they use to negotiate this casualised labour market. As they show, risk has been individualised to the level of the worker, away from programme controllers and broadcasters (ibid: 285). Workers have to negotiate rates individually, whereas before they would have received a fixed salary (ibid). Their research shows that workers deal with uncertainty by building informal networks as a means of finding consistent work, by diversifying their income source, often through teaching, and by thinking of leaving television altogether (ibid.: 283). Informal contact through building and maintaining networks was a key factor, but their research also shows that formal agencies and avenues of finding employment were rarely used (ibid: 299). Clearly, this has implications for the transparency of recruitment processes in the industry.

In a related vein of analysis, Saundry (2001) and Sparks (1994) have investigated the impact of deregulation on the internal labour politics of the industry, exploring the history of this process, and also the implications of it for televison production culture. Savagely attacked as 'the last bastion of restrictive practices', the industry is now an exemplary model of free-market flexible labour (Barnatt and Starkey, 1994). As they show, prior to the deregulation of the 1980s, industrial relations within broadcasting were highly formalised, with agreements between the unions and the broadcasters ensuring minimum basic rates of pay, and working conditions (Saundry, 2001: 25). They argue that this had an impact on skill levels in the industry, where 'the industrial relations system within television provided for the recruitment and retention of a highly skilled

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[18] Indeed, low pay was also gendered, with women earning significantly less than men (ibid: 207).

and trained labour force' (ibid). Unions exercised control over recruitment, and much of the industry was effectively a closed shop (ibid). But as the industry was radically restructured during the 1980s, as a result of deregulation, and with the growth of the independent sector, freelance working increased profoundly, weakening the power of the unions drastically as membership levels fell (ibid.: 27-31). In this context, a number of exploitative working practices have evolved, particularly in the less regulated independent sector, such as paying below minimum rates of pay specified in collective agreements, and the open-ended use of work experience (ibid.: 30). As John Willis has noted, this has led to 'the media equivalent of the pupil system for lawyers – only kids with well-off parents and good contacts need apply. More glamorous than most jobs but sweatshop television all the same' (Willis, 1996). This research helps us to understand the depoliticised working environment within independent television production, where there is now an almost total lack of collective bargaining for better working conditions.

In separate research, Ursell has also examined the impact of a transformed production culture within the freelance television labour market in the North of England. Her research echoes many of the findings of the BFI research, in terms of the growing casualisation of the industry. She shows that exploitation is rife (2000), and that production values have suffered a decline as a result of the growing demands placed on television workers (2003). Networking also emerges as a key theme, as it does in other related literature on television (Ursell, 2000: 811-13; Spence, 1999). Yet differing from the BFI research, Ursell takes a more Foucauldian perspective, where she shows that television work, despite its exploitative nature, enourages a particular 'technology of the self' (Foucault *et al*, 1988), which is associated with the demands put upon workers by late capitalism. For Ursell, workers seek to commodify themselves within this context, in order to make themselves more attractive on the labour market (2000: 822). Here, strategies of self-governance (Rose, 1999) are shown as vital to maintaining a career in the industry, encouraging 'a technology of the self which requires self-entrepreneurship' (Ursell, 2000: 809). Pleasure at work is seen as a key factor in this process, where 'The willingness of individuals to work in television production is partly to be explained by the tantalising possibilities for securing social recognition and acclaim, that is self-affirmation and public esteem, and partly by the possibilities for self-actualization and creativity (be it aesthetic or commercially entrepreneurial)' (ibid: 819).

Ursell's insights are theoretically crucial for my research, as she shows that issues of subjectivity and affect are vital to understanding labour markets in the cultural industry. Furthermore, in reference to television journalism, she shows how the new culture of cost-cutting and casualisation has led to an erosion of production values, particularly in relation to timely and expensive functions such as fact-checking. The craft and skill associated with television production is shown to be under threat in this new mode of production.

Surveying these studies, it is clear that television production has been transformed in recent years. But what are the broader social, political and economic forces driving this transition? Can this more recent research on television production be placed within a historical context of global transformation? In the following section these questions will be explored, through an examination of the macro-changes within advanced capitalist societies since the 1970s, which can be seen as the pivotal decade when capitalism shifted to a new mode of production, leading to a new ideological framework, widely known as neo-liberalism.

2.3 Social, political and economic transformation: understanding the 'creative economy'

In order to understand these changes in creative labour, one must also understand the structural, political and sociological shifts that have accompanied them. Most clearly, these are: flexible accumulation and the rise of the 'knowledge economy' (Harvey, 1990; Lash and Urry, 1994); the rise of neoliberalism (Keat and Abercrombie, 1991; Harvey, 2005); and the social ruptures caused by 'reflexive modernisation' (cf. Beck *et al*, 1994).

The global economic restructuring from Fordism to post-Fordism, or flexible accumulation (Harvey, 1990), that took place in the wake of the 'Long Downturn' between the 1970s and 1990s, is *the* crucial macro-structural factor which has impacted on the cultural industries in recent years. The rise of free-market *neo-liberalism*, which occurred in the wake of this economic downturn, is the political context under which deregulatory policies in the media and cultural sphere have occurred, leading to an accelerated process of marketisation within the cultural industries in the UK (and

globally). Together, these factors have transformed not just the cultural industries, but the organisation of labour, of the economy, and of the dominant hegemonic political values within society. Yet at the same time, longer-term sociological shifts such as reflexive modernisation and individualisation have taken place alongside these structural changes, which have impacted on society and work in a number of ways.

2.3.1 Flexible accumulation and the 'Long Downturn'

Before the series of economic crises that hit the global economy in 1973, and recurred throughout the 1980s and 1990s, capitalism had enjoyed a period of relatively stable growth in advanced industrial nations from the end of World War 2 in 1945. Job security was high, pay was steadily improving for the majority of workers, and the future looked bright. As Hesmondhalgh has noted 'for the "advanced" capitalist economies of Europe, North America and Australasia, the period from the 1950s to the early 1970s was one of steady economic growth, rising standards of living, and a relatively stable system of liberal democratic government' (2002: 85). Indeed, some economists have argued that this period was 'the golden age of capitalism' (Marglin and Schor, 1992). However, in the 1970s, this situation dramatically changed. In the advanced capitalist countries, profits fell markedly across all sectors, and particularly severely in manufacturing. Commentators have given a number of reasons for this. Harvey (1990) argues that international movements of capital started to undermine the stability of the system from the early 1960s. Others point to the increased power of labour vis-à-vis capital, which led to a growth in wages, undermining profits (Armstrong *et al*, 1991). Over-accumulation was also seen as a key factor as increased capitalist competition globally led to an surplus of capacity, particularly in manufacturing (Brenner, 2000: 8). As Perelman notes, 'New entrants from developing regions, especially East Asia, combined cheap labor with relatively advanced techniques, creating a sharp intensification of international manufacturing competition beginning in the late 1960s' (2003: 1282). On top of all this, there is a general consensus that the OPEC oil crisis of 1973 acted as the catalyst to push the world into recession.

Fundamentally, this crisis stands as a dividing line between two dominant modes of capitalist accumulation: Fordism and flexible accumulation. Fordism is the mode of production pioneered by Henry Ford in Detroit in the 1914, when he introduced the five-dollar, eight-hour day for his workers at Dearborn, Michigan (Harvey, 1990: 125).

Ford created a strictly controlled centralised production line at his plants, based on a strict hierarchy and on each worker performing a very specific task in a repetitive fashion. By dividing the labour involved in producing a car into specific acts, Ford was able to hugely increase productivity. The approach was hugely influential and swept the globe in the post-war period. As Harvey writes, 'what was special about Ford... was his vision, his explicit recognition that mass production meant mass consumption, a new system of the reproduction of labour power, a new politics of labour control and management, a new aesthetics and psychology, in short, a new kind of rationalised, modernist, and populist democratic society' (1990: 126). Fordism meant routinised labour, devalued the need for traditional craft skills, and gave the worker practically no autonomy or involvement in the design and structure of the production process (ibid.: 128). In short, it had the effect of automating human labour, creating a strict temporal and productive regime in the workplace, turning men into little more than machines at work, whose reward was then to go out and spend their money consuming the vast output of new products that had also been produced along similar lines of accumulation and production.

With its focus on centralised, bureaucratic, hierarchical and highly automated production, Fordism dominated organisational and economic life in advanced capitalist countries around the globe until the sharp global recession of 1973. In this period between 1965 and 1973, the rigidities of Fordist production had became apparent: the long-scale planning that was needed for Fordist production was too risky, and a far more precarious consumer market had emerged where innovation was increasingly being called for in order to gain the competitive edge. As Harvey suggests: 'There were problems with the rigidity of long-term and large-scale fixed capital investments in mass-production systems that precluded much flexibility of design and presumed stable growth in invariant consumer markets' (1990: 142). Heavily unionised labour markets also meant that the system of accumulation was rigid: companies were locked into strict labour contracts, and allocations, and attempts to overcome these led to the waves of strikes and disruptions that occurred throughout this period. As the world emerged from this crisis, it became clear that a new form of production was emerging that marked a sea change, which is perhaps best understood as *flexible accumulation*.

Flexible accumulation, the new dominant mode of capitalist accumulation that emerged out of the recession of 1973, has a number of key features. It is a more flexible, adaptive regime of accumulation and production which is better able to respond to the need for innovation and speed within production and labour markets. As Harvey notes:

> *Flexible accumulation...* is marked by a direct confrontation with the rigidities of Fordism. It rests on flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products, and patterns of consumption. It is characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation. (1990: 147)

Flexible accumulation involves a number of key economic restructurations: a new labour structure emerged, with a 'core' and a 'periphery' to whom lower-skill or less critical processes were outsourced internationally; 'just-in-time' modes of manufacturing were introduced; an exponential growth took place in the service industries with a simultaneous decline in extractive (e.g. mining and agriculture) and to a lesser extent transformative (manufacturing) sectors.[19] Consumption changed, with constant product innovation, niche marketing, and fast fashion turnaround. There was an increasing polarisation in company size, with the growth of huge global conglomerates, and the concomitant rise in small businesses, acting as sub-contractors. Flexible accumulation encourages innovation, mobility, and flexibility, and has driven the rise in commodified knowledge, global information systems, and 'immaterial' forms of labour.[20] On a global scale, new global financial systems emerged which broke down national boundaries, speculation on currency markets grew, individual nation-states had less control, and instead global financial markets were increasingly regulated by transnational institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Harvey, 1990: 147-64).

2.3.2 Neo-liberalism

As this new mode of capital accumulation emerged, so too did a new political ideology which facilitated the policies necessary in order to shift to a new mode of production, and which attempted to 'fix' the economic crisis. Advanced capitalist states

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[19] See Castells (1996: 311) for a full discussion of this shift.
[20] The concept of 'immaterial labour' comes from Lazzarato (1996), who argues that in today's economy, work is becoming increasingly intellectual, cognitive, and knowledge-based.

responded to the crisis politically by attacking labour movements, and withdrawing from the state intervention policies of the post-war period, where government spending would be used to sustain economic growth where consumer spending was insufficient (Harvey, 1990: Part II). This was followed by cutbacks in public spending, and a steady process of deregulation. This formed a central part of neoliberalism's dismantling of so-called 'Big government' (ibid.: 164-70). Harvey argues that neoliberalism represents a doctrine that 'human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade' (Harvey, 2005: 2). New Left writers such as Hall (1988) have mounted a convincing critique of neoliberalism, arguing that it is a class-based ideology that seeks to dismantle the welfare state. Moreover, writers such as Gill (1996) have suggested that neoliberalism is a disciplinary regime which seeks to legitimate global capitalist domination, through the hegemony of 'progress' associated with 'market civilisation'. And it has been incredibly successful, with Harvey arguing that now 'it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world' (2005: 3).

Neoliberalism marks a radical ideological shift within the politics of the industrialised world, with its almost religious belief in the power of the lightly regulated free market to guarantee economic growth. Neoliberalism accompanied the rise of flexible accumulation, and was seen in its most extreme versions in the US and UK, under President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Neoliberal politicians forced through a series of measures to undermine the power of the unions, giving companies far greater power over hiring and firing and reducing wages in real terms. Governments across the political spectrum attempted to lower labour's bargaining powers in order to reduce wage costs. As Brenner has argued, 'Credit was restricted through the raising of interest rates, which forced unprofitable firms out of business, and weakened labour still further through the spread of unemployment' (Brenner, 1998: 181)

These political and economic changes helped to produce a dominant entrepreneurial culture of competitive individualism, which advocated the belief that individuals should be 'freed' from the state, to pursue their own ambitions within a market capitalist society (Harvey, 1990: 170-72) . As social security spending was cut back, and as job security waned, so too did an ideology emerge of self-reliance,

consumerism, enterprise and individualism. Neo-liberalism not only became the dominant political ideology of advanced capitalist states, but its focus on enterprise, entrepreneurialism and individualism can be seen to have produced a new cultural climate where these values were instilled in subjects through the media, advertising and other modes of discourse. As I shall explore in chapter 5, the ideological structures of neoliberalism are vital to understanding subjectivities at work in the cultural economy, as these values are clearly evident in the subjectivities of workers in the research that has been done.

2.3.3 Reflexive modernisation and sociological transformation

As well as these macro-structural and political transformations, a set of sociological shifts has also occurred with important ramifications for the study of cultural workers. The key sociological change of the last thirty years revolves around the transition to 'reflexive modernisation', as a means of understanding particular trends within contemporary society, such as individualisation and 'risk', and the increasing reflexivity of social agents to make 'lifestyle' choices (Giddens, 1991; Beck *et al*, 1994). Reflexive modernisation's theorisation on the individualisation of identity, and on the growing risk within late modernity, provides useful models for understanding new modes of work within postmodern societies (Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

There has been intense controversy within sociology as to whether these shifts do indeed register a new mode of society, geared around the individual, or whether in fact reflexive modernisation offers an essentially *neoliberal* conception of selfhood, where the individual is seen to be a reflexive, planning, adaptive agent, able to meet the challenges of a new flexible mode of capitalism (Mestrovic, 1998; O'Brien, 1998). Indeed, some have suggested that the reflexive modernisation agenda, and its enthusiastic adoption by central left governments (particularly in the UK under New Labour), with its uncritical acceptance of capitalist relations, its emphasis on active citizenship, and a shift from equality of outcomes to equality of opportunities, can be understood as a mechanism of control of subjects under neo-liberalism (Avis, 2000; Barnett, 2002). As Rose and Miller have argued, such a shift in leftist thinking can be seen as a neoliberal configuration of the subject, where:

...the political subject is less a social citizen with powers and obligations deriving from membership of a collective body, than an individual whose citizenship is active. This citizenship is to be manifested not in the receipt of public largesse, but in the energetic pursuit of personal fulfilment and the incessant calculations which are to enable this to be achieved. (1992: 1)

However, despite these tensions, it is clear that reflexive modernisation theory is useful in terms of describing particular central features of late modernity, and it is also helpful in thinking through questions of reflexive selfhood within contemporary society.

Reflexive modernisation theory seeks to explain the new set of conditions that have emerged as a result of a fragmentation of the social order within late modernity, taken to refer to the period of history after the Second World War. Following reflexive modernisation, late modernity is characterised by the end of meta-narratives, and a breakdown of traditional structures and institutions such as the family, through to the nation-state. For Beck, reflexive modernisation is the 'radicalisation of modernity' which disrupts the traditional industrial order and creates the possibility of another kind of modernity (1994). It is 'reflexive' on the basis that it represents a modernity that is increasingly focused on its own institutions, processes, outcomes and risks, that is explicitly and implicitly concerned with its own transformative implications. Reflexive modernity is an era defined by self-confrontation and individualisation as the universal values, traditions, practices, politics and identities of modernity are called into question and replaced by multiplicity, fluidity and an awareness of social construction (Beck *et al*, 1994; Giddens, 1991).

2.3.3.1 Individualisation

The shift to reflexive modernity has been seen to have significant consequences for the theorising of identity. Theorists such as Beck, amongst many others, have argued that as an outcome of such shifts, 'individualisation is itself becoming the social structure of second modernity' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 1), replacing the collective social forms and categories that previously anchored subjects, and in many ways determined their life course. Individualisation occurs as people are disembedded from traditional social ties of kinship, class and geography and become more fluid and mobile in their

social relationships.[21] As Lash writes, 'individualism is a result of the retreat of the classic institutions: state, class, nuclear family, ethnic group' (2002: ix-x). With the shift from industrial to post-industrial societies, the rise of secularism, the impact of new technologies, and increased globalisation, the traditional foundations of ascribed and seemingly fixed identities have been increasingly eroded and displaced.

In this context, subjects gain increased choice and agency over their life trajectories. Increasingly freed from the external constitution of their life course, they instead come to impose their own set of meaning and definitions on the 'self' – a shift of authority over the 'self' from 'without' to 'within' (Heelas, 1996, 2). However with these new freedoms come new risks and uncertainties that individuals must negotiate in their day-to-day lives, and within the processes of self-construction. In this context, and lacking external guides for one's life course, individuals must place themselves at the centre of this process and reflexively plan their life narratives. The 'reflexive self' (Giddens, 1991) of late modernity is a subject immersed within an inescapable project of self knowledge and self-actualisation: the choices subjects make about their private and public lives become increasingly significant to the production of identity, surpassing or transforming the impact of traditionally dominant predictors. As such, the choices an individual makes in relation to education, work and personal relationships become dominant definers of the self. Subjects reflexively engage with – and manage – the freedoms as well as the risks afforded by a widening of opportunities for self-construction in an attempt to maintain a coherent but adaptable self-narrative. Giddens notes that 'In the settings of...late modernity...the self, like the broader institutional contexts in which it exists, has to be reflexively made...amid a puzzling diversity of options and possibilities' (1991: 3).

However, these new freedoms are laced with the risk of failure, and that risk is devolved away from the state to the individual. Here, responsibility for one's life course is delegated to the self, so failure too is individualised. As Bauman contends:

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[21] 'Disembedded' is the term that Giddens uses to best describe how individuals and institutions are 'set free' from traditional modes under the dynamics of 'reflexive modernity'. See Giddens (1991).

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'individualization' consists in transforming human 'identity' from a 'given' into a 'task' - and charging the actors with the responsibility for performing that task and for the consequences (also the side-effects) of their performance. (2002: xv)

As such, subjects in individualised societies must take responsibility for themselves. If things go wrong, the answer lies not with society, but with their own personal failings. The risk that Beck (1992) describes is individualised, particularly in the sphere of employment, as full-time employment over the course of the lifecycle drastically reduces. This has led to a situation where individuals are compelled, to become 'entrepreneurs of the self' (Burchell *et al*, 1991: 300); to realize their 'true identities' by means of looking inwards and improving themselves. As Bauman puts it, 'Modernity replaces determination of social standing with compulsive and obligatory self-determination' (Bauman, 2002: xv).

The concepts of 'risk' and individualisation are vital for understanding work in the independent television industry, as they provide a theoretical way of understanding the challenges facing subjects in these new conditions. Cultural labour offers a clear site of self-actualisation within an individualised society, where the tropes of choice, autonomy and freedom characterise late modern biographies, and allows individuals to set about planning and living 'a life of one's own' (ibid). However, in a climate of pervasive risk, and through the disciplinary context of individualised failure, cultural producers are less inclined to take risks, to innovate, for fear of falling off the 'tightrope' created by a society of individualised insecurity (Beck, 2000). Yet, despite its explanatory power, there are significant theoretical problems with the reflexive modernisation thesis, in particular its tendency to sideline questions of class, gender and race as old categories. Reflexive modernisation contributes significantly to the theoretical approach taken in this thesis, which seeks to assess how cultural workers come to identify with new modes of autonomous labour, and how they plan their careers in the midst of overwhelming risk and uncertainty. As such, the notion of reflexive selfhood is central to such an investigation into how freelance television workers negotiate questions of self-actualisation, 'good work', and risk, and in so doing construct a life trajectory in these new times. However, there are limits to the contribution that this argument can make to understanding the experiences of individuals within the cultural industries, particularly in terms of questions of class, power and subjectivity.

2.3.3.2 Neoliberalism by another name? Individualisation and 'governmentality'

Reflexive modernisation theory has been criticised by a number of commentators who argue that the 'old' political-economic categories of class, gender and race are sidelined through its normative focus on 'individualisation' and selfhood (cf. Mouzelis, 2001). It has been criticised for failing to take on board the fact that some are more able to pursue their project of reflexive selfhood than others (Leggett, 2002: 425). In short, it sidelines the political, economic, and ideological rationale for reflexive modernisation, by focusing on the cultural. For example, examining Giddens' cultural and technological reading of globalisation, Benton argues that in fact economic globalisation 'is an important strategic weapon in the hands of politically and economically powerful groups and institutional complexes, not a secular tendency of a certain phase of "modernity"' (Benton, 1999: 47). In short, reflexive modernisation fails to acknowledge the continuing unequal stratification of life-chances and social position as a result of the logic of market capitalism (Leggett, 2002: 434). This is a valid critique, borne out in the empirical analysis of this thesis which clearly shows the impact of these social structures on people's ability to progress within the labour market of television.

Is reflexive modernisation just neoliberalism by another name? Foucault's concept of governmentality is a useful theoretical way of understanding the significance of how reflexive modernisation theory has been taken up in the British context by New Labour (Barnett, 2002). For Foucault, governmentality is concerned with the 'conduct of conduct', the means by which we are encouraged to act on ourselves in certain ways that suit the prevailing neoliberal climate, allowing us to understand the paradoxical simultaneous occurrence of manipulation and freedom (Hodgson, 2001). Foucault described governmentality as the way in which contemporary subjects are governed through self-regulation, arguing that:

> The contact point, where the individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves, is what we can call, I think government. Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word, governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by oneself. (Foucault, 1999: 162)

It explains how control over political subjects is managed through the management of freedom. Here the management of subjectivity is linked to subjection; we are controlled by the very aspects of society which appear to make us free. As Barnett argues, 'In this interpretation, essentially neoliberal modes of government rely on modes of power which work through the freedoms and nurtured capacities of the governed' (2002: 314). Reflexive modernisation's focus on the autonomous, choosing individual can be seen in this poststructuralist reading as the ideal political subject for the neoliberal project. As I shall explore in my analysis, this insight is particularly useful when thinking about the control of subjects within creative labour markets who willingly comply with their subjection to negative working conditions because of the attractions of 'creative' work.

For example, using the theory of governmentality, in chapter 5 I explore how the discourse of individualisation functions as a means of control within the precarious labour market of television production, as actors are forced to fall back on their self as a means of understanding the 'compulsory peformativity' that operates within this deregulated working sphere. A Foucauldian and Bourdieusian theoretical approach, which is evident in some of the recent research in this area, can deepen the theory of reflexive modernisation by attending to such questions. A Foucauldian approach allows us to consider how 'freedom' operates within late modernity as a means of control (Rose, 1989, 1999), an issue that is directly central to issues of autonomous labour with the 'creative industries'. Bourdieu's notion of 'field' and 'cultural capital' allows us to understand how class and cultural capital work to structure cultural labour markets, excluding individuals for socially determined reasons (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986, 1993).

2.4 A renewed analysis of cultural production

Acknowledging these material, ideological and sociological transformations, recent studies of cultural production have approached the field with fresh theoretical insights. This literature has examined the rise of networking, the appearance of new socialities in the workplace, new modes of emotional labour, and the emergence of particular forms of selfhood and subjectivity amongst cultural workers, which it is argued

are aligned to a 'technology of the self' encouraged by neo-liberal late capitalism.[22] This work is disparate, encompassing a broad range of concerns and creative occupations, often polemical , and indicative of potential new research routes and methodologies. Giving an exhaustive account of this literature would be impractical. However, from a theoretical, methodological and political perspective, particular aspects of this work are central to the approach undertaken in this thesis.

2.4.1 Flexible accumulation and the organisation of cultural production

Responding to macro-changes in society and economy, cultural production researchers on a global level have examined the implications of flexible accumulation on the structure, evolution, and management of the cultural industries. Influential work has emerged from the field of human geography and economic sociology, investigating issues such as 'clustering' (Pratt, 2004a), co-location (Pratt, 2005, 2006), cultural regeneration and gentrification (Zukin, 1982), and globalisation (Scott, 2000, 2004, 2005). This work has been closely linked to questions of urban geography and culturally led regeneration, and has used empirical methodologies in order to investigate the material features of creative environments. Other work has explored the impact of flexible accumulation on cultural production from the perspective of the media or cultural organisation itself, exploring the changing economic and organisational structures of cultural production (e.g. Blair, 2000; Randle *et al*, 2003).

Flexible accumulation within media production has meant that there has been a process of decentralisation and a rise in casualisation: increasingly key creative functions are carried out by networks of companies, who employ people largely on a contract freelance project basis. As Curran *et al* argue: 'post-Fordist production methods have, among other things, introduced decentralised networks of companies and highly skilled, flexible and professional workforces' (2000: 27). Crucially, flexible accumulation has meant that media organisations outsource more of the creative work of cultural

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[22] For an excellent overview of the nature of contemporary cultural work which explores these debates in detail, see Banks (2007). In this book, the author assesses how different sociological traditions have sought to understand the creative, cultural worker, and questions whether the creative worker is the archetypal creative, autonomous agent, or purely a victim of the industrialisation and commodification of culture within capitalism. Banks' focus on the nature of creative work and his theorisation of the tension between creativity and neoliberal capitalism is highly relevant to this thesis, which shares many of the same concerns.

production and concentrate on the core functions of financial operations, distribution and commissioning.

A number of researchers have examined cultural production under conditions of flexible accumulation, Scott (2005) has focused on Hollywood, exploring the distributed geography of cultural production, and has made useful links to the organisation of cultural industries generally. Miller (2005) has analysed the outsourcing of Hollywood production processes, in what he calls that 'New International Division of Labor' (NICL). Pratt (1997, 2002, 2006) has drawn on human geography to explore the creative ecology in a number of spheres including advertising, and new media, in places such as San Francisco and Soho, London. This research has pointed out the densely interrelated and highly mobile spatial and human geographies of creative labour markets. Networks are the ubiquitous organising dynamic of these industries, in terms of recruiting, finding work, sharing knowledge, and support (Pratt, 1997, 2002, 2004a, 2004b; Scott, 2000, 2005). In the highly casualised, flexible labour markets of the cultural industries, this networked organisational dynamic enables individuals to negotiate risk, develop social capital and gain crucial industry knowledge which acts as a means of competitive advantage. Therefore, this work shows us the crucial importance of *place* as a way of understanding the dynamics of cultural production. Despite the so-called 'death of distance' (Cairncross, 1998), this research has shown that in fact the opposite largely holds true in creative industries: proximity to colleagues and competitors is crucial as 'clusters' of production are the dominant model for successful and high-growth creative ecologies.

2.4.1.2 Network society and network sociality

In such an environment, interaction between firms and between individuals often takes place within networks. Here, we are dealing with two separate issues. Firstly, the economic structure of production and of organisation has become increasingly decentralised and networked (Castells, 1996). Secondly, research has pointed to the appearance of forms of 'network sociality' within late capitalist labour markets, particularly amongst individuals working in the cultural industries (Wittel, 2001). Clearly, these two issues are connected, but it is important to think through the nature of the connection. The 'network society' does not necessarily automatically produce 'network

sociality', but rather that network sociality emerges as a response to a) information communications technology transformations which facilitate networked modes of communication (i.e. email, texts, mobile phones, instant messaging and social networking websites[23]); b) precarious labour markets, where individuals need to find new ways of finding work and making contacts; c) as a vastly technologically intensified form of the networking that has actually always occurred within creative labour markets. While there is an obvious link between the network society and 'network sociality', it is important to recognise that network sociality is not purely a determined feature of the network society, but reflects both macro-changes, and also internal specificities within particular creative labour markets.

But what is meant by the term 'network society'? Castells has argued that fundamental changes in communications technology, most importantly the development of the Internet and instantaneous global communications systems, mean that we have entered the age of the 'network society' (1996). For Castells, 'A technological revolution, centered around information technologies, is reshaping, at accelerated pace, the material basis of society.' (1996: 1). Echoing Harvey's (1990) work on flexible accumulation, Castells argues that in the network society:

> Capitalism itself has undergone a process of profound restructuring, characterized by greater flexibility in management; decentralization and networking of firms both internally and in their relationships to other firms; considerable empowering of capital vis-à-vis labour, with the concomitant decline of influence of the labor movement; increasing individualization and diversification of working relationships. (1996: 1)

In this context, labour has fundamentally changed, as a tension emerges between the global co-ordination of capital, and the individualisation of labour, or 'between the bare logic of capital flows and the cultural values of human experience' (1996: 476). In this restructured context of networked capitalism, and as creative workers are increasingly freelance, mobile, and have no fixed stable workplace, the network becomes increasingly important in terms of finding work, socialising, sharing information and learning new skills. Castells' magisterial thesis has been criticised by a number of writers for tending towards technological determinism, and for over-playing the effects of these changes on

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[23] Social networking websites are becoming increasingly popular, such as www.facebook.com, which at last count had over 66 million active users (Facebook, 2008).

everyday life (Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Calabrese, 1999); however, his work is still important to any understanding of work and communication in the current period.

Exploring the consequences of the shift to a network society, Wittel (2001) has argued that network sociality functions within the cultural industries as a new means of sociality, one that is fleeting, ephemeral, intense, but ultimately shallow and individualised. His research is useful for thinking through the implications of the organisation of work, and the potential for exclusion that occurs in the 'guest list' mentality. As McRobbie has noted, work in the creative economy 'requires endurance and stamina', where networking, and attending the right parties, with no guarantee of financial return, is par for the course (2004: 195). However, a lack of empirical depth to Wittel's work, coupled with a lack of attention on a specific industry, means that one is left querying the overall applicability of his work to the generically defined 'cultural industries'.

More grounded work confirms that networking is indeed a vital feature of seeking competitive advantage in the creative workplace. Under these new conditions, networking becomes central to finding work, as Ursell (1997) and Spence (1999) have examined in relation to the television industry. People are employed on the basis of 'reputation and familiarity, conveyed in a mix of personal acquaintance, kinship, past working connections, and past achievements' (Ursell, 2000: 811). Indeed, as Ursell points out, in this creative environment 'networking as a considered effort of self-enterprise is the norm. Those who do not or cannot network are substantially disadvantaged' (ibid.: 813). The ability to join the networks is seen as a decisive factor in ensuring optimum access to work opportunities in an uncertain industry; as Paterson writes, 'many producers use a limited pool of known colleagues for productions and entering one of these networks can be difficult' (2001: 515). Similarly McRobbie points to the pre-eminence of networking as the dominant paradigm for finding work, which she suggests has a relationship to the 'club culture sociality' which is prevalent for contemporary young people (McRobbie 2002a: 521). But as she points out, this creates new forms of opacity and discrimination in cultural labour markets where one's ability to find work is predicated on one's ability to network after hours:

> [T]he club culture question of 'are you on the guest list?' is extended to recruitment and personnel, so that getting an interview for contract creative work depends on informal knowledge and contacts, often friendships. (2002a: 523)

2.4.2 Casualisation and precarious labour

Another major issue that has been the subject of focus in much recent cultural production research is the growth of casualised, 'precarious' labour in the 'middle layers' of society, which is particularly noticeable in creative labour markets. In the cultural industries, these trends have been particularly pronounced, and have been examined by researchers. Recent studies have pointed out the impact of flexible accumulation on working lives in cultural industries in fashion (McRobbie, 1998), film (Blair and Rainnie, 2000), television (Ursell, 2000; Paterson, 2001) music (Negus, 1992; Toynbee, 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 1998) and other areas of creative labour. Considering the impact of flexible accumulation on television specifically in the UK, Ursell argues that 'the size of permanent staffs with terrestrial producer-broadcasters has diminished, casualisation of the labour force has increased, entry to the industry is more difficult and less well rewarded or supported, average earnings have dropped, and working terms and conditions have deteriorated' (2000: 805). Paterson also points to the transformed labour market in British television: 'freelance employment on short-term contracts became normative in the early 1990s with inevitable consequences for career patterns and with a major effect on the creative environment within which television production work was carried out' (2001: 496). Born echoes this in her research on the BBC, arguing that 'One of the most striking developments in the broadcasting industry in the eighties and nineties was the casualisation of employment, evident in the drift away from permanent staff jobs and towards a reliance on short term contracts and freelancing' (2004: 180). Furthermore, Sparks (1994) shows how, in the face of massive pressures to cut costs, independent production companies in the 1990s operated by maintaining a skeleton staff, and contracting in freelancers when commissions were won. The longitudinal research project for the BFI (British Film Institute) on the working lives of people employed in television showed how workers were forced to cope with far greater levels of uncertainty, and increasingly needed to rely on networks of friends and colleagues to find work (BFI 1999). They were increasingly responsible for maintaining their own training, developing creative ideas on their own time, and sustaining good relationships with powerful figures such as commissioning editors. As Paterson argues, 'these

requirements had to be fulfilled with no certainty of work beyond the present commission or project as structures evolved and changed' (2001: 497).

It is clear that the new modalities of work in the cultural industries, which are largely freelance, flexible and entrepreneurial, have been seen by some researchers as indicative of how we are all increasingly having to negotiate our working lives in a state that is 'permanently transitional' (McRobbie, 2004). If the early cultural production research took place in relatively stable environments where nearly all of the staff would have had permanent jobs (e.g. Schlesinger, 1987; Burns, 1977; Silverstone, 1985), then new research in this area has begun to examine the cultural impact of flexible accumulation and casualisation in cultural production (e.g. Ursell, 1997, 2003; Paterson, 2001). As McRobbie argues, 'There has... been a neglect of the terrain of experience, that is to do with how, in this case, cultural workers make sense of what they do and with how they explain their own pathways through the insecure and volatile fields of creative labour' (2000: 256).

Therefore, for some writers, creative labour acts as a template for new modes of working within late capitalism (e.g. McRobbie, 2004; Ross, 2004; Lazzarato, 1996). Certainly, the shift in creative labour echoes wider transformations in the nature of work in late capitalism. Flexible accumulation, coupled with the dismantling of unionised labour, has also caused a huge rise in far more precarious labour relations. This process has occurred partly as a result of the flexible employment structures created under conditions of flexible accumulation. This has led writers such as Handy to talk of 'portfolio workers':

> Entering this zone of the world of work obliges us to rethink many fundamental assumptions of our lives. For one thing, we will have to abandon the metaphor of the line - always an upward-tending one, we'd like to think - as the organising design of our autobiographies....Instead, portfolio living forces us to think in terms of the circle, something like a pie chart with different segments marked off for different occupations, each coloured for kind and degree of hoped-for remuneration.(Handy, 1995: 26-7)

While Handy's account is celebratory, in fact for many people 'portfolio work' has merely meant a series of insecure and low-status service jobs (cf. Thompson *et al*, 2000) Moreover, the argument that creative workers are 'pioneers of the new economy' for over-privileging the figure of the artist, and ignoring the fact that precarious and unpaid

work has always been a feature of capitalism for those without power (such as migrant workers, domestic labour, 'grey economy' labour) (Vishmidt, 2005). Such critics argue that it is only because creative labour is more visible, as a result of the class of people undertaking it, that it has been noticed in this way. As Vishmidt contends:

> [W]hat may also be instructive in the uses of 'precariousness', especially those that try to critically appropriate the figure of the artist as the ideal pliant and omni-creative subject of capital, is the omission of the ordinary invisibility that always sustained the free movement of capital, Keynesian or networked: the flexible, informal, spontaneously value-adding sites of housework, personal care, seasonal and surreptitious labour – the disposable labour that was always at the core of the process if not the narrative of accumulation. (Vishmidt, 2005: 40)

2.4.2.1 'Immaterial labor' and precarity

Another strand of work which has assessed creative labour, but which comes from a rather different theoretical and political perspective, is analysis utilising Autonomist Marxist theory, in particular the work of Hardt and Negri (2000), Virno (2003) and Lazzarato (1996). This work seeks to explain changes to work through the concept of 'immaterial labor' and 'precarity' as a means of gaining a purchase on shifts within the mode of production in late capitalism. Immaterial labour describes the transformed nature of work, where labour is increasingly affective and knowledge based (Hardt, 1999; Lazzarato, 1996). Paradoxically echoing the management theorists of the 'new economy' (Leadbeater, 1999; Knell, 2000), the three key aspects of this new production paradigm are described as: 'the communicative labour of industrial production that has newly become linked in informational networks, the interactive labour of symbolic analysis and problem solving, and the labour of the production and manipulation of effects' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 30). It is described as 'labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication' (ibid.: 2000: 290). This concept, which places the production of knowledge, communication and culture at the centre of changes to capitalism, has acted as a theoretical catalyst for researchers attempting to mount a critical analysis of the nature of work in the cultural and creative industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 3)

According to these theorists, immaterial labour has emerged under the conditions of flexible accumulation, as a direct result of capital's dynamic of constant

growth. Hardt and Negri's (2000) analysis of contemporary capitalism argues that work has been transformed by the widespread use of computers, and that it increasingly involves the manipulation of symbolic information. Yet, in opposition to the notion of the economy becoming more 'informational', they see labour practices as becoming more homogenised, as workers modify their actions through use, through a process of constant interactivity, 'along the model of computer operation' (Hardt, 1999). Furthermore, they contend that as labour becomes increasingly affective, and emotional, then contact and interaction also become more important. On the one hand, this has negative consequences in that late capitalism seeks to link knowledge, creativity, thought to management – imprisoning the capitalist worker through the workings of desire, emotion, knowledge and sociality (Seymour, 2005: 13). Yet on the other hand, as a result of these changes Hardt and Negri (2000) argue that labour has become more co-operative, involving networks and new types of sociality.

From this analysis, the Marxian leap is made which claims that 'immaterial labor thus seems to provide the potential for a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 294). Immaterial labour, whilst ostensibly a key part of capital's dominance over the individual, holds within it the embryonic potential for a contestation of the capital's power. Foti has even announced that 'the precariat is to postindustrialism as the proletariat was to industrialism' (Foti, cited in Seymour, 2005: 8). Moreover, Neilson and Rossiter have argued that immaterial labour contains 'potentialities that spring from workers' own refusal of labour and subjective demands for flexibility – demands that in many ways precipate capital's own accession to interminable restructuring and rescaling (2005: 1).

As Hesmondhalgh has argued, 'It is this combination of rampantly optimistic Marxism, combined with a poststructuralist concern with questions of subjectivity and affect that has helped to make Hardt and Negri's work so popular amongst contemporary left intellectuals' (2007: 3). Certainly, there has been an explosion in the popularity of the concept of 'immaterial labour', particularly amongst those who have found it useful as a way of understanding the contemporary policy focus on creative industries, and the apparent injunction towards particular modes of working. Following on from this work, a number of writers have made use of the phrase 'precarity', to describe the new relation between work and capital which has occurred under the

conditions of immaterial labour (Neilson and Rossiter, 2005; Iles, 2005; Tsianos and Papadopolous, 2006). As Iles argues '"Precariousness" and "precarious work" have rapidly become terms for thinking through the collapse of the distinction between labour and non-labour and the expansion of capitalist forms of valorisation over all aspects of life' (Iles, 2005: 34). However, the term has become a rather 'catch-all' phrase, used to describe a wide variety of different forms of flexible labour, which are seen as exploitative and include temporary, seasonal, illegal work, as well as other 'precarious' aspects of life such as housing, debt, relationships and the decline of welfare provision, and as such has lost much of its explanatory or theoretical power. Moreover, little explanation has been given as to why the figure of the creative worker has been used as being totemic of transformations to the landscape of work, or as a 'model precarian' (Vishmidt, 2005: 39). Indeed, as Vishmidt has argued, such a theoretical leap fails to acknowledge the precarious sites of housework, personal care, and other forms of invisible labour, and as such 'risks embedding itself precisely in the terms that it is interrogating – the dogma of "creativity"' (ibid: 40).

Useful as this work is in terms of drawing attention to these issues, and to the politics of 'precarity', the work that has been carried out in its name has been highly speculative and lacking in empirical evidence (Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 4). It fails to ground its assumptions in research on the cultural industries, and moreover, the claim that immaterial labour holds within it the seeds for a radical transformation of capitalism seems rather fanciful in the current historical moment, to say the least. Indeed, the very concept of 'immaterial labor' has been roundly critiqued by commentators who argue that it represents a naïve celebration of the power of labour against capital, and that it overlooks the fact that labour continues to be, for the majority of people in the world, all too 'material'. As Thompson argues:

> Labour is never immaterial. It is not the content of labour but its commodity form that gives 'weight' to an object or idea in a market economy. Its physicality or otherwise is wholly irrelevant. Knowledge and intangible assets, whether in services or any other form, can be calculated, rationalised, rule-governed and ultimately commodified. (Thompson, 2005)

Indeed, knowledge workers who identify and solve problems and manipulate symbols and ideas, constitute only 10-15 per cent of the working population in both the UK and the UK (Thompson *et al*, 2000). Most actual growth has actually occurred in low-skill,

low wage jobs such as serving, waiting, guarding, cleaning and catering (Crouch *et al*, 1999).

Despite these crucial criticisms, this work has opened up an important debate around the political and social implications of the appropriation of culture by capital. For example, Neilson and Rossiter (2005), along with other writers, have shown how creative industries policy neglects the precarity of creative work in two key ways: firstly by refusing to acknowledge the insecure and precarious conditions facing cultural workers; and secondly by ignoring the fragile ecology of cultural production by reducing all analysis to the empirical determinism of mapping documents, feasibility studies and value chains.[24] This work also opens up the possibility of a post-individualistic politics, where the idea is explored of individualisation giving way to 'new productive singularities' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 395). As McRobbie has argued, this allows us to consider how 'Work (and here creative work) can become a site for re-socialisation at the heart of everyday life' (2004: 199).

2.4.3 Understanding the 'cultural economy': subjectivity, affect and emotional labour

Two issues can be seen to arise in particular strands of the work outlined above. The work emerging from human geography and management studies is rich in empirical detail, but arguably fails on occasion to analyse the sociological, political and cultural consequences of the new configuration of creative labour. Conversely, the 'precarity' work, which examines the rise of immaterial labour and focuses on creative labour as both a site of precarity, and also a utopian space for resistance, exhibits a failure to provide empirical evidence, thereby addressing the political question, but failing to address the sociological dynamics of production. However, it does draw our attention to the crucial issues of subjectivity and affect which are increasingly central to creative labour.

In this final section of the literature review, I explore the work that examines these micro issues of subjectivity, autonomy and emotional labour, at a sociological level,

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[24] Also see Hesmondhalgh for a more in-depth discussion on this issue (2007: 4)   .

through empirical research within a cultural industry. Usefully, much of this work is grounded in sociological analyses of specific cultural industries, and it moves the debate forward providing exciting new theoretical insights into creative labour as a whole. This work suggests that questions of identity, subjectivity and affect are vital in understanding the macro-structures of creative labour, moving us beyond a deterministic approach, but one that is still attentive to structural questions. Despite the clear differences within the fields of study, and the varied mode of analysis, a critical survey of this literature shows that there are also striking similarities within the creative labour markets that are studied by these authors. Here I shall examine the key themes that have emerged from this sociological analysis, and consider their implications for this study of creative labour.

2.4.3.1 Pleasure at work: the affective demands of creative labour

The issue that emerges consistently from this research is the pleasure which cultural workers derive from their work, and the enthusiasm with which they launch themselves into their chosen careers. This suggests that creative work is a clear site of 'emotional labour', which Hochschild identifies as a key element of labour in an increasingly service economy (Hochschild, 1983). Emotional labour involves 'deep acting', where workers employ their emotional lives as part of the labour process. It is a process that signifies increasing management control over the personal, traditionally 'non-work' elements of our lives, for as Hochschild contends, 'All companies, but especially paternalistic, non-union ones, try as a matter of policy to fuse a sense of personal satisfaction with a sense of company well-being and identity' (ibid: 132). Indeed, for emotional workers, 'emotion work, feeling rules, and social exchange have been removed from the private domain and placed in a public one, where they are processed, standardized, and subjected to hierarchical control.' (ibid: 153)

Of course, creative labour has always been a 'labour of love', but this signifies something new. The available research shows that many people's experience of cultural production is one of (self)exploitation, inequality and exclusion. A striking feature of recent research is the re-emergence of gender, ethnic and class inequalities, particularly around issues of access and employment practices. Gill (2002) and McRobbie (2002b) have pointed to the exclusionary nature of network culture, where to find work you have to be part of the 'club culture', and hang out with contacts in trendy bars. Yet this mode of human capital is only available for those with the stamina and ability to let work into

all areas of their life. It precludes single parents, and those who have lost the stamina of youth (McRobbie, 2002b: 10). Moreover, (self) exploitation is rampant. McRobbie (1998) has shown how in the fashion industry, people will offer free labour in order to to gain credibility and to make contacts, which will hopefully lead to a paid commission. Ursell has also shown how many entrant level graduates will work for nothing in the television industry in the hope of securing paid work in the future (2000: 814). However, despite the difficulties of finding work and making a living, ever greater numbers of people are attempting to find their way into the cultural and creative industries, seeking autonomy, self-fulfilment, and perhaps more than just a touch of glamour. As McRobbie points out, this issue of 'glamour' as a central incentive of working in creative labour has been mistakenly ignored, for in her analysis it forms a crucial legitimating function for the perceived cultural value of creative work (McRobbie, 2002b).

This would seem to be a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, there are the many attendant pressures of insecurity, exploitation and low pay which mark the experiences of many cultural producers. Yet, on the other hand, these workers appear to be at pains to stress the pleasure that they derive from their labour. Work for these cultural producers has become a site of self-fulfilment, autonomy, independence and even of intense 'pleasure in work' (Donzelot, 1991). How can we understand this? Clearly, labour markets in the modern (post-)industrialised economy, particularly those in the 'creative industries', have come to be seen as being spaces for achieving these goals. For example, Florida describes how the 'no-collar workplace' 'replaces traditional hierarchical systems of control with new forms of self-management, peer-recognition and pressure and intrinsic forms of motivation, which I call *soft control*' (2002: 13). Here, the search for self-actualisation and autonomy is central to the restructuring of labour:

> We trade job security for autonomy. In addition to being fairly compensated for the work we do and the skills we bring, we want the ability to learn and grow, shape the content of our work, control our own schedules and express our identities though work. (ibid.)

Here, we can connect this mode of self-actualising work as part of the logic of individualisation. As Heelas argues, 'people have been thrown back on *themselves* as the key *source of significance*' (2002: 92). There is a clear power dynamic to this, in which workers are offered the 'reward' of autonomy as part of the package of benefits which a 'creative' job provides. Here, the discourse of creativity, entrepreneuralism and the 'talent

led economy' works as a form of *governmentality* (Foucault, 1991), regulating creative workers' subjectivities so that they embrace the stringent demands of work in casualised, deregulated cultural labour markets.

For Foucault government is a general technical form which encompasses everything from self-control to the control of populations. Governmentality in this sense is the process of regulation of individuals from the inside, and describes how social power is assured and reproduced through discourses and processes that encourage individuals to fashion themselves in ways that suit the demands of the dominant social group. The promotion of cultural values in the workplace works in the interest of neoliberal laissez-faire capitalism. As du Gay writes:

> 'Culture' is accorded a privileged position... because it is seen to structure the way people think, feel and act in organizations. The aim is to produce the sort of meanings that will enable people to make the right and necessary contribution to the success of the organization for which they work. (1996: 41)

The discursive emphasis on entrepreneurialism and creative innovation in policy discourse masks the ruthless individualism of this new mode of work. As such the 'freedom' of creative labour becomes a highly effective technology of the self. Indeed, as Miller and Rose show, creation of meaning at work is a regulatory practice: 'Organizations are to get the most out of their employees...by releasing the psychological strivings of individuals for autonomy and creativity and channelling them into the search of the firm for excellence and success' (1997: 330). So creative workers are encouraged to be entrepreneurial and endlessly flexible as the historic link between labour and capital is eroded, as a result of the restructuration of capitalism outlined earlier. Indeed, as McRobbie argues, reflecting on her own work on the cultural industries:

> Capital finds novel ways of offloading its responsibility for a workforce, but this relinquishing process is confronted no longer by traditional and organized 'labour'. Instead, the new conditions of work are largely being experienced by 'new labour'. By this I mean those sections of the working population for whom work has become an important source for self-actualization, even freedom and independence. (2002a: 518)

Creative workers embrace a deregulated working sphere because it is promoted in social discourse as a place for fashioning an identity, perhaps even attaining an aspect of celebrity. Work in this new creative environment becomes a site of intense personal satisfaction, of reflexive self-organising, of affective pleasure; yet it is simultaneously sometimes exploitative, certainly precarious and prone to ethnic, gender and class inequalities. Failure is individualised. What is particularly striking about the available research on work histories in cultural production is the high level of attrition as cultural workers get older and disillusioned. One is forced to question the brutal logic of the need for constant reinvention, when the mental and physical trials of such work begin to take their toll after a certain length of time. As McRobbie has asked: 'How many times can people re-invent themselves? In a winner-takes-all market, risk taking takes its toll' (2002b: 103).

How these processes are experienced on the ground by television workers in the British independent television sector, and what the implications of this new mode of labour might be on the actual content of television are questions that I shall explore in the analysis of my research.

2.4.3.2 Self-commodification and emotional labour

Interestingly what has emerged in this research is that not only are these often young people accepting of the difficulties of making a living in these sectors, but that they are actively involved in the reproduction of that system of commodification and exploitation itself. As Ursell notes, following her work on television production, a phenomenon that needs careful investigation is 'that workers are, by and large, not merely volunteering to co-operate with the vampire but are actively constituting its life process' (2000: 816). Exploring these dynamics in the television industry, she uses a Foucauldian framework of understanding to see how self-enterprise works as a technology of the self in terms of how its values are inculcated and so reproduced (2000: 818).[25] As she argues, television workers are keen to stress the personal pleasure that working in this creative environment offers them:

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[25] Technologies of the self are those practices which 'permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls,

The willingness of individuals to work in television production is partly to be explained by the tantalizing possibilities thereby for securing social recognition and acclaim, that is self-affirmation and public esteem, and partly by the possibilities for self-actualization and creativity... For the workers, television production is simultaneously a source of definite rewards, both material and existential, and a source of definite exploitation. (2000: 819)

Developing this analysis further, Ursell shows how the subjects of her study are actively involved in self-commodification, being acutely aware of the need to sell themselves on the creative labour market.

Approaching the issue of cultural production from a perspective that emphasises identity, subjectivity and affect as key features of creative labour, writers such as McRobbie (2002b), Ursell (2000), Ross (2004) and Gill (2002), amongst others, have done crucial work to explore this issue, by examining how creative labour places very particular demands on workers by utilising the self-realisation dynamic at the heart of individualisation. This research shows how creative labour is organised through particular practices and discourses which encourage the investment of emotion and affect as a central facet of the labour process. Their approach, which is concerned with creative labour as a site of affective labour, and which encourages particular 'technologies of the self', allows us to understand why cultural workers not only put up with often highly precarious, poorly paid and exploitative working conditions, but indeed embrace them. This work also shows the new forms of discrimination, hierarchy and exploitation which emerge under the deregulated conditions of what Ross has called 'the humane workplace' (2004).

For example, Ross, writing about his experience of observing new media workers in New York's 'Silicon Alley' during the dot.com crash in the late 1990s, describes the significance of 'the industrialization of bohemia' that has taken place since the 1960s, where capitalism absorbs a counterculture and then profits from it (Ross, 2004). He describes the emergence of what he calls 'the humane workplace' (ibid), where young new media workers are able to wear the clothes they want to, are encouraged to express themselves individually and creatively, and where work and play are interconnected. This

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thoughts, conduct and ways of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality'. See Foucault (1998: 18).

clearly represents a shift away from previous expectations of workers under capitalism, where conformity was expected within the bureaucracy of the large organisation. As a result of this shift, workers are encouraged to, even expected to, make a significant emotional and personal investment in the company. On the surface, all would seem well – happy, seemingly autonomous workers, room for self-expression, and high levels of productivity and economic growth. Yet he also shows that despite this, these workers are also highly deunionised, working incredibly long hours, often with no health insurance and other social security benefits. As Ross argues:

> When work becomes sufficiently humane, we are likely to do far too much of it, and it usurps an unacceptable portion of our lives... Not by any boss's coercive bidding, but through 'work you just couldn't help doing,' had the twelve-hour day made its furtive return. (2004: 255)

Here, the hidden power function of the humane workplace emerges, which is 'to extract value from any waking moment of an employee's day' (ibid.: 146). Yet this is achieved through supposed autonomy, for as Ross argues, no-collar work is able to 'enlist employees' freest thoughts and impulses in the service of salaried time' (ibid: 19). Through the creation of the 'humane workplace', Ross shows how capital is able to shed its traditional responsibilities to workers, whilst at the same time, through the promotion of values which connect to the realisation of a culturally desirable self, actively engaging those very workers in the maintenance and reproduction of this disinvestment in human capital.

Gill, exploring a similarly rich vein of critical analysis of the new media industries, has shown how new media work is able to present itself as 'cool, creative and egalitarian', therefore using cultural values to promote a very particular mode of flexible labour, with all the attendant pains described above. Yet, she shows that when you scratch at the surface, significant hierarchies and insecurities exist, and gender discrimination is rife. As she shows, paradoxically, it is the very features of new media work that are valorized (informality, autononomy and flexibility), which facilitate the emergence of what she calls 'new forms of gender inequality' (Gill, 2002: 71). The 'wired' portfolio workers that she studies, much beloved of future-gazers, politicians and policy-writers, imbued with the values of entrepreneurial individualism and who are said to 'prize freedom, autonomy and choice' (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999: 15), in fact find

that the individualisation of risk which accompanies project-based careers provokes deep anxiety (Gill, 2002: 81). As Gill notes:

> On the one hand, individuals must become entirely self-governing and must bear the costs of all their training and professional development, of insurance, social security, sick pay, maternity leave, etc. They must also take responsibility for finding future work and for managing gaps between projects. (ibid)

Gill's respondents were unequivocal in presenting an upbeat account of the pleasures of 'working autonomously with no managerial control, flexible working hours, and the intrinsically challenging and fulfilling nature of the work' (ibid: 80). Yet, whilst presenting itself as egalitarian, the industry in fact paid woman less than men, they were more likely to be socially isolated because they worked from home, more likely to work part-time, and on fewer projects (ibid: 82).

2.5 Conclusion

What emerges clearly from this review of the literature is that there is a pressing need for grounded empirical sociological research that examines the new economic, structural and material reconfigurations of the cultural industries, yet also is alert to the processes that are particularly noticeable in creative labour markets, around subjectivity, identity, individualisation and affect.

From a political point of view, the work of the 'precarity' writers offers up political openings, particularly in terms of how we might think through the long-term implications of a transformation in capital accumulation, new modes of working, and the valorization of 'creativity' within contemporary policy discourse. Yet, as argued earlier, much of this research is speculative, unempirical, generalising and unsubstantiated. The theoretical rush to detect new forms of collectivism within modes of immaterial labour looks rather hopeful in the present individualised context, particularly without sociological evidence to back up these claims. As Hesmondhalgh has argued, 'certain forms of empirical engagement can help qualify – and thereby ultimately strengthen – arguments concerning the nature of creative labour in the cultural industries in modern societies' (2007: 7).

Therefore, my intervention in this thesis is to test out some of the insights from the new sociology of creative labour and from the other areas explored above, in order to examine the nature of creative labour within independent television. This approach will draw on the theoretical insights gained by theories of reflexive modernisation, and capital restructuration, but also be attuned to the modes of emotional and affective labour which operate within the cultural industries. Such an approach aims to avoid the pitfalls of over-determination through economy, politics and ideology, be alert to the contradictions that emerge from the fieldwork, and ultimately provide grounds for a critique of 'creative industries' policy, by providing empirical sociological evidence to demonstrate the fragility and complexity of the ecology of production on which cultural industries are based.

Chapter 3. The politics of independence: Contextualising independent television production in the UK

Having provided a broad account linking global sociological transformation to creative work in the previous chapter, this chapter situates the research findings within a more industry-specific historical and political context, by exploring the evolution of the independent television industry from its origins to its present form. This evolution has taken place within particular ideological and social contexts, during a period of intense social transformation. In outlining this history, the chapter will cover a period of over fifty years, from the background to the formation of Independent Television (ITV) in 1955, through to the Communications Act 2003, and the ensuing rapid consolidation and commercialisation of the independent sector. This will involve analysing a number of key historical and political moments in the evolution of the independent broadcasting sector, including: the formation of the independent broadcasting sector with the creation of ITV and the Independent Broadcasting Association (IBA); the creation of Channel 4 and the emergence of the creative ecology of 'indies' that this produced; the significance of New Labour's current policy focus on the 'creative industries'; and the current process of rapid consolidation, commercialisation and concentration that is taking place in the sector, characterised in particular by regulatory changes to intellectual property rights for producers, and the emergence of the 'super-indies'.[26] Throughout this period, issues around public sector broadcasting are continuous, and play a pivotal role.

Independent broadcasting has developed in this country under two key competing ideological influences: the values of public service broadcasting and the values of commercialisation. When tracing this sector's history one can see clear evidence of the influence of democratic concerns about the public sphere, increased choice and diversity

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[26] Although my focus in this research is primarily on the independent television sector, it would be impossible to attempt to understand the broadcasting sector without examining it in relation to the changing role and structure of the BBC. Therefore I shall also be referring throughout this chapter to changes within the BBC and policies that relate to those changes. As we shall see, the very history of the independent sector (and indeed the very composition of people who work in the industry) is intimately bound up with the BBC, therefore debates around public service broadcasting (PSB) are at the heart of policies which have led to the evolution of the independent television industry.

and a greater range of programming and quality; therefore the emergence of this sector is deeply imbricated in the wider political debate around public service broadcasting. However, at the same time the evolution of independent broadcasting (and the political decisions that paved the way for its existence) is inextricably connected to political and corporate strategies for commercial gain, competitive advantage and economic growth. Although of course these two positions are not necessarily incompatible, it is clear that the tension between them is still very much in evidence today within political and public discourse.

Using a mixture of policy documents, empirical data and historical research, a picture emerges of an industry in a state of constant flux from its inception. The independent television industry in the contemporary sense emerged with the launch of Channel 4 in 1982. At this point the 'indie' sector was very much a cottage industry peopled by 'one-man bands'; a disparate group as Jeremy Isaacs (first Chief Executive of Channel 4) recalls:

> Some were individuals, natural freelances, touting a particular one-off idea that interested them to work on. Others were would-be entrepreneurs, looking to make substantial numbers of programmes, to build on that, to see their business grow. (Isaacs, 1989: 108)

Today it is a far more professionalised affair, experiencing rapid growth and commercialisation (Mediatique, 2005). It is a sector undergoing radical structural change as a result of consolidation, concentration and digitalisation, as convergence looks set to transform the consumption and the production of audio-visual material.

In order to provide a coherent political economic narrative for the evolution of the ITPS, this chapter is structured in chronological order, with each section encompassing a particular ideological and political era that was central to the sector's formation. Following World War II, there was significant political and public demand for independent television, which took the form of ITV, and laid the ground for the creation of the ITPS. However, the sector we see today, made up of small to medium-sized companies operating on a commissioned project basis for the broadcasters, is one that only emerged in the 1980s with the launch of Channel 4. This chapter explores the political story behind the creation of Channel 4, and its catalytic effect on the broadcasting industry. Finally, it examines the implications of New Labour policies

towards broadcasting and the 'creative industries' since 1997, exploring how the media policies of the current government have impacted on the development of the sector as we enter the digital age.

By contextualising the independent production sector this chapter provides a political and historical map for the reader that will both situate and illuminate the qualitative analysis of the later chapters, based on interviews with my research participants. The development of the ITPS has taken place against a backdrop of political, social, technological and economic change. Politically, we can see that the impact of neoliberal values in the 1980s, which placed an emphasis on free markets and the sovereignty of consumers to make choices on the open market were central to the creation of Channel 4 and the subsequent development of the ITPS. Socially, acknowledging the increasing importance of television in people's lives in the twentieth century is vital to understanding the growth of the sector. Technologically, we can see that the ongoing advances in both production and distribution of television content have had a huge impact on its development. Economically, the rise of flexible accumulation (Harvey, 1989) is key to understanding the organisational structure of the independent television industry; moreover, the increasing centrality of cultural production and consumption in the economies of advanced industrial nations is vital in terms of understanding the import of recent policies under New Labour that see the 'creative industries' as motors of economic growth. In short this chapter seeks to radically contextualise the research of this thesis by exploring the political, economic and social forces that have structured the independent television industry as it is today.

3.1 From monopoly to duopoly: the BBC and the creation of ITV

Difficult as it is to imagine today, for the first thirty years of broadcasting history in this country there was no independent broadcasting sector at all. Instead, the BBC, created in 1922 as the British Broadcasting Company, had an unchallenged monopoly over the airwaves. The BBC was created by order of the British government, which licensed a number of radio manufacturers to form a cartel. It was licensed to broadcast by the Post Office and was run as a monopoly funded by an annual licence fee paid by radio set owners. Public taxation was used to avoid commercialisation, and a monopoly was preferred to keep the broadcasting under strict regulatory control. This continued in

1927 when the company became an independent national organisation – the British Broadcasting Corporation, created by Royal Charter. The BBC was not directly controlled by the state, but its future lay in the hands of the government, which had the power to periodically review its licence to broadcast and determine the cost of its licence fee; a situation which continues to this day.

As radio emerged as a key medium of communication after World War I, it became more closely regulated and controlled by government than any other mode of public communication. Politically it was felt that the state should maintain a close control over broadcasting, as such a powerful new medium of communication. The Sykes Committee of 1923 was clearly concerned about this, arguing that 'the control of such a potential power over public opinion and the life of the nation ought to remain with the state' (Sendall, 1982: 3). Indeed, the rise of broadcasting as a technological and social innovation was intimately bound up in a much larger project of national identity, and nation building, designed to address and construct a national public (Scannell and Cardiff, 1986; Hilmes, 1997). As Hilmes writes:

> In Great Britain and in the United States, as in most other countries, national governments assumed a greater degree of control over the establishment and development of broadcasting than they dared for any other medium of communication, in the interests of social order, political control and preservation of central cultural and economic hierarchies. (2003: 1)

Certainly there was a climate of anxiety about the power of broadcasting on society, and it was into this situation that the notion of public service broadcasting emerged. This was spearheaded by John Reith (1889-1971), the BBC's first director general from 1927 to 1938, and before that Managing Director of the British Broadcasting Company. Reith took a very high-minded interpretation of broadcasting as a public service: it existed not only to entertain the population, but to inform and educate them as well. Reith was a Calvinist, son of a Scottish Free Church minister, with a missionary conception of broadcasting as a civilising tool to lift up the masses and therefore to avoid social chaos. In this vein, he famously asserted that 'Broadcasting is a servant of culture' (Reith, 1924: 217). For Reith, radio was a medium which should provide cultural 'uplift' for the masses (Scannell, 1990: 16) For Reith and many others, broadcasting became the tool of social inclusion. This patrician interpretation of public service broadcasting believed the masses would be improved by exposure to the culture

and values of the social elite. Indeed, for Reith, the question of whether this form of broadcasting might be what the public actually wanted was irrelevant, as they were seen as not having the aptitude to even know what they might want, or, more importantly need. As he wrote in *Broadcast over Britain*, 'It is occasionally indicated to us that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need – and not what they want – but few know what they want and very few know what they need' (cited by Briggs, 1961b: 238). As such, the BBC broadcast content that was part of this 'civilising' project. As Hilmes writes: 'Reith saw a "top-down" approach to broadcasting as the most effective way of ensuring that programme output fitted his concept of public service, in which the standards and values of metropolitan culture were taken to be self-evidently better than anything in the rest of the country' (2003: 6-7).

Reith's notion of the public interest had political as well as cultural implications. Certainly in the early days of broadcasting, the BBC was at pains not to offend the government of the day. Reith earned the trust of government because his notion of the public interest largely seemed to coincide with that of the government, especially during the 1926 General Strike, during which the BBC allowed the Conservative government to use the airwaves while barring trade union leaders. Indeed, a memorandum circulated by Reith internally within the BBC after the strike shows the level of complicity between the BBC and government: 'Since the BBC was a national institution, and since the Government in this crisis were acting for the people… the BBC was for the Government in this crisis too' (cited by Scannell and Cardiff, 1991: 33). There were many critics of the BBC's approach to the strike, particularly amongst Labour politicians who saw the BBC as a propaganda tool of the government. As Tracey has argued, 'There is no doubt from reading through the various memos and numerous expressions of intent that the BBC's coverage was specifically aimed towards a particular end, which was the defeat of the strike' (2000: 42). Many disagreed with the BBC's handling of the strike, and the broader sense was born that allowing a broadcasting monopoly was not essentially anti-competitive, but that it was undemocratic.

For critics, the BBC's handling of the strike was evidence of an organisation peopled by employees who were out of touch with the wider realities of social life for the majority of the country's population. This could be seen not just in the coverage of political issues but also in the very culture of the organisation, as Burns has suggested:

BBC culture, like BBC standard English, was not peculiar to itself but an intellectual ambience composed of the values, standards and beliefs of the professional middle-class, especially that part educated at Oxford and Cambridge. (1977: 42)

Similarly, Creeber notes that Reith shaped the BBC 'in his image, an authoritarian, paternalistic and innately highbrow institution that tended to promote the interests and tastes of the English upper middle class' (2003: 24).

These were all factors that led to a backlash against the BBC's monopoly hold over broadcasting. Following World War II concerns about the monopoly intensified. As Sendall writes, 'The very idea of a single public corporation, enjoying unchallenged monopoly control over a channel for the communication of information and ideas, seemed wrong to many thinking people.' (1982: 4). When, in January 1946, the Labour government declared that it *would not* be setting up another committee of enquiry before renewing the BBC's charter, there was criticism on both sides of the house. A number of heated debates followed in that year, which can be seen as the catalyst for the campaign that ended with the creation of Independent Televsion. By June 1946 a motion calling for the matter to be referred to a Joint Select Committee attracted 211 signatures (Wilson, 1961: 31). That committee was to be the Beveridge Committee, which would hold its first meeting in June 1949, by which time there had been a build-up of influential Conservative back-benchers who had the explicit aim of ending the BBC's monopoly through setting up a commercial service. After the general election in 1950 this included the influential 'One Nation Group' of Conservative politicians who were opposed to monopolies of any kind in principle, especially in broadcasting. (Johnson and Turnock, 2005: 17).

3.1.2 Beveridge

William Beveridge was appointed by Clement Attlee in 1949 to lead a committee tasked to consider the 'constitution, control and future development of sound and television broadcasting services in the UK' (Hilmes, 2003: 32). The Beveridge Committee on Broadcasting was critical of the BBC, and described its ethos as 'beginning with Londonisation, going on to secretiveness and self-satisfaction, and ending up with a

dangerous sense of mission which became a sense of divine right' (cited in Curran and Seaton, 2003: 160). The Beveridge report was published in January 1951. Although it actually recommended that the BBC should retain its monopoly on broadcasting, enough momentum had now been created for introducing the BBC to competition. Following the report a campaign was launched for commercial television and the breaking of the BBC's monopoly. Moreover, an influential report by a minority report by one committee member, Selwyn Lloyd, argued that that BBC should no longer be granted 'the brute force of monopoly' (Briggs, 1961a: 217) in the provision of television services. When Labour was defeated in 1951, the Conservatives hastily pushed through a White Paper that promoted 'some element of competition' (Sendall, 1982: 13). A cabinet committee was set up under Lord Salisbury to examine a policy on the future direction of broadcasting. This took place within a political climate where there was a general feeling that the BBC was self-righteous and arrogant (ibid.: 10).

While these political changes were taking place, television was evolving into an ever more popular cultural medium, which intensified the political demand for the end of the monopoly. Television services, which had started in 1936 and then been halted days before the outbreak of war, were resumed in June 1946. Take-up was slow at first – by 1947 there were only 20,000 sets in the country capable of operating in the UK - and the new medium was beset by technical problems. However, as the 1950s progressed, television assumed an ever-greater cultural importance in people's lives until in 1953 the broadcast of the Coronation, watched by at least 20 million people, ushered in for many people the era of television. Whilst this was a great success for the BBC, ironically it heightened calls for the end of its monopoly, as demand grew for greater choice.

Following the Conservative's White Paper on broadcasting policy in 1952, which advocated some form of competition to the BBC, the stage was set for radical change. The Television Act of 1954 gave the green light for the commercial television system, and the Act received Royal Assent in July 1954. The Independent Television Association (ITA) met soon after and began the planning for regional franchises. Invitations to interested parties to become programme contractors were published in the press on 25 August 1954, and twenty-five applications were received. The ITA regulated commercial television through awarding franchises and controlling the nature and content of advertising; a strong public service remit was also imposed on contractors (Briggs, 1995:

879). Finally, commercial television began broadcasting on 22 September 1955. At first ITV could only be watched in the London area, but by 1956 it was available in the Midlands, and the main population areas were covered by the early 1960s. The new channel was highly popular and by the end of the 1950s ITV was winning the ratings battle with the BBC (Crisell, 1997: 139).

Throughout this early period of ITV's history television became increasingly culturally important. As O'Sullivan writes, 'By the end of 1959, the British television landscape had been transformed. From the very shaky post-war technical restart in 1946, television had been reinvented as a national cultural institution with an established and expanding domestic viewing culture' (2003: 34). More and more people were watching television in their leisure time, so that in the 1950s people were spending more time watching television than visiting the cinema or listening to the radio. By the 1960s, the British population was spending more of its leisure time watching television than on any other activity (Williams, 2004: 1).

The creation of ITV is crucial in that it led to the emergence of independent broadcasting and paved the way for the creation of an independent production sector in the future. However, although the government had succeeded in breaking the BBC's monopoly over broadcasting, it had established in its place a comfortable duopoly between the two broadcasters (O'Sullivan, 2003). The pressure grew from the 1960s onwards for a second commercial channel. This was not be realised until 1982, with the launch of Channel 4, and with it the contemporary ITPS.

3.2 Channel 4 and the creation of the 'indie' system

The watershed moment for the creation of the ITPS came at the beginning of the 1980s, under the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, with the creation of a new commercial public service broadcaster. The Channel Four Company was incorporated in December 1980 as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). Channel 4 began broadcasting on 2 November 1982 after more than two decades of fierce political and public debate. The famous 'empty room' of broadcasting, referred to in 1977 in Lord Annan's report on the future of broadcasting, had finally been filled (Annan, 1977). But what was the political context under which Channel 4 emerged? Crucially, it was created on the threshold of a decade

that is generally associated with Thatcherism, with the economic, cultural and social policies of the New Right (Levitas, 1988). Forged under the contradictory forces of leftist radical experimentalism and neoliberal conservatism, Channel 4 has a unique position in the history of broadcasting. Its existence also transformed the political economy of television production, largely due to its publisher/commissioning structure, which has had a fundamental impact on the ecology of independent production in this country.

Harvey has shown how a key problem for the Conservatives in the 1980s was attempting to resolve the conflict between the values of the old and the new right, 'between a paternalistic and often authoritarian cultural conservatism, and the demands of economic innovation, of letting the market "rip"' (2000: 93). On the one hand there was a demand for heritage, and for cultural continuity; whilst on the other hand, economic liberalism meant setting the market free, developing more efficient, flexible forms of production, providing greater choice, and prioritising the individual consumer's sovereignty to make choices in the marketplace. Channel 4 bears the hallmarks of these contradictory tensions within conservatism at the time. The commitment to public service with its long history in the BBC, and before that in the Victorian commitment to civil service, was evident in the 1980 public service requirement that Channel 4 should provide innovative new programming, serve the tastes and interests of a wide audience, and produce a suitable quota of educational programming. Leading up to the 1980 Broadcasting Act, which acted as the political catalyst for Channel 4's creation, there was a clear focus from both the Labour and Conservative Parties for choice in terms of content, not just of channels. With Channel 4, this was manifest in the focus on complementarity, and on serving the needs and interests of niche groups. Such a policy focus was not new, showing how 'public service' principles and a commitment to cultural heritage had historically superseded demands for a 'free market' in broadcasting, unlike the approach in the United States (Harvey, 2000: 93).

At the same time a strong focus on entrepreneurialism and free-market economic liberalism was evident in the structure of Channel 4. This was designed to encourage greater efficiency in production, establishing Channel 4 as a broadcaster that would commission programmes externally, rather than produce them internally. Hitherto, programme production in the UK had been largely vertically integrated, with the

broadcasters also producing their own content in-house. Under the new system at Channel 4, the ITPS was created virtually overnight, consisting of small to medium-sized companies whose remit was to produce new and innovative content for the new broadcaster. As Harvey writes:

> The new independents, it was argued, would have more innovative attitudes to doing business, and lower overheads than the lumbering giants who were their parents: the BBC and ITV companies. The newcomers, motivated by an anxious desire to deliver programmes at competitive prices, would ultimately transform the industry as a whole, replacing permanent contracts with freelance employment, and doing away with 'over-manning', along with the company pension schemes, subsidized canteens, and childcare facilities, that had indirectly increased the costs of production. (Harvey, 2000: 94)

Then as now (despite the emergence of the so-called 'superindies') it was an industry made up largely of micro-production companies, sustained precariously through insecure commissioning relationships with the broadcasters. We shall now turn to explore the political context of the creation of Channel 4, charged under an Act of Parliament to be experimental and innovative (Warnock, 2003: 199), and the implications of the radical new structure of this organisation on the independent production industry in the UK,

3.2.1 Channel 4: breaking the duopoly

> [Channel 4] did not drop from the skies in response to a few lines in the British Parliament's Broadcasting Act of 1980. It was pushed into existence by many people, acting sometimes together, sometimes at cross-purposes, and under more-or-less favourable conditions...It was probably the only television channel in the world to combine a legislative requirement to experiment, to innovate, and to complement the service offered by the existing commercial television channel, and all of this on an income guaranteed in advance by its parliamentary godparents, under the direction of a Conservative government. (Harvey, 2000: 92)

Essentially, Channel 4 was created to provide a new model of public service broadcasting in the UK, in the form of a channel that could provide greater choice and innovation. A comfortable duopoly had emerged between the BBC and ITV, which had led to a glut of populist television, particularly on ITV, that was squarely aimed at a mass audience. In some respects the duopoly between ITV and BBC had been a success, introducing a less elite tone, and providing some very welcome competition. However, it

was widely felt that there was a need for more experimental television in the commercial sector. After ITV's creation in 1955, there was a backlash against commercial broadcasting. The Pilkington Report in 1962 was critical of ITV's achievements for its perceived focus on ratings and commercialisation and made recommendations for a third channel which became known as BBC 2 in 1964. The creation of BBC 2 had shown government how successful a complementary programme schedule could be in public television. From that time onwards it was increasingly felt that commercial television should have a similar transformed structure. There was a feeling that the endless battle for ratings had made much television output bland and predictable, and that it failed to cater for diverse and niche audiences (Johnson and Turnock, 2005: 22). Channel 4 was designed to be a commercial channel that could take risks, innovate and experiment, without the commercial pressure of always having to aim for huge audiences.

As well as greater diversity of programme content, it was also felt that there needed to be a new broadcasting commissioning structure which gave greater opportunities to independent producers. Following the establishment of ITV a number of influential programme makers had tried to set up IPCs outside of the BBC/ITV duopoly during the 1960s and 1970s. They included figures such as Jeremy Isaacs, Robert Kee, Ludovic Kennedy, Donald Baverstock and Alasdair Milne (Harvey, 2000: 95). They quickly discovered that working outside of the duopoly was financially unrewarding and unsustainable. The first major attempt to work independently of the broadcasters came in 1962, when a number of *Panorama* presenters, fearing takeover by the BBC's lively magazine current affairs programme *Tonight*, left the BBC and formed Television Reporters International Ltd (TRI). As Lambert notes:

> It was the first major attempt by television programme-makers to work independently of the broadcasting institutions... Television Reporters International... were convinced that with their impressive array of the BBC's most prominent presenters they could dominate the current affairs market and sell independently produced documentary features in Britain and worldwide. (1982: 36)

The project was a failure: although Associated Television (ATV) made an agreement to buy their programmes, both Granada and Associated Rediffusion (AR) refused to take TRI's programmes. There were a number of reasons for this. As an

article at the time in *Contrast* suggested: 'AR said they would not participate in the networking of current affairs programmes not made by a company directly responsible to the government' (cited in Lambert, 1982: 36). Certainly internal staff tension within the ITV companies caused by TRI's entrepreneurialism was a major factor. The permanent workforces within ATV, Granada and AR perceived the threat to their security. Granada were worried that the deal would 'have a bad effect on their staff' (Lambert, 1982: 6). Moreover, the ITA was nervous about current affairs content produced outside of a directly regulated broadcasting company; and of course, the BBC was not going to support the breakaway group.

In another doomed effort, a separate group of BBC producers also set up their own production company. In 1965, when *Tonight* came off the air, Antony Jay, Donald Baverstock, and Alasdair Milne formed JBM Limited. They actually managed to forge a working relationship with the BBC, and sold a small number of programmes to them; however, their financial lifeblood was industrial training films. When Milne was offered the controllership of BBC Scotland, he accepted, and the venture fell apart. As Lambert writes, 'Once again, the lesson for others was that even the most respected programme-makers found it hard to exist outside the duopoly' (1982: 37).

These two high-profile examples had discouraged other programme-makers who might have been considering going independent at the time. Aspiring independent producers had to overcome great obstacles to make a success of it in the years of the duopoly. Both the BBC and ITV had established a form of cultural protectionism, unwilling to concede that good programmes could be made by independent producers. There were financial reasons of course: a healthy independent sector would challenge the BBC and ITV in terms of selling British television programmes abroad; but there was also a cultural reason. As the producer/director Christopher Nupen has suggested, there was a general feeling amongst the broadcasting elite that there was no real need to give greater control and opportunity to the independent sector:

> The absence of truly independent television producers in the United Kingdom, in spite of the availability of so many of the best technicians in the world, lies in the direct commercial conflict that inevitably exists between independent producers and the ITV companies, and the self-importance of the BBC administrators in their methods of using their absolute control over two of the three networks in this country. (cited in Lambert, 1982: 39)

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Within this combative context the Pilkington Report in 1962 was highly critical of ITV's achievements and recommended the idea of a third channel which would eventually become BBC 2 in 1964. Politically, this is the moment when demand for a fourth channel began in earnest. Immediately, the ITA began calling for a new commercial channel known as 'ITV2'. Whilst the ITA at first envisaged this channel being independent from ITV, slowly over time, under pressure from the ITV companies, it changed its position to see the fourth channel being under the control of the existing ITV contractors. In 1970, when the Conservatives returned to power, the issue became more heated. In 1971 the ITA submitted evidence to the government which proposed that the ITV contractors should have scheduling control over a board consisting of the ITV programme controllers, with guaranteed rights to make programmes for ITV companies (ITA, 1971). It did suggest that an unspecified amount of airtime should be available for independent producers, but the ITA did not see their abilities in the most favourable light:

> There are dangers of amateurishness in production and difficulties in incorporating such programmes in a national television service without sacrificing impartiality and editorial control. (ibid.: 17-18)

However, there were criticisms of the ITA's proposals from a number of quarters, most sharply focused in the TV4 group, a coalition of programme-makers, journalists, politicians, academics and advertisers, which attacked the ITA proposal in these terms: 'it represents an arrogant and bland ignorance of the needs of the public' (Lambert, 1982: 46). Despite this, it seemed that the momentum for the fourth channel was lost when, in 1972, Christopher Chataway, Conservative Minister for Posts and Telecommunications announced that the government did not intend to proceed with allocating a licence for a new channel. In fact the debate was just starting.

3.2.2 'The National Television Foundation'

Undoubtedly the single most important intellectual contribution to the future structure of Channel 4 came in April 1972 from Anthony Smith, a former BBC programme-maker, when he wrote to the *Guardian* and put forward his ideas for a National Television Foundation, which was subsequently worked up as a submission to

the Annan Committee (Smith, 1976). He argued that the Foundation would act as a publishing house, buying in and broadcasting programmes from a wide range of sources; open to independent programme-makers and individuals and organisations with a point to make. Smith contended that the duopoly had produced large self-protective bureaucratic organisations which had damaged creative work. As Harvey suggests, 'Smith argued that existing broadcasting institutions had become vast and bureaucratic centres of power, corrosive of creative work, inclined to over-careful self-policing, and absorbed in the project of their own institutional survival' (2000: 98). Against the duopoly, Smith made the case for a new kind of broadcaster: 'What has to be achieved is a form of institutional control wedded to a different doctrine from existing broadcasting authorities, to a doctrine of openness rather than to balance, to expression rather than to neutralisation' (Smith, 1976).

Smith's thesis is pivotal to the eventual structure of Channel 4, and for the development of the independent production sector. He proposed that the current control of the airwaves by two broadcasters was unacceptable, and that there needed to be new independent voices that could bring new innovations and ideas into the television landscape. This envisaged that the open publishing system would provide a market for 'freelance' creatives who would not find outlets for their work within the existing broadcasters. As he suggested:

> It would supplement existing broadcasting by broadening the input, by allowing anyone to bring a project to it, whether an independent programme-maker with a finely worked-out plan, neatly costed, or a firm, organisation or individual with merely a well-argued complaint that some issue was failing to get across to the public. The Foundation would then play a kind of impresario role, merely by allocating resources to some, but fitting producers, writers, technicians to others who arrived with an idea, a grievance, a cause. (cited in Lambert, 1982: 47-8).

Smith's critique of the duopoly, and his call for a new kind of broadcaster, was a intellectual focal point for those who argued against the extension of the duopoly through ITV2, and 'for many who had become disenchanted with the bland or censorious nature of the medium' (Harvey, 2000: 99). Key industry figures such as David Elstein, John Birt and Jeremy Isaacs argued for a new arrangement which allowed the independents to compete for airtime against the broadcasters. As Harvey writes:

> What Isaacs, Birt, and Elstein shared with Anthony Smith was a desire to liberate the creative people in television from the often stifling effects of bureaucracy, and to find a way to ensure – systematically, not, as it were, by accident – that new things could be said in new ways' (2000: 99).

The intellectual backlash against what was seen as a stifling duopoly system is perhaps best expressed by Michael Darlow, one of the key players at the time in the campaign for Channel 4:

> Increasingly we came to believe that the whole system of control and funding in film and broadcasting was inappropriate to the needs and aspirations of the new age; that the BBC and ITV networks, controlled and run respectively by narrow elites of predominantly middle-class Oxbridge men and a handful of show business agents and impresarios, no longer adequately met the range of needs and tastes of the viewing public or of society at large. As a result we began to search for ways of making the media in which we worked more accessible and participatory, open to a much wider range of possible ideas, films and programmes – drama, entertainment, documentary and current affairs, even to forms and content not so far seen or invented. *In searching we sought to create a freer and more open arena in which to realise our own creative ideas.* (2004: 3-4, my italics)

3.2.3 The Annan Report

The Annan Committee was set up in this climate in 1974 under a Labour government, although its recommendations were not available until 1977. It argued for a 'third force' in broadcasting, to break the ITV/BBC duopoly. Although there was a widespread political desire for a fourth channel, there was a conflict between those who thought that there was a need for something completely different, and those who wanted the creation of 'ITV2', a channel that would be controlled by the ITA, provided for by the existing ITV companies which would essentially maintain the duopoly. The Annan Committee was wide-ranging, looking into all aspects of British broadcasting. Influenced by Anthony Smith's arguments (although he had been denied membership of the committee) and by Phillip Whitehead, a Labour MP who had been active in the TV4 Campaign, the committee put forward recommendations that British broadcasting should be:

- accountable through Parliament to the public;
- diverse in its services;

- flexible in structure;

- editorially independent (Annan, 1977: 474).

Lord Annan also saw the need for making space for minority audiences, contending 'we do not want more of the same. There are enough programmes for the majority... What is needed now is programmes for the different minorities which add up to make the majority' (ibid.: 237).

The Annan Committee proposed an Open Broadcasting Authority (OBA), which would act as a publisher offering an outlet to programmes from a diversity of sources that would not fit on existing channels. In key ways, the OBA was very similar to Smith's notion of the National Television Foundation. The OBA's programmes would come from three areas: education (including the Open University), the ITV contractors, and those from independent producers, the latter which it saw as a 'force for diversity and new ideas' (ibid.: 237). This new channel was seen as a space of experimentation for a new kind of broadcasting:

> We see the fourth channel not just as another outlet or even just as a means of giving a more varied service to the audience. It should be the test bed for experiment and symbolise all the vitality, the new initiatives, practices and liberties which could inspire broadcasters. (ibid.: 474)

However, Annan's recommendations were not put into practice by the Labour party that set it up. It was unsure about the proposals, and although in 1978 it decided to support the OBA proposal, it did not move forward with enabling legislation. Then in 1979 Labour lost the general election to the Conservative party. It looked as though the creation of the new channel had once become bogged down in political quagmire.

In fact, the opposite proved to true: progress under the new government was to be swift. The incoming home secretary William Whitelaw had been interested in the fourth channel campaign, and in May 1979 the government announced the creation of a fourth channel in the Queen's Speech. Immediately, the campaigning increased to ensure cultural independence for the new institution, with many key figures in broadcasting and politics opposed to the idea that the ITV companies could control it. In the same year, the future Chief Executive of Channel 4, Jeremy Isaacs, gave the McTaggart Lecture, in

which he laid out his vision for the new channel and in which the imperative for it to 'somehow be different' was again asserted:

> We want a fourth channel that will neither simply compete with ITV1 nor merely be complementary to it. We want a fourth channel that everyone will watch some of the time and no-one will watch all of the time. (cited in Lambert, 1982: 92)

Meanwhile during the course of 1979 the campaigners for Channel 4 repeatedly emphasised the entrepreneurial benefits of independent production, most notably when a delegation of senior television figures including David Elstein, Christopher Nupen, Peter Graham Scott and Mark Shivas met the Conservatives' backbench Media Committee and argued that they had a greater desire to maximise overseas sales than the ITV companies.[27] They warned the politicians that unless the new channel could provide a reliable domestic market to help create a potentially prosperous ITPS, then other countries might achieve a domination of this sector, which would make it harder for British producers to enter it in the future. Moreover they argued that an ITV2 run by the ITV companies would merely be a continuation of the wasteful industrial practices of over-manning, and overspending, which the ITV companies had become infamous for. The campaigners of the 'Channel Four Group' emphasised that as indie producers they would be entrepreneurial small businesses, in line with the enterprise ideology of the government, and the importance of small businesses to the economy. They borrowed Thatcher's free market language (with its focus on enterprise, small businesses and 'The Free Market of Ideas') to devastating effect (Darlow, 2004: 202). By aligning themselves to the Conservative's guiding ideology of free-market capitalism, the independent production lobby hugely increased the momentum for the creation of the new channel.

In September 1979, Whitelaw ended speculation about the structure of the new channel when he gave a speech at the Royal Television Society Convention at Cambridge which assured observers that the government was committed to providing 'new opportunities to creative people', 'new ways of finding minority and specialist audiences' (Lambert, 1982: 93). The idea of the Open Broadcasting Authority was gone, and in its place Whitelaw proposed that the new channel should come under the control of the IBA. In the end the eventual regulatory structure was a compromise from some of the

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[27] These figures were part of the Channel Four Group, the history of which is outlined in Darlow's account of the history of independent television (2004: chapter 6).

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more radical suggestions that had been made over the years, with Whitelaw appealing to all factions to come together to make it work:

> The experience and ability of the IBA, if used to the full, the money, equipment and skills of the ITV companies, and the talents of independent producers, can be harnessed to provide a different and worthwhile service on the fourth channel. (cited in Lambert, 1982: 93)

However, the independents had been successful in their lobbying to government, and the IBA was required to ensure that 'the largest practicable proportion of programmes' would be supplied from non-ITV companies. In return ITV would retain their monopoly on advertising sales. The control of this new institution had firmly moved away from ITV, and with it the creation of the independent sector had been guaranteed.

3.3 Channel 4 and the new independents

The creation of Channel 4 in 1980 meant a radical new structure for British broadcasting. The new channel was a wholly owned subsidiary of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). Although financed by advertising, it was set up on a 'not-for-profit' basis, meaning that the return of profit for private investors would not be the main priority. As Harvey points out, this was a major structural innovation in commercial television:

> There would be no private investors whose primary interest would be in dividend returns and profit maximisation. This was seen as the most appropriate organisational form for the delivery of a public service remit, offering genuine programme (and not just channel) choice to audiences. (2003: 51)

At the time, ITV was able to retain its monopoly on the sale of television airtime for commercials, which it had enjoyed for over twenty-five years. The creation of Channel 4 presented potentially new competition for television advertising revenue, which the ITV companies were implacably opposed to. However, through a complex deal struck by the regulatory body, the IBA, ITV held on to its advertising sales monopoly by being given the right to sell the airtime to Channel 4. The IBA acted as the middle-man, passing on the ITV subscription to meet the programme and running costs of Channel 4. The catch for the ITV companies was that in exchange for holding on to

their advertising sales monopoly they had to meet the running costs of the new channel, which were in excess of its advertising income for the first five years of its existence (Harvey, 2003: 52). However, the payments that the ITV made to the IBA, apart from the Channel 4 payments, were organised in such a way to cause minimum financial pain. In the end ITV was able to continue to set the price of airtime sales without a competitor. Essentially, this complex deal meant that it was in ITV's interests to peacefully co-exist with Channel 4, rather than aggressively compete with it through fierce scheduling competition. This served the public interest, in that Channel 4 was able to experiment and grow; whilst at the same time it was a way of subsidising this risky initiative in public service broadcasting. As Harvey notes, this arrangement of subsidy seemed to have slipped under the Conservative radar of the time:

> In practice the IBA made rather lower returns to the government Treasury during the first five years of this experiment and the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, vigorously attached to the principles of the free market and deeply opposed to any extension of the public subsidy system, appeared unaware of the subversively uncompetitive nature of the new funding arrangement. (2003: 52)

The ITV companies had been appeased with advertising revenue from the commercial breaks, but those who wanted the new channel to be experimental and innovative were satisfied that the channel was not forced to chase high viewing figures.

3.3.1 Radical content

Channel 4 had a parliamentary remit to provide programmes that were 'innovative in form and content' and to 'encourage innovation and experiment in the form and content of programmes' (Bignell, 2004: 45). Certainly the content produced by the new channel under its first Chief Executive, Jeremy Isaacs (1982-7), achieved this prerequisite. Experimental and radical, Channel 4:

> Tapped the pent-up creativity of producers drawn from established broadcasters and radicals from the film industry and independent cinema. It also provided, under the banner of liberalism and innovation, a substantial platform for left-wing ideas that were being squeezed out of the other media, especially the BBC, by the prevailing orthodoxies of Thatcherism. (Harvey, 2003: 96).

It was a period of bold innovation and defiance. The programmes that were commissioned challenged established views and positions, as Isaacs points out: 'I had never doubted, thinking too much television too unthinking, too bland, that Channel 4 would broadcast programmes that put, as forcibly as possible, a forcible point of view' (ibid.: 53). In this context, Isaacs declared that the new channel should not aim for a mass audience but be different (ibid.: 19-20).

Channel 4 set about fulfilling its parliamentary remit to experiment and innovate with vigour. A number of innovative examples stand out. Under Isaacs, an hour-long news programme was created for peak time, but that was ended by a three-minute *Comment* slot that featured an individual with a passionately argued point of view. *Right to Reply* and a thirty-minute *Opinions* programme gave the viewers the right to get their views on television, working against what Isaacs perceived as 'a subtle centrist, conformist bias' in broadcasting (ibid.: 85). Other material such as that commissioned for strands like *Eleventh Hour* and *People to People* took risks both visually and in terms of subject matter. Moreover there were some hitherto unheard of experiments in broadcasting, such as the screening of Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour film about the holocaust, *Shoah*, over two nights without any television commercials.

Looking back to early Channel 4, there was clearly an explosion of originality and ideas, as if a pressure valve of creative energy had been released. Ironically, Channel 4, developed under policies emanating from the free market doctrine of the current Conservative government, was often a radical, subversive broadcaster, giving a voice to the experiences, for the first time, of a wide range of minority groups. However, there was constant opposition to the perceived leftist bias of the new channel, as Jeremy Isaacs recalls when describing an encounter with the Conservative cabinet politician Norman Tebbit shortly after the channel's launch:

> After dinner at the German Embassy I spoke to one politician who was sure we were on the wrong lines, Norman Tebbit. 'You've got it all wrong, you know,' he said, 'doing all these programmes for homosexuals and such…Parliament never meant that sort of thing. The different interests you are supposed to cater for are not like that at all. Golf and sailing and fishing. Hobbies. That's what we intended' (Isaacs, 1989: 65)

As Buscombe has written, this was one of the delicious ironies of early Channel 4: 'It is not the least amusing contradiction of capitalism that in the name of economic laissez-faire it permits many flowers to grow which get right up the nose of its more socially conservative supporters' (2000: 13).

3.3.2 The independents: a new paradigm for production

As well as providing a home for experimental programming, the creation of Channel 4 also acted as the catalyst for the rapid development of the independent television sector, which exploded in size in the years to come, and provided much of this innovative new content. As Lambert shows, there had been some growth in the independent production sector since the 1970s, with growth in the overseas and industrial training film market, and a growth in the number of production companies making television commercials (1982: 76). Meanwhile there were a number of freelance producers and directors who worked for the BBC and ITV. However, there was no 'indie' sector then as it is conceived of today; a situation that was transformed by the creation of Channel 4. There were a number of key reasons for this. Firstly this was due to the commissioning structure of the channel. Crucially, the channel had retained Anthony Smith's original concept of the broadcaster as akin to publishing house; this made Channel 4 unique amongst the broadcasters of the period in that it was purely a broadcaster of content, it was not a producer. Second, there was a regulatory demand that the new channel should source a proportion of its original programming from independent sources.[28] Both of these factors meant that Channel 4 needed to buy in new programmes from outside sources, many of which came from independent producers.

After Channel 4 was set up in 1980, but before it started broadcasting in 1982, many industry figures transformed themselves from political agitators for the new channel to entrepreneurs. The new Chief Executive appointed his staff, and then began the process of commissioning programmes in earnest. There was a flood of offers from the few established and many more aspirant independent producers; this coupled with ITV's sluggishness in proposing programme ideas meant that by the beginning of 1982, Channel 4 had made over two hundred commissions, nearly all from independent

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[28] Initially, the independents were expected to provide ten hours of programmes a week (approximately 20 per cent of Channel 4's output) (Darlow, 2004: 281).

producers (Lambert, 1982: 122). The quality of the offerings from the new independents, their enthusiasm and speed in proposing programme ideas, and their competitiveness in relation to the much larger ITV companies, meant that about 50 per cent of newly originated material for the first year's output – a much higher share than Isaacs had predicted – came from the independent sector (ibid.).

Therefore, while there were concerns from the IBA about whether the independent sector had the facilities to become major suppliers to Channel 4, the independents were quick to promote their competitiveness, their flexibility, and their leanness; juxtaposing the benefits of being small and flexible against what they argued was the cumbersome bureaucracy of the BBC and ITV companies. For example, Darlow, responding to contemporary concerns that the independent production sector wouldn't have enough quality production equipment to make the amount of programming necessary for the new channel, countered by arguing that in fact the BBC and ITV's post-production equipment was dated. 'On the whole, one can find better stuff around Wardour Street, and we would rather use it; it works quicker, it works better and it produces more the sort of pictures we want' (IBA, 1980: 7).Similarly, Mike Luckwell argued that there were more than enough studios, with forty in London alone (cited in Lambert, 1982: 123).

Certainly in the ensuing competition between the independent producers and the ITV companies (both the network 'Big Five' (Thames, London Weekend Television, Associated Television, Granada and Yorkshire) and the smaller regional companies), the independent producers found themselves consistently in a stronger, more competitive position, because they did not have the high running cost overheads of the ITV companies. Whilst the ITV companies argued that Channel 4 should pay an indirect cost allowance to go towards permanent staff salaries, studios, equipment, ancillary resources) on top of the direct cost of a programme, Channel 4 disagreed. Indeed, Justin Dukes, the early Managing Director of Channel 4, speaking about this very issue, argued, 'no way am I interested, nor is there a case for, my paying their total costs, which are horrendous, but they are nothing to do with me' (cited in Lambert, 1982: 132). The advantage was to the independents, who did not have such overheads. Indeed, as Lambert argues:

> The extravagant industrial practices of the ITV companies, especially the Big Five, had been the subject of criticism over the years. The companies would have

to improve their working structure if they were to operate competitively with the leaner independent producers, who could afford to work with Channel Four's average £30,000 per hour budget. (ibid.)

In contrast, the independents were able to make use of their flexible organisational structures to drive their costs down.

3.3.3 The 'Indies' in the 1990s

The economic and cultural success of the independent sector during the 1980s was compounded in the 1990 Broadcasting Act, which stipulated that the BBC and ITV commission at least 25 per cent of their originally produced content out of house. By 1991 over half of its originally commissioned programmes were being made in the independent sector, produced by a total of 668 production companies, the majority being small businesses: only twenty-eight of those 668 companies received commissions amounting to more than £1 million for the year, with the majority of them (470) receiving commissions worth under £100,000 (Harvey, 2000: 112).

The 1990 Broadcasting Act was crucial in the development of both Channel 4 and the independent sector. The emphasis on experimentation and innovation was reinforced in the Act's requirement for the channel to encourage 'innovation and experiment in the form and content' of programmes, and to 'appeal to tastes and interests not generally catered for by Channel 3'. (ibid.: 115). The channel was no longer a wholly owned subsidiary of the regulatory body; the link to the ITV companies was broken, and the new corporation was able to sell its own advertising. As Harvey writes of this time:

> In avoiding both a private shareholding solution for Channel Four and the creation of head-on competition with ITV (for the same audiences at the same time) the long-established public policy principle that audiences should be offered programme choice, not just channel choice, continued to be upheld. (ibid.: 116-17)

Choice had certainly been provided by the independent production sector in the course of the 1980s and 1990s, but during this time, independent production remained a deeply precarious sector. Building a sustainable business model was incredibly difficult for the

majority of IPCs, apart from a very few who were able to grow to a large enough size, with sufficiently good track records to guarantee commissions. However, although there was an explosion of production companies during this time, there were also many failures. As such, Channel 4's public service model was based on a free market model of flexible accumulation that left the majority of providers extremely vulnerable to failure.

3.3.4 Independent but still dependent: insecurity as structural

> Certainly, many independent producers are experiencing almost intolerable living and working conditions, and yet this sector continues to be the preferred free-market policy instrument for implementing the commitment to cultural diversity. There is a tense 'play-off' here between the values of 'heritage' and those of 'enterprise'... For that variant of broadcasting heritage which involves a commitment to cultural pluralism is underwritten by the 'enterprising' methods of a dependent-independent production sector which may find it difficult to reproduce itself in the long term. (Harvey, 2000: 114)

During the 1990s, building sustainable businesses was a remote possibility for the majority of IPCs who were utterly dependent on winning commissions from the new channel commissioners, but without any long-term guarantees of work. Commissions were largely one-off purchasing decisions, leading to a very high level of insecurity in the sector. Certainly, this insecurity was something that Jeremy Isaacs acknowledged in his first public address to independent producers in January 1981, when he cautioned producers that the independent route could be a difficult one: 'Do not leave steady jobs, mortgage the house and send the family out to work unless you've had your programme commissioned.' He warned those producers in the BBC and ITV that they should only consider the independent route, leaving the security of a permanent position, if they were especially talented (Lambert, 1982: 125).

The insecurity of the independent sector is integral to the commissioning structure of Channel 4, with both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, because the commissioning/publishing structure worked in Channel 4's economic favour, they were able to create growth in the independent sector by providing a market for their ideas. However, as Harvey points out:

> While it is true that Channel Four provides some opportunities for first-time film-makers and for those who would otherwise have no access to television, the

problem for the small independents is 'how to survive' in the face of radical uncertainty about the renewal of production contracts. As the individuals who make up the sector get older, take on domestic commitments, and realize the benefits of secure employment, a predictable income, sick pay, paid holidays, and properly resourced pensions, their commitment to working in a radically insecure sector inevitably diminishes. It is appropriate, therefore, to ask whose cultural and economic interests are served by the maintenance of this sector and this 'miniature' mode of production? And to what extent are freedom and diversity of expression safeguarded for the television audience by this system of production? (2000: 113-14).

Essentially, the insecurity of this creative sector was created as a structural element of Channel 4's business model. Crucially, it is one that also suited the free-market ideology of Thatcher's Britain, in which entrepreneurial individuals were encouraged to sell their talent on the open market. The development of Channel 4 is critical to the evolution of the independent sector, which remains a precarious, freelance industry for so many individuals, as my analysis will show.

3.4 Independent television production in the age of New Labour

In the following section of this chapter, I explore how the independent sector has evolved from this position in recent years. I examine the key policy debates that have impacted on the growth and development of the sector in recent history, in particular under New Labour. There has been a rapid commercialisation of the sector during this period, partly as a result of regulatory change, creating an environment more conducive to growth for IPCs. However, while there have been a number of high-profile commercial success stories in the independent sector amongst the 'super-indies', in fact the vulnerability faced by the majority of producers has intensified under the contemporary 'Creative Industries' policy. But first I will contextualise the new ideological environment that emerged under New Labour in the 1990s, which has had a significant impact on the broadcasting landscape since they swept to power in 1997.

3.4.1 New Labour and the 'modernisation' agenda

After eighteen years in power (1979-97), the Conservative government were finally ousted from office in New Labour's landslide victory of May 1997.[29] In the years following Thatcher's departure in 1990, the Tory government under John Major had become indelibly associated with sleaze, hypocrisy and incompetence (Kavanagh, 1997; Geddes and Tonge, 1997). Policies such as the 'back to basics' strategy, with its moral emphasis on recreating traditional 'family values', jarred disastrously with a party increasingly embroiled in personal scandal; at the same time the lingering negative impact of the poll tax, introduced under Thatcher, had a damaging long-term impact on the party's popularity. Labour, which had been out of office since 1979, had become increasingly desperate to regain power, and in 1992, with the election of John Smith as party leader, the shift to position the party in the 'centre' of British politics was consolidated. Determined to reform the structure of party politics within Labour, Smith quickly introduced the 'one member, one vote' rule for the selection of parliamentary candidates, in order to curb the power of the union block vote. However, for the 'modernisers' within the party, the reform process was slow and overly consensual. With Smith's sudden death in May 1994, Tony Blair was made leader, and immediately set about a radical reform of the party. As Freedman argues:

> New Labour, as Blair's project came to be known at the end of 1994, could be characterised by its emphasis on three features: 'modernisation' of party policies, ideologies and structures; the professionalisation of the party's presentation and campaigning skills; and the neutralisation of the influence of a traditionally anti-Labour mass media. (2003: 155)

The transformation that occurred under New Labour was ideological, structural and aesthetic. Ideologically, the party made an accommodation with the values of market capitalism, as Tony Blair and his shadow chancellor toured the City convincing the financial community that they were friendly to business. They set out to dispel the old image of Labour as the party of high taxes; instead they offered low inflation and low levels of public spending. New Labour began to distance itself from fundamental socialist principles, in order to appeal not only to the City, but also to the psephological electoral heartland of 'Middle England'. This was epitomised in April 1995 when Clause IV of the constitution, which promised 'common ownership of the means of production', was replaced by one that promised wealth creation rather than distribution.

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[29] Labour captured 43.2 per cent of the vote, compared to the Conservatives' 30.7 per cent.

Simultaneously, New Labour structurally metamorphosed into a tightly-controlled centralist machine, as changes were instigated that concentrated power within the party executive, away from the rank and file members and the National Executive Committee (NEC). Candidate selection was centralised, with the national party given the ability to impose candidates on local branches. The annual conference was marginalised and the NEC's role was transformed to make it 'auxiliary to the parliamentary party, rather then the other way round' (Panitch and Leys, 1997: 234).

Aesthetically, the transformation was immediately evident in the rebranding of the party as 'New Labour'. Individuals skilled at media political communication, such as Philip Gould, Peter Mandelson and Alastair Campbell, were brought into Blair's private office, and a new unit was created at Millbank specifically for dealing with media and campaigning issues. Through a highly effective public relations strategy the party explicitly sought to court the media (especially the right-wing tabloid press, who were widely seen as responsible within the party for Labour's defeat in 1992). As Freedman argues, 'The effectiveness of Labour's communications and public relations strategy was seen as decisive, not simply in terms of electoral success, but in the actual creation and definition of New Labour' (2003: 157). Electorally, this strategy was wildly successful and in 1997 Labour succeeded in winning back the hegemonic political centre ground from the Conservatives and swept to power with a mandate to create a 'New Britain'.

Most notably, a discourse of 'modernisation' swept through the party throughout the 1990s, and was utilised as a symbolic battleground in which the Labour right emerged victorious against the socialists in the party. This discourse, still very much in evidence today (Butler, 2003), has had the effect of drawing a metaphorical line in the sand between those on the side of Blair and the New Labour project, and the 'forces of conservatism' (Blair, cited in Fielding, 2002: 36) on both the left and right who oppose their policies. As Finlayson argues:

> The rhetoric of modernisation can be seen as a way of drawing antagonistic lines of exclusion and inclusion. On one side is that which is modernised or attuned to modernisation and this is always good (if sometimes requiring a 'hard choice'). The other side is always, by definition, out of touch and anti-modernisation. (2000: 60).

With the election of Tony Blair as party leader, the architects of New Labour increasingly aligned themselves with this project of modernisation, arguing that issues confronting the contemporary world transcended old political distinctions. Central to this process was New Labour's embrace of market capitalism and business; something made publicly apparent when Peter Mandelson declared that 'Profit was no longer a dirty word – profits are accepted as the motor of private enterprise' (1996: 22). As Freedman points out, this was a development of the Labour right's long-held belief in the idea of 'markets as tools of egalitarian choice' but adapted to the context of the 1990s (2003: 156). This was the context of rapid globalisation (Giddens, 1991) which was presented by New Labour as an inevitable force, and something that should be embraced as a source of opportunity for business and consumers globally. For Blair, globalisation was the 'driving force of economic change' resulting in a situation where:

> Technology and capital are mobile. Industry is becoming fiercely competitive across national boundaries. (Blair, 1996: 22)

Free-market flows of capital and goods were seen as inevitable, and nation-states helpless in the face of such forces. Rather than resist this process, New Labour advocated measures and strategies to build international competitiveness so that 'UK Plc.' could thrive in such a context. Blair was particularly keen to stress the role of culture and communications in this process:

> It is as if someone has pressed the fast-forward button on the video and there is no sign of it stopping. I also believe that the internationalisation of culture has played a significant part. In Tokyo and London, increasingly we are sharing the same rock music, the same designer clothes, the same films and surely, over time, the same attitude and tastes. (ibid.: 118-19)

3.4.2 The 'third way'

In these early days of New Labour, Blair drew heavily on the ideas of the British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1991, 1998), who proposed the much-maligned concept of the 'third way' for progressive politics, an attempt to steer a course between the naked individualism of Thatcherite neoliberalism and what was seen as an outmoded socialist politics of redistribution. The 'third way' posits the idea that state-based solutions to issues such as social exclusion have failed, and in fact it is through economic

competitiveness that a new progressive approach to social justice can be based. Global markets were no longer to be rejected on socialist grounds, but were seen by New Labour as instrumental in addressing central Labour aims, such as social inclusion and better public services. For Blair, the 'third way' meant an entirely different kind of politics:

> My vision for the 21st century is of a popular politics reconciling themes which in the past have wrongly been regarded as antagonistic – patriotism and internationalism; rights and responsibilities; the promotion of enterprise and the attack on poverty and discrimination. (1998: 1)

Market mechanisms were no longer antagonistic to core social democratic principles, but were now seen as the route to delivering them.

Crucially, the third way presents the key issues affecting societies and individuals in an increasingly globalised economy as transcending the traditional dichotomies between the left and the right. For Blair, globalisation (in particular an essentially neoliberal, capitalist mode of globalisation) is inevitable; in this new rapidly changing world, the 'old' questions posed both by socialism and 'the forces of conservatism' were increasingly irrelevant. New Labour has consistently presented its policies as the only logical response to inexorable global forces and the concomitant rapid social and technological change they bring; in this way globalisation is presented in a deterministic way, rather than as something contingent and shaped by social and political interventions. As Gilbert points out, the rhetorical use of language was a 'hegemonic gesture par excellence': by using the 'empty signifier' of 'modernisation', New Labour was able to assert the idea 'that its interests are conterminous with those of all or most members of that society' (Bewes and Gilbert, 2000: 59). Although the discourse of the 'third way' has long been discarded by New Labour, the ideology that it represents can be seen to be alive and well within the broader 'modernisation' agenda of the government.

3.4.3 Creative industries policy: the neoliberalisation of creativity

At the heart of this New Labour modernisation manifesto was an explicit focus on promoting and embracing the 'knowledge economy' (DTI, 1999). A heavy emphasis

was placed on the value of knowledge-intensive industries to the UK economy. Technology-based sectors, science and the cultural industries were singled out as exemplary of the new 'weightless economy' that was seen as Britain's post-industrial future (Coyle, 1999). Tony Blair presented the 'new economy' as 'radically different' from what had gone before:

> Services, knowledge, skills and small enterprises are its cornerstones. Most of its output cannot be weighed, touched or measured. Its most valuable assets are knowledge and creativity. (1998: 8).

Charles Leadbeater is the key policy thinker associated with these ideas in the UK.[30] Highly influenced by the heady atmosphere of Silicon Valley during the dot.com boom of the late 1990s, his book, *Living on Thin Air*, puts forward the argument that in the 'new economy' the most highly prized qualities will be creativity, innovation and knowledge. For Leadbeater, Britain must build a knowledge-based economy in order to prosper in an increasingly competitive global capitalist environment. With digitisation and globalisation leading to the far greater speed of knowledge distribution, the ability to convert 'tacit' knowledge to 'explicit' knowledge and then to disseminate it globally is the key to economic growth. As such Leadbeater argues that '[k]nowledge sharing and creation is at the heart of innovation in all fields – science, art and business – and innovation is the driving force for wealth creation' (1999: 29).

Writing at the turn of the twentieth century, Leadbeater suggests that knowledge, and the individual's ability to market, package and generate economic value from it, is key to success:

> At the end of the century, knowledge is not just one among many resources; it is becoming the critical factor in how modern economies compete and how they generate wealth and well-being. (ibid.: 36)

In the 'knowledge economy' view, the proliferation of new digital technologies creates an intensification of globalisation which in turn heralds a new economic order where there

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[30] Charles Leadbeater - a former contributor to *Marxism Today* - is the author of a number of books on the new economy, and retains a close link to the New Labour think tank Demos, where he worked in the mid-1990s. He has also acted as an adviser to government, most notably as the author of the DTI's report on the knowledge economy (DTI, 1999).

is a need for a 'learning society', in which workers need to be constantly updating their skills and reshaping themselves to be fit, lean and flexible for the 'new economy'.

Culture has been accorded a privileged place within this vision of economic growth under New Labour. According to a number of definitive New Labour policy documents, without even realising it Britain had a great economic success story under its noses, one that had prospered despite years of under funding and cultural philistinism from the Conservative government (DCMS, 1998, 2001a). This was comprised of a group of sectors that became known as the 'creative industries', essentially an attempt to find a new term for 'cultural industries' with less ideological baggage (Oakley, 2006). The creative industries were defined as 'those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property' (DCMS, 1998: 3). Creativity and culture under New Labour was at once a source of individual fulfilment, economic growth, and a social policy tool for enhancing education and tackling social inclusion.[31] Indeed, Tony Blair has consistently made the clear link between creativity and national prosperity and success:

> For too long, arts and culture have stood outside the mainstream, their potential unrecognised by the government. That has to change, and under Labour it will…in the 21st century, we are going to see the world increasingly influenced by innovation and creative minds. Our future depends on our creativity. (2000)

The 'creativity script' (Peck, 2005: 749) involves an aggressive positioning of the cultural and 'content' industries at the heart of the new networked knowledge economies of post-industrial society, with 'creativity' (the definition of which is left deliberately vague) as a precondition for economic success. The policy shift to the concept of creative industries was radical in that it heralded a move from seeing culture and the arts as sectors to be supported through state subsidies, to seeing them as critical components within a globalised knowledge economy (O'Connor, 2007). According to the creative industries script as developed since 1997, and which has since spread globally (Wang,

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[31] In the UK government Green Paper, 'Culture and Creativity', stress is laid on 'the key role that culture and creativity play in the government's educational and industrial policies'. 'Culture and Creativity' acknowledges the importance of the cultural sphere as a sector of the economy that continues to experience vigorous growth in Britain and throughout the globe. But it also recognises that cultural research and development constitutes an essential catalyst of future innovation: 'creative talent will be crucial to our individual and national economic success in the economy of the future' (DCMS, 2001a).

2004), culture, creativity and the cultural industries have been reconfigured as engines of economic growth *and* social transformation, offering the hope of generating capital accumulation through the development of *creative clusters*, with the promise of making the UK the 'world's *creative hub*' (Purnell, 2005, my italics).

The creative industries agenda is evidence of the massive economic shift of cultural industries from the margins to the centre of economic and social life. Economically, the creative industries account for 8 per cent of Gross Value Added (GVA)[32] – estimate at £56.5 billion - and according to the latest government figures, they are growing at 6 per cent per annum, compared to 3 per cent for the economy as a whole (DCMS, 2005). In 2004 there were an estimated 113,000 creative companies and employment exceeded 1.8 million (ibid).[33] While there are serious questions about the validity of the creative industries evidence base and about the methodologies used to measure their economic impact (Oakley, 2004; Pratt, 2004a), it is clearly evident that as a collective group of sectors they have an increasing economic importance. Moreover, the creative industries development agenda within central and regional government has been used as an instrumental tool for a whole host of wider policy aims. For example, the creativity agenda has been mobilised to address social exclusion (DCMS, 1999); creative education (NACCCE, 1999); regional development (GLA, 2002), as well as economic development (DCMS, 2001b).

Immediately, New Labour set about measuring this area of the economy. The Creative Industries Task Force (CITF) was set up in 1998 to measure each of the sectors within the creative industries. The CITF has produced two reports, one in 1998 and again in 2001. Details were amassed about each sector's size, number of employees, overall contribution to GDP, and growth. As a result, it was asserted in 1998 that the creative industries generated revenues of £60bn a year and employed over 1m people (DCMS, 1998). The message of the report was clear - the creative industries are big business. Moreover, New Labour asserted their centrality to wealth generation, arguing that 'creative industries have moved from the fringes to the heart of the UK economy; a key economic driver, providing the jobs of the future and maintaining our position in the world' (Smith, 1998a).

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[32] GVA measures the contribution to the economy of each individual producer or sector.
[33] The employment figures for creative jobs apply to Great Britain only, i.e. they do not include Northern Ireland.

On the basis of this narrative of economic success, conclusions were drawn for appropriate growth strategies for the sector as a whole, and there was an analysis of the threats facing the different industries. Creativity and culture under New Labour was firmly conceived of within an economic frame of understanding, as a key part of the wider knowledge economy policy strategy. It was also seen as an essentially individualised process, as the rhetoric surrounding the creation of NESTA (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) suggests, when Chris Smith (Culture Secretary 1997-2001) announced it would 'help talented individuals develop their full potential' (1998b: 30). The explicit link between an individualised creativity and profit is again clearly made by Smith in his manifesto for the arts, *Creative Britain:*

> The Creative Industries as a whole are big business. They are the fields in which jobs have been created and will be created, into the next century. And they all depend ultimately in the talent of an individual or the intellectual property that is created in order to succeed.(Smith, 1998b: 51)

What is clear from New Labour's policies generally, and particularly towards the creative industries, is that there has been a significant political shift within the party towards an accommodation with neoliberalism, and the primacy of markets, whilst still holding on to core social democratic concerns around social inclusion, access and social justice. The attempt to find a 'third way' for progressive politics is echoed in New Labour's policies on the 'creative industries'. Since coming to office in 1997, New Labour has increasingly framed the importance of culture and creativity in instrumentalist terms, as the means to both bring about economic growth and tackle social policy agendas. This is also the context under which more specific policies around broadcasting have been developed. Within this wider political context, I shall now examine how broadcasting policy has developed under New Labour, and the impact of that policy on the independent production sector.

3.4.4 Broadcasting policy

Under New Labour there has been a constant emphasis at the policy level of commercialising the creative industries, and reducing barriers to growth. While earlier

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Labour governments have expressed concerns about the dangers of media monopolies on democratic grounds, New Labour has steadily reduced the barriers to concentration and consolidation amongst media companies. Research papers published by central government, and also funded by government indirectly through organisations close to the New Labour project, have consistently argued that the UK's creative industries need to find ways to compete in the global market, find routes to market, and commercialise (e.g. Nesta, 2006). Indeed, this commercialisation of culture is one of the hallmarks of the New Labour government. In broadcasting policy, the commercialisation agenda has manifested itself most clearly in terms of deregulation, both in terms of content regulation, but most importantly in the relaxation of regulations around media ownership. This approach has had a significant impact on the structure of the broadcasting industry, and more specifically on the development of the independent production sector.

In the period between 1992 and 1997 Labour's ideological conversion towards markets was echoed in its attitude to broadcasting regulation. This can be seen clearly when we examine Labour's changing conceptualisation of television audiences from citizens to consumers. For example, in 1992 Ann Clwyd, on the left of the party, was Labour's shadow heritage secretary. Working with Mike Jempson, whom she had brought in from the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, she was tasked with responding to the Green Paper on broadcasting in November 1992, which showed that the Conservative government had no intention of replacing the licence fee or of changing the funding structure of the BBC. As Freedman argues, 'the moderate tone of the Green paper provided Labour with an ideal opportunity to mount a stout defence of the principles of public service broadcasting and to attack the commercialisation of British broadcasting' (2003: 160). The submission that followed was anti-commercial and anti-deregulation, arguing that 'deregulation stems from a political decision to stimulate market forces, by commercialising every aspect of public life' (Labour Party, 1993). Crucially, the document saw the viewer as a citizen participating in a democracy, and not just a consumer with a commercial perspective. As Freedman argues, this report represented 'a clear indication of a mood inside Labour to resist further commercialisation and to halt the extension of the market to all areas of social life, indeed to treat people as "citizens" and not as "consumers"' (2003: 161). In 1993, Clwyd was also reported as hostile to Rupert Murdoch, who she was said to have declared 'must

and will be stopped', and to any relaxation on cross-media ownership rules (Culf, 1993). The following month she was ousted from the cabinet and replaced by Mo Mowlam.

Under Mowlam, Labour's attitude towards media concentration of ownership became markedly more relaxed. The focus within the party shifted towards 'choice for the consumer' and deregulation of ownership and control measures (Culf, 1994). This position was given further credence in the following year with the creation of a research project into media regulation at the left-of-centre think tank the IPPR,[34] backed by an array of big media interests including BT, the Cable Communication Association, LWT, Pearson, Mercury Communications and News International, which led to the publication of *New Media, New Policies* (Collins and Murroni, 1996). The report was highly critical of the left's hostility to the market, and sought a synthesis of neoliberal and left approaches. James Purnell was one of the IPPR researchers on the project and subsequently a special adviser on media policy in Downing Street.[35] As he has since explained, the research was guided by two key beliefs:

> Firstly, that markets weren't necessarily bad things, that there were some things that they were the best tool to deliver. Secondly, we had to adapt to the fact that technology was changing incredibly fast and that, whereas policy was based on the idea that you would have a very small number of channels and newspapers, those assumptions were being overturned. (cited in Freedman, 2003: 163)

In calling for modernisation, the report breaks ranks with the left on media concentration, arguing that it need not necessarily be curbed. The authors of the report assert that 'Large, concentrated media organisations are not intrinsically undesirable... Large size tends to bring the resources required for comprehensive high quality reporting and the case of the BBC suggests that large organisations with a share of media markets can serve the public interest' (Collins and Murroni, 1996: 75). Intellectually, this research can be seen as a turning point in Labour's attitude to media regulation, becoming the de facto Labour position on media regulation. Indeed, when Jack Cunningham became shadow heritage secretary in 1996 his spokesperson Lewis Moonie went so far as to say that 'Cross-media ownership is a good thing. The whole point is to ensure the creation of bigger companies that can compete abroad' (Prescott, 1996).

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[34] The IPPR is an influential centre-left think tank close to New Labour.
[35] James Purnell has been central to the development of media policy under New Labour, involved in many of the key decisions including the creation of Ofcom and the 2003 Communications Act. He is now a cabinet minister.

This approach was developed during the 1990s as the implications of digital technology for traditional analogue media forms became clear. Labour embraced the idea of the 'information superhighway' and in 1994 set up a policy forum on the subject, chaired by the new shadow heritage secretary, Chris Smith. The report that came out in 1995 saw Britain's digital future in a technologically deterministic fashion:

> We stand on the threshold of a revolution as profound as that brought about by the invention of the printing press. New technologies, which enable rapid communication to take place in a myriad of different ways across the globe, and permit information to be provided, sought, and received on a scale so far unimaginable, will bring fundamental changes to all our lives. (Labour Party, 1995: 3)

Yet, despite its enthusiasm for the development of the 'information superhighway' within New Labour, its development was essentially left to the market to provide: 'so that government's role was essentially to create the appropriate competitive environment and to promote the use of the networks' (Freedman, 2003: 167). The impact on television policy was significant; firstly it showed that New Labour's vision of future foresaw the inevitability of convergence of all media, which meant the development of policies that fitted with that scenario. As such, there was less need for separate media policies, and the need for a 'communications policy' for a more competitive market, which led to the eventual creation of a new regulatory body, Ofcom.[36] Secondly, it implied that Labour would now consider television policy more as a part of industrial policy, to do with infrastructure and building capacity for digital switchover (ibid.: 167-8). Free and fair competition was to be created using the competition authorities and economic regulators, not the broadcasting regulators who worked with cultural as well as economic objectives (ibid.: 168).

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[36] Ofcom was established in the Office of Communications Act 2002, received its full authority from the Communications Act 2003, and began operating on December 29, 2003. Ofcom is widely seen as a new breed of 'super-regulator' and inherited the duties of five regulatory bodies:
- The Broadcasting Standards Commission
- The Independent Television Commission
- The Office of Telecommunications (Oftel)
- The Radio Authority
- The Radiocommunications Agency

This industrial approach typifies New Labour's approach to media policy. The pre-election arts and media report *Create the Future* had a number of references to the 'digital future' and promised 'universal access to a wide range of television services in the digital age', but failed to suggest how this would be publicly funded. In terms of television, the document emphasised the economic importance of UK television, but in a classically 'third-way' approach also emphasised the importance of 'creativity' and 'independence', and key public service values (Labour Party, 1997). However, it is the emphasis on the commercialisation of television that is of most importance, as this is the agenda that can be seen clearly in Labour's subsequent policies on television.

3.4.5 Deregulation and commercialisation

Since reaching office in 1997, New Labour have enthusiastically embraced deregulation of the media sphere, beginning by pushing forward with their vision for a new 'super-regulator'. In May 1998 the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee argued that the current surplus of regulatory bodies in the media sphere was 'more reminiscent of a feudal State than a regulatory structure for the multi-media age' (Culture Media and Sport Select Committee, 1998). In July 1998, the DCMS and the DTI published their joint green paper, *Regulating Communications*. Viewers were seen as consumers, and market forces of supreme importance. Regulation should be minimal, and primarily undertaken in the interests of the market. As such, '[t]he government will seek to provide a structure that reflects market realities and will seek to distort them as little as possible' (DCMS/DTI, 1998: 10). Regulation, it was suggested, should now be 'flexible' for a 'fast-changing environment' (ibid.: 24).

This drive towards deregulation was accelerated in 2000 with the publication of the government's white paper, *A New Future for Communications* (DCMS/DTI, 2000). The paper declared that the government would seek to 'make the UK home to the most dynamic and competitive communications and media market in the world' (ibid.: 10). The rule preventing one ITV company from reaching more than 15 per cent of the total TV audience was abolished. The market was seen as the best mechanism for delivering choice and quality. International competitiveness was seen as a key issue, indeed in 1998 the government had argued the necessity for it:

Since markets are increasingly global – particularly if they are mediated electronically across global networks – domestic firms increasingly must compete with strong players from abroad. It is clearly central to the health of the UK economy that UK firms are fully competitive in world markets, not only to defend the domestic position but also to attract a share of global revenues and jobs to the UK. (DCMS/DTI, 1998: 14)

In this way, the government has consistently made it easier for media companies to concentrate ownership, arguing that it makes them more globally competitive: '[s]ome concentration of ownership has been regarded as inevitable, and possibly desirable, since it confers advantage in terms of global competitiveness' (DCMS/DTI, 1998: 16). The government argued that existing competition law should be strong enough to stop any abuse of a dominant market position, but not the pursuit of dominance (ibid). In 1999 the Monopolies and Mergers Commission was scrapped and the Competition Commission was introduced in its place, with 'tough new powers to rule on anti-competitive behaviour without any political interference affecting key merger decisions' (Freedman, 2003: 176). The argument was that public interest was effectively served through competition in the market. However, the irony is that there is little to no competition in broadcasting in the UK, with Granada-Carlton dominating ITV, Telewest and NTL dominating cable and BSkyB dominating satellite. Broadcasting had come to be seen as an industrial sector to be exploited, rather than as an area of cultural life with its own rules and needs (ibid: 177-8).

3.4.6 From 'cottage industry' to big business: the growth of the independent sector

This shift towards deregulation and commercialisation is the broader context in which policies directed towards the independent television sector have been formed. The political will to build international competitiveness can be seen to have informed thinking within government towards the independent production sector, in particular the desire to provide regulatory changes which would allow growth in the sector, and allow those companies in a position to do so to commercialise and capitalise on their intellectual property. The overall picture has been one of economic growth. The statistics certainly tell a story of growth and economic success in the UK television industry. The UK television industry contributes around £12 billion to the UK economy, with exports approaching £500 million (Skillset, 2006b). Indeed of all the communications sectors,

television has had the fastest revenue growth (up 9 per cent from £9.3 billion in 2003 to £10.1 billion in 2004) (Ofcom, 2005a). This can be seen in context against annual GDP growth in the period 2003-4 of 3.1 per cent (Tyrell, 2005). A number of key changes have taken place within the independent sector which have contributed to this growth, which I shall explore below. However, there are growing concerns that this growth has occurred at the expense of a culture of innovation and creativity within the sector.

In recent years technological innovation, commercial changes and regulatory intervention have created a climate of intense growth and investment interest in the ITPS. First, particularly as a result of digital television, the number of channels that commission programmes externally has dramatically increased. Over 370 channels are now available to UK audiences. Almost 2.5 million UK households acquired digital TV over the course of 2004, and by March 2005 62 per cent of UK homes were digital. All four main UK broadcasters have announced plans to diversify further, with new digital channels and movement into new delivery platforms such as broadband (Ofcom, 2005b). This has created a significant opportunity for British television production.

Certainly the ITPS has been highly successful in recent years, and experienced consistent growth, largely as a result of regulatory changes. The introduction of the independent quota in the 1990 Broadcasting Act (HMSO, 1990) stated that 25 per cent of broadcast television must be sourced from independent companies. This provided a massive boost to the sector. More recently, changes to the Communications Act in 2003 have been crucial in generating rapid investment growth in the sector. The Act outlined new terms of trade which mean that independent television companies are able to retain ancillary rights to the content that they produce, previously controlled by broadcasters. Once a programme is shown on terrestrial TV, the rights revert back to its maker, allowing companies to generate revenue by selling the show to foreign networks, licensing the format to other broadcasters, or selling the show on new platforms. This is vital in a transformed commercial environment where non-first-run revenue sources are providing increasing financial opportunities. However, there are concerns that these rights are not yet being sufficiently exploited – recent research found that 54 per cent of production companies were generating less than 1 per cent of their turnover from royalties (Skillset, 2005a).

Finally, the BBC has recently set up its Window of Creative Competition (WOCC), which means that the broadcaster will make up to 50 per cent of its original programming budget available to outside suppliers. All of this has ensured intense investment interest from the City in the independent television sector, which is currently experiencing a moment of dynamic commercialisation and growth, with turnover predicted to grow from £780m in 2004 to £1.5bn in 2014, not counting traditional programmes and format sales (Mediatique, 2005: 4).

This has led to unprecedented interest in the independent sector since 2003, and a shift towards media consolidation and concentration. Most obviously there has been much talk of 'super-indies' within the media press, largely focussing on a small group of successful independents who have grown substantially in recent years to increasingly dominate the market (Martinson, 2005). These include companies such as RDF, Endemol, TVI, Shed and Shine.[37] While each of these companies have quite different business models, between them they are representative of the rapid commercialisation and internationalisation that has taken place within the sector. Increasingly the commercial success of a production company lies in its ability to exploit its intellectual property globally across differentiated media platforms. For example, Endemol, as the producers of *Big Brother*, and other successful formats, extract commercial value across different territories, giving the company a stability beyond the traditional commissioner basis. Mobile phone ringtones, online rights, merchandise and book spin-offs are all ways for the successful modern IPC to capitalise on its intellectual property.

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[37] For example, eight years ago, production company RDF was run out of an old church and employed 20 people. Today it has 350 employees and sales of £50m. RDF was voted *Broadcast's* best independent production company in 2004 and boasts offices in London and LA, having recently sold 20 episodes of its show *Wife Swap* to the US in a deal worth $7.5m. Much of RDF's success has come from pioneering one of the key trends in contemporary television: the development and exploitation of television formats for a global market. RDF has developed a number of highly successful formats, such as *Wife Swap*, *Holiday Showdown*, and *Faking It*, which have been exported internationally. This strategy takes full advantage of the new legislative climate allowing indies to hold on to secondary rights. The move towards producing formats locally, as opposed to merely licensing product, represents a maturation of the market and the growing confidence of UK producers, who now lead the way in international format development and production. Recent research shows that the UK is the world leader in the creation and distribution of international TV formats, securing a dominant 45 per cent share of the international TV format market by hours and a 49 per cent share by the number of titles across the channels studied (UK Trade and Investment, 2005). Moreover, RDF is actively exploring multi-platform opportunities for its formats including web-based and mobile content, telephony income and sponsorship.

The success of the independent sector has created significant City interest, which means that those companies that have attracted investment have access to previously unimaginable levels of funding. The ability for independents to exploit their Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) is the underlying reason for this interest, viewed as they are as the key source of value in media markets. In the US, the equivalent sector has created many millionaires (Mediatique, 2005: 4). In the UK, increasing numbers of independents have floated on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM), and several have private equity backing (ibid). However, for all the hype around the so-called 'super-indies' it is easy to neglect just how fragile and exposed this dynamic creative sub-sector actually is. Often large production companies are in fact financially reliant on one or two high-profile hits, and so find themselves utterly exposed to the whims of television trends and of the commissioners. For example, one of the most successful and feted indies, Shed productions, floated on the AIM in 2005 for £44m, is in fact almost wholly reliant on the success of glossy dramas such as *Bad Girls* and *Footballers' Wives*. This is worth bearing in mind as large independents increasingly dominate the sector. However, the level of risk is even greater for the majority of independents, which are small to medium-size enterprises (SMEs) or micro-businesses, and which often survive in a piecemeal fashion, lurching from commission to commission.

As a result of these changes to the sector, the structure of independent production is currently undergoing a radical transition, from a largely 'cottage industry' sector, as it was from its formative days with the creation of Channel 4, peopled by SMEs and micro-businesses, relying on unpredictable commissions from a very small pool of broadcasters, to an industry that is largely dominated by a handful of large companies, selling their intellectual property to global markets. A recent report into the sector has predicted that the trend towards concentration will continue, leading to the existence of just five 'super-indies', which it suggests will be listed on the Stock Exchange; a smaller mid-market group of companies which may be externally financed, and a much smaller 'tail' of independent producers who will find it increasingly difficult to survive in this far more competitive environment (Mediatique, 2005: 4). This report depicts a highly commercialised, professionalised future:

> It is likely that these 'super indies' will be able to leverage their programming skills to ensure that they derive greater value from the broadcasters, to further develop their new media and international businesses, and to secure revenues

from an increasing variety of sources – all of which should lead to a more lasting love affair with the City (ibid.: 20).

3.5 Creativity at risk?

This situation raises a number of key questions both for the broadcasting industry, and for the nature of the content produced. As external investors buy into the production sector, the primary concern of the company is to produce a return for investors and shareholders. Thus profit becomes the over-riding imperative in the independent sector, rather than the culturally independence and creativity which marked Channel 4's launch. While independents now have a much bigger market to sell their programmes to, arguably the commercialisation of the sector has a detrimental effect on innovation, as companies become under greater pressure to produce hits.

What is increasingly clear both from my analysis and from the industry data is that this sector is undergoing a major structural change, which is squeezing out the small 'lifestyle' producers. This is the term given to those small companies who make a living from a small number of productions each year, but do not have major plans for growth, and are quite content to carry on being creative without the need to grow. However, many of these 'lifestyle' producers are highly talented individuals who have produced some of the most memorable and creative television of the last thirty years. Analysis of the figures provided by the Mediatique report shows that whereas those lifestyle producers made up 61 per cent of turnover in the sector in 1993, by 2004 this had dropped to just 9 per cent. This is occurring as the number of independents is dropping (from around 1,000 in 1993 to the current level of 800) (Mediatique, 2005), as consolidation and concentration has an impact on the diversity of the independent production sector ecology. The larger companies will benefit, but the smaller ones will struggle. The following chart shows the change in the composition of the industry since 1993:

Figure 1: The changing structure of the ITPS

Independent market £475m turnover in 1993
(No. of independents: c. 1,000)

Independent market £780m turnover in 2004
(No. of independents: c. 800)

19%

20%

61%

9%

40%

30%

21%

■Players > £5m turnover ■ The Middle Group □The Tail   ■Top 5 Players ■Next 10 Players □ The Middle Group □The Tail
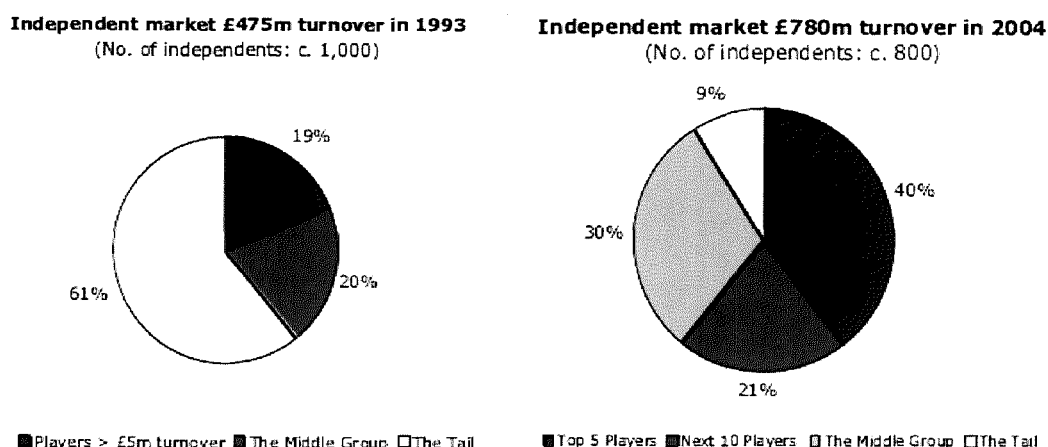
Source: Mediatique (2005: 8)

There is a tripartite structure in place in the independent production sector, which is increasingly making it harder for these small 'long tail' companies to compete:

> Not all IPCs [independent production companies] are equal. The range of trends analysed in this report is likely to perpetuate a tripartite structure in the sector, with a handful of strong, well-funded and professionally managed IPCs, a long tail of small targeted and creative 'one-man bands' and a number of mid-market players, with little hope of creating critical mass despite ambitions to break into the top league. It is this last category that will be most at risk if the trends described here continue to develop but the long tail, too, is likely to see its shares of failures. (ibid.: 20)

As in other sectors of the creative industries, there is a tension between size and creativity. Often the most innovative, risky and exciting cultural products come from outside the commercial mainstream, from people pushing boundaries. Commercial imperatives are often in conflict with creative innovation, so the question is who will be doing the risky, innovative television (except for the publicly funded BBC, which is of course facing its own huge structural changes). As Mediatique suggest, the picture may well be bleak:

> It will be the mid market and long tail where most innovation among independent production companies is likely to take place. It will also be these sub-sectors most at risk of failure. (ibid.: 20)

This is likely to have an impact on the culture of innovation and creativity within programme making. As we have seen with the music industry, the existence of a

genuinely independent cultural production scene can have a significant cultural (and economic) effect. For example, the success of the 'Madchester' scene in Manchester in the late 1980s (and the subsequent wave of culturally led urban regeneration that it precipitated) was directly connected to the existence of a vibrant independent music production scene, which clearly acted as an incubator for a number of culturally significant acts (Halfacree and Kitchin, 1996; Haslam 1999). One has to ask how such a scene would have developed in today's highly commercialised music industry, where 'independence' is often more rhetoric than reality.[38] In the same way, will 'independence' in the commercial, global future of the television industry merely mean companies that are subsidiaries of huge, global media conglomerates? And if so, what does this mean for the cultural sphere?

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[38] For example, the majority of 'independent' labels now are in fact subsidiary labels of the major labels, such as EMI, BMG and Universal.

Chapter 4. In the field: Researching cultural production using a situated, qualitative approach

In this study, a primarily qualitative approach was taken, with 'ethnographic intent' (Gray, 1992; Morley, 1988). Empirical data for this thesis came from in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews with twenty people working in the independent television sector, who were then studied longitudinally over a period of six months using bi-monthly email contact to develop an insight into the flux of their working lives over a period of time. To conclude the research, shorter follow-up interviews were conducted after this period. In addition, three in-depth interviews with more senior figures in the independent television sector were also conducted. This was done to build up a broader account of the organisational challenges and opportunities facing the industry in the coming years; also these interviews explored labour market issues from the perspective of individuals who were running their own companies, and making human resources decisions. Site visits were undertaken, as well as visits to industry conferences, in order to build up a deeper picture of the industry. Whilst the data generated from the fieldwork constitutes the bulk of material used for the analysis, the findings are also informed by the available empirical market and employment data on the television industry (e.g. Skillset, 2005b, 2006a, 2007; BFI, 1999; Ofcom, 2006; Mediatique, 2005).

The chapter is structured as follows. First, it outlines the significance of the epistemological debates that have occurred within social research, in particular in terms of how those debates have been played out within qualitative and ethnographic research. This is vital as a way of positioning my research approach; one that is qualitative, but informed by ethnographic concerns, and which seeks a 'critical realist' theoretical approach to conducting social research. Second, it assesses the methodological significance of qualitative and ethnographic accounts of cultural production for this study, exploring the difficulties of conducting production research, and the strategies and theoretical approaches that researchers in this field have used. Third, it outlines the research approach taken, detailing the time-frame of the research, the scale of the sample, the process of recruiting and tracking the participants, and of conducting final follow-up interviews at the end of the research period. This section will explore how a

qualitative approach connects to the research aims. Details are provided about the practicalities of conducting the research, dealing with recruitment of the sample, the issue of access, and the rationale for the selection of the key informants selected for study. Finally, the chapter outlines the mode of analysis taken, exploring the use of experience and of narrative inquiry as a means of conducting social research. It outlines the use made of the qualitative data analysis software *NVivo*, and also the use of discourse analysis.

The methodological approach taken in this thesis is primarily qualitative, rather than ethnographic in the anthropological sense, which would involve full immersion in the field for an extensive period. However, I use the term 'ethnographic' here as an approach which signals the use of familiarity with the field, and the use of key tools of ethnography which are explored below, rather than in the 'strong sense of the term' (Goldbart and Hustler, 2005: 16). This draws from Sennett's mode of narrative sociology (1998), with interviews employing strategies of close listening, to understand the self-reflexive narrative features of my participant's accounts, as well as ethnographic attention given to the sites of the research. Indeed, post-foundationalist methodological revisions (particularly feminist) which critique the concept of objective knowledge as power-laden and oppressive, and argue for a situated, grounded approach to knowledge generation (e.g. Haraway, 1991), have allowed a greater flexibility and openness in terms of what constitutes 'ethnography' and are highly significant for the methodological approach of this research. Such studies signal an openness which allows the researcher to use a number of different methods to produce an account of a social environment (e.g. Walkerdine *et al*, 2001; Budgeon, 2003; Skeggs, 1997).

My methodological strategy has enabled me to 'develop a strong sense of the particular realities involved' within a given context (Goldbart and Hustler, 2005, 17). A range of research strategies are used which derive from ethnography, such as attention to the narrative features of my respondents' talk, reflexive engagement with the research process and engagement in the field for a length of time. Such an approach can be described as a *'quasi-ethnographic'* methodology (Willis, 1981: 49, 75, 139, 138), used here as a strategy for gaining a greater understanding of the conditions of creative labour in the television industry.

4.1 Approaching social research: questions of epistemology

In undertaking social research it is vital to attend to the epistemological questions that accompany such activity. What is the status of the knowledge that can be generated by such research? What are the epistemological and representational issues raised by doing social research, that are germane to this study? If conducting social research was once understood as a relatively unproblematic activity, based on an empirical, positivist understanding of the process of generating knowledge about the social world,[39] then structuralism, poststructuralism, postmodernism and feminist post-foundational concerns have posed a series of radical epistemological challenges to this positivist model, by focusing on the constructed, partial, subjective nature of interpretation and representation.

Social research undertaken in the wake of postmodern epistemological doubt must acknowledge these concerns. This does not mean that all attempts to describe and analyse the social world should be abandoned, but these epistemological concerns raise important questions about methodology which need to be addressed. In the following section I examine the implications of the 'crisis of representation' within social research (Geertz, 1975), and explore the benefits of a 'critical realist' methodological approach (Bhaskar, 1989), as a means of avoiding either an unreflexive positivism, or a potentially impotent postmodernism, paralysed into theoretical inertia.

4.1.1 Positivism and the legacy of the Enlightenment

Early social research was largely conducted with the view that scientific observation could achieve an objective, 'truthful' account of society. The social world was conceived of as an objective reality, which existed separately from human observation and modes of understanding it. This epistemological scientism emerged from the Enlightenment period in Europe in the 18th century and the dominant belief in

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[39] Within sociology, positivism is evident, for example, in Durkheim's classic text *The Rules of Sociological* Method (1964), and is exemplified in his assertion that 'a sociologist is a scientist, not a mystic' (ibid: 141).

science and objectivity as instruments of rational progress.[40] In the empirical epistemology associated with positivism, the researcher is presented as a scientific, neutral observer who is able to provide an accurate representation of social life through scientific methods. Such an approach to social research puts forward a case for scientific knowledge gathered from 'the facts of experience acquired by observation and experiment' (Williams and May, 1996: 15). Such research is informed by this focus on 'facts', which are presented as already-existing entities which can be measured and captured by the tools of the researcher.

Qualitative research, with its focus on culture, identity and meaning, has always been a more subjective mode of research than quantitative research, with a greater emphasis placed on individual interpretation. However, early qualitative research (largely ethnographic) was imbued with a highly positivistic framework of understanding. This positivist approach to social research can be seen clearly in some of the canonical early ethnographic texts which describe cultural formations in distant locations, often amongst communities far removed from the norms and beliefs of western civilisation (Bateson, 1958; Mead, 1942; Evans-Pritchard, 1974; Malinowski, 1922).

Such ethnographic research involved extensive field research, often over a year, with the researcher living alongside the group being studied. Its aim was to provide a realistic and objective analysis of social formation, discovered by an immersive and painstaking observational research. The ethnographer was the trusted and authoritative interpreter of 'alien' societies, an impression reinforced by the fact that early ethnography rarely used direct quotations from respondents, which meant that the correct interpretation of events came from the 'expertise' of the anthropologist, as opposed to the research participants. Utmost faith was placed on the ability of the ethnographer to interpret the reality of the situation being studied. Four beliefs can be said to characterise social research of this kind in this period: (i) a commitment to objectivism; (ii) a complicity with imperialism; (iii) monumentalism (the belief that the report would contribute to a growing repository of knowledge); (iv) a belief in the timelessness of the culture being studied (Seale, 1997: 102).

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[40] During the 18th century there was an intellectual shift towards understanding the world through scientific and technological progress and discovery. This led to the conceptualisation that the world could be controlled and understood through rational scientific understanding and progress, a mode of thinking associated with modernism. See Lyotard (1984) and Habermas (1971) for seminal accounts of Enlightenment and modernist thought.

Other forms of early qualitative research exhibit a positivist legacy. For example, the 'Chicago School' researchers of the 1920s and 30s took a highly scientific approach, emphasising the deductive analysis of data. They focused on urban life, and believed a scientific approach would provide answers about the nature of society. Their approach is known as 'ecological', in that they perceived society as an ecological system, which could be studied in a dispassionate, detached way. This epistemology is epitomised in this quote:

> In these great cities, where all the passions, all the energies of mankind are released, we are in a position to investigate the process of civilisation, as it were, under a microscope. (Park, 1928: 190)

Such research was essentially 'realist', expressing faith in the concept of a world 'out there' that is independent from our perceptions of it, and that can be explained through rational, detached observation (Williams and May, 1996.: 36). It is 'the idea that there is a reality independent of the researcher whose nature can be known, and that the aim of research is to produce accounts that correspond to that reality' (Hammersley, 1991b: 43). It is an approach 'which claims that knowledge and scientific theories of the world are derivable solely from empirical sense experience or observation' (Lazar, 2004: 9).

4.1.2 Structuralism and the constructivist turn

During the course of the twentieth century, these positivist assumptions were challenged, initially by structuralist theory and then by poststructuralism and postmodern epistemological deconstruction. Feminist standpoint and post-foundational concerns, and the growing concern with 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1991), were also vital to contributing to this epistemological break from positivism. The focus turned away from a belief in scientific objectivity, towards representation, partiality and the impossibility of an objective position 'outside' of cultural constructs, language and identity. Moreover, the scientific, empirical position of the positivists was seen by post-foundationalist social researchers and theorists as homogenising, de-differentiating, gendered and ethnocentric (e.g. Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1998)

This shift began gradually, as theorists and linguists increasingly focused on the constructed nature of representation. In social research, under the influence of structuralism, there was a growing concern with how social groups were constructed. In qualitative research this meant investigating societies as structural systems with their own codes of meaning-making, which occurred at the same time as the linguistic turn in literary theory. Structuralism emerged from Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of structural linguistics, which played a key role in the development of structuralism and semiotics (Saussure *et al*, 1966). Saussure presented language as an arbitrary system of signs used to represent and construct an external meaning. For Saussure, language could be broken down into two key parts: the signifier (the mark, image, text, word or sign) and the signified (the meaning that the signifier was referring to). Words do not acquire their meaning from their equivalents outside the system of language, but rather through how they are differentiated from that which they are not within the internal linguistic system. As Strinati writes:

> Since the meanings of particular linguistic signs are not externally determined but derive from their place in the overall relational structure of language, it follows that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is a purely arbitrary one. There is no necessary reason as to why the notation 'dog' should refer to that specific animal, nor 'god' to a supernatural deity. (2004: 81)

In social research, the influence of structuralism was most noticeable in the focus on the constructed nature of societies, and how those structures might be analysed. The realist agenda (Malinowski, 1922; Maybury-Lewis, 1965; Mead, 1942) gradually transformed into a concern with the structural conditions of meaning-making, such as language, myth and ideology (e.g. Lévi-Strauss, 1961, 1977). Social constructionism became a dominant approach within the field of social research, described by Walsh as 'the view that society is to be seen as socially constructed on the basis of how its members make sense of it and not as an object-like reality' (2004: 227). Essentially, social constructivists examine how individuals and groups participate in the creation of any given reality; analysing how social phenonena are created and given institutional form by people. For the constructivist, this is an ongoing, constantly evolving process, where social life is constantly reproduced by people's interpretations and knowledge of it. Constructivism aims to analyse and describe the process by which ideas and interpretations become social constructs, and are given material form, within a given culture.

4.1.3 The crisis of representation: 'anti-realism' in social research

Structuralism's commitment to understanding belief systems and values did not pose a significant challenge to the realist agenda as long as it focused on the construction of the societies being studied. But when it turned to consider the construction of knowledge itself, it caused serious epistemological problems. Conceptual relativism posed a radical epistemological challenge to the positivist tradition, because it argued that any single interpretation was only one of many possibilities. The privileging of 'scientific', 'objective' knowledge was dismantled. As Little argues:

> Different cultures employ radically different conceptual schemes defining what exists in the world, how things are organized in time and space, what sorts of relations obtain among things, and how some things influence others ... [from this standpoint] it is not possible to give rational grounds for concluding that one such scheme is more congruent to reality than another. (1991: 203, cited in Lazar, 2004: 17)

In this view, all knowledge is seen as socially constructed, with the researcher's interpretation being just one of many possible perspectives.

Critical reflexivity towards the act of social research itself began in earnest in the latter half of the twentieth century, in what has been called the 'anti-realist' movement. Ethnography's 'crisis of representation' emerged with the publication of a number of formative critiques, which mounted a radical challenge to the hermeneutical framework of the dominant realist mode (Geertz, 1975; Marcus, 1982; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Pratt, 1986; Clifford, 1988). These texts attack the ways in which ethnographers assert their objective authority and deny the subjective, power-laden nature of their relations with subjects. As Peason argues, 'ethnography is a messy business [but] public accounts of fieldwork are invariably cleansed of the "private" goings-on between researcher and researched' (1993: vii). Within qualitative research more generally, there was a turn towards modes of interviewing which focused on issues of representation, with the boundaries between the interviewer and interviewee becoming blurred. Marginal voices were increasingly focused on, and the very purpose of doing social research became a focus of intense query (Gubrium, 2002: 163-3).

This re-evaluation of the method, theory and purpose of social research coincided with the wider poststructuralist movement which sought to expose the constructed, arbitrary nature of language and of systems of meaning. Poststructuralism claimed that 'meaning' was the product of unstable and endless chains of self-referential signifiers. If Saussure (1966) argued that all language was an interplay between the signifier and the signified, the text and the meaning implied, then poststructuralists took this one step further and argued that there was no meaning beyond the text; that all attempts to find any objective scientific, rational perspective from which to observe and judge reality were fruitless because any findings were merely the product of yet more signifiers.

For example, Derrida emphasised the instability of language, in that the author can have no control over the arbitrary collection of signifiers in the text to forge meaning (Derrida and Spivak, 1976; Derrida and Bass, 1978); meanwhile Barthes showed that 'meaning' is created by the reader and the understanding that this reader brings to any text (Barthes, 1967, 1976; Barthes and Balzac, 1975). Poststructuralism sees social life as composed not of identities, objects and subjects, but rather of difference, complex relations, and instability (Filmer 2004: 42). For the poststructuralist, 'meaning' and 'truth' are ultimately deferred, as signifiers only refer on endlessly to other signifiers. In other words there is no singular reality or meaning, only representation, which is arbitrary.[41] For the poststructuralist, as Eagleton suggests:

> Meaning is the spin-off of a potentially endless play of signifiers, rather than a concept tied firmly to the tail of a particular signifier (1996: 127).

Poststructuralism has been highly influential for theorists who claim that we are living in a postmodern society. Postmodernism signals a moment of radical critical re-evaluation of the 'Enlightenment project', with its underlying narratives of progress. These meta-narratives of modernity were challenged by postmodernism, which Lyotard argues represents an incredulity towards overarching explanatory schemes (1984: xxiv). As Filmer *et al* argue, in the place of these meta-narratives, 'instability and uncertainty are introduced into knowledge claims and practices, and a more pragmatic and situated model of research is promoted' (2004: 43).

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[41] For an excellent exposition of poststructuralism, see Eagleton (1996: 127-50).

Such ideas have had a powerful impact on social research methodology. For example, Geertz (1975) radically calls into question any claim made by ethnography of objective scientific inquiry. As Walsh suggests '[t]his position involves not simply seeing ethnography as a revelation of social construction but seeing ethnographic research as *itself* participating in the construction of the social world' (2004: 227) For Geertz, social research is only one interpretation among many. He has called for a more genuinely interpretive ethnography, which focuses on the 'search for meaning' rather than the one definitive meaning. As he writes:

> ...man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun and I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical. (1975: 5)

In this view, ethnography should involve the generation of 'thick description' as its central knowledge-generating activity. This involves seeing the ethnographer as a kind of semiotician, examining a culture like a literary theorist would a text - as a system of signs which demand interpretation, even though any attempt at a definitive interpretation is frustrated by the fact that the researcher is caught up within that enclosed system of meaning.

4.1.4 Towards a critical realism

The postmodern rupture with totalising truth claims has been of crucial importance in advancing social research methodologies. The focus on reflexivity, and on marginalised voices, has shifted the terrain of social research, allowing for a recognition of the power imbalances inherent within the very act of much research. However, in recent years, there has been a growing backlash against the more extreme versions of postmodern social research. This is largely because the validity of such research has been questioned. If any attempt at ascertaining knowledge generates just one more interpretation amongst many, then what is the basis for the validity of any social research? If the social researcher becomes no more than a story-teller, then notions of truth must be forgotten. Given the radical shift towards partiality, situatedness and

reflexivity in postmodern social research, can there be any knowledge-producing role for social research in contemporary society?

Devine and Heath (1999) have pointed to the specific challenge of doing social research in the wake of postmodernism. They question the possibility of producing reliable knowledge of the social world, when postmodernism, in its deconstruction of empiricism, argues that there can be no final, conclusive and stable definition of knowledge. Williams and May have also pointed out the implications of postmodernism's radical deconstruction of epistemological understanding for the practice of social research:

> At an epistemological level, converts to postmodernism regard it as nothing less than pulling the rug from under the feet of traditional scientific foundations. Although there remains definitional ambiguity over the term... postmodernism may be viewed as a critique of the values, goals, and bases of analyses that, from the Enlightenment onwards, have been assumed to be universally valid... Methodologically, the alternative to the complacent foundationalism of modernism becomes the maxim that 'anything goes'. (1996: 158)

For the postmodern relativist, there is no singular truth to be discovered 'out there' in the social world, but rather any number of co-existing 'truths' and interpretations, depending on the perspective of the respondent or researcher. As Seale has argued, 'relativism rejects that notion of a common objective reality and counterposes to the idea of truth the notion of truths, there being (allegedly) no rational basis for choosing one version of truth as *the* truth' (1997: 19}.

Yet surely there must be some basis for doing social research, without necessarily having to resort to a mode of essentialism? As Walsh argues, 'it seems wrong for social researchers to accept this postmodern discourse, to abandon all forms of realism as the basis for doing ethnography, and to accept that all is textuality and construction... The social and cultural world must be the ground and reference for ethnographic writing, and reflexive ethnography should involve a keen awareness of the interpenetration of reality and representation' (2004: 228).

This emphasis on reflexivity is vital for my research approach. By reflexive, I mean the process by which the social researcher incorporates into the study an acknowledgement of his/her own position within the research, and the causal

relationship between the research process and the findings generated. However, in conducting this research I wanted to avoid producing an entirely self-referential study that is only able to comment on the act of enquiry. Geertz has warned against an over-reliance on self-inspection in the field and the 'curious interiorization of what is in fact an intensely public activity' (1995: 120). The problem is how to be reflexive and also generate empirical knowledge. Usefully, as Couldry argues, 'a commitment to reflexivity… is perfectly compatible with a commitment to carrying out new empirical research' (2000: 13).

While acknowledging the postmodernist position in social research, which rejects totalising truth claims, and argues that '[t]here can never be a final, accurate representation of what was meant or said – only different textual representations of different experiences (Denzin, 1997: 5), a number of researchers have argued that it is both possible and *necessary* to say something valid and useful about social life. This is an approach I have followed. Therefore while the research methodology of this thesis emphasises local, situated and partial accounts of the social world, it rejects the radical relativism of certain aspects of postmodern social research. Although one can agree with the postmodern notion that knowledge is socially produced, and that privileging one 'reality' over another risks reproducing uneven power relations (Williams *et al*, 1996: 169), one can also argue for research that aims to produce knowledge of the social world, however partial or situated that knowledge might be. As Devine and Heath have argued, 'the wholesale dismissal of conventional criteria for assessing social research can easily collapse into a rather hopeless relativism and, consequently, an inability to contribute to public debate' (1999: 209-10).

As such, this research is positioned within what Deacon *et al* have called the 'critical realist' tradition (1999). This approach, while indebted to the theoretical approach of standpoint feminism and poststructuralist methodology (Stanley, 1983, 1993; Haraway, 1991), and influenced by a post-foundationalist, interpretivist perspective (Geertz, 1975; Marcus, 1982, 1998; Clifford, 1986, 1988), also emphasises the value of social research to attempt to critically answer difficult questions. This means rejecting the 'excesses' of postmodern research, where the researcher can end up in a reflexive 'hall of mirrors' (Devine, 1999) – worried about the implications of making any truth claim at all. As Morley and Silverstone have written, with reference to ethnography, but in a view

that can equally be applied to all social research, 'if the traditional anthropological attitude to these questions ("Don't think about ethnography, just do it") is the problem, then equally, to fall into a paralysing (if vertiginously thrilling) trance of epistemological navel-gazing ("Don't do ethnography, just think about it") is no kind of answer to anyone with a commitment to empirical research' (1991: 162).

Critical realism supports the interpretive position that 'the social world is reproduced and transformed in daily life' (Bhaskar, 1989: 4). However, 'everyday action cannot be properly understood without taking account of the broader social and cultural formations that envelop and shape it' (Deacon *et al*, 1999: 10). This rests on the belief that structures are always enabling, and that the 'relations between situated actions and general formations, local choices and prevailing circumstances, are dynamic and two-way' (ibid.). As Giddens has argued, 'structures are constituted through action' but simultaneously 'action is constituted structurally' (Giddens, 1976: 161).

Such an approach rejects the extreme postmodern view that reality exists only in terms of how people choose to imagine and understand it. Rather it accepts that there are cultural and social structures that shape people's understanding of reality and their options for action, but that in turn those structures are constituted by active, creative agents. Positivism is unable to theorise structures in relation to creative agency and is therefore unable to explain how change occurs (Fiske, 1994: 195). But critical realism with its emphasis on structure 'insists that unlike the structures that organise the natural world, social and cultural structures have traceable historical careers' (Deacon, 1999: 10). It is by analysing the structures of contemporary social and cultural life that we can understand how they are changing, and it is through attentivity to the creative actions of agents within those structures that we can understand how that change is occurring.

This position is essential to the methodology of my research into television production. A critical realist approach demands attentiveness to the historical context of production, but also to the subjective desires, beliefs and cultural meanings for individuals within that production chain. It is an attempt to look for the macro within the micro, to theorise from the ground up rather than in a top-down manner. This means combining a method that is able to take the macro picture of the television industry (an empirical analysis), and connect this to the qualitative insights that come

from the local case study. Critical realism is an attempt to understand the 'generative mechanisms underlying and producing observable events' and the meaning systems attached to those events (Bhaskar, 1989: 2). This means the researcher must 'range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self', 'from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world and see the relations between the two' (Mills, 1970: 14).

4.2 Using qualitative methodologies to study cultural production

Having outlined the key epistemological issues which arise in approaching social research, in the following section I specifically examine how other researchers have studied cultural production, in order to provide a critical account of methodological issues that are germane to this field, and to position my approach. In the last thirty years, cultural production research has shifted from a positivist approach to a more interpretive approach concerned with questions of subjectivity, identity and affect, echoing the wider turn within social research. From the sociological studies of large media organisations in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Schlesinger, 1987; Burns, 1977), there has been a recent resurgent interest in smaller, 'micro-studies' of cultural production – qualitative and ethnographic accounts of creative labour markets which are attentive to new issues and use different methodological approaches to their subject matters.

There is a long tradition of studying cultural production within media studies. Many of the key studies have been carried out by sociologists at a number of institutional sites, including the BBC, national newspapers, and television stations (Tunstall, 1971; Elliott, 1972; Alvarado, 1978; Feuer *et al.*, 1984; Silverstone, 1985; Schlesinger, 1987; Gitlin, 1994; Born, 2004). While the qualitative study of production in media and cultural studies has certainly been limited, it has, however, established a clear tradition in the field. However, it is fair to say that such research into cultural production is a niche area. This has now been acknowledged, as evidenced by Curran *et al*, who have criticised the lack of empirical research in this area:

> This has had two harmful consequences. It has encouraged a simplistic view of media representations as the expression or reflection of some aspect of society without reference to organizational mediation. It has also encouraged a Panglossian conception of the audience as autonomous and sovereign, without

regard to the ways in which audience responses can be constrained by the political economy of the media (1996: 169)

Furthermore, McRobbie has argued that 'cultural studies has been concerned with representational forms and their meanings, leaving the terrain of lived experience completely to the side. Likewise social institutions and their practices have also been disregarded except in their discursive and regulative modes' (2000: 176).

As a result of this, media research has tended to focus on three key areas: the political economy of the media (ownership, structure, distribution and access); textual analysis of media and cultural products themselves; and a focus on the audience (which is often ethnographic in approach). Participant-observation of media production remains a relatively small niche within the field. Deacon *et al* have noted that:

> Studies of media production almost inevitably rely on some form of observation of the production process, and because of the practical difficulties this entails it is no surprise that the literature of such studies is the smallest branch of media research. (1999: 248-9)

As the quote above suggests, there are a number of reasons for this lack of empirical research:

1. **Access is often difficult to obtain.** This is partly due to the difficulties inherent in gaining access to the inner workings of any social group, but also because there is a fundamental lack of trust between social scientists and media production professionals. When Schudson writes, '[s]ocial scientists who study the news speak a language that journalists mistrust and misunderstand' (2000: 176) he is highlighting an endemic issue for cultural production research.

2. **Participation in media production requires skills that many researchers do not have.** As Deacon *et al* argue: 'few researchers have the skills or training to become a working member of a news team or production crew...' (1999: 251).

3. **The research process is time-consuming, and therefore more expensive than desk research.** Often such research is carried out over an extensive period of time and involves participant-observation. The lack of extended research within the cultural industries is clearly related to the laborious process of gathering the empirical evidence in the field. Such work is 'production heavy',

and 'requires intense periods of immersion in the field of study' (McRobbie, 2000: 257).

4. **Lack of theoretical interest**. Until fairly recently, there has been more theoretical interest in the study of media products as textual artefacts, or the political-economic study of media organisations which examine their structural, political, and economic formations and the impact of these factors on the public sphere and democracy (for example Schiller, 1992; Herman, 2001). Such accounts tend to ignore the role of the individual cultural workers within such organisations.

However, despite these difficulties, qualitative research methods have been used in a number of different contexts within media and organisational studies, because they offer a means of understanding the formation of production values from within the practitioner community. Cultural producers are affected by prevalent structural conditions (economic, ideological, cultural) which ultimately have an effect on the media products that surround us, and so on the wider public sphere. As Schlesinger has pointed out:

> While there is no doubt that external analyses of cultural products, whether by using the techniques of content, textual or discourse analysis, have much to tell us, such approaches do face the crucial limitations of only being able to make inferences about the actual processes of production inside cultural institutions. (1987: xxxii)

As cultural production as a field of employment and labour becomes increasingly casualised, individualised and precarious, within a wider economic and political context of neo-liberalism, deregulation and of increased commercialisation, it is important to understand the transformations in the practitioner community from the perspective of those people working in these cultural sectors.

4.2.1 Cultural production studies

In terms of methodological contextualisation, early qualitative studies of cultural production are important as points of reference for this research. As described in the previous chapter, sociologists such as Silverstone (1985), Schlesinger (1987) and Tunstall

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(1971) carried out groundbreaking ethnographic work into media production in the 1970s and 1980s. These were deeply immersive studies. Schlesinger spent five years observing BBC journalists at work. In terms of methodology, Schlesinger used a classical immersive ethnographic mode of research that involved participant-observation over the course of five years. Similarly Silverstone's (1985) ethnographic study into the making of a BBC *Horizon* programme also involved an immersion into the institutional setting of the BBC, this time in the science documentary department, to uncover how programme makers go about framing science within the populist format of television.

The methodological approach that Schlesinger takes to his research is staunchly realist. Throughout this text Schlesinger gives the impression that he is an objective observer, unaffected by the situation, and similarly not affecting the situation by his presence. There is an empirical 'truth' to be uncovered – in this case the inner workings of a cultural institution, the BBC – and Schlesinger posits himself as the anthropologist-as-detective, able to uncover the clues or signifiers and *read* the underlying reality of the situation. Silverstone's (1985) research is equally positivist in approach. It is presented in a diary format, and achieves a highly intimate account of the complexity of undertaking such research. As with Schlesinger's study of the BBC, this is research in the positivist mould of early ethnography - the detached, neutral observer who is able to go into strange exotic situations and environs and learn about the customs and beliefs of the 'natives'. Questions that have emerged from postmodernism and poststructuralism, which undermine totalising truth claims, and show the difficulty of any 'neutral' realist reading of a situation, are not engaged with in this text.

These studies used a more fully immersive approach than has been possible or desirable in this research. For example, both Silverstone (1985) and Dornfeld, in his study of public service broadcasting (1998), take on the double role of academic *and* production assistant/researcher in order to carry out the research. This was appropriate because their research focused on single productions. Such a degree of immersion was not something that this study set out to achieve, as it seeks to answer a wider range of research questions across a number of institutional settings. As my research is about working conditions within independent production, across a very large number of organisations, it has also been vital to interview and study a wide sample of individuals. However, the work of Silverstone and Dornfeld persuasively demonstrates that a

qualitative methodology is an appropriate approach for this kind of research into cultural production. Dornfeld's account of documentary production is very evocative in describing the culture of public service broadcasting, which he experiences as 'a constructive act of social communication and cultural production' (1998: 19).

4.2.2 Contemporary accounts of cultural production

Since the formative studies of production detailed above, a number of changes have occurred which have instigated a return to the study of cultural production, and which comprise a motivating force for this study. These changes can be seen as theoretical, material and methodological. From a methodological perspective, the early production studies are overly confident about their ability to produce an authoritative account from the field, and suffer from a lack of reflexivity. The pattern of research in these early studies involves the (largely male) sociologist observing and interviewing the production community, after which it would appear to be a relatively unproblematic process for the researcher to turn his experiences into an authoritative text.

Moreover, material changes in the nature of employment and production within the context of a flexible 'fast capitalism'[42] have required new, equally flexible modes of research. The nature of cultural production has radically changed in the last fifteen years or so: now cultural production is a vastly expanded sphere of activity that employs many more people in a context of flexible accumulation. Today's cultural producer is likely to be a freelancer with a number of projects on the go, within a casualised and deregulated labour environment. The production studies undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s described a far more stable working environment for cultural producers, one that was also more spatially fixed (in terms of the working environment) and discursively bounded. As McRobbie argues, there needs to be a 'renewed commitment to production studies' because working practices in the media industries are 'almost unrecognisable compared to those that prevailed when sociologists talked convincingly about the

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[42] According to Steer (1999): '[t]he term fast capitalism is an emerging description of the current social and economic environment workers find themselves in. Employers are demanding total commitment from their workers because they argue this is necessary to maintain their competitive edge. This has meant a declining quality of life for many people including increased levels of stress, reduced times spent with friends and families and overall disatisfaction with their lives.'

routines and daily practices of media professionals as they worked alongside each other in a relatively stable TV newsroom environment' (2000: 258). This has happened at the same time as there has been a discursive political emphasis placed on the 'creative industries' as drivers of innovation and global competitive advantage within an informational society, demanding research that examines the subjectivising impact of these contemporary discourses on individual attitudes towards creative labour.

As a result, there have been a number of recent studies of cultural production that have explored these issues, in a range of production spheres, such as music (Negus, 1992, 1998; Hesmondhalgh, 1996), fashion (McRobbie, 1998) and television (Ursell, 1997, 2000), which take up the challenge of researching cultural production in the transformed economic and political climate of late modernity. These studies describe the turn to 'cultural individualization' (McRobbie, 2002a) for people working in creative sectors of the economy. Here, contemporary cultural production is seen to be peopled by atomised workers, who connect through networks but have lost a wider sense of workplace politics and labour solidarity. As such, employment fields for those working in the new economy become deeply individualistic:

> Thus the new work marks the end of loyalty to others in a shared workplace, the end of dependence, which is replaced with a more detached, self-reliant outlook. Here social interaction is more fleeting and the person protects him or herself by acting the part of co-operation and involvement, while in fact retaining a primary commitment to self-interest. (McRobbie, 2002a: 103)

The use of qualitative methodologies to study cultural producers in this new context can be seen as a strategy for grounding some of the theoretical concerns around production and consumption in a late capitalist society (Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 1991; Lash and Urry, 1994) and also to question what might constitute creativity in this new economic and political climate. For example, Negus, in his research into music industry production cultures, shows how the 'creative' industries in fact often produce formulaic and repetitive work and that their structures of employment and their hierarchies are bound up in strict class divisions. To counter this, he argues that:

> We should develop an ability to untangle or disaggregate the practices of cultural intermediaries: to work out when, how and under what conditions such aesthetic activity might be creative, innovative and providing any more than an impetus inclining towards the conservative and mundane. (2002: 510)

Qualitative methodologies have found a resurgence within this field because they offer a more grounded approach to studying the media that acknowledges the importance of attempting to understand those involved in the production of culture. That it is local, specific and situated research is central both to the theory and the method of such an approach. The local study within the qualitative or ethnographic tradition enables the researcher to affirm the agency of those who are involved in cultural production: not to assert that they are subsumed within structural constraints. As Dover argues, 'the practitioner community and the industry are only understandable through the experiences and relations of individuals involved' (2001: 59).

4.3 Designing the research strategy

With these issues in mind, I shall now turn to the specific methodological details of this research project. Clearly it was vital to develop a research strategy that was best able to address the key research questions of this thesis, namely:

1. What is the nature of work and production within the ITPS?
2. What is the impact of casualisation on the working lives of cultural producers within the ITPS?
3. How do cultural producers in the ITPS find work and manage their careers within this casualised context?
4. What is the impact of the transformations within the cultural economy of the ITPS on the production values and potential for creativity within the ITPS?
5. What kind of subjectivities are emerging amongst creative workers under conditions of late capitalism?

In order to address these questions, I have used an eclectic methodological approach, using a variety of qualitative research tools. Methodological textbooks can often give the impression that there is a 'correct' methodological approach to be found for a particular research project (e.g. a social survey, semi-structured interviews), and once it is found it is simply a case of sticking to it.[43] However, social research is often a messy business which necessitates a mixed, inclusive approach, rather than a straightforward process of

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[43] For further discussion of this tendency in methodological textbooks, see Devine and Heath (1999: 199-200).

choosing a method and then arriving at a conclusion (Deacon, 1999). There are often valid practical and theoretical reasons for taking an eclectic methodological approach to tackle the research questions of the study. One needs to be flexible in one's approach to social research, responsive to the changing dynamics and circumstances of the field being studied.[44] Indeed some of the most productive contemporary social research has emerged from an eclectic approach (see Devine, 1999). Whilst the researcher must be aware of the specific epistemological challenges of a multiple approach, there are great benefits to be accrued if it is done thoughtfully and with intent:

> Despite the difficulties and challenges of mixing methods...the combination of different methods within a single piece of research – if done well – can lead to a much more rounded and holistic view of the topic under investigation. (ibid.: 201)

Initially I believed that the best way to address the research questions of this thesis would be to undertake a 'full blown' and ethnographic study of a number of production companies. However, this initial assumption proved problematic. First, there was the theoretical and practical difficulty of studying individuals at work in an industry where there is *no fixed workplace*. This is a key issue: how to carry out a study of contemporary cultural production where there is often no single stable spatially bounded zone for such production, especially as the traditionally dichotomous zones of work (production) and leisure (consumption) increasingly elide within the creative economy (McRobbie, 1998; Kane, 2004)? Arguably, this dynamic works against the rationale for carrying out lengthy ethnographies within production companies.

Second, although I initially hoped that gaining access to production companies would be relatively unproblematic, in fact it was far more difficult than I had imagined. The independent television industry is to a large extent a close-knit, closed-off community. Ironically for organisations that often make their living observing others, production companies have little desire to be observed themselves. This has been noted before by academics studying media organisations, who have written of the chasm of understanding and mutuality between media researchers and media practitioners. As Deacon *et al* have observed:

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[44] For a full discussion of the need for flexibility in planning and carrying out social research, see Devine and Heath (ibid: 198-205).

National media – broadcasting organisations and networks, major newspapers – are understandably cautious about approaches from researchers. Themselves in the business of publicity and information, they feel vulnerable to potentially critical or intrusive examination by people they consider ill-informed or even hostile. (1999: 367)

As such it proved very difficult for me to gain access to production companies to carry out a full ethnographic study.

Third, it also became clear that the research questions would be best answered through a more mobile methodology of qualitative interviewing, and by building up relationships with the participants over a period of time. This is partly because the research is concerned with the personal consequences of the conditions of creative labour. These are issues that were much easier to deal with in the more intimate, private setting of the interview. Moreover, from a theoretical point of view, the issues that are covered in this thesis are emergent and under-theorised. Creative labour in this new organisational and social context has yet to be fully understood, and there are many conflicting views on how to analyse it (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). In such an uncertain context, qualitative research is far better suited for exploratory, theory-generating research (Spicer, 2004: 295).

4.3.1 Using a qualitative methodology

For these reasons, I decided that a qualitative research strategy was most appropriate to answer these questions, with a close focus on a relatively small group of research participants. A more statistical, quantitative approach could have covered a larger sample, and would have provided useful statistical information about employment within the ITPS. For example, the BFI (1999) research study of television workers makes use of questionnaires and quantitative methods to gauge details such as the levels of freelance workers in the industry, the lengths of contracts, the number of people leaving the industry. However, statistical methods are unable to delve deeper into the emotional, cultural and subjective aspects of work, which were key areas of concern for this research. Qualitative research is particularly useful in conducting research over an extended period of time where it is necessary to find out personal, intimate details of a

participant's life history. The in-depth, semi-structured interview, especially when accompanied by follow-up contact and interviews, allows the researcher to build a stronger relationship of trust with the participant, and gather data which is more personal and covers more sensitive issues. Qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to delve deeper into the interviewee's attitudes and values, which cannot easily be uncovered within a formal questionnaire interview (Byrne, 2004: 182).

4.3.2 The case study approach

Small-scale qualitative research does, however, raise questions about validity and representativeness. Clearly the use of a relatively small group of people is open to the charge of methodological relativism, and of being 'unscientific'. For example, given that this research involves only twenty people one might ask how it can make representative claims about an industry in which over 20,000 people work? Surely the sample would need to be far larger, the approach more scientific, and the data statistically examined for empirical evidence? These are charges that can be levelled against small-scale qualitative research. However, there is a strong theoretical argument for the case study approach. In terms of this thesis, the qualitative and ethnographic study of cultural producers offers the researcher an opportunity to understand a professional community undergoing intense structural transformations through the intensification of reflexive modernisation, in a way that is grounded in the lived experiences and belief structures of those experiencing those transformations. Such research also provides a way of grounding theoretical debates, particularly those around global transformations in late capitalism, in praxis, and seeks to discern specific and situated local knowledge which avoids abstract macroscopic accounts in favour of a lived reality.

In this sense the micro-study approach is not a way of simply using the microcosm to make claims about the macrocosm, but is an embodied means by which to see how much larger trends within society are actually experienced at the local level. It is a question of *translation*. McRobbie has challenged those from within the political economy tradition in media studies who use case studies as a way of making much broader structural claims, claiming that such an approach has the danger inherent within it of reducing the local case study to the 'merely empirical' (1998: 176). Instead, discussing the

rationale for a localised approach when undertaking her research into the fashion industry, she argues:

> To those who query the value of local studies, and dispute the claims to political relevance, I argue that... the case study (in this case, geographically 'local') performs a knowledge-generating function. It allows us the opportunity to see how things actually work in practice and how more general social, and even global, trends like those described by social theorists including Beck, Giddens and Lash (1994) as well as Lash and Urry (also 1994) and also by cultural theorists like Jameson (1984) and Harvey (1989) are translated or modified when they become grounded. (McRobbie, 1998: 11)

This is a crucial statement, one that provides an important methodological justification for carrying out local case studies on workers in the cultural industries, as a way of grounding the debates around 'reflexive modernisation' in practice. Furthermore, by studying *creative workers*, such research is able to focus on a particular group who are arguably at the accelerated end of the transformations that reflexive modernisation has brought to contemporary working life.

4.3.3 Outlining the research design

Following the decision to use a qualitative approach, it was important to devise a specific approach best suited to the research task. The fieldwork was carried out between October 2005 and July 2006. A small sample size of approximately twenty individuals was initially decided upon, with some flexibility in order to adapt to the necessities that would arise when doing the fieldwork. All of the core sample of workers were employed regularly within the independent television industry. The vast majority were freelancers, moving regularly from company to company, and sometimes working within the BBC as freelance staff. All interviewees were guaranteed anonymity, and so their names have been changed in writing up the analysis. This is because the freelance community within television is small and interconnected, and they did not want to jeopardise their future career prospects as a result of being open about the working culture that they described. This was understandable, given that their working conditions were often exploitative and nepotistic.

Three more interviews were then carried out with the owner/managers of three independent production companies. Two of these participants wanted anonymity so that they could speak freely about their industry. There was no need for follow-up interviews with this group, as they were not being studied longitudinally; therefore, the research with the 'owners' took the form of one in-depth semi-structured interview. These interviews were useful in a different way from the main worker interviews, as they provided information on the changing structure of the industry, a historical overview of how the industry had changed in the last twenty years since the formation of Channel 4, and an insight into the prioritisation of commercial success and the shift towards factual entertainment within UK broadcasting culture.

The core group of 'workers' were interviewed in-depth initially, after contact was made and the interview arranged. The interviews themselves were semi-structured, and were conducted in person. A range of key areas were covered, with the flexibility to diverge to other areas if the conversation led that way, and the data being gathered was germane to the research (see appendix 3 for an outline of the key areas covered in each interview). They were then studied longitudinally over a six-month period. This took the form of regular email updates every two months. The email tracking survey was used to provide data on contract lengths, and changes in their employment status, summarised in table 1.

Finally, attempts were made to re-interview all of the twenty workers at the end of the research, to ascertain their reflexive thoughts on the research process, and to find out if their views on the industry had changed at all during that period. This was possible with the vast majority of the participants, but due to time pressures and personal factors, a small minority of those interviewed were unable to be re-interviewed at the end of the study (see appendix 2 for full details). This process, known as 'sample attrition' and common in longitudinal studies, occurs for a variety of reasons, including: participants' unwillingness to continue with the research; difficulty in contacting participants due to change in address; and non-availability due to illness or death (Summer, 2006: 12).

4.3.4 Recruitment

In terms of recruiting my respondents, a number of important issues needed to be considered. Having decided on a small sample, the immediate question was around who should be the focus of the research, and where would I find them? Television production is spread around the UK, with notable production hubs in regional cities such as Manchester, Cardiff, Glasgow and Bristol (Skillset, 2006b). However, despite ongoing attempts to shift production to the regions (through regulatory mechanisms such as the BBC and Channel 4's regional commissioning quotas, and the impending move of BBC production departments to Salford's MediaCity complex), the industry is still overwhelmingly based in London. For this reason, and also due to my own location during the period of the research, the majority of the respondents lived and worked in London. Only two of the respondents worked outside of the capital. I also wanted to speak to individuals across all levels of the production community. The sample reflects this, ranging in hierarchy from junior researcher to series producer (not including the 'expert interviews' with company owners and executive producers). Appendix 2 describes the sample of participants for this thesis.

This range of respondents was crucial as I wanted to develop a sample which allowed me to examine the particular issues germane to the research. In conceptualising the sample, I use the idea of a *theoretically purposive* sample, where groups or environments that are chosen are seen as being illustrative of the phenomenon at the heart of the research problem (Silverman, 2000: 104, see also Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Mason, 1996: 93-4). Here the sample is specific and partial as opposed to statistically representative. The rationale of theoretical sampling is to generate and develop theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In exploratory qualitative research of this kind, the sample is not meant to be statistically representative of a wider target population, but rather the emergent theories should be representative of the kinds of empirical phenomena one wishes to analyse (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 214).

A focus here was not to make generalised findings (not a primary concern of theory-building research), but to focus on the 'explanatory power' of findings (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 267). As Alasuutari argues, 'If all readers of a study can recognise a phenomenon from the description presented, then generalisability is not a problem; the only issue of interest is the relevance of the explanation offered for that phenomenon' (1995: 145). Yet it is still possible to relate the research findings back to the wider social

context in a process Alasuutari calls 'extrapolation' (ibid.: 155). In this study, my concern is to relate back the experiences of this small group in terms of their wider theoretical significance, as exemplars of new modes of work and experience within the cultural economy. Here I focus on individual narratives and experiences as emblematic of particular processes, following Sennett's approach in *The Corrosion of Character*, where he explores new modes of production through the exploration of individual sets of experiences. Here, Sennett discusses the 'universality' of his participants' individual work experiences (1998: 31).

Initial contact was made with a number of gatekeepers who would prove vital to the progress of the research. In 2005 I posted details of my research on the website www.tvfreelancers.org (now defunct), advertising for participants (see appendix 1). This website was aimed at freelancer workers in the television industry, and issues around working conditions were widely discussed on the site's forums. Two strands of research opened up from this initial advertisement. First, I established contact with one of the site's founders, Jack, a producer working in the independent sector, who proved a key informant. Jack helped put me in touch with other individuals working in the industry, and acted as a key gatekeeper for the research, posting further details of my work in an email newsletter. Second, the advert itself solicited several responses, leading to my first interviews. I had become aware of the site whilst working in the television industry before undertaking this research, and also through my earlier MA dissertation, which explored the working lives of a small group of individuals working in London's cultural industries – a project which effectively acted as a pilot study for this research (Lee, 2006).

However, these initial efforts did not produce sufficient responses for the research, and other avenues were then explored. Here, a number of strategies were used. First, I snowballed my initial sample from the website respondees, leading to a small number of further participants (snowballing occurs when the initial research sample contact individuals that they know to provide the researcher with more potential participants). However, snowballing is not without its theoretical and methodological dangers. In terms of advantages, it allows researchers to identify potential particpants when it would otherwise be very difficult to do so (which is very much the case in this industry, for reasons mentioned earlier). However, its weakness is that it relies on the initial sample to understand the aims and objectives of the research in order to identify

suitable participants. Also the initial sample may have characterstics which are unrepresentative of the population as a whole, which can lead to problems of representativeness (Oliver, 2006: 282). Therefore, it is unadvisable to rely solely on such a technique.

Second, in order to widen the scope of the research, and to gather together participants with a different perspective, I began to make use of my own personal contacts. Here, I was able to make contact with several respondents through my own network of television workers. I avoided interviewing direct friends and colleagues, and instead asked them to send details of the research to their contacts, allowing me to be more personally removed from the research. Again, there are problems associated with this approach, but such a route was unavoidable due to the difficulties of accessing the research population. I also made contact with key gatekeepers for this research through my association with the creative industries research consultancy Burns Owens Partnership, where two colleagues in particular were able to put me in touch with a wide range of industry professionals.[45]

Once initial contact was made with my interviewees, it was important to establish a level of trust, in order to achieve the best possible research results. I always sought to meet my interviewees in their own preferred environment. Often, the interviews took place in cafes near to their places of work, although several interviews took place in locations such as editing suites, and production company offices. The fact that I had previously worked in the industry meant that I was able to understand the issues they were describing from a personal level, allowing a more immediate rapport. As Roseneil has argued, in relation to her sociological study of the Greenham Common protestors, having first-hand experience of the field being studied is a resource which can be utilised:

> Whilst 'insider research' is rarely discussed in texts on research methods, I am certainly not the first sociologist to use her personal experience and unique life history for research purposes. (Roseneil, 1995: 7-8)

Indeed, it would be wrong to deny the importance of such prior involvement in the industry. As Devine and Heath have argued, 'sociological researchers cannot be divorced

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[45] I have opted to keep the details of these gatekeepers anonymous, to protect the anonymity of my interviewees.

from their autobiographies, and will inevitably (whether consciously or otherwise) bring their values to bear on the types of research they choose to pursue, the ways in which they pursue that research and the ways in which they interpret and analyse their data' (1999: 27).

4.3.5 Using the interview

The semi-structured interview was used as the primary tool of data gathering. The interview provides the ability to go in-depth and to be flexible in terms of the subject matter covered. This was a key factor in the decision to make the qualitative interview the core of the research strategy. Describing the strength of this approach, Taylor and Bogdan note its 'flexible and dynamic' quality:

> By in-depth qualitative interviewing we mean repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed towards understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words. (1984: 77)

Qualitative interviews are loose and semi-structured, and can be seen as 'conversations with purpose' (Burgess, cited in Mason, 1996: 38). The questions are open, unlike the closed type which would typically be found in a questionnaire-based survey. The aim in qualitative interview research is data generation, and interpretation of the data which is a key part of the involved researcher. As Byrne notes, 'In qualitative interviews, the researcher is often regarded as a co-producer of the data, which are produced as a result of an interaction between researcher and interviewee(s)' (2004: 181).

Using the interview has been vital in examining and generating data on the experiential terrain of the creative economy, which is one of the main underlying purposes of this research. It is well suited for this purpose, for as Gray has argued, the interview is 'an absolutely central discursive technology in the generation of experience' (1997: 99). The use of the interview as a research tool has allowed me to interrogate the 'lived experience' of my respondents, and to probe their reflexive self-knowledge about the conditions of their labour. As Gray writes, the qualitative techniques of 'participant observation and interviews' can work to 'produce rich and full accounts of... lives and social worlds' (ibid.: 92). However, as Scott (1992) has warned, it is vital to avoid focusing on experience for its own sake. This is because sometimes the focus on

exploring experience is presented as a direct means of opening up 'hidden' lives and truths. Scott is highly critical of the metaphor of visibility in this context, 'implying as it does the possibility of a direct, unmediated apprehension of a world of transparent and knowable objects' (quoted in Gray, 1997: 93).

Experience must not be fetishised, then, but should be seen as fitting into wider discursive regimes of meaning and knowledge, not used as a transparent truth. This is important in analysing my respondents' accounts, and is where a theoretical concern with the subjectivising effects of neoliberal discourses of the governmentalisation of creativity are useful when assessing their accounts of their experience. As Spivak has written, theories and methods should be challenged unless they enable us to '[u]nderstand the operations of the complex and changing discursive and material processes by which identities are ascribed, resisted or embraced, and which processes are themselves unremarked, indeed achieve their effect because they aren't noticed' (1987: 214).

Using the interview as a means of generating knowledge raises other issues. For example, it is necessary to be constantly reflexive about the impact of the research process itself on the answers and data that is being generated. This is something that is vital for qualitative research, for as Hammersley and Atkinson argue, 'it is misleading to regard [this influence] simply as a source of bias that must be removed … neither non-directive interviewing nor even reliance on unsolicited accounts avoids the problem' (1995: 110). Moreover, as Byrne points out, 'in thinking about interviewing as a tool of social research, we need to be aware of the many different variables which will affect the outcome. These will include who is doing the interviewing, who is being interviewed, the location in which the interview takes place and the form of questioning' (2004: 180). However, with this in mind, the interview remains valid, for 'the fact that linguistic signs derive their meaning from relations with other signs … does not strip them of their referential function' (Atkinson 1990: 176).

My interviews with respondents followed a qualitative and a semi-structured approach, both in the initial and the final interviews. Semi-structured interviews mean that the interview has both a set of questions that are asked in a sequential manner, and also areas where the questions arise from the context of the interview and explore the views of the interviewee in more detail (Bloch, 2004). My interviews were conducted for

a duration of approximately one hour each, and I allowed myself the freedom to divert 'off-script' in order to be responsive to the context of the interview and to what my respondents were actually telling me. As Byrne points out, '[q]ualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values – things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire. Open-ended and flexible questions are likely to get a more considered response than closed questions and therefore provide better access to interviewees' views, interpretations of events, understandings, experiences and opinions' (2004: 182).

The interview has other strengths as a research tool. It enables participants, to a certain extent, to speak in their own voices – useful for researchers who want to uncover subjugated experience and knowledge, for example feminist scholars. It also allows for a complexity that is not available in a more survey-based approach to social research, and so when done well can achieve a depth not available in other approaches, as well as enabling the researcher to become attuned to subtle differences in participants' positions, both during the the interview and in the ensuing analysis (Byrne, 2004: 182)

4.3.6 Multi-sitedness

> Sociology may be able to develop a new agenda, an agenda for a discipline that is losing its central concept of human 'society'. It is a discipline organised around networks, mobility and horizontal fluidities. (Urry, 2000: 3)

As Urry has argued, our increasingly mobile age means that we need to develop a new mode of sociology that is able to deal with fluid, mobile individuals, who do not stay in one temporally, physically bounded location (Urry, 2000). The question is what kind of methodology is best suited to studying such mobility? In this study, the nature of the working lives of the research participants made the interview particularly efficacious. An approach based around interviewing informants is a highly effective method for researching cultural production in this new flexible environment. Interviewing offers a means of exploring the desocialised, individualised working lives of *highly mobile* cultural workers. Therefore, on a practical level there is another reason that I have made use of the interview as perhaps my primary research tool, and that is the flexibility it gives to the researcher to be mobile. As McRobbie has pointed out, discussing her own experiences of interviewing cultural producers in the British fashion industry, there are serious

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obstacles to overcome in order to carry out direct observation in the new working conditions of the cultural industries:

> I encountered first hand the difficulties participant observation posed, for the reason that the personnel doing this kind of work were highly mobile, most likely to be employed on a freelance or temporary contract, and consequently individualized in their outlook and rather isolated in their working practices. (2000: 260)

Therefore, taking on board the difficulties of carrying out qualitative research on workers in this area of the economy, is there a sense in which the contemporary researcher of cultural production needs to be more adaptive and multi-sited than the cultural production ethnographers of the past were? I have found a methodology of mobility to be vital in my own research, as I am studying individuals whom it would be impossible to study at any one fixed location. These are creative workers who, as my research will show, often have very short contracts and have no one fixed workplace. Indeed this raises deeper questions about qualitative methodology in a transformed economic era of production. In studying cultural production in the complexity of the network economy, where cultural products are created in a highly complex chain of action and interaction, there is a need for research to take on board this emergent post-Fordist production environment.

If multi-sitedness is the material reality of cultural production, how then can the ethnographer study loose networks of individuals, who work as freelancers under conditions of flexible specialisation, moving from project to project, in a number of sites, often juggling a number of jobs at any one given time, and for whom the concepts of 'work' and 'play' are eroded? Recent ethnographic research of the Internet is particularly suggestive in this context, where the focus has been on so-called 'virtual ethnography' (Hine, 2000). Under the conditions mentioned earlier, where ethnography is detached from reliance on a single field site, it becomes a more complex, ongoing project. As Hine (1998) has argued, '[t]he ethnography becomes focused around the tracing of complex connections and the mobility of the ethnographer is a tool which provides opportunities to reflect on the construction of place'. Moreover, as Marcus (1995) has pointed out, there is a growing trend for ethnographers to study multiple sites in order to follow objects (such as cultural products) through a series of cultural contexts. This means conducting 'ethnographies which are motivated by following people, things,

metaphors, stories and conflicts as examples of approaches which breach the dependence of ethnography on a particular bounded place' (Hine, 1998). Multi-sitedness that takes on board these insights is clearly a growing field within media studies (Radway, 1988; Abu-Lughod, 1997) and science studies (Heath, 1997).

4.3.7 Longitudinal research

Another strategy I have used in my research is to track my respondents longitudinally for six months after the initial interview in order to build up a more complete picture of their movement within the labour markets of the television industry. This was achieved largely via email contact. Online technologies are increasingly being used in social research, and are very useful tools for qualitative research. The use of these technologies allowed me to overcome distance as a barrier to research, allowing my respondents greater flexibility in terms of communicating with me. As Markham points out, '[a]s well as collapsing distance, Internet technologies disrupt the traditional use of time in interaction...Because Internet technologies accommodate both asynchronous and synchronous communication between individuals and groups, the use of time can be individually determined... Internet communication is persistent; conversations can extend over long periods of time, picking up where they left off with greater ease than in face-to-face settings' (2004: 103).

Moreover, the use of longitudinal research allowed me to build up a deeper picture of my respondents than would have been possible from just one interview. This made it possible to interact more reflexively with my respondents and to extend the researcher/researched relationship over a greater period of time, building up a greater trust and hopefully leading to more genuine reflection. However, in using Internet communication as a tool for conducting social research, it is important to bear in mind the disembodied context of the Internet, which has implications for ethnography . As Hine (1998) suggests:

> The accessibility of the Internet attracts ethnographers to a field site which lives on the desk top, and a community which can apparently be joined without complex rituals and access negotiations. This very accessibility, however, tends to focus attention on the on-line community, to the exclusion of links with off-line

lives, identities and activities. It also tends to leave unquestioned the status of the Internet as a communication medium and as a technology. (Hine, quoted in Walsh, 2004: 232)

This issue has been negotiated in this study by the fact that I was able to build up a relationship of trust through first-person contact before undertaking the email longitudinal research.

4.4. Analysis

The qualitative approach used in this study, by its intensive and longitudinal nature, generates large amounts of data which needs to be analysed. Moreover, television workers are by nature gregarious and talkative. As Gitlin notes, 'the television business is a talker's business... So getting people to talk was not the problem I had anticipated: the problem was to evaluate millions of words' (1994: 14). This section will give an overview of how the data generated during the research was analysed. Data was generated in a number of ways, through in-depth interviews and email contact with my respondents. Ordering and structuring that material was a key task of the analysis.

In analysing qualitative data, it is important to remember that such research is not a 'soft option', but should be systematic and rigourous. As Deacon has argued:

> Qualitative analysis should be as thorough and systematic in its way as any statistical analysis. Simply skimming through transcripts to gain a loose impression of the issues and to 'cherry-pick' juicy quotations for the final report does not constitute an adequate qualitative analysis. You need to immerse yourself in the detail available to you, to look for precisely the kind of subtle insights and qualifications that tend to escape most quantitative perspectives. (1999: 351-2)

This is why it is vital to have a clear strategy for analysis, both practically and theoretically.

4.4.1 Using computer aided qualitative data analysis software

Making use of the qualitative data analysis computer programme *NVivo* was vital for the task of ordering and analysing the vast amount of data that was generated in the course of the field-work. *NVivo* allows the researcher to decide on a hierarchical system of concepts (or 'nodes') which then allows one to code the data accordingly. Essentially this is a process of categorising the material conceptually to identify key themes and patterns from the data. *NVivo* allows for two centrally different nodes to be used. 'Trees' are essentially used for concepts, which are dealt with hierarchically. Therefore each tree node would have a 'parent' node (such as 'casualisation', or 'identity'), under which sub-nodes or 'child' nodes are created which directly come under the umbrella of the key concept. For example, in figure 2, it is possible to see that 'creativity' is being used as a parent node, and that there are a number of developing child nodes underneath it. 'Cases' are used for people, places and objects: they are specific instances of particular kind of thing. For example, each participant in the study was designated a case node.

Figure 2: Screengrab from *NVivo*
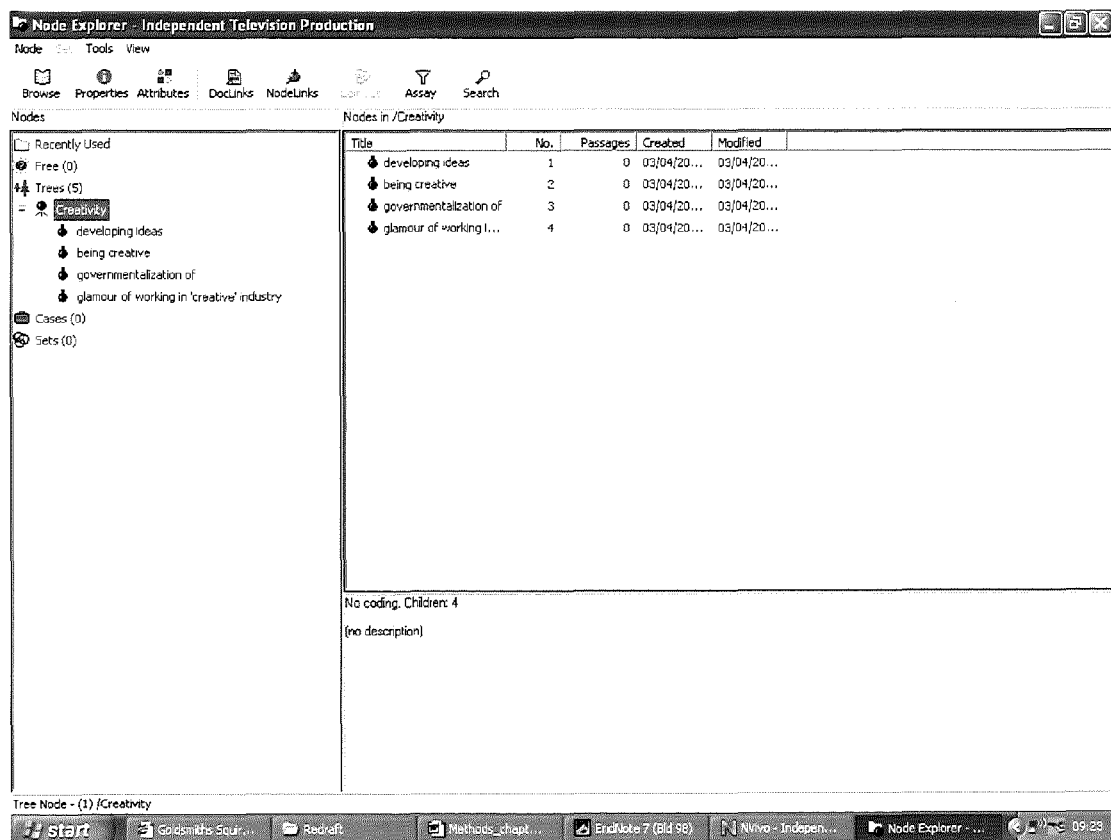
NVivo allows the researcher to begin to conceptually order and categorise all of the data that is generated in a qualitative research project. Having transcribed all of the interviews, the raw data was put into *NVivo* where it could begin to be analysed. In developing the nodes themselves, this was a process of imposing analytical codes on the data (such as 'casualisation', 'identity', 'governmentality'), and also allowing concepts to arise from the data. It is important to avoid over-imposing conceptual frameworks of understanding on the data collected, as the researcher should be open and flexible to ideas and patterns which may not directly relate to her or his theoretical model of understanding. *NVivo* helps with this process, allowing for the flexible generation of new ideas, while helping the researcher to organise a vast amount of data into hierarchically arranged categories which can be built up and modified as the work of analysis is done. As Deacon suggests, '[a]lthough qualitative research is flexible and responsive – ideas and concerns are *induced* as the research is conducted as much as they are *imposed* at the outset - you inevitably reach a stage when you have to impose some order on your data' (1999: 356).

Once the data has been entered, and the coding is done, *NVivo* has powerful tools that allow one to search and analyse the data instantaneously. At a basic level, it can conduct administrative functions, such as retrieving all the text that relates to a particular node or set of nodes. This ensures a comprehensive record of what was written or said on that issue or theme, and so avoids a superficial impression of the data. However, *NVivo* also provides the capability for more sophisticated analyses than just that. For example, it allows one to produce statistical information about one's data. For instance, one can see the number of times that a particular node appears, and in how many documents. It also allows one to find the location and frequency of the appearance of individual words or phrases, which can help significantly with discourse analysis. Statistical summaries and tables can be produced that make it possible to identify patterns and thematic clusters. Age, gender, occupation of participants can be cross-referenced against codings, which allows comments to be formally connected to their sources (ibid.: 362-3).

4.4.2 Discourse analysis

> Discourses... deeply permeate what is allowed as legitimate knowledge in particular domains of social life, and rigidly exclude other possibilities and other perspectives on those domains. (Deacon, 1999: 147).

On a more theoretical level, extensive use has been made of 'discourse analysis' in this research project. Discourse analysis focuses on the use of language in social life, and on the relationship between language and social structure. Therefore discourse analysis is highly concerned with the context in which language is used, and how it is indicative of wider discursive formations within society. In this sense, discourse analysis connects directly to the historical and contextual sensitivity of critical realism, outlined earlier as the theoretical approach for this research project. Discourse can refer to a single fragment of a text, or a speech act, or to a 'systematic ordering of language involving certain rules, terminology and convention' (Seale, 1997: 373). Taken in this way, 'a discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic' (Hall, 1992: 290). This way of thinking about language and meaning systems is closely associated with the poststructural philosopher Michel Foucault. For Foucault, language is constitutive of social reality (Deacon, 1999: 147). As Deacon argues, 'The term discourse figures more in his earlier work, where it was taken to refer to broad domains of language use which both condition and mobilise historically specific "strategic possibilities" of meaning, understanding and practice... Discourse in this sense, or what Foucault sometimes referred to as discursive formations, is at once singularly authoritative and deployed in the interests of existing structures of authority and power' (ibid.: 147). Discourse allows us to be attentive to the relations of power and knowledge which certain forms of discourse make possible.

Therefore, taking one research question as an example, this research is concerned with the governmentalisation of 'creativity' as a key discourse that has emerged from a policy context over the last ten years, and is particularly associated with New Labour. Here the Foucauldian concept of subjectivisation is crucial – how certain discourses and practices work to shape human identities in certain directions. Such a process can be detected, arguably, through discourse analysis. In this sense, language is linked closely to ideology and to power. In this understanding of discourse, language is not a transparent medium through which we objectively and neutrally see the world. Rather we come to our understanding of social life, and our very sense of identity, through our engagement with

the signifying system of language, building up our sense of the social world through our language, which is largely cultural and historically determined (ibid.: 148). For the discourse analyst then, language is both text and practice; it is inherently a social act that relates to wider structures of power, meaning and culture.

In this research, key discourses which emerged from the participants' talk about their working lives were investigated in order to explore how a practitioner community uses language in certain ways which work to organise fields of knowledge and practice in the field. For example, if creativity is taken to be a key discourse of government in the 'knowledge economy' (as explored in chapter 3), then a discourse analysis would seek to understand how something that is naturalised through language can be understood as a social and political artefact shaped by a number of different discourses. Then it is instructive to see how my respondents engage and respond to the question of creativity as a key discourse shaping cultural and economic policy. Moreover, the research looks out for how television production workers have created a certain 'expert' language. As Seale argues, the development and use of expert languages has key effects, because 'it marks out a field of knowledge or expertise, it confers membership, and it bestows authority' (1997: 375). In analysing the documentary evidence that is relevant for this enquiry, such as policy documents, newspaper articles and so forth, discourse analysis in this sense is also central, allowing one to study the popular discourses associated with the 'creative economy', for instance, in politicians' speeches.

Discourse analysis is interpretive, and in terms of selecting and approaching material one's attention will be focused by the research questions. One needs a conceptual framework in place to start identifying the key themes and arguments that will emerge from the data. Also, in sorting, coding and analysing the data, one needs to be flexible. As Seale argues, 'At times it can be tempting to impose an interpretation on a sample of discourse, but if this is not supported by the data then it will not yield an adequate analysis' (1997: 377). One needs to be adaptive, reflexive, ready to reject a theoretical or conceptual framework if it is no longer appropriate: 'Discourse analysis involves a commitment to examining processes of meaning in social life, a certain modesty in analytic claims, and an approach to knowledge which sees this as open rather than closed' (ibid.: 380). For these reasons, discourse analysis is central to this research,

and it can be seen how it would be used with *NVivo* to generate particular forms of analysis.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological framework of analysis and data-generation, as it relates to the research into independent television production, and the conditions of creative labour in this setting. As we have seen, there have been a number of studies within sociology, media and cultural studies that have examined cultural production from ethnographic or qualitative perspectives. However, it is also clear that there is a lack of research that has adapted to the realities of material conditions under the conditions of flexible accumulation, where the network is the key structure of production. These economic changes, as explored in chapter 2, are associated with a sharp decline in manufacturing and traditional industries, a rise in services and an emergence of an economy, characterised by networks of firms producing products and services on an increasingly global basis and on a contractual basis (Touraine, 1974; Harvey, 1989; Scott, 2000). Under conditions of flexible accumulation, a pattern has emerged of loose networks of small firms working together on a project basis, to produce short runs of new products at short notice (Jeffcut and Pratt, 2002). At the same time, commentators have noted the emergence of spatial clustering that has occurred, and the creation of new industrial districts (see Amin *et al*, 1995 and Scott, 2000). This process has been particularly marked in the creative industries. Recent research has shown that firms in cultural industries tend to agglomerate together in dense specialised clusters, yet their products circulate on a global market (see Power and Scott, 2004). Therefore, there is a pressing need for a new type of methodology to study workers in creative industries that find themselves under these new conditions of production and labour. Therefore, in this chapter I have argued for a qualitative, and essentially *mobile* methodological approach, which responds to these dynamics now inherent within contemporary cultural production.

Furthermore, much research in the public domain into the creative industries is highly empirical, and 'evidence based'. The current research climate in the UK privileges particular types of 'factual' evidence and quantitative methods of researching society above qualitative methods of research. This is particularly pronounced within

government and public sector research on the cultural or 'creative' industries, with the emergence of any number of 'data-sets' that give statistical and 'hard' economic information about the shape and location of the various sub-sectors located under the broad umbrella of the 'creative industries' moniker (DCMS, 1998, 2001b, 2005).

However, despite the growing body of factual evidence that has emerged from central government research, Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), and consultancies, as to the shape, size, location and clustering dynamics of the creative industries, little attention has been given to the impact of a neoliberal, deregulatory political environment on the subjective experiences of individuals entering these new labour markets, and on the possibility for creative expression within such a context. As McRobbie has argued, it has become a politically pressing concern to research the working lives of individuals for whom 'self-reliance [is] more of a survival strategy than a political statement' (1998: 3). This points to a new understanding of the sociology of work and labour beyond the old dichotomy between left and right. Such an understanding allows for an understanding of workers' identities in the creative industries which can move beyond seeing workers as exploited subjects caught up in a ruthless free market, or as outright 'yuppie' individualists enthralled to the tune of Thatcherite enterprise culture, to a more sophisticated account of the realities of negotiating risk and insecurity which is attuned to the harsh conditions such workers face, yet understands that these sectors offer intense affective rewards at the same time.

Research in this area demands an approach that is open to the experiences of social actors, one that is attuned to more subjective, qualitative concerns. In this sense, a qualitative approach has key strengths and offers depth and insights that a pure focus on statistics cannot provide. Policy research on creative industries has been largely silent on this issue (Knell and Oakley, 2007). However, a qualitative approach to analysing creative labour allows researchers to tackle pressing questions of identity, subjectivity and lived experience through a focus on individual narratives, areas which are missed by purely statistical, empirical analysis. Therefore, the decision to take a qualitative approach is crucial to this thesis's aim of attempting to generate a more critical body of evidence about creative work which is based on studying the subjective responses of the individuals involved in production, using a situated research methodology, where

'subjectivity, biography and commitment are a constitutive part of the research process' (Gray, 1997: 98).

Chapter 5: Risky business - making a living in the independent television production sector

> The working lives of most creative personnel in the television industry are marked now by uncertainty. (Paterson, 2001: 498)

> With the slow demise of lifelong full-time employment, continuous searching for jobs, preparing for potential future jobs, as well as managing multiple careers more or less simultaneously have become core elements of the workstyle in everyday life for many. (Deuze, 2007: 20)

Perhaps the most consistent theme that emerged from the research was the prevailing and often overwhelming sense of insecurity that the participants experienced in their working lives. This was a common feature, regardless of their occupation, from researcher to series producer, editor to producer/director. As other researchers have shown, both in media industries and more broadly within society, precarious labour is now a fundamental feature of working life, transforming traditional expectations about careers and the sustainability of creative work (Beck, 1992, 2000; McRobbie, 1998, 2004; Ross, 2004; Ursell, 1997, 2000). Moreover, creative labour markets are exemplary of patterns that emerge more broadly within the 'new capitalism', where class and gender re-emerge as significant factors determining success within opaque, networked modes of insecure, contingent employment (Sennett, 2006: 80). This is important not only as a matter of sociological interest, but also because there is growing evidence that such an employment landscape has a detrimental impact on the creative ecology in itself, with implications for the public sphere (Paterson, 2001; Ursell, 2000). As a result of the negative associations of insecurity increasing numbers of people leave television once they reach an age where flexibility is no longer an attractive option (BFI, 1999); this skills exit connects to growing evidence that creativity itself needs secure conditions in which to flourish.

The broader empirical and theoretical context of labour uncertainty, which I outline below, resonates with my interviewees' experiences of work. Work in the independent television sector is highly precarious and contract based, involving the individual in the constant search for sustainable work. The traditional benefits of secure labour, such as paid holidays, pensions and employment rights have largely vanished. In

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this chapter I examine the striking uncertainty of creative labour in the freelance production environment within television, and its implications.

5.1 The context of risk

It is clear that my findings in this area are part of a wider picture. Numerous sociological investigations into the nature of work in the post-Fordist environment, particularly within media and new media environments, have pointed to a transformation of working structures, with freelance encounters within networks of companies increasingly becoming the standard model (Gill, 2002; Ross, 2004; Pratt, 2000, 2002). Some have argued that the freelance mode of work, with its contract based and insecure nature, is now the new norm, indicative of a shift within capitalism away from the job security associated with professional careers in the mid 20th century (Allen and Henry, 1996; Beck, 1992, 2000). Increasing numbers of men and women, especially in the service sector, occupy 'non-standard' jobs. Standing (1986) has referred to this trend as the 'contractualisation' of employment, where employers erode the terms and conditions of labour, so that short-term contracts and a lack of benefits such as holiday pay and a pension become increasingly normal. The rhetoric of 'flexibility' as something to be embraced by the individual belies rather less attractive conditions for many workers. Peck has pointed to how these 'flexible' arrangements in the workplace operate in the interest of increasingly centralised capitalist markets, for the purpose of control and profit:

> Disintegration and fragmentation on the surface often reflect underlying processes of integration and centralization. This is certainly true in the labour market context, where many of the so-called flexibility strategies – 'individualised' employment relations, plant-level pay bargaining, incentives-based contracts – are established means of deepening control over the labour process in ways of which Frederick Taylor might have been proud. (1992: 329)

As chapter 2 explored, the global economic crisis in the 1970s and the rise of flexible accumulation means that job security has decreased in many areas of the economy. Sennett notes how temporary labour is the fastest growing sector of the labour force in the United States and Britain, accounting for 8 per cent of the U.S. labour force today (2006: 49). Beck has argued that we are witnessing a major transition in the very nature of employment within post-industrial societies in the West, with 'the spread of

temporary and insecure employment, discontinuity and loose informality into Western societies that have hitherto been the bastions of full employment' (Beck, 2000: 1).

Certainly there is growing evidence of employment casualisation, as more people in industrialised countries such as America and Britain have become free-lancers, 'e-lancer's', or so called 'Free Agents' (Malone & Laubacher, 1998; Pink, 2001). These individuals are often presented as the feted mobile elite of the new capitalism with no permanent employment, who move from contract to contract, a group for whom the notion of a 'job for life' has vanished. For writers such as Pink (2001), this group is the subject of breathless speculation. They are portrayed as the avatars of the new economy of uncertainty, using their skills, know-how and knowledge for their own and society's economic and social advantage. However, as Ross points out, in fact the majority of these 'free-lance' individuals in the US are involuntarily contract and part-time workers, often women, working in low-wage jobs such as temping, and are predominantly black and Hispanic (Ross, 2004: 157-8).

Despite such contradictions between hype and reality, there is broad evidence of a shift towards less secure forms of employment within post-industrial societies. In the UK the picture is similar, with the Office for National Statistics showing that the self-employed now account for over 13 per cent of the workforce, with almost 4 million people having set up their own business, the highest number since records began in 1992 (Freelance UK, 2006). In the UK there are now more than 3.7 million people working as freelancers (ibid). In the United Kingdom at the beginning of the 1990s, nearly 40 per cent of work was destandardised (much of it part-time) (McLaughlin, 1994; Millar *et al*, 1989). While it is important not to overstate the statistical importance of freelance modes of work in the new capitalism, we must recognise the cultural importance that such models of working hold, in that they 'exert a profound moral and normative force as a cutting-edge standard for how the larger economy should evolve' (Sennett, 2006: 10).

5.1.1 Theorising uncertainty

Beck (1992, 2000) has suggested that we are witnessing the end of the era of full employment, and that this is part of a much larger trend towards an economy of personal insecurity and risk. Risk and social responsibility for working lives is offloaded

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from capital onto the individual. For Beck (1992), this process can be seen as the 'reflexive modernisation of the employment society', one where underemployment becomes the new aim so that employers are able to extract more value from workers for less cost. This is work as 'permanently transitional', where temporary jobs become not a pathway to greater security but a permanent phenomenon.

A number of writers have examined the personal and cultural consequences of precarious labour markets in the flexible economy. Sennett (1998) has described the loss of character and a coherent life narrative that occurs under conditions where workers are constantly having to move from job to job and from place to place. This is a game of chance, a gamble where life-chances are the stake and where 'new market conditions oblige large numbers of people to take quite demanding risks even though the gamblers know the possibilities of reward are slight' (ibid.: 88). These individuals are forced to endlessly reinvent themselves, and Sennett asks what the human cost is of such permanent impermanence. For Sennett, work in the new capitalism has a deleterious impact on self, as these individuals are assailed by economic forces beyond their control. Forced to live in a constant state of flux, individuals are unable to construct a stable linear narrative account of their lives, weakening the social bonds between people and producing a more individualistic, self-reliant perspective on life. He asks:

> How can long-term purposes be pursued in a short-term society? How can durable social relationships be sustained? How can a human being develop a narrative of identity and life history in a society composed of episodes and fragments? (1998: 26-7)

The emotional impact of an uncertain life narrative is clearly in evidence in my research findings.

These are the personal consequences of labour restructuring. In *The Organisation Man*, Whyte (1963) famously described a bureaucratic world of work in 1950s America, depicting a nation of employees where the new middle class were creatively stifled and conformist, but essentially employed within permanent and secure jobs. The bureaucratic organisation created a rationalised form of time, predictable, linear and long-term (connected to a culture of delayed gratification which operated for individuals working in such organisations). As Sennett has argued, 'Rationalized time enabled people to think about their lives as narratives – narratives not so much of what necessarily will happen as

of how things should happen' (ibid.: 23). The bureaucratic organisation, described as an 'iron cage' by Weber (1992: 123), did, however, offer the security of life-long employment, fostered social inclusion (and social capital) by providing wide-spread employment within society, and provided individuals with a clear sense of a life *narrative* through work (Sennett, 2006: 15:82). Such a narrative has now largely vanished, for those at the 'cutting edge' of capitalism, such as creative workers.

Such uncertainty clearly works in favour of capital accumulation, at the expense of the individual. Yet it has been achieved not by domination, but through a process whereby precarious models of work are aligned to a cultural desire for individual freedom. For Ross (2004) the shift towards a more 'humane', 'no-collar' workplace, where self-management and flexible patterns of employment are common, also provides the grounds for exploitation, and a long-hours culture. He exposes how the employees of the digital creative economy have 'brought their experience in sacrificial labour and therefore a willingness to work in low-grade office environments, solving creative problems for long and often unsocial hours in return for deferred rewards' (Ross, 2004: 10). Ross's research exposes the dark side of the 'new economy':

> Features that appeared to be healthy advances in corporate democracy could turn into trap-doors that opened on to a bottomless seventy-hour-plus workweek. Employee self-management could result in the abdication of accountability on the part of real managers and an unfair shouldering of risk and responsibilities on the part of individuals. Flattened organizations could mean that the opportunities for promotion dried up, along with layers of protection to shield employees from market exposure. A strong company culture was an emotional salve in good times but could turn into a trauma zone in times of crisis and layoffs. Partial ownership, or stakeholding, in the form of stock options could give employees an illusory sense of power sharing, rudely shattered when they encountered the unilateralism of executive decision-making in layoffs and office closures. (ibid.: 18-19)

For Ross flexible creative labour blurs the boundaries between work and leisure, so 'that it can enlist employees' freest thoughts and impulses in the service of salaried time':

> In knowledge companies that trade in creative ideas, services, and solutions, everything that employees do, think, or say in their waking moments is potential grist for the industrial mill. Where elements of play in the office or at home/offsite are factored into creative output, then the work tempo is being recalibrated to incorporate activities, feelings, and ideas that are normally pursued

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during employees' free time. For employees who consolidate office and home, who work and play in the same clothes, and whose social life draws heavily on their immediate colleagues, there are no longer any boundaries between work and leisure. (ibid: 19)

Here the 'new capitalism' demands particular forms of 'emotional labour' (Hochschild, 1983). Cultural norms, based around individual self-actualisation, exert a powerful mode of governmentality at work, shaping individuals' innermost desires and feelings towards the firm's mission for profit (du Gay, 1996; McRobbie, 2002b; Ursell, 2000). My research shows how the discourse of being creative in fact provides individuals with a narrative of work which fails to address exploitation, insecurity and long-term sustainability.

5.2 The research findings

My research shows that the labour market in television has become a desocialised and individualised environment, a site of intensive self-reflexivity and constant updating of skills in order to remain employable. Yet despite these rigours, it is also a site of intense personal pleasure. My interviewees expressed a deep ambivalence about their working lives. On the one hand, they were open about their concerns at the insecurities and the stresses of individualisation, of living and working in a 'winner-takes-all' culture (Frank, 1995). Yet, on the other, they emphasised their great personal satisfaction in being creative, and in the pleasure they derive from their work. In central ways, 'creativity' acted as a panacea for the structural pains of making a living under such pressures.

What is immediately clear from the analysis is the casualised nature of their employment. Table 1 below provides detail of number of contracts that each of my participants had during the research period.

Table 1: Details of participants' contract lengths

Name	Occupation	Number of contracts in research research period	Average length of contract in research period
Abigail	Assistant Producer	5	6 weeks
Andrew	Assistant Producer	3	2 months
Anita	Producer/Director	Has own company	n/a
Colin	Editor	5	6 weeks
Dave	Managing Director	Has own company	n/a
Deborah	Editor	1	Rolling contract with one employer
Eleanor	Assistant Producer	3	2 months
Emma	Producer/Director	2	4 months
Jack	Producer/Director	3	2 months
James	Producer/Director	3	2 months
Jenny	Assistant Producer	3	2 months
Jonathan	Assistant Producer	2	4 months
Louise	Series Producer	2	3 months
Paul	Assistant Producer	1	Rolling contract with one employer
Rachel	Researcher	3	2 months
Richard	Producer/Director	3	9 weeks
Robert	Editor	4	6 weeks
Sara	Production Manager	2	2 months
Sarah	Producer/Director	2	3 months
Simon	Producer/Director	2	3 months

5.3 The material realities of insecurity in the ITPS

My data shows that insecurity and casualisation have very real consequences on the day-to-day working lives of production workers in the ITPS. Individuals are involved in a constant search for future employment. There is a restless mobility to their lives, as they endlessly move from contract to contract. Re-skilling becomes a vital way of maintaining an advantage in this situation. As a result of this working culture, the social contract between worker and company erodes, leading to a lack of loyalty to the company. Capital reneges on its responsibilities to the worker, meaning that production workers must take responsibility for their own pensions, holiday pay, and health care costs. Exploitation is rife, bad working practices emerge such as taking on eager young recruits on an endless cycle of 'work experience'.

5.3.1 'Liquid' workers

In the casualised world of television production, the production culture is one of constant mobility, where contracts vary from weeks to months:

> Emma: I've got a long one at the moment, 8 months, but … I've had a weekly contract at [....], see where we are at the end of the week. That's about as bad as it gets! 3 months is very common for a documentary… I've never had anything longer than 8 months which is the longest ever.

Therefore, work within a small 'indie'is experienced as highly unpredictable:

> Jenny: Well I'm still living on the edge… Baby… You know. So, I've spoken to [x] [the production manager] and he said February, which is when my contract ends, so it's really difficult. We're hoping to extend that for another three months but he's like, you know we are just examining our finances at the production company.

James also told me that 'the longest contract I've ever had is 5 months, 6 months, to make a big BBC 1 film, you know'.

An analysis of the tracking data confirms this picture of mobility. For the freelance workers I interviewed, their average contract lengths ranged from six weeks to four months (see table 1). This precarious existence echoes Bauman's description of 'liquid modernity' as: 'a society in which the conditions under which its members act change faster than it takes the ways of acting to consolidate into habits and routines. Liquidity of life and that of society feed and reinvigorate each other. Liquid life, just like liquid modern society, cannot keep its shape or stay on course for long' (Bauman, 2005: 1). Modern life exhibits characteristics of permanent flux and uncertainty; in such conditions workers are required to adopt certain strategies.

5.3.2 The constant job search

Unsurprisingly, given this short-term contract context, all of the freelancers I studied were involved in a constant search for future employment. Indeed, this process was an over-riding concern, dominating 'leisure' time and involving effort outside of contracted hours, and involving emails, phone-calls and meetings, often during the production period of the current job that they were employed on. The structural uncertainty about future employment means that freelance workers in television must constantly be thinking about their next job, even while they are working on their current one, as this quote of Emma's suggests:

> It's difficult, it's insecure because it's very hard to manage…most people as they play it, the last few weeks of their contract they start looking around for work, because when people want to hire you as a researcher or AP they want you the next Monday, so it's really difficult to say, unless you're incredibly lucky with a really good relationship with someone in a company who is able to plan 8 months ahead, say you're on a one 8 month contract and you know mostly that it's quite rare that one contract is going to dovetail nicely with another because there's all this cyclical commissioning stuff that is going on behind the scenes…

Equally, Jenny described the need to 'bash the phones, and fire off emails all the time' in order to find the next job. And this process is hard work in itself, as Emma notes:

> I would say I have met 10 or 15 contacts before I actually work for them. Either they called me and I go in and have a chat about something specific or emailing them or them ringing me, so it's a long process.

This process is stressful, particularly as there is no down-time on productions, so this job-hunting has to take place within one's own time:

> Emma: [Y]ou're full on the whole time and then sort of two weeks before you realise 'shit, I haven't sent any emails out', so you do a horrible excruciating day at work, then you go home and do a job application...Or you bung out a few emails. So it's either at the weekend when you're meant to be resting or in the evening.

Indeed, managing the whole process is fraught with problems, particularly in terms of fitting interviews around the requirements of the current job:

> Andrew: Going for interviews is problematic in terms of trying to get time off during a short term contract because they obviously won't give you time off, so its like well how can you go on holiday then. But it makes it difficult to go for job interviews.

This echoes the research of Paterson, who notes the 'constant necessity of finding new work, the next contract' in the television industry (2001: 497).

5.3.3 Exploitation

Insecurity breeds (self-) exploitation. My research was indicative of a work culture which included features such as extremely long hours, low pay, bullying, the exploitative use of work experience free labour, and other highly dubious working practices, exacerbated by a pervasive fear of standing up to exploitation for fear of being labelled a trouble-maker. The network culture of employment militates against workers giving public voice to their discontents, for in doing so they run the danger of not being employed again (Saundry, Stuart and Antcliff, 2007: 185). Such widespread exploitation, particularly of junior production staff, has been called 'television's dirty little secret' (Silver, 2005); indeed many of these issues have become areas of public concern since a high-profile media campaign in 2005 called Television Workers Rights Advocacy Petition (TVWRAP), which collected stories about exploitation in the industry, making use of a web forum for freelancer television workers.[46] The petition was signed by 2,800

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[46] See www.tvfreelancers.org.uk for full details of the campaign. This was the first Internet campaign in British broadcasting history for better working conditions for television production staff, and it received significant coverage in *The Guardian* and *Broadcast*. Notably, the campaign

freelancers and was backed by senior figures in the industry such as the documentary-maker Paul Watson. They collected evidence of how many independent production companies were failing to pay junior staff the minimum wage, and to meet freelancers' entitlement to paid holiday. However, despite the coverage, my research suggests that many of these issues remain.

The long-hours culture in television means that it has become standard practice for employees to sign out of the European Working Time Directive, which limits working hours to 48 hours per week. In fact all of my freelance interviewees had signed an opt-out clause in their contract. This long hours culture is widely accepted:

> Paul: I think there is a tendency to keep wages relatively low and maintain long working hours and so on, that perhaps might be viewed slightly differently, but I think that at the entry level, I think that unfortunately everyone just accepts that that's the way it is. It's not always fair but...

Production schedules were often squeezed, making antisocial hours an inevitability. One interviewee described the situation he experienced at a major indie:

> James: This is an example of modern TV, the last job I've done, they're current affairs so they tend to have short turnarounds on things anyway. A) It was a shorter schedule; b) it was a big ruthless company...; c) and I think they take the piss because they push... It didn't need to be fast turnaround, there was no real time sensitivity on it, but they pushed the production schedule...

Another interviewee experienced the same issue:

> Simon: I think a lot of the exploitation comes about in a sense by saying 'we'll make this documentary in 4 weeks'. The company doing that is actually saving money, but it's to the detriment of the social life, or life, of the person making the film.

This inevitably impacts on life outside of work. For example, this way of working impacts on the ability to have a social life:

was conducted outside of union involvement (the main union in the industry for television workers is BECTU), and shows the potential for networks as a means of campaigning. See Saundry *et al* (2007) for a full discussion of this campaign, and the implications for trade unions in the audio-visual industries.

Andrew: I was going to join a karate club and ended up not doing it because I could never commit to a regular appointment every week. I've never done that since. I mean I think the only thing I've done outside of work is the gym and even that I don't go to because I don't have time.

Equally, Abigail said '[y]ou basically have to realise that if you do one of these very full on jobs then you're not going to have a personal life for three months'.

Insecurity was closely linked to self-exploitation, particularly at the more junior editorial levels of the industry, such as researcher and assistant producer. For example, Jenny, a junior assistant producer, described how the competition and insecurity created a culture where you felt that you just couldn't say no to unreasonable working demands:

I'd say it has more of an impact on your social life than anything. Because if you are in there, and you've been picked, you've either probably got a good track record or you are a hard worker and they've recognised that. And you kind of work. You want to do the best, you want them to choose you again, so you kind of swallow things that you really shouldn't... You probably kind of say oh I'll put up with that. Long hours. Sometimes that's the nature of the beast. Sometimes for example, pre-production and you've done like 8 hours and you go home. Other times you work 16 hour days and that's just the way it is.

There was a sense of frustration about this situation, yet also resignation. As Abigail noted, there was no option not to sign out of the working time directive, but that 'once you sign a contract that says that your hours are unregulated then what can you do?' The competitive nature of the industry is used as a means of coercing individuals into accepting such conditions:

Jonathan: It's so competitive, that if you get asked to work the weekend, you're like 'oh right is it going to be paid', they're like 'oh no it's not paid', and you cannot say no to working that weekend. Because if you do you'll be replaced just like that. They don't care. There's a hundred people queuing up to do your job and can do it as well as you can.

Bullying also appeared as an issue for a number of interviewees. Andrew told me about an experience he'd had on a well-known factual strand;

I mean I've worked on [x] with a boss who literally threw furniture at people, and he got away with it because it was a 6 month contract and Channel 4 were like 'Oh by the time they've all complained...'... Because it's all short-term contracts everyone just puts up with it.

The research uncovered a picture of a bullying culture within television, accepted as normal by pliant young workers:

> Eleanor: I think it's a bullying atmosphere. If I've just come out of university and I'm desperate to work in telly and I manage to claw my way through the doors because perhaps I know someone who knows someone, I'll do anything to stay there even if it's really unethical or I'm killing myself.

On one job Eleanor described how her boss 'used to scream at me, and I always remember he used to eat cake and scream at me at the same time so I could see the cake in the inside of his mouth'.

Working for nothing also emerged as a major issue in the industry, particularly with the use of long-term unpaid work experience, an illegal practice, but clearly one that many of my interviewees had either experienced themselves or witnessed. This is consistent with the findings of the TVWRAP campaign, which found this to be a widespread practice. Sarah told me, 'Yeah of course I've seen it happen'. Rachel, a researcher, said 'I just don't think you've got a hope in hell of getting a job in television without doing free work'. Paul, having acknowledged that its something that 'almost everybody has to do', speculated on the implications for diversity, noting that it's only possible 'if your parents can bankroll you', and that 'the industry loses out on a lot of talent because people just can't afford to work for free'.

In short, exploitation figured as a major theme in my interviewees, with casualisation and the decline of union power cited as the key reason for these trends. Paul Watson, an experienced film-maker, has argued that the situation is getting worse: 'I think exploitation is far more widespread than it's ever been...I've been in the business 40 years and have heard most of the plaintive cries over those years, possibly even uttered a few myself ... but it is now a clamour' (quoted in Silver, 2005). Furthermore, Darlow has also spoken out about the situation publicly:

> The TV industry is rife with stories of exploitative and bullying employment practices, Indies appearing to be among the worst offenders... Young, fully-trained people forced to work unpaid, and more experienced people, in order to work at all, increasingly having to work on rates below those agreed between the

industry's unions and employers, and for hours far in excess of the working time directive. (quoted in Silver, 2005)

Yet, despite this, only two of my interviewees belonged to the broadcasting union BECTU, which has directly campaigned on this issue. In one sense, this is as a direct result of the deunionisation of the industry, discussed in chapter 3. Belonging to a union is no longer seen as a 'normal' thing to do in this industry:

> Sarah: I don't know anything about BECTU. I've barely ever met anyone who said they were a member and I just don't know anything about it. I don't know what it would do for me, no...

Furthermore, fear of being marked as 'difficult' prevailed. This echoes Saundry's research, which specifically looked at union organisation in the industry. As one of their interviewees noted, '[T]here's this unspoken thing that if you were to get BECTU involved then they wouldn't employ you again so you just agree a fair rate with them. You don't say I'm calling BECTU to get my rate. (Wildlife filmmaker)' (Saundry *et al*, 2007: 185).

Indeed, the fact that all of my interviewees stipulated the need for anonymity suggests that this fear of speaking out is a key issue. This echoes the situation with the TVWRAP campaign, and the subsequent media stories, where all of those complaining about the exploitation did so only under the guarantee of anonymity. Considering this situation, Martin Spence, assistant secretary general of BECTU has argued:

> Working long hours and for free is widespread in the independent sector because crudely-speaking it's a buyers' market. Some employers do take full advantage of that, there's no question about it. The catch 22 is that the young people who are being worst treated hope that this is their way into proper employment in the industry and so the last thing they want to do is kick up a fuss or come and speak to the union as they'll be seen as trouble-makers. So there are real incentives for them to grin and bear it (quoted in Silver, 2005).

5.4 Responding to uncertainty

Unsurprisingly, this precarious and often exploitative situation was a cause of anxiety and stress for some of my participants. However, others accepted and even embraced the risk. Unsurprisingly, all developed strategies for dealing with it. In such a

context, it is evident that the response to uncertainty is varied. As I shall show, insecurity has a clear emotional impact, producing feelings of anxiety, stress and fear. Yet this does not represent the full picture. Generational differences in attitudes towards risk emerged from the data. Some embraced the flexibility of their employment situation, while others had come to find it unsustainable. The individualisation of risk means that responsibility is devolved to the self; this leads to particular strategies for dealing with the situation, including developing entrepreneurial attitudes towards the self and an embrace of mobility and fluidity as a means of moving up in the industry.

5.4.1 The emotional impact of uncertainty

'In a winner takes all market, risk-taking takes its toll'. (McRobbie, 2002a: 103)http://docs.google.com/View?docID=dgvjqhqp_21hnsx5h&revision=_latest - _ftn3

The culture of risk-taking, and endless uncertainty, appeared to take a significant emotional toll on some of my respondents. Anxiety and stress were marked responses to this way of working; significantly, insecurity was the key factor that seemed to cause this. Arguably, underlying this 'structure of feeling' lies an emotional shift, away from the terror of permanent unemployment, to the anxiety produced by the constant spectre of underemployment, and individualised risk. As Sennett has argued, 'Failure in the old pyramid was grounded in dread; failure in the new institution is shaped by anxiety' (Sennett, 2006: 53). Furthermore, he contends how in the new flexible capitalism, affluent and highly educated young professionals are 'on the edge of losing control over their lives. This fear is built into their work histories' (1998: 19).

Expressing just this fear, Emma described the emotional rigours of a freelance casualised working environment:

> At times I feel incredibly insecure... the positive way of trying to look at the career is always looking for new skills and new challenges and just keeping moving taking the work that came my way, but the actual feeling, what that is actually like to work really really hard and be off to Africa one week talking your way into a jail cell and then fly back and the project is over and you're

unemployed again and all your contacts say that there is no work about, can be very harsh really...

Jenny also described working in the industry as a frustrating, combative experience; 'It's just really hard. There is just so much insecurity. I think you've just got to be a fighter...you just feel like you are banging your head against a brick wall more times than not'. Describing the emotional impact of the insecurity, she said: 'It makes me feel really low self-esteem, scared, worried'. James said he found 'the feeling of not belonging' to be 'isolating'. Andrew described being 'scared' by the experience of being out of work.

Louise experienced the difficulties of being able to plan for the future because of the insecurity; 'Well the key feature for me as a freelancer is the utter lack of stability in your life and you know it's difficult to forward plan for things because you always feel that you are only as good as your next contract'. She clearly resented the lack of job security, particularly when compared to the experience of her parents:

I mean both my parents... one was in the Navy and the other one was a teacher so they both very much were from that kind of you know job for life kind of existence where you have a nice job and the government pays your wages and you work hard but you get a pension at the end of it, and you get your holidays and that works well. And so I found the whole idea of being utterly dependent on myself without any security beyond the next six weeks really freaky.

Eleanor even told me that she thought the stress of working in the industry had caused a 'nervous breakdown' in at least one of her friends:

The stress of it is a lot of people bottle up all their tension, resentment and fury and suddenly it all comes out. And I'm talking about quite mild-mannered people just going completely furious at someone because they just can't take it anymore.

5.4.2 Generational differences

Despite these negative feelings, clear generational attitudinal differences emerged towards insecurity and the 'liquid life' of media work (Deuze, 2007). For example, the younger respondents (below 30), who had entered the industry following the restructuring of the early 1990s, tended to be more accepting of the situation that they were in. While they may have complained about the hours, or expressed anxiety and

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stress at insecurity, the vagaries of a casualised industry were normalised for them. For example, for Rachel, a researcher aged 25, the idea of a 'job-for-life' was anathema:

> To tell you the truth, I personally wouldn't want a job for life. I think we've all grown up in such a consumer society, and we do want the best all the time, and be able to take the best option all the time. No, I don't think jobs for life really do exist, and I don't think we want them either.

For these younger workers, insecurity was also seen as something that could and indeed *should* be successfully negotiated if one was to have a successful career in the industry. These interviewees were keen to tell me about the positive elements of the flexible labour market of television, and of how they embraced insecurity and risk almost as a marker of success. For example, Sarah (producer/director), Simon (producer/director) and Jonathan (assistant producer) asserted that although they were aware of the insecurity of their industry, it was not something that bothered them, as they felt they were successfully navigating this terrain:

> Sarah: It [the insecurity] doesn't bother me at all. It never has bothered me, I don't know why. It may be that I've never been out of work for more than about 10 days without knowing what I'm doing next. I mean I've taken more time off than 10 days but that's about the longest I've been out of work not knowing what's coming next or needed to know what's coming next.

Jonathan is equally relaxed about it. Age is a key factor. He is 24, no mortgage and family commitments, and so for his lifestyle the freelance way of work suits him very well. However, he is able to see that such a way of life may not be sustainable as he gets older:

> I think there will come an age where maybe the freelance isn't so attractive anymore. They've [BBC employees facing redundancy] probably got kids, wives families mortgages. I've got none of those worries. But at the end of this job I'm out of work. I'm out of work [...] I'm still at the point where I'm trying to travel and work and it's perfect for that. I can do a job, three or four jobs, and you can just go off and travel come back and there's none of that mess, you can just get straight back into it. The last trip I did was half a year and I was able to sort myself out a job while I was still away so when I came back I just went straight back into work. If you can do it it's great. But there will come an age in a few years' time when that will have stopped, and all of a sudden I might want to be settling down. When all that comes into it, then you're going to be looking for more security.

Yet for some of the slightly older workers, the pressures of uncertainty clearly begin to have a much more marked impact. For the majority of those above 30 years old there was a strong recurrent theme of leaving television. This was framed within the context of insecurity. For example, Louise, a series producer aged 38, told me: 'One day I would like to have a family and at the moment I can't really see how I could reconcile the two well because I don't want to have that stressful life all the time...I can't see myself doing it when I'm 50'. Similarly, Jack (who has now left the industry to work in higher education), speculated on leaving the industry: 'I wouldn't hesitate to switch to something else if it gave me a stable income and allowed me to have more of a home life'. James also talked to me about the exhausting nature of his creative labour, and his desire to leave the industry as a result:

> Despite having had a fair amount of success and all the rest of it, I've just... I don't know I can't imagine doing this at 50 you know? The energy levels required and the insecurity and all the rest of it. I think you want to be able to take your foot off the gas at some stage you know? Not being lazy, but not always be watching your back and working in... I mean obviously the longest contract I've ever had is 5 months, 6 months, to make a big BBC 1 film...

While clearly this research would need to be replicated across a far wider sample in order to stand up statistically, my findings do call into question the sustainability of such precarious creative labour. This is illustrated in these workers' feelings towards the work. Although they find the work rewarding, there is a sense in which it is increasingly an unsustainable model of employment for middle age and beyond.

5.4.3 Individualisation of risk

My research findings show that this insecurity and risk is not dealt with collectively, but is individualised, so the structural issue of casualisation is interpreted at the individual level. Individualisation means that these knowledge workers must 'seek personal solutions to systemic contradictions' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: xxii); they must live with the ever-present possibility of 'the breakdown biography' (ibid: 3). With the individualisation of work, where '[t]he normal work situation – normal both for individual lives and for company policy – has begun to break down, and a political economy of insecurity and differentiation has developed in place of an economy of state-guaranteed social security' (Beck, 2000: 53). This new situation provides a freedom to

shape one's life, but that 'new trapdoors can lead to exclusion, and the risks are shifted from the state and the economy on to the shoulders of individuals. Both aspects are based on the new precariousness of work; the opportunities come with risks attached' (2000: 53-4). Individualisation provides new freedoms, but also much greater risk, uncertainty and anxiety, requiring constant self-monitoring and improvement in order for the individual to negotiate this new economic and cultural terrain.

Work therefore for my participants becomes a critical site for the process of creating one's desired identity. For some, as we have seen, it is also a source of stress and insecurity, for as Bauman suggests, the processes of disembedding that are set in motion by individualisation are 'forcing men and women to be constantly on the move and promising no rest and no satisfaction on "arrival", no comfort on reaching the destination where one can disarm, relax and stop worrying' (2002: xvi). However, for others, there is a clear sense in which insecurity also equals freedom, a discourse that appears with regularity in their talk about work. Freedom is very much part of the individualisation process, where the wish to 'live a life of one's own' has taken on a historical and cultural significance under conditions of late modernity. If paid work is 'chopped up' (Beck, 2000: 53), then what remains is the freedom for individualistic self-determination, as the traditional certainties of work dissolve.

For example, Emma is also acutely aware of the way that the risk inherent in her employment situation means that responsibility is devolved from the company level to the personal level:

> I think my viewpoint now is that yes, I know I have to accept total financial responsibility for myself, no-one is going to do it for me, no-one is going to put money into a pension scheme for me... I've got used to the fact that no-one's going to look out for me financially and I've got used to it.

James told me about the isolation that the insecurity and constant job-searching brings to his life, describing his existence as 'fairly nomadic' and 'pretty isolating in a way'. He also expressed an awareness of another more bureaucratic mode of working life, one with attractions, despite the pleasure of being an independent freelancer:

...you've never got that sense that you would in an organisation of somebody looking out for you, you know... or thinking 'what would be best for James next'.

Paul, as a staff employee within an independent production company, has more security than the majority of my interviewees, but he is also acutely aware of a constant sense of individualised insecurity, telling me that 'there isn't that sense of unity in a union sense... we're all freelancers and we're all on our own as far as, you know, you have to look after yourself as far as your next job... you don't have that kind of healthcare pension scheme, long term employment prospects that you might have had years ago'.

This is very much a world where loyalty and a sense of solidarity has all but disappeared. In its place comes the imperative to make it on one's own, as all other allegiances are fleeting, transitory and weak. Simon describes the individualistic culture of the independent production company, where any sense of loyalty has vanished:

> There's no safety net... And because of that there is very little loyalty. Because of the lack of loyalty it creates an inherent kind of instability anyway... Nobody pulls together to get something done. If they want to fire somebody it's easy to fire somebody. A company goes under the wall, there's very very little chance that people are going to come in and help that company because it's not an industry that has been built on a sub, and in a sense it means that it's built out of sand to a certain degree because it's so movable that the moment the water comes it just washes it away and there's almost nothing there.

This clearly connects to Sennett's assertion that the low social capital generated within companies that adhere to the values of highly flexible capitalism engenders a lack of loyalty to the company, and low levels of personal trust between colleagues (Sennett, 2006). This is in opposition to the high levels of loyalty that sociologists observed within the bureaucratic forms of labour in the twentieth century:

> Cutting-edge institutions in civil society lie at the opposite extreme. They elicit extremely low levels of loyalty. The reason is not far to seek. If an employer tells you that you are on your own, that the institution will not help you out when you are in need, why should you feel much loyalty to it? (ibid.: 64)

This lack of loyalty only serves to exacerbate the anxiety and stress within such firms, because employees feel a lack of purpose to their work, where '[t]he stretched-out,

intense workday can seem without purpose; pressure becomes depressing rather than stimulating' (ibid.: 65-6).

5.4.4 Entrepreneurs of the self

Under these conditions of individualised risk, my respondents are compelled to become highly enterprising as a strategy for survival in a precarious working environment; indeed they become 'entrepreneurs of the self' (du Gay, 1996). As Beck has noted:

> For a majority of people, even in the apparently prosperous middle layers, their basic existence and lifeworld will be marked by endemic insecurity. More and more individuals are encouraged to perform as a 'Me & Co.' selling themselves on the marketplace. (2000: 3)

Moreover, as Reich has argued, 'Increasingly in the new economy, the only way up is to promote yourself' (2001: 128).

Again, we see the ambivalent response to insecurity for these production workers, where stress and anxiety are translated into feverish enterprise. For example, Jenny describes the need to push oneself and be endlessly self-promoting:

> You've just got to rise to every occasion, you've got to seize those opportunities, you've got to take those opportunities, you've got to find opportunities. You've got to really push yourself and always... Like ... Just ... You know that thing when you are younger and you pat your head and rub your tummy, it's like that, it really is like that and you've got to keep all the balls in the air you've got to ... But ... It's exciting when you get it right it's brilliant. When you are where you want to be, it's good, it's good.

Sarah also pointed to the importance of being entrepreneurial in television:

> I do know that you have to be able to sell yourself with flair quite a lot, so in the sense of an entrepreneur being able to sell anything, this is my product, it's me really, in order to get me in the door somewhere. So yeah... But I think that the skills that you need to make a good programme many of those are also those that you need to get the job in the first place.

For Simon, his response to insecurity was entrepreneurialism, with an explicit focus on how he could develop his career successfully to the point where insecurity was no longer an issue:

> [Insecurity] makes me feel two things. One, that I need to get on with creating security and by creating security you have to find a way of earning a lot of money in this industry. And two, it makes me think kind of think beyond, think further. What else can you do? Where are you in terms of your own abilities? It makes you think that as well as being personable, being versatile and being able to bullshit and a lot of that stuff.

5.4.5 Mobility as strategy for success

While stress and anxiety were major features of television work for many of my respondents, a number of them actively embraced the risk of a flexible, mobile labour environment, asserting the need to move around different companies within the industry. Interestingly, in this context, moving around emerges as a key strategy for success. Staying still was perceived by a number of my respondents as a mistake, while being mobile a means of moving up within the field. Paul describes this situation:

> I'd like to stay at [x] for a little while longer, because they've been very good at giving me experience, and giving me a lot more hands on experience than I would have got at a lot of bigger companies. But you know ultimately you know I think if you don't move around a little bit, people are very suspicious in the work place, you need to be able to show that you can adapt to different situations…The bigger the company, the easier it is for them to keep you at a certain level and pay you at a certain level, because they can offer more security, they can offer more training, but you often don't get as much experience. And also by moving around, in reference to your earlier question, you know one of the ways in the industry that you manage to negotiate more money is to move. Every time you move you look to secure a little bit more on your salary or on your weekly or monthly wage... You know as part of the process of moving.

Moreover, Sarah, when reviewing her own work narrative in television, clearly perceives a period of relative stability and security that she experienced when working for a large independent company as a time of stasis, and damaging to her career. She described to me the need to leave this secure situation in order to get herself better known in the industry:

Sarah: ...so in a way even though I was technically freelancer the whole time I had this very sort of comfortable I mean I knew that my contract would just keep rolling on and it wasn't very good for me actually. I mean it was good for the first... I think if I'd stayed for three years that would have been ideal because it is actually a freelance industry, so if you opt out of that it can actually do your career harm.

DL: People expect you to be moving around?

Sarah: No-one outside of [x] knew who I was at all, and you do need to develop a reputation.

This echoes Bauman's notion of 'liquid modernity', where the primary experience of individuals caught up in late modernity's ceaseless change is one of movement, transition, and flux. Here the existential modality of individuals in the postmodern period is one of 'insufficient determination, inconclusiveness, mobility and rootlessness' (Bauman, 1996: 51). Individuals working in the television industry must become more mobile in order to succeed, they must enact fluidity. They move within the network of production in much the same way as Urry has described the movement of 'global fluids', as a means of categorising the increased but unpredictable flow of people, information, money, objects and risks:

> Fluids move in particular directions at certain speeds but with no necessary end-state or purpose...They move according to certain temporalities, over each minute, day, week, year and so on...Different fluids spatially intersect in the 'empty meeting grounds' of the non-places of modernity, such as motels, airports, service stations, the internet, international hotels, cable television, expense account restaurants and so on (2000: 194)

Yet it is vital to see that there are power relations at work within this dynamic of fluid mobility. Clearly, some are more able to be mobile than others. Sarah and Paul's sentiments about rejecting security for the flux of mobility relate to Sennett's understanding of the culture of the new capitalism, where the new values of flexibility and enterprise mean that 'dependency' is perceived as a weakness; the 'idealized person eschews dependency; he or she does not cling to others' (2006: 46). In turn this creates anxiety, as 'the fear of dependence names rather a worry about loss of self-control and, more psychologically, a feeling of shame in deferring to others' (ibid: 47). In the new capitalism, the key to success is the ability to let go of one's past, to constantly go with the flow of ceaseless change, and to accept impermanence. As Sarah told me:

I think I actually quite thrive on the flexibility of it, I don't know what I'd feel like doing a job which was just 4 weeks holiday a year. I get a kick out of moving from company to company. I never feel nervous starting at a new company, never have done.

The ability to be mobile, both physically and psychologically, is a key factor in determining success, not only within television production, but more broadly within contemporary capitalism. As Boltanski and Chiapello have shown, those who are immobile are seen within contemporary capitalist discourse as 'rigid', 'local', the 'little people' who suffer from 'attachment' to a single project or place (2005: 19); whereas those who are mobile are celebrated within this discourse as flexible, enthusiastic, constantly prepared for change, and able to take risks (ibid: 12). As they argue, those who are immobile and fail to move around are fundamentally disadvantaged within today's flexible capitalism. Indeed, 'some people's immobility is necessary for other people's mobility' (ibid: 362)

The paradox of 'liquid work' is that everything points towards instability, and 'a rapid destabilization of social bonds', yet successful workers caught up in this global shift 'express a sense of mastery over their lives, interpreting their professional identity in this context in terms of individual-level control and empowering agency' (Deuze, 2007: 24). But what kind of 'mastery' is this, where my respondents have no choice except to find individualised gratification at how successfully they have commodified themselves? This is not an expression of pleasure in mastering one's creative craft, for example. What is being expressed here is a sense of pleasure over how 'successfully' my respondents have mastered fluidity and insecurity, rather than a sense of deep gratification in the creative role itself.

5.5 Affective labour

Television production emerges as a emotionally charged labour market. Yet as the previous analysis shows, the response of workers is paradoxical, where they respond to uncertainty and destabilisation with both fear and a sense of mastery; both positive and negative emotions are evident in their views on their working lives. Anxiety, fear and stress marked the emotional response to insecurity. Lack of loyalty, and low social capital within organisations, are endemic, as individualisation shifts the focus of security from

the company, and the state, to the self. Yet they also experienced great pleasure and satisfaction. Thus the sphere of television production becomes marked out as a zone of affective labour, marked by extreme highs and lows, often closely associated with each other. Of course, television workers have always cared about their creative efforts (Deuze, 2007: 65). Yet, arguably, the particular tone of emotional investment that we see in creative fields of labour today, where workers willingly embrace their own exploitation and casualisation, is something new. This shift is significant, suggesting a new mode of work that is associated with late capitalism. Affective labour is understood as a condition of labour that appears more prominently in the new capitalism, as work demands more of the workers 'soul' (Hoschschild, 1983; Rose, 1989, 1999; du Gay, 1996).

5.5.1 Subjectivisation and disciplinary control

It is possible to understand this ambivalence towards insecurity and exploitation if we recognise the subjectivising power of the meritocratic discourse that has evolved around creative work. Subjectivisation, following Foucault, means 'those forms of understanding which the subject creates about himself' (1999: 161). Here the very concept of self is inextricably connected to historical and material circumstances, so that 'self' is seen to be caught up in processes of social reproduction. The 'creative' self is one that is encouraged through the contemporary discourse of 'creativity' as explored in chapter 2. For Foucault, the very way that we understand our 'self' relates to these broader political-economic values within society. Therefore, in the creative economy, a particular mode of selfhood emerges, which encourages and embraces flexibility, freedom and creative autonomy.

The 'creativity' discourse functions to individualise the experience of work, and to encourage certain types of subjective responses to such conditions, which are in line with the values of particular discursive regimes. My respondents seem particularly attuned to the need to be entrepreneurial, to network, and to make it on one's own, as I shall explore in the following chapter. The language of risk is highly evident in their talk about work, but it is largely understood in personal, individual terms. In this process we can see how the casualised and freelance dynamics of television production are in turn

understood and translated at the level of self-identity by television workers, so that the values of entrepreneurialism, freedom, creativity and flexibility (which are of course closely aligned to the economic values of neoliberal late capitalism, with its emphasis on flexible markets and outsourcing) are embodied at the level of subjectivity.

Creativity, glamour, freedom from the perceived banality of the office environment: these are all recurring themes which show that for my respondents, their jobs provide high levels of meaning and self-actualisation. The regularity with which these themes come up in my own research, and in other research that has explored similar areas of the economy, suggests that there is now a powerful discourse in play around the experience of work in this creative area of the economy, to the extent that being creative has almost become a moral edict. Indeed as Osborne argues, 'in psychological vocabularies, in economic life, in education and beyond, the values of creativity have taken on the force of a moral agenda' (2003: 507). This raises the question: what purpose do these powerful discourses about work have in contemporary society, and how are they manifest for television production workers? In addressing this, I have turned to the post-Foucauldian theoretical framework employed by writers such as du Gay (1996), Ursell (2000) and Donzelot (1991). These authors, although examining very different fields, have a shared attentiveness to discourse and to the micro-politics of power within the workplace as they are played out through working life.

Du Gay's (1996) research on the discursive power of culture within the labour processes in the service economy is useful here. Du Gay has concentrated on the role of identity within contemporary labour markets, alerting us to the ways that work-based identities are formed through governmentality and discourse, so that workers come to identity with beliefs that closely echo the needs and normative demands imposed on them by capitalism and by the companies that they work for. Concentrating on the work-based discourse of 'excellence' that became so prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of Thatcherite neo-liberal strategies in the workplace, du Gay demonstrates how language plays a vital role in the creation of new subjectivities at work, which function on behalf of contemporary organisations to make the individuals working there more competitive, autonomous and adaptive. Examining the role that discourse plays in creating identity at work, du Gay argues, 'The fact that the self is constituted in discourse means that certain aspects of a person's sense of who he or she is are bound to mirror

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and incorporate the general morals or values of the wider group contained within discourse' (1996: 30). In this way, concepts that have been naturalised within managerial discourse for hegemonic reasons are demystified:

> Notions such as 'job satisfaction' and 'motivation' are not phenomena that exist in some timeless universal realm waiting to be discovered by, and deployed within, managerial discourse. Both the basic concepts and the practices that bestow upon them a material reality are products of changes in the imagination and organization of work. (ibid.: 51)

This research exposes the centrality of culture as it is employed as discourse within the contemporary workplace. Du Gay's insights are essential for understanding the discursive power of 'creativity' for those employed within the cultural industries, as a way of creating 'better' contemporary workers. Indeed he suggests that there is a clear reason for this turn to culture in the workplace - profit:

> 'Culture' is accorded a privileged position... because it is seen to structure the way people think, feel and act in organizations. The aim is to produce the sort of meanings that will enable people to make the right and necessary contribution to the success of the organization for which they work. (1996: 41)

As such, particular cultural values about working life, and about contemporary capitalism, emanate and are embodied within particular discursive formations within the workplace, which are crystallised in particular forms of selfhood. This is indicative of a wider self-reflexive individualising shift within contemporary capitalist society, as responsibility for the self is politically devolved from society to the individual. Therefore this is a process by which self-management, and self-regulation, are seen as key, and indeed part of the way in which capital devolves its responsibility for a work-force to the individual worker.[47] As Ursell writes, it is in this process that we can see 'how late capitalism associates with a very particular technology of the self' (2000: 806).

5.5.2 Pleasure at work

A key factor therefore in understanding the response to the insecurity is the professed pleasure with which cultural workers embrace this kind of work, despite the insecurity, the long hours, and the various inequities which clearly exist within it.

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[47] For more on this process, see McRobbie (2002a: 109).

Pleasure at work becomes a key part of the disciplinary power of late capitalism, so that these structural pains are actually offset by the passion that they have for the work. As Ursell suggests, 'in television production you can pursue your sensual pleasures'; moreover, for creative workers 'pleasure derives from the scope they are finding for aesthetic self-expression' (2000: 819). This self-actualising sense of pleasure in such work accords with McRobbie's observations on cultural labour, where she notes, 'the pleasure with which individuals enter into this kind of work, notwithstanding low pay (sometimes no pay), extraordinarily long working hours…and volatile and unpredictable patterns of work' (2002a: 109).

Indeed many of my interviewees were keen to stress the pleasure that they got from working in television, despite the insecurity:

> David: I feel very lucky, and I feel that I'm one of a small group of my peers and friends who has a job that really interests him and he really likes. I mean there aren't sometimes Monday mornings when you wouldn't rather stay in bed, but I find it creative and I find the people that I work with appreciative. So I find my job very rewarding in that sense.

Crucially for David, a big attraction of creative work is about escaping the routine of the '9-5', and in finding himself doing a job that is seen as interesting. This also emerged in Richard's feelings about his job; he told me:

> Broadly I feel quite lucky that I do it. I enjoy my job. I look around at a lot of my friends and think maybe I enjoy it more than they do their jobs. I mean I like coming into work in the morning mostly. So I like that, I like the variety.

Jenny also colourfully described her love of television work, as set against more 'boring' work.

> Yeah this job is finally where I want to be, where I can grow. And [the series producer] says, 'Right you want to be a producer how are we going to get you there?' It's like yeah baby, yeah baby. That's what I want to hear…I want to be the best I want to do the best I can. I really… I've tried all those… I've worked at [x], and secretary things like that, it's not who I want to be, it's not where I want to be.

Sarah expressed similar feelings about her job as a producer/director, one in which the sense of doing something 'different' from the norm was a key attraction of her role:

I think the upsides are that you do get access to the most amazing people and places and stories. The other day I was coming back from the first day of my shoot on this project and I was just suddenly struck...I looked around the tube compartment, it sounds really ridiculous, but I thought I bet no-one else in this carriage has had as interesting day as I have, because I'd interviewed Douglas Hird, Pete Waterman and Jazzie B and you know it was such a weird combination... You know...to sit and interview for 3 and a half hours Bob Geldof and then the next day go and do an interview with Richard Curtis, and then go to LA to interview Bono, and all these people who are culturally significant people, and you know I've spent significant chunks of time interviewing them and getting them to reveal all, and it's very rewarding that sort of thing. So what it gives you access to is amazing.

Equally, James told me that for 'all the frustrations of working in it I've never had another job, I mean there must be a lot of jobs, for all the problems of TV it sure beats working in most office environments you know?'

Emotional involvement with the subject matter, and with the process of work, also came across as vitally important. As Dave T told me, 'I think one of the reasons that we make films is that we are passionate and we are consumed by what we make'. Similarly, Jenny told me that 'Where I am working now, I love it so much, and I feel really happy, and really really blessed, and it has taken me a really long while to get here'. This connects to Hochschild's (1983, 2003) analysis of contemporary work, in which she argues that contemporary capitalism is demanding ever greater emotional involvement of the worker, with the shift towards service work and a more intense involvement of the whole *self* in work.

Rachel's response to her feelings about her job was telling, in the strong ambivalence coming through, between 'enjoying' it, and yet constantly feeling the pressure of the insecurity:

I really really enjoy it. I don't see myself being in it forever, I don't think I could face the short contracts, the worry about the next job, forever. I just think I don't want that in probably 5 years time. But I do, I like the change, I like meeting new people. I can just see that the novelty of meeting new people will wear off, when you've done it for the 30th time, and obviously this constant need to prove yourself, because it is extremely competitive. I mean I've not worked with somebody who's bad at their job yet. I think everybody is brilliant, and how on earth people choose between people I don't know. And I think that endless competition and change I think will lose its appeal for me.

Here, the perceived glamour of media work is key to understanding its appeal, but also in understanding why television workers express such ambiguity about working in the industry; here work becomes more like consumption, more about lifestyle self-actualisation, than a traditional career. Jack discussed his reasons for enjoying television work in these terms:

> The upsides are ... It's very varied, it's very creative, um you know generally you find yourself sharing... You are very privileged actually to be able to share the lives and events that people let you into. Um, you know always meeting new people and you know there is, I don't care what people say, there is a certain amount of glamour working in television, which is easy to forget when it's what you do all the time, but a lot of the time it is fun and you do get a buzz off it.

Consistently this sense of doing something that is more interesting than other jobs is intransigent throughout the data I gathered. The glamorous, autonomous world of media work is seen as a space where one can express oneself. As Emma told me, 'I am allowed to be me in my work, I can bring my personality to work and it's accepted'. Equally, Jenny's comments capture the importance of emotional involvement in creative work, despite the challenges:

> DL: How important for your sense of identity is what you do?
>
> F: Really important. I'm not a media luvvie at all, but I love it when people say 'Oh what do you do', and I say 'Oh I work in TV, I love it'. And they are like 'Oh wow!', and you're like 'The hours are shit, the money's rubbish, get out!' Yeah iI love it, it's great! I love it.

5.6 Conclusion

A picture emerges from this analysis of an industry that is precarious, often exploitative, and fuelled by injections of emotional labour, where intense and reflexive associations are made between creative media work and freedom, autonomy, glamour and self-actualisation. The theoretical framework of individualisation enables us to understand the fluidity, or 'liquid' nature of this working environment (Deuze, 2007). Yet, a Foucauldian analysis of identity allows us to see how particular forms of selfhood are encouraged within this individualised context, which contain both an embrace and a rejection of uncertainty.

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By examining the way that they deal with the insecurity, but use 'creativity' and 'freedom' as key self-actualising values to negotiate or avoid the tensions of such a stressful situation, it is evident that sociologically something unusual is going on here. Understanding the subjectivising power of such contemporary discourses is one way of making sense of how my interviewees describe their working lives. The 'creativity script' (Peck, 2005: 749), which cherishes the values of entrepreneurialism, freedom and flexibility, has become a pervasive discourse within working life, particularly in the cultural industries. This discourse functions to legitimate the workings of neo-liberal markets at the level of self-identity. As Peck has argued, 'Discourses of urban creativity seek to normalize flexible labour-market conditions, lionizing a class of workers that can not only cope with, but positively revel in, this environment of persistent insecurity and intense, atomized competition' (2005: 764-5). It is at this level of individualisation that the power of the contemporary discourse of meritocracy can be most evidently seen, and one can see how such a discourse of 'talent' and 'creativity' becomes a technology of the self, engendering an individualised response to structural insecurity. The climate of casualisation and freelancing can be seen to operate within a broader cultural milieu where these discourses function in a disciplinary sense, so that workers are encouraged to embrace this working climate, despite its insecurity and risk, and attendant pains.

Using the theoretical framework of subjectivisation and of emotional labour is not to suggest that these workers are all ideological dupes, suffering from some form of 'false consciousness'. Rather it is to explore how individualisation connects with a particular technology of the self, which crystallises in media work, allowing particular forms of selfhood to evolve. The emergent subjectivity in television labour is of sociological interest in its own right. But when we consider the cultural power of television, then the analysis takes on a new urgency; here subjectivity connects to political economy in the structuring of the industry, and in the forms and modes of creativity that are allowed within it.

In the next chapter, I shall explore how my respondents negotiate this precarious and insecure world that I have described above. As we shall see, they do so through networking, and through cultural capital. This has serious implications for diversity, inclusion and ultimately for creativity within the industry.

Chapter 6. Networks, cultural capital and creative labour in the television industry

> In a connexionist world, a natural preoccupation of human beings is the desire to *connect* with others, *to make contact*, to make *connections*, so as not to remain *isolated*. (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: 111-12)

Work in the cultural industries is widely claimed to differ from earlier Fordist arrangements. Cultural firms are widely understood as information rich, relatively un-hierarchical, flexible, with a tendency to cluster, and dependent on networks as sources of industry gossip, employment and talent (Lash and Urry, 1994; Pratt, 1998; Scott, 2005). More specifically, research into working practices in television, and more broadly the audio-visual industries, has emphasised the importance of informal networks as a means of recruitment (Antcliff *et al*, 2005a, 2005c; Blair and Rainnie, 2000; Ursell, 1997; Willis and Dex, 2003). In this way, networks function to overcome information asymmetries within the project-based political economy of media production, where the absence of familiarity built up over time leads to a reliance on personal recommendations through networks.

There is growing evidence that under the combined pressures of deregulation, flexible accumulation and technological transformation, the cultural industries are at the forefront of a labour market transformation, characterised by casualisation, risk, outsourcing and flexibility. Labour market trends in the British television industry have accelerated the shift towards networking practices, as the sector has become highly casualised. Here, networking emerges as a key mode of finding work, and sustaining one's career (Paterson, 2001a). Employment has moved decisively away from the more regulated framework of public sector employment (predominantly the BBC); what public sector employment remains has become increasingly casualised, whilst simultaneously there has been a rapid growth in the size of the freelance independent sector workforce (Mediatique, 2005). Therefore questions about labour transformations within this industry have become more urgent, with the rise of networking as a key phenomenon to be studied.

The culture of networking takes place broadly under conditions of the 'network society' (Castells, 1996), as described in the literature review. However, Castell does not set out to explore the impact of this shift towards networks on individuals managing their careers. A key feature of the transformation that Castells describes is a shift towards network structures of employment and recruitment. But how is this interpreted and negotiated on the ground? This chapter will explore the hypothesis that a new mode of 'network sociality' (Wittel, 2001) is at work in the culture industries, drawing on empirical data, existing research and analysis. It then examines this claim more specifically in the television industry, by drawing on an analysis of the research data. It investigates the role that social networks play in the working lives of the research participants, and the implications of a network culture upon this sphere of employment, exploring how the reliance on networks of contacts 'frees up' the labour market, allowing a greater mobility and flexibility for the lucky few, but also creates new forms of exclusion, hierarchy and discrimination.

A significant body of work has been done that has examined the relationship between *social capital* and the extent of one's personal and professional networks (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1996). Within networked, flexible firms, high levels of social capital have been seen as key sources of competitive advantage (Marti, 2004). Yet, little research has been done on the implications of the turn towards networking in terms of opportunity, equality and exclusion, particularly in the cultural industries. In a broader economic context, however, research has shown that networking operates as a means of closure, reducing competition within informal and flexible labour markets (Fevre, 1989). More recently, important questions have been raised about the lack of equality in gaining access to audiovisual labour markets, partly as a result of networking practices (Holgate and McKay, 2007). Holgate and McKay's (2007) work has pointed to exclusion from the industry on the basis of race; meanwhile Willis and Dex (2003) have explored the challenges facing mothers returning to television production work in the new casualised environment. These findings raise important political and cultural questions. While social capital theory has largely been discussed in an enthusiastic manner by policy commentators (e.g. Khan and Muir, 2006; Leadbeater and Miller, 2004), this chapter will critically evaluate how social capital, when utilised through networking practices as a dominant mode of finding work and seeking

advancement within the television industry, becomes a mechanism of power, excluding actors on the basis of class, race and social status.

A strong pattern emerges from the data which shows that 'getting on' in the television industry as a freelancer is inextricably linked to creating and maintaining a large network of contacts, a process which involves a significant amount of work, in terms of presenting the self as flexible, enthusiastic and mobile. While networked labour markets undoubtedly facilitate greater economic and managerial flexibility in the cultural industries (a process that is of course echoed across the economy as a whole, with the rise of 'flexible accumulation'), there is, however, a high social cost to pay, as this process negates a workplace politics based on equal opportunity, diversity and fairness. Moreover, it is evident that because network sociality (as a means of access, recruitment and furthering one's career) is by its very nature *opaque*, with access depending on contacts and informal processes, there is a necessity for cultural workers to possess high levels of cultural capital in order to enter and succeed in this industry (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986).

In this context, the concept of *risk* (Beck, 1992, 2000) is a useful theoretical tool, as networking becomes a vital means of negotiating the precarious nature of cultural employment. As Banks *et al* argue, 'It is suggested that senses of risk are constitutive and often pivotal to the whole economic and social basis of cultural entrepreneurship – risk being central to choices made not only in business but in the lifeworld more generally' (2000: 453). Therefore networking becomes a mandatory practice for subjects who are constantly struggling to navigate the 'tightrope' of contemporary labour markets (Beck, 2000). As Pratt argues, 'The challenge of getting the next job, and for employers to hire, relies upon networks' (2005: 4). However, as with their feelings towards insecurity, the interviewees present ambivalent feelings towards network sociality. Whilst all concede the necessity of networking, some positively embrace it, whereas others begrudgingly accept it as a normative practice. For some it is all part of the 'fun' of creative work, where business and leisure elide; others see it much more instrumentally as a source of potential economic or professional reward. Again, there is a generational gap here, with older workers far more likely to view networking as an instrumental practice, than to associate affectively with it. Moreover, those that reject it then feel that they are somehow 'missing out'. Therefore, this research raises important questions about how

network culture is both structural, determining the field of relations within the industry, and translated at the subjective, individual level where its meaning alters.

In contemporary capitalism, networking is a mechanism of power. Behind the discourse associated with networking, such as 'flexibility', 'freedom', and 'access', lies a process which often excludes social actors on the basis of social capital, which in turn is largely determined by social status. Yet networking is not just a structural reality, it is also a dominant discourse within the new capitalism, particularly within the cultural industries, which functions to legitimate and regulate particular practices and modes of thinking about labour market processes. Therefore, a particular set of discursive values about networking culture have become internalised by my respondents; networking is a potent technology of the self. Here we can see how contemporary capitalism, with its focus on flexibility, adaptiveness and networks, needs 'justificatory regimes' to become attractive to individual workers (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005).

6.1 Network modalities at work

According to Castells (1996), we are now living in the 'network society'. While his work offers little or no insights into how the transformations he describes might be *experienced* by individuals in the contemporary workplace, his understanding of the macro shifts within society provide a crucial context for the changes that I argue have occurred in the television industry. The key features of Castells' theory are that the information technology revolution coupled with a radical restructuring of capitalism on a global basis has brought about a network society which is characterised by a number of key features. They are the globalisation of strategic economic activities, the rise of the networked organisation, by flexible, unstable and individualised labour, by a new virtual and interconnected media culture, and by a material transformation of space and time, through the constitution of what Castells' calls 'the space of flows' and 'timeless time' which are expressions of the activities of controlling elites (1996: 1). Network society theory argues that the topology of the network is the most useful way of understanding these transformations, both at the macro global level, and also at the micro level of individual identity. Most clearly these transformations can be registered in the following areas: communication and information technological advance; the restructuring and

globalisation of capitalism; political change; and the emergence of personal identity as a key force in a globalised society, with the rise of new forms of identity politics.

This research is most interested in the changes to labour that Castells argues has occurred. Castells asserts that labour has become decentralised, more flexible and networked (internally and on a firm-to-firm basis); leading to an empowerment of capital over labour, greater global competition, and increased individualisation of working relationships (1996: 1-2). The key factor that has facilitated such changes is the rise of a new 'networked' form of capitalism, which has seen the extensive use of advances in information communication technology (ICT) in order to connect up firms and markets globally. This has led to the creation of global financial markets, which operate in real-time, connected by ICT.

The worldwide integration of capital has made labour fundamentally unpredictable, as local production becomes contingent on the global network fluctuations. If the new creed of contemporary capitalism is 'workforce flexibility' (experienced by the majority as casualisation, downsizing, and permanent flux) then for many it is synonymous with job insecurity (real or perceived). In this context, Castells characterises workers as 'nodes' in the network, who are either switched on or switched off, depending on how their labour serves the interest of the network. The inclusion/exclusion logic of the network "switches off . . . people and territories dubbed as irrelevant from the perspective of dominant interests" (Nyiri, 2004: 7). This enforces domination: '[d]omination depends . . . on the simultaneous capacity of . . . elites to articulate themselves and disarticulate the masses' (Waterman, 2004: 49).

Castells' theory is key to the analysis of the participants' working lives, for as he argues, 'one of the key features of informational society is the networking logic of its basic structure' (Castells, 1996: 21). Thus network effects can be felt at the level of global restructuration of capital, and at the individual level of daily labour. Networking is crucial to my respondents, who enter insecure labour markets through networks; use networks as a vital means of communication (for finding work, promoting themselves via online employment websites); and for whom social 'after-hours' networking is central to success. Therefore, through networking, demarcations between work and leisure time erode. With the ongoing demise of lifelong full-time employment, coupled with a

process of continuous job seeking, and the management of multiple careers as a reality for increasing numbers of people, it is clear that we need a more inclusive understanding of work as taking place in a variety of socio-economic circumstances, often connected with non-work relationships (Parry *et al*, 2005: 541). In this context, networking becomes *the* means of navigating risk, for as Deuze writes:

> Working increasingly includes (re-) schooling and training, unlearning 'old' skills while adapting to changing technologies and management demands, moving from project to project, and navigating one's career through an at times bewildering sea of loose affiliations, temporary arrangements, and informal networks (Deuze, 2007: 542).

6.1.1 Networking in the cultural industries

As vital as Castells' meta-theory of the network society is, it tells us little about the specific network culture of the cultural industries. Castells provides us with a guide to this new terrain, but more specific evidence is needed to begin to understand the network environment within the television industry. Research into the culture industries (as well as other knowledge intensive environments) has shown that networking is a central mode of interaction in these sectors. It functions as a means of sharing tacit knowledge, fostering relationships within flexible working environments, which tend to be geographically clustered, and building competitive advantage (cf. Comunian, 2006; Grabher, 2004). Cultural industries, particularly those at the high end of the value chain in the audio-visual sector, have a strong tendency to be geographically clustered, based in urban environments, and are characterised by being made up of dense networks of formal and informal economic and social relationships (Pratt, 2004a; Scott, 2005). Indeed, often cultural industries (particularly new media sectors) are based in the same building or block of a town or city (Indergaard, 2004; Pratt, 2002).

Much of the economic literature related to cultural industries and regional economic development stresses the importance of networks and co-location in order to build a vibrant economy (Coe, 2000, 2001; Gibson, 2003; Kong, 2005; Lange, 2005; Scott, 2004; Turok, 2003). Networks therefore play an important economic function, providing cultural producers with vital routes to market. For example, in his investigation of the new media sector in San Francisco with its dense network of social

and economic interactions, Pratt (2002) has shown the importance of material networks of collaboration and competition. Similarly, Scott (2005) has demonstrated the centrality of networks to the development of Hollywood as a global film production hub. Both demonstrate the importance of the network as a means of understanding the human geography of culture industries.

Networks are not only economically important but they also serve a vital social function in cultural industries. The network structure in the cultural industries supports the exchange of ideas and social interaction that is essential to the development of their work. In this sense, networks and networking can be seen as vital to innovation, for as Lange says, cultural entrepreneurs 'act in order to build up networks, to arrange meetings, and to establish urban laboratories where new products can be tested and where experience and knowledge may be shared' (Lange, 2005: 82). They also act as an important support infrastructure for freelance, sometimes isolated cultural producers (Comunian, 2006).

6.1.2 Television networks

Turning to the television industry, research shows a highly dense network culture in operation. This can be seen at the macro and the micro level. On a structural level, the independent television industry exhibits a network structure, comprising of a large number of firms which are arranged in dense geographical clusters (in urban locales) providing content for a small number of broadcasters. Research suggests that there are high levels of movement by individuals between these companies, as work is largely contract based and freelance (Antcliff *et al*, 2005a). Therefore, at the micro level, informal and formal networking between individuals emerges as a key mode of interaction, providing individuals with the means to find work, and companies with a method of bringing in flexible, freelance talent and 'know-how' on a project basis.

Drawing on available industry data, it is possible to see that television production takes place in urban clusters (see figure 3 below). The industry is still overwhelmingly London-based, with the BBC and ITV and the majority of independent production companies based there; however, important but small clusters of activity exist in Manchester, Cardiff, Leeds, Glasgow, Belfast, Southampton, Birmingham, Bristol and

Newcastle (Skillset, 2006b). Recent research for Ofcom shows the concentration of economic activity in this sector as being within London (Ofcom, 2005a).

Estimated distribution of all production across the UK
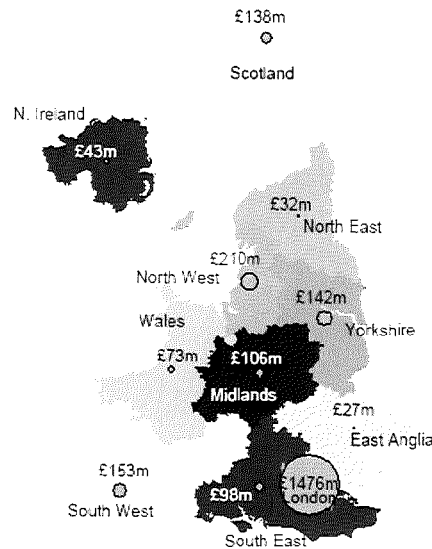
Source: Ofcom Pact Census. Data from Channel 3 regional and national licensees
Note: Data includes News and Sports production as reported in Ofcom Pact Census by vertically integrated production companies

Figure 3: Independent television production map. Source: Ofcom (2005a)

The research sample echoed this general picture: all but two of the participants are based in London, except for one who is based in Manchester, and one who runs a company in Wakefield, West Yorkshire. The analysis shows that unless they actually own their own company, my respondents all move fluidly from one company to another. As the data on their contract lengths in table 1 shows (chapter 5) it is clear that there is a high degree of movement between jobs for my participants. In such a highly casualised environment, making and maintaining contacts with people in the industry emerged as a crucial determinant of success, echoing research conducted by the BFI which showed that, in a much larger sample than mine, 72 per cent of respondents had 'maintained work contacts' due to uncertainty, and 63 per cent had attempted to work with people that they knew (BFI, 1999: 31). Indeed, the BFI data shows that personal contacts are the most important way of finding work (ibid.).

6.2 Fieldwork analysis

My respondents are deeply immersed in a network culture in their working lives. This structural shift is individualised – they make use of the Internet, email, mobile phones to keep in touch, they go to clubs, bars and actively network as a means of maintaining their careers. In the following analysis, I interpret their mode of social interaction as evidence of the turn towards 'network sociality' (Wittel, 2001). Building a broad range of contacts in the industry is central to moving up, as opportunities come about through a multitude of 'weak ties' (Granovetter, 1973).

6.2.1 Network sociality in the television industry

How do I network? Just pop an email, make a call, be charming. *Emma*

The concept of network sociality (Wittel, 2001) is useful for this research because it is a form of sociality particularly visible in the cultural industries. Indeed, as Wittel argues, 'the rise of a network sociality is especially visible in *urban (post)industrial spaces* and milieus. It is most visible among *the new middle class* of culturally educated and media and computer-literate people' (ibid.: 53). 'Network sociality' is the term developed by Wittel after undertaking ethnographic research in the new media environment in London in the late 1990s (the period of the 'dot.com boom') and refers to an emergent mode of social interaction under the larger structure of the network society. It draws on the work of Lash and Urry (1994), who have analysed patterns of interaction in the cultural industries, and is described as the social expression of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000).

In network sociality, 'networking' is understood as a key component of economic, social and cultural relations, in contrast to the declining traditional sociality of community. For if community sociality exhibits characteristics of embeddedness, continuity, depth, stability, coherence and belonging, then network sociality is 'lifted out' (Giddens, 1984), disembedded, fleeting, non-linear, often superficial, and ephemeral. Equally, if community provides individuals a coherent narrative, of the kind that Sennett (1998, 2006) argues is disappearing in contemporary working lives, then network sociality is informational and intermittent in character:

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> Network sociality consists of fleeting and transient, yet iterative social relations; of ephemeral but intense encounters. Narrative sociality often took place in bureaucratic organizations. In network sociality the social bond at work is not bureaucratic but informational; it is created on a project-by-project basis, by the movement of ideas, the establishment of only ever temporary standards and protocols, and the creation and protection of proprietary information. Network sociality is not characterized by a separation but by a combination of both work and play. (Wittel, 2001: 51)

This ephemeral and instrumental nature to network sociality has also been observed by Grabher, who writes, 'in sociality, social relations are less "narrational", that is they are less based on mutual experience or a common history but primarily on an exchange of knowledge and "catching up"' (Grabher, 2004: 26).

While network sociality is not a new phenomenon, having been noted by writers such as Simmel (1950) in the early twentieth century, what has changed is the way that network sociality is now an increasingly dominant mode of interaction in the 'new economy', and how the structural changes associated with the rise of the network society have led to a massive spread of this new mode of social interaction. As Wittel notes, 'the rise of network sociality is not only a far broader and more visible phenomenon than it was a few generations ago, it is also new in terms of its formalization and institutionalization, and in terms of a commodification of social relationships' (2001: 52-3). However, it is important to note that network sociality is not universal, but rather is highly dependent on factors such as geography, class, education and socio-economic status (ibid: 52). Therefore one's ability to network relates to symbolic forms of capital; here cultural capital is used in order to improve one's social capital through networking practices.

My respondents are all highly reliant on this mode of interaction as a means of operating within their industry, particularly in terms of finding and maintaining work. When asked about the importance of networking for their professional practice, they all agreed that it was vital. There is a deeply restless quality to these accounts of finding work, suggesting the need to constantly be on the move, and be contacting people in the network who might be helpful.

Jack, a producer/director, described contacts as 'absolutely crucial' when it comes to finding work in the industry. He explained that when you finish a job as a television freelancer, the 'first thing' you do 'is just start ringing around, emailing people':

> I think literally just keeping up with contacts whether you are working or not working is the best way of being thought of when something does come up.

Equally, Sarah, a successful series producers in her early 30s, described to me her experiences of entering and moving up in the industry, where networking and confidence were key:

> I was this strangely mature creature at 23 and then as I said in my late 20s I went into a bit of a dip, once I started directing and stuff, but at the beginning I was like dynamic, very employable, so a lot of it was through force of personality I think…I was quite good at catalysing on contacts that I'd made because by then I was generating my own contacts, but … *I was a good little networker!*

She describes the frantic round of networking that goes into moving up within this industry, demonstrating the need to be flexible and fast-paced in order to negotiate precarity:

> And I went to see this guy but again I seem to remember that the connection was via some friend of my parents… The company I went to see was [x] and I went in for a chat for advice but there was no job. But a couple of months later I was getting a bit fed up with this job I was doing …so I thought I know I'll go off to Hong Kong for the handover in 6 months time, I'll stay with my uncle and aunt and I'll see if I can get some sort of work … So I called up this guy at [company x] to say do you know anyone who's doing anything in Hong Kong in the next few months and he said 'No but I need a researcher to start next Wednesday are you free?' So I just dropped everything because it was a Channel 4 job… and again that was only through being in the right place at the right time.

Jenny also emphasised the importance of networking in her narrative of finding work. Contacts and persistence are key, and a sense that each meeting becomes an opportunity to network, that help can come from unexpected places:

> DL: How do you go about finding work, what's the process?
> F: Kick bollock scramble. Really, truly. As I said to you previously, it's just a case of trial and error, of like trying to speak to people and saying you know 'can I have 5 minutes of your time?'

In such an environment, great emphasis is placed on having the 'right' kind of personality, and being persistent:

> DL: You just phoned people up?
> F: Literally phoned people up. Some of them were like yeah, yeah, yeah whatever. And other ones were like, sort of interested... But at the same time I was making new contacts. So I emailed the producer, and he emailed me back and in the end it led to a job. All experience is good experience.

Rachel, just starting out in the industry at the age of 25, also explained the role that networking played in finding work, echoing the BFI's research that shows how the majority of work in television comes about through contacts and informal recruitment procedures:

> DL: Just thinking about that, how do you tend to find work?
> EW: Well it has been through word of mouth, it's been through different directors I've worked with, they've all actually said you know I know so and so needs a researcher, and they put you in touch with them. But it is such an ad hoc way of doing it, and you think god if what next time they don't have anything for anyone, but so far that's how it's worked for me.
> DL: So in terms of the process, it's word of mouth. Is networking quite important?
> EW: Well it's essential. It really is. None of the jobs I've got have ever been advertised.

6.2.2 The 'strength of weak ties'

Clearly, then, networking is a vital way for my interviewees to find work within the television industry. But why does networking function as such a persistent mode of interaction within this sphere? If the jobs are precarious, then the networks are much more durable. Granovetter's (1973) theory about the strength of 'weak ties' is useful in exploring this paradox. His theory came about from a puzzling anomaly that he noticed, where the overwhelming majority of people he was studying found out about work opportunities through loose acquaintances, rather than close friends or family as might be expected. Granovetter's argument is that close relationships such as those between family members and close friends ('strong ties') do not provide the same diversity of knowledge capital as the relationships between acquaintances and business 'contacts' (seen as 'weak ties'). Therefore, a person or an organisation is more likely to maintain

and build on their position in the field by actively creating contacts with 'weak ties'. As Granovetter argues, there is a mathematical logic to this, in that 'whatever is to be diffused can reach a larger number of people, and traverse greater social distance (i.e., path length), when passed through weak ties rather than strong' (1973: 1366).

Strong ties are based on bonds, forged around community, family, and geography, which are close, intersecting, multi-functional ties. Trust is also seen as a key distinguishing feature of strong ties (Leonard and Onyx, 2003). Strong ties involve 'bonding' social capital, as opposed to 'bridging' social capital (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). Conversely, weak ties are based on the thin, impersonal trust of acquaintances. These are loose networks, which mean a shift from the 'getting by' dynamic of 'bonding' social capital to the 'getting ahead' culture that comes out of 'bridging' social capital. Strong ties occur with friends and family, built up over time, with a clear narrative to them. Loose ties are ephemeral and impersonal, and emerge for mutually beneficial reasons.

While one might assume that an individual would find out about a job through a strong personal tie (on the basis that such a person would be more motivated to help someone with whom they shared a close tie), in fact Granovetter discovered that individuals were far more likely to find out about a job through someone with whom they share a weak tie. The reason for this is because those to whom we are weakly tied are likely to move in different social circles and therefore have access to a greater diversity of information (Granovetter, 1973: 1371). Indeed in Granovetter's study, people sometimes even received job information from people who they had actually forgotten existed (ibid.: 1372). From this research, Granovetter shows how weak ties provide individuals with informational advantages within job markets; this is because they connect distant 'nodes' in the network, and are thus highly efficient as a means of overcoming information asymmetries that occur within networks (Burt, 1995).

How can we relate this to the television industry? As previously argued, broadcasting is now a highly fluid and transient industry, therefore making it difficult for people to build up lasting, strong ties. As Anita puts it, television is made up of atomised individuals, so that although it 'seems like a social industry, [it is] …actually quite isolated and isolating'. Her perception of the industry is that 'people are separated off into their

cliques. People move in and out of jobs so regularly there is very little sense of sort of team, or kind of continuity'. Therefore, in the factual television industry, weak ties function as a way for participants in a particular labour market to keep each other informed of what is going on, and act as a durable mechanism for individuals to negotiate a casualised labour market. For example, Louise, a series producer who has worked for a number of 'super-indies', emphasised how important networking is for her:

> Networking is hugely important. The one thing that has made a difference to my life in the last couple of years is just having spent more time as a freelancer and worked in more places I now have more contacts.

Equally, Anita pointed to the significance of having a wide number of contacts in terms of finding work. Here we can see how it is vital to have access to a wide network of acquaintances, and the number of contacts that one has is instrumental in one's ability to find sustainable work:

> I think it helps if you've got friends who are in good positions, and I think it helps if you know a certain number of people, and I think that there are a lot of deals that are done that are to do with socialising... And to do with knowing people I think. A lot of work comes through that way.

6.2.3 Networking and exclusion

> Current pathways are opaque and there is an over-reliance on graduate entry in some sectors. What I term the 'work experience, work for nothing' model also militates against those from more diverse backgrounds. All this, at a time when employers in these industries are crying out for a broader talent pool from which to recruit. (Creative and Cultural Skills, 2006)

The position from which one enters into networking, and one's access to 'weak ties' within the industry, is, however, far from equal. This is a highly opaque industry to enter, where recruitment is largely done via word-of-mouth, and through personal recommendations. This is similar to trends that have been noted within the film industry, where 'the majority of those working in the film industry, as well as those attempting to gain access to it, hear of and secure work through a variety of types of personal contact who perform functions such as providing recommendations' (Blair, 2001:152). In the film industry, advertising for positions is rare (Skillset, 1996: 45) and curriculum vitae are

very rarely used (Langham, 1996). This is a relatively unexplored, yet pertinent issue within the cultural industries, for as Oakley points out:

> In many years of interviewing creative industry workers, the notion that these sectors remain the preserve of a well-educated elite is always greeted with protestations of horror and evident discomfort. But it is perhaps the very unconscious nature of these barriers which makes them most difficult to surmount. (2006: 265)

My analysis shows that access to television industry networks emerges as crucial for finding work. Simon explains how 'word of mouth is very important and who you know is very important'. As such he told me, 'that's really how I've always found my work, through who I've known and my name's been passed on to other people'.

This means that access to these networks and informal routes of recruitment is vital in order to get on. However, this access is often restricted, and often based on levels of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu and Johnson, 1993). The networking culture, whilst seemingly open and accessible, actually negates diversity, by privileging those with good contacts and social status. Moreover, the fact that entry to the industry is often unpaid means that individuals from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds find it very difficult to survive. The industry was seen as highly middle-class by my interviewees:

> Emma: For god's sake, it's middle class people... It's people who can afford to get into telly, who can afford to support themselves while they are doing work experience to get the experience you need to get a paid job... So unless you've got the economic wherewithal, a credit card you don't mind maxing out, blind faith in yourself to actually the point of ridiculousness, then going through that process of being a runner a researcher and an AP, getting on the ladder, you have to have a confidence in your ability to survive on not very much money.

Social position (and race) was also linked to success in television:

> Simon: Yes if I think about it everyone does talk the Queen's English. You don't get many 'geezers', you don't get many black people. And I think it's maybe a socio-economic thing.

This echoes research done by Skillset (2005b) which shows that 38 per cent of audio-visual workers had done unpaid work during their careers; and 70 per cent got their first job informal routes such as via contacts. Moreover, research by Blair on a specific film

industry production shows that 56 per cent of the crew entered the industry through either friends or family (2001: 159).

6.2.4 Translating cultural capital into social capital

If networking is the new paradigm for finding work and maintaining a career in the new cultural economy, then a critical question arises: who has the skills to get on in this 'club culture' and who does not? Here we need to understand how 'cultural capital', by dint of education, class, geography, can be translated into social capital in terms of helping individuals enter the industry and move on up the career ladder. Identified by Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital relates to modes of knowledge, taste and education which provide social advantages to an individual giving them a higher status in society. Such forms of capital enable society to reproduce itself along class lines; for example parents will provide children with cultural capital, the knowledge that makes the educational and social system a place in which they can easily succeed. These cultural attributes can then be translated into social capital, which can be seen as resources based on group membership, relationships, networks of influence and support. Bourdieu defines social capital as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (ibid: 248). While *social capital* is the vital ingredient in terms of negotiating the precarious nature of freelance labour market in the independent television industry, *cultural capital* acts as the means by which an individual amasses this social capital, and gains the resources of the network.

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital is closely linked to the concept of *field*. A field can be any structure of social relations (King, 2005: 223). It is a site of struggle for positions within a field and is constituted by conflict which is created when individuals or groups attempt to establish what defines legitimate and valued capital within it. For Bourdieu, fields are determined by conflict, and by a desire to get to the top of any given field (to dominate it, and thus determine the rules which govern the field). Cultural capital is a vital tool used as a mode of symbolic domination. Therefore, following Bourdieu, we could argue that individuals within the television industry make use of cultural and social capital to rise up within the field. Because of the lack of transparency in recruitment procedures and in terms of entering the labour market, modes of capital

that are largely determined by class and status within society play a powerful role, as their influence is largely unregulated.

Therefore, a defining factor for success in the network society is a high degree of cultural capital to facilitate access to the network and to provide an individual with the communicative and cognitive skills to succeed in this environment. Cultural capital encompasses such seemingly 'natural' things as taste, style and confidence. Bourdieu (1984) shows us that such traits are not 'natural' at all, but are socially constructed, the product of education, class and social position. They are the symbolic means by which society reproduces itself. As Bourdieu argues, 'art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social difference' (ibid.: 7). Cultural capital plays a vital role in determining the economic and social success of the cultural producer, for the acquisition of forms of cultural capital is often undertaken in the expectation of the improvement of status or life chances (McRobbie, 2005: 145).

Thus social class, and forms of cultural capital (which are unmeasurable through equal opportunity criteria such as qualifications) thus re-enter the frame of cultural production. Although small, my sample suggests that cultural capital plays an important role in regulating access to television industry networks. Cultural capital is notoriously difficult to assess. However, I have focused on key factors which are well-established indicators: education, self-perception of social class background, and access to television industry networks through family or friends at the start of a career. For the purposes of this research, I have not looked at their cultural tastes, as Bourdieu does in *Distinction* (1984). However, I was interested in levels of *confidence* to access networks, which I believe to be key to success in this environment. This draws on research done by Oakley and Erskine (2004) which showed that the 'right' personality attributes such as confidence were key to entering cultural industry networks.

The qualitative data from the interviews provides useful insights into personal predispositions towards networking which can be seen as part of the cultural capital which an individual brings to this job market. This analysis shows that out of my sample, all but two considered themselves to be 'middle-class', and all but one had been educated to degree level. Of those degree educated individuals, all of those under thirty at the time

of the interview had entered the industry through work experience, often gained through family contacts. Commenting on his experience of *not* having a degree within the industry, Jonathan told me:

DL: Is it quite unusual to get in without a university degree?

KB: I think it is. I never like to say it is, because it always makes me feel like I'm going 'Hey I'm the only one in here without a degree guys!' But it is. Especially at the Beeb. At the Beeb everyone's been to university, lots to Oxbridge...

What emerges strongly from my sample, is that class, cultural capital, and social position appears to matters as a means of accessing the networks of television. The result of this is a marked inequality of access.

Cultural capital provides my respondents with opportunities to enter the television labour market. It also provides them with the innate confidence and social skills to navigate this precarious world. My research indicates that exclusion is also stratified along the lines of personal attributes, where the ability to network (and therefore get on within the industry) is based on specific social skills. The research shows that certain social attributes (associated to high levels of cultural capital) were seen as important to have in order to get on. For example, a number of my respondents pointed to the centrality of 'getting on' with people in this industry. Jack emphasised the personal attributes he thought were important to succeed in the field

DL: Are there skills that you need ... Not necessarily to be good at working in TV, but to find work and to be able to network?

NP: I think the most important thing is to be able to get on with people, and for people to you know, you can't afford to have any kind of attitude, you need to be amenable, you know, flexible, willing, enthusiastic... So in terms of getting repeat work, if people find you easy to work with and enjoy working with you they will work with you again.

Simon pointed to the importance of softer, personal skills as a prerequisite for getting on:

You've got to be nice, you've got to easy to work with. Nobody wants to work with an arsehole. Although you can be an arsehole if you are higher up the scale.

Paul also noted the need to 'have the right tone' as an important attribute in the industry, raising questions about who makes the judgement about what the 'right' tone might be:

> I think the one that I always hear discussed the most is you know really the ability to be a good communicator. You know it is a communicator's industry, it is a media industry, you know if someone comes in to work for us, especially at a junior level, if they can't pick up the phone and make phone calls, and compose letters and emails, and really communicate and express themselves with decorum effectively, with the tone required, that can be a real problem, and vice versa if they are very able and very eloquent, and able to express themselves, that can be really helpful.

Such communicative abilities, and intangible assets such as having the 'right tone' are increasingly culturally embedded. They are not only acquired indirectly through academic qualifications, as traditional cultural capital theory would have it, but 'also as a direct consequence of patterns of middle-class socialization and life-styles, where the cultivation of interests and investments in leisure, hobby pursuits, and patterns of personal interaction serve to embellish a "privileged" education' (Brown and Scase, 1994: 29).

Furthermore, the emphasis placed on a particular type of communicative ability predicated on successfully operating within networks (and extending networks), is connected to Boltanski and Chiapello's ideal type 'networker' or 'network-extender' who forges profitable network links in late capitalism (2005: 355). Such an individual is 'mobile, streamlined, possessed of the art of establishing and maintaining numerous, diverse, enriching connections, and of the ability to extend networks' (ibid). Successful networkers are autonomous and entrepreneurial. Above all, they must be confident, for 'They regard everyone as contactable, and any contact as possible and natural' (ibid.: 113).

These communicative skills are vital for success in the networked cultural industries. Self-presentation, the ability to read situations are vital. Such skills emerge from one's cultural capital, which being largely socially determined means there is a narrowing of who can participate. Describing her research with a group of 'cultural entrepreneurs' at the Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA) in central London, Oakley notes that for these successful networkers:

> The notion that having the confidence to go to the ICA and introduce yourself to strangers, albeit ones who are open to such introductions and having to do the same themselves, is not a characteristic that is equally distributed in the population, *was seen largely as a personal failing*, if it was seen at all. (2006: 266, my italics)

This connects with Sarah's baffled reaction to the success of some older established individuals in the television industry with perceived 'social failings':

> Yeah you do meet [television producers], fewer now, but slightly more in the older generation... who you think are so diffident and sort of odd, and how on earth could they ever do the researcher/AP jobs?

This is the neglected downside of the 'network society'. Networked labour markets have a tendency to be opaque. The networked economy becomes increasingly discriminatory in terms of who has access and who doesn't, while hard-fought battles over workers' rights and anti-discrimination laws are sidelined. Social reproduction on the basis of cultural capital is accentuated in contemporary media production as a result of the connexionist economy, where mobility acts as a form of competitive advantage. This mobility, and the ability to network, appears to emerge from high levels of cultural capital.

6.2.5 Class and diversity

This focus on cultural capital raises some uncomfortable questions about the social make-up of the labour market in the television industry. If there is a high value placed on cultural capital, then what issues does this raise for diversity? The research shows that class and socio-economic position are major employment barriers in the broadcasting industry (and broader cultural industries). Whilst there is no evidence from my research that blatant discrimination on the grounds of class, gender or race operates within the industry, there is certainly evidence of closed networks which are often nepotistic and exclude outsiders. Obviously, this impacts on those from less powerful social positions. Also the fact that it is largely an imperative to work for nothing in order to enter the industry means that individuals who come from poorer, working-class backgrounds often just cannot afford to get into the industry. Finally there is a cultural expectation factor at play – often working in 'the media' is perceived as a middle-class white pursuit. Whilst this is something that I have not been able to follow up in this research, certainly

this was something that came up on occasion in the interviews, and has been explored in more detail elsewhere (Holgate and McKay, 2007).

My research concurs that there are significant barriers to entry to these highly closed-off labour markets. A key factor is that there is a strong reliance on a network of contacts and friends in terms of finding out about work in the first place. Sarah describes the vital role that familial contacts can offer to those in the industry, describing how being at a family party helped launch her career:

> And the reason I was at this party, again it was one of those things where my mum who as I said had no connection with anyone in TV industry said I'm going to this party that a colleague's having and his boyfriend works at Planet 24 and you better come... Sure enough I go to this party begrudgingly with my mum and dad and there was this guy there who you know we didn't talk about TV particularly but somehow that was enough to mean that when my mum bumped into someone at work a couple of days later he said 'Oh that guy's looking for researchers'... My experience, even though I didn't have parents who were in the media, was that just having that sort of middle-class network works as a huge advantage because if you're a kid in Wolverhampton from a council estate you just don't have access to those sort of connections, so there's no doubt that that is very significant.

Moreover, as Andrew's comments show, often the television industry networks are small, and difficult to gain access to:

> DL: Do you find that the word of mouth side of finding work, does that make it problematic for some people to find work?
> Andrew: I think for new people definitely. I know when I started I got my first job through a friend of a friend... but then after that someone from [programme x] suggested me for a job, and then they suggested me for another job and then the commissioning editor for Channel 4 who I'd met suggested me for another job. Do you know what I mean? It kept on happening like that. So it kind of became self-fulfilling.

Equally, Rachel, at an early stage in her career, described the lack of transparency in television recruitment, where jobs are never advertised, and word of mouth rules:

> DL: What's the recruitment process like in television?
> EW: Well it's a joke really. I mean you just never see jobs advertised, which again is very, very daunting, you just think God if I haven't got a list of contacts, which of course you don't have when you are starting out, how on earth will you get follow-on jobs? Because they are just not advertised. And that is difficult. And coming up the end of a contract you know that

it's that way, because you can't do a standard application process, it's a matter of talking to people. But also in a way it's not cliquey in that jobs are only going to friends, it's just that jobs aren't advertised, and people do everything through word of mouth.

Lindsey also reflected on the exclusionary nature of networking, pointing out that you need to do it more when you are at the start of your career, but that at this stage you lack the necessary contacts:

It's [networking] one of these things that you need to do more when you're further down the career ladder, but it's more difficult to do then, because you're younger and you don't have as much in common with the people that you're trying to network with and you don't get invited to the same industry bashes as you do when you're a bit more experienced and all that kind of thing.

Other research has indicated that the broadcasting industry is still highly homogenous in terms of being largely white and middle-class. Recent research on diversity in the audio-visual industries has shown a lack of diversity in the labour market (Ursell, 1997; Campion, 2005; Holgate and McKay, 2007). For example, Holgate and McKay (2007) have explored the barriers to the black and minority ethnic (BME) population in entering these highly competitive industries. Their research shows that the closed incestuous world of recruitment practices in this sector of the economy act as significant barriers to entry for BME audio-visual workers, and for them to move up the career ladder.

The findings of these much larger studies are reflected in the personal testimony within my findings. For example, Holgate and McKay's (2007) study shows that a lack of aspiration amongst ethnic minorities to work in the media industries is a key issue. Simon, a black producer/director, has personally experienced the impact of these cultural expections very keenly:

Simon: As far as race, I don't know many black producer/directors. I don't know if that's an issue of racism, but it's certainly true that this is a very white industry... there just aren't many black people in the industry.

DL: Is that partly a cultural factor within BME communities - television isn't something that is aspired to?

EO: Yes. Or they wouldn't think about going into it. Especially they wouldn't even know about it... Unless you are brought up in a very middle-class family you

wouldn't know about current affairs television or something like that. It's just not something that you'd do. I've seen a couple of other black producers, there is a black reporter, but he tends to do things on adoption... There was another black producer who sadly tended to be employed on things to do with race and started off on *Black Britain*... It's interesting, it is a very white industry.

Class also emerged as a barrier to entry for those at a lower socio-economic position, particularly because of the 'working for nothing' culture. Anita felt that the prerequisite for capital to enter the industry means that 'unless you come from a background where you can have a certain amount of support, it's almost impossible'. For Jack, equally, the cost of entering television as an unpaid intern discriminates against people from poorer backgrounds, it discriminates probably against ethnic minorities as well, especially if you are trying to get into the industry in London'. As he says, 'you cannot live in London on £250 a week on a basic minimum wage, or work for nothing'. Louise also pointed to the lack of diversity in the industry, which she put down to the exclusions caused by class, nepotism, lack of capital and transparency:

> The way that it [recruitment] seems to happen at the moment is oftentimes just through nepotism. And I know that some people will build little empires and just surround themselves with their mates. It's not necessarily good for the programmes and it's not necessarily very good for the industry. And it prevents other people who might be better at that job from getting ahead.

6.2.6 Mobility and stasis

A picture emerges from the research of an industry that is difficult to gain access to, where access is often predicated on social and cultural capital, where opaque networks function as the dominant means of finding work and progressing within the industry. However, as suggested earlier, some ambiguities also emerged from the interview data. A number of my participants denied the importance of the networks, and indeed denied that it was an industry structured by anything less than sheer merit and talent. Anita said she thought there was 'a big difference between getting work through contacts, because they've noticed your work and they think you are good, and going and hanging around at parties and harassing people...' She dismissed the idea of networking creating inequality, saying, 'I don't know I think the whole thing about networking and is it leaving single mothers out and things like that ... I don't think that's really relevant, because I think that if you do good work, and you make a bit of an effort to try to get it

seen as well, I think you'll be fine'. Similarly, Simon, whilst acknowledging the importance of networking, still argued that 'you have to be good'.

Nevertheless, both also told me that class and race was an issue. Of course, one could interpret their inability to see such inequities as evidence of 'false consciousness' (Engels, 1893), and undoubtably the powerful ideology of meritocracy in operation in the industry would provide a justification for such beliefs. Obviously, it is true that you do have to be talented to make it within the industry, for as Emma told me, you wouldn't get far in such an exposed industry if you were purely reliant on nepotism:

> I mean the job I'm working on at the moment I had to give 3 references, and also somebody on the team already knew me and I had 2 interviews, that's to get this job, so ultimately unless you're the sort of person who has got a job because you're somebody's nephew, and you stay at that one company and you don't mind not being promoted, if you're going to move around ultimately peope will talk about you.

However, despite this, it appears that another dynamic is in evidence here, which relates to the issue of mobility, and its converse state, fixity. The participants who seemed most oblivious to the potential inequities of the network culture were also those who were doing best out of it. Anita has made it to Executive Producer at the young age of 32; Sarah is a series producer; Simon is highly successful as a current affairs producer/director. These are examples of success. They are also highly mobile, able to easily move from company to company, in demand, with strong networks. Moreover, they were able to identify important nodes within the network, who would give them access to knowledge and contacts. For example, Sarah told me how she had established a 'mentor' figure senior to her in the industry. As Boltanski and Chiapello suggest, successful networkers such as Sarah 'know how to locate sources of information' (2005: 113).

This mobility is of course in stark opposition to other less mobile figures in the industry (not to mention the immobile state of much of the population's socially excluded). In some ways, indeed, the rhetoric of the independent television industry is founded on such a distinction between entrepreneurial mobility versus bureaucratic fixity. This can be seen in Jonathan's rather dismissive attitude towards BBC staff workers:

There is such a weird difference between people who are staff at the BBC. In production a staff AP had to serve as an AP... When I was in DMCF [Documentaries and Contemporary Factual][48] they were going through lots of redundancies and everybody was going, and the feeling of the place was so depressed... I'm like 'hang on a minute, I've been brought in for 6 months, that's my job, at the end of that I'm off and I'll go somewhere else'. I love that. I love the freedom to go where you want. They don't owe me anything, and I don't owe them anything. But they have got some way indebted to the BBC and feel that the BBC owes them. They don't understand the whole freelance world. I mean we're looking for jobs all the time. They're sitting there in master classes on how to cope in the outside world... Things like how to do an interview and stuff. You can't believe it, they're so miserable about it...They don't want to have to compete with people like me, and why would you?

Here, having a mobile adaptable self is key to success, for as Boltanski argues, 'to adjust to a connexionist world, people must prove sufficiently malleable to pass through different universes while changing properties' (2005: 461).

Yet it is also true that in the flexible, reticular, project-based environment of the independent television labour market, those who do not make it are, of course, invisible to the successful. Thus the excluded disappear. As Boltanski and Chiapello note: 'in a world so constructed as to be entirely subject to a network logic, there is no reason to pose the question of justice, because those of low status... tend to disappear without trace.' (2005: 106). For example, Sarah told me:

DL: Do some people get left out and if so who?

Sarah: Well I don't know if I would ever come into contact with them because they probably have already fallen by the wayside... Yeah I think that they are probably the people who end up dropping out and I never hear...

In such a way, the network culture obscures social injustice and inequality is reduced to a mere abstraction.

6.2.7 The obligation to be free: networking as a discursive regime

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[48] DCMF was part of Specialist Factual at the BBC, which was part of the broader Factual and Learning department. This has since been rearranged.

> Discourses... deeply permeate what is allowed as legitimate knowledge in particular domains of social life, and rigidly exclude other possibilities and other perspectives on those domains. (Deacon, 1999: 147)

In order to understand the ambiguities of this networking culture, where networking plays a crucial role in the careers of my participants, yet is downplayed in significance - indeed where the very notion of networking appears to discomfort some of them - it is important to understand the discursive power of networking at the subjective level. Throughout the findings of my research, a strong sense emerges from the data that the culture of networking is an activity that you cannot opt out of. As illustrated in the last chapter, Sarah embraced the risk of entrepreneurial networking after several years of job security at one company as a staff producer. For her, fixity was interpreted as personal failure:

> Eventually I had to leave to give myself a bit of a kick up the arse and I did and then improved things enormously.

Similarly, Louise deliberately made a choice to embrace the insecurity and risk of the freelance world, leaving in the process a secure job at the BBC. Discussing this, she said:

> L: That's the other thing, it's really difficult to get promotion across by staying in the same company. It's usually by moving outside and moving sideways into another job that you get it...
> D: So is there a sense that you've got to be quite risk-taking to move up?
> L: You've got to leave and at some point you've got to decide that you're not going to take any more researcher jobs because you really want to be an AP.

Emma also told me that 'networking becomes a way of life, something that you have to do in order to survive in this industry'.

Yet for Emma the pressure to network jarred with the practical difficulties of actually doing so. First the pressures of her job made it difficult:

> You get to this stage at the end of every job where you're facing unemployment again. So you bang out emails to people you know, fix up interviews for jobs. This inevitably happens at the end of a job, when you're flat out in the edit, working all hours. It's a nightmare.

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Secondly, there are the competing demands of work and home-life that she faces as a young mother:

> I really struggle to be a director and a mother. We have child-care, and luckily my husband's hours are less crazy than mine. But it gets me down, I feel I'm missing a lot. Then I'm supposed to be out there schmoozing at parties on top of all of that?

Here we can see how successful networking places demands on individuals outside of the formal contracted time of the workplace. Whilst crucial to success, it entails a lifestyle that is only compatible with youth and health (McRobbie, 2002a). When asked what might happen to someone who opted out of the after-work networking culture in the pub or bar, Jonathan's response was telling:

> She then has to make up for it in the office. The people who don't come for the drinks after work and stuff. Like jobs I've been on we've had 'beer o clock Friday', five o clock, everyone knocks off and goes for a drink with work, and there will always be people who can't, maybe someone who has always got plans on Friday, maybe they have got a family to get back to, but then they have to be a massive character in the office to claw some of that back, what they're missing out on. And if ...you're not coming to those after-work drinks and you're quiet in the office you'll get left behind definitely.

Louise also raised an crucial point about the cost of the networked labour market. Whilst she feels that she is now in a position where she would like to have children, she worries about the potential cost to her career and economic wellbeing:

> [T]he one big thing for me is that I think it's really difficult as a woman to see how you could reconcile having a family with working in TV because the hours are long and as a freelancer especially you are expected to be utterly dedicated to your job, so you get taken on for a 2 month contract and they expect 110 per cent every single day of those 2 months.

How can we understand this process, where my respondents readily acknowledge the negative aspects of this networking culture, yet still feel compelled to be a part of it, even rejecting job security in the process? It seems that my respondents are 'obliged to be free' (Rose, 1999: 87), even when they might be fearful of the precarious nature of the 'freedom' that awaits them. For example, as Louise says, when asked about how she feels about the insecurity, and whether she had got used to it:

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No absolutely not, it still can be a source of huge stress and fear to me, and I sometimes think what am I doing with my life and why don't I just try to get a nice job in a company somewhere where life will be less stressful, and I just don't know.

An understanding of the importance of the governmentalising power of the *discourse* of networking is crucial to understanding this contradictory process, whereby individuals embrace a particular entrepreneurial risk culture, which involves endless networking, whilst simultaneously being terrified by it.

In examining the discourse of the 'network' it is possible to see how it fulfils a regulatory role in society. With the rise of the 'network society', a powerful discourse around the idea of networking and networks has emerged. The discourse of the network is now ubiquitous, as commentators on issues as diverse as social interaction (Wittel, 2001), the 'new economy' (Kelly, 1998; Reich, 2001), and politics (McCarthy *et al*, 2004), amongst others, point to the network as the emergent key topology for understanding new forms of organising and communicating within society. Individuals, business managers, and even states, are encouraged to 'surf' the wave of the networked future, or risk falling behind and failing (Leadbeater and Oakley, 2001; Mulgan, 2004). The concept of the 'network' and networking is highly prevalent within management theory, most closely associated with 'new managerialism' gurus such as Kanter (1995, 2000, 2001). Here, networking is valorized as part of the heady rhetoric of the 'new economy', presented as exciting, creative, chaotic and as representing multiple opportunities for economic and social success.

In their analysis of the role that managerial discourse plays within contemporary capitalism, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) argue that capitalism necessarily embraces values outside of itself, in order to produce 'justificatory regimes' that appeal to society, even appropriating elements of capitalist critique in this process. When considering how networking has been valorized within new managerialism literature, one can see how certain counter-cultural values that rejected the conformist homogeneity of Fordist mass production (and labour) are embedded within the ideas being presented, such as the focus on creativity, collaboration, constant change and self-actualisation.

Considering the rise of networking as a powerful discourse within contemporary capitalism, it is evident that networking is promoted as a form of 'inspirational'

organisation, a 'project-oriented' regime whose, 'state of greatness includes adaptability, flexibility, sincerity in face-to-face interaction, capacity to generate enthusiasm, its format of investment is readiness to sacrifice one's private life and longterm plans for the company, its paradigmatic test is ability to move from project to project' (Fairclough, unpublished paper). This represents an ideal archetype for my respondents, who have to juggle numerous projects, be endlessly flexible, and for whom the right form of self-presentation is vital. Therefore networking (and its associated activity of entrepreneurialism) is not only a structural necessity within the television labour market, but also a *cultural value*, something to be aspired to.

This discourse, when considered at the level of the individual, is part of a wider discourse of 'freedom' within contemporary society (in this case the freedom to embrace risk), in which we see the valorisation of a particular type of idealised entrepreneurial self, the self-choosing, self-actualising, autonomous individual. As Rose argues, we now live in a 'regime of the self where competent personhood is thought to depend upon the continual exercise of freedom, and where one is encouraged to understand one's life, actually or potentially, not in terms of fate or social status, but in terms of one's success or failure acquiring the skills and making the choices to actualise oneself' (1999: 87). As such, the choice made by my respondents to embrace the precarity of the network can be seen as a means by which particular choices are closely aligned to the interests of wider power structures, politically and economically.

6.3 Conclusion

The research above shows that the rise of a network culture, on a macro global level, has intense ramifications at the local micro level. Whilst much of the management and policy discourse around networks is often technologically deterministic and celebratory, in fact network culture translated on the ground in this specific culture industry has a number of sociological consequences, some of which are deeply worrying. We need to be attentive to the power dynamics inherent within networks, in a world that remains hierarchical and divided.

The rise of network forms of organising social life is bound up with new forms of inequality and control. Flexibility and mobility for the few means fixity and inequality

for the majority. The configuration of the network as a means of organising social and economic life is deeply linked to the wider shift in neoliberal capitalism towards *flexibility*. As Castells points out:

> [T]he information technology paradigm is based on *flexibility*. Not only processes are reversible, but organizations and institutions can be modified, and even fundamentally altered, by rearranging their components. What is distinctive to the configuration of the new technological paradigm is its ability to reconfigure, a decisive feature in a society characterized by constant change and organizational fluidity. (1996: 71)

Therefore the wider shift towards flexible specialisation in firms is accelerated through the move towards networks. Flexibility at the level of the organisation is closely associated with economic advantage and the need for adaptivity in a highly competitive global market. Indeed, managerial discourse celebrates 'Change as a condition of existence' within a transformed mode of accelerated capitalism (Kanter, 2001: 255).

Meanwhile, at the level of the individual, flexibility is part of a wider discourse that emphasises creativity, self-actualisation, freedom and personal responsibility. However, flexible specialisation is also synonymous with mechanisms of control and power, allowing as it does particularly ruthless forms of cost-cutting, downsizing, job insecurity and the rise of non-typical employment arrangements such as part-time working and contract work.

It is this potential for social control that has been largely ignored by the first wave of network theorists and cyber-libertarians (e.g. Rheingold, 2000). Yet, increasingly there is evidence that networks have a number of negative social attributes, as well as positive. For example, it is widely assumed that networks are open, democratic and transparent, but in fact networks are by their very nature exclusionary, for in order to have a network, you have to leave people out. Indeed, Mulgan has noted the power dynamics inherent in networks: 'Networks are created not just to communicate, but also to gain position, to outcommunicate' (1991: 21).

In this chapter we see how networking as a practice has a number of consequences for the independent television industry. Firstly, we can see how networking potentially negates cultural diversity. In order to be able to network successfully an individual has to

have particular personal attributes, which one could argue are related to high levels of cultural capital. Thus, a network culture within this industry works to reinforce lack of diversity at a structural level, because as Bourdieu has shown, cultural capital is the means by which society reproduces itself along hierarchical lines. This finding is crucial, because it would suggest that networking practices mitigate against cultural diversity. The question of diversity is crucial within the cultural industries because the culture industries are the means by which a society communicates to itself. Lack of diversity at the level of production means that inevitably certain views, positions and values fail to be represented. The network culture would appear to reinforce a lack of diversity through its potentially exclusionary mechanisms.

Secondly, it is clear that network society at the macro-level (Castells, 1996; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005) produces a new mode of network sociality within this industry. This produces intense yet ephemeral social interactions, and breaks down the distinction between the business sphere and the personal. As Grabher writes:

> *Networking*, in fact, signifies the emblematic mantra of project ecologies… Personal networks symptomatically efface the distinction between private and business…, between the communicative logic in the 'life world' and the strategic rationality in the 'systems world'. (2004: 6)

Network culture in fact intensifies work, and produces a lack of loyalty to the firm, as individuals must first and foremost think of their own career within this insecure environment.

Thirdly, the constant focus from my respondents on networking as a practice also emphasises how it has become a powerful regulatory discourse within this industry. And it often emerges as a discourse in connection to obligation, as something that one 'should' be doing. Thus, arguably, networking has become a regulatory discourse of subjective control within this industry, something that has become hegemonic, and normative.

Many of my findings raise worrying questions about the implications of a network culture within the television industry. On the one hand, the research raises questions about how networking has been appropriated in the pursuit of capital. On the other, it raises questions about the social structure of the industry, which as the following chapter

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will explore, has worrying implications for creativity itself. The underlying issue governing the networking dynamic within the television industry is one of power. For example, one's attitude towards networking and entrepreneurialism is to a certain extent determined by personal attributes, class, cultural capital and social position. One's ability to move through the dense networks of opportunity that make up this particular cultural labour market is dependent on such supposedly outmoded 'depth' variables as social class.[49] Networking works for elites in positions of authority and prestige, but presents new challenges and obstacles for those seeking to enter and progress within the industry. Indeed, it excludes many before they even have the chance to prove themselves.

Earlier studies of television showed strong evidence of an 'old boys' club' (Tunstall, 1993). This research shows that social class and cultural capital play a strong role in access to the independent television industry. However, what is clear is that a new networking dynamic, one naturalised by advances in communication technology, has become embedded within the labour market. Ironically, despite being deeply exclusionary for less privileged individuals, this networking dynamic is intensified by the fact that it justifies itself through the prevailing discourse of meritocracy within contemporary society (Finlayson, 2000). However, my research suggests that successful networking now supplants talent as a means of advancement within the industry; success in television is now oriented around success at networking. Futhermore, the new networks of power in independent television (geared around super-indies and which priorities commercial values) have arguably instilled a culture of creative stagnation, where new ideas are arguably unable to find space in the dominant commercial landscape of factual entertainment witin the factual television sphere (Silverman, 2005). In such a context, what becomes of craft, and of talent?

In the following chapter I shall examine this pressing issue of creativity and craft, which I argue is under increasing threat in the contemporary commercialised television landscape. This will involve examining the transformed political economy within this sphere as a way of understanding the changing production values of television has focused on the external political economy. As I argued in chapter 3, the independent television industry has undergone a rapid commercialisation in recent years. In the

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[49] The idea that 'class' is an ineffective way of analysing social groups can be seen in a particular strand of contemporary social and political thought. See, for example, Kingston (2000).

following chapter, I shall explore how my research indicates that this transformed political economy is having dramatic consequences on the production culture within the industry (while recognising that this study does not extend to an actual textual analysis of the content itself). I also investigate how the production values of my respondents appear to be changing as a result of sociological changes in the nature of work and identity, as well as because of external market forces. For my respondents, the creative energy that was once spent on learning the craft of programme-making is increasingly spent on networking and entrepreneurialism. Moreover, this insecure, 'liquid' environment presents significant challenges for learning and developing skills, a process which would have traditionally taken place within the more secure environment of the major commercial and public service broadcasters. I shall explore the paradox of why my respondents feel that production values within independent television production are declining, and why the 'craft' of programme-making is under threat, whilst simultaneously the discourse of 'creativity' within contemporary society, and within television in particular, has become so prominent.

Chapter 7. Precarious creativity: The transformation of television production values?

> The emerging social order mitigates against the ideal of craftsmanship, that is, learning to do just one thing really well; such commitment can often prove economically destructive. In place of craftsmanship, modern culture advances an idea of meritocracy which celebrates potential ability rather than past achievement. (Sennett, 2006: 4)

> 'There is relative silence on the issue of what happens to media production arrangements under different regulatory regimes. In particular, there seems to be a failure to consider that the changes in conditions of work and employment have consequences for the extent to which television workers find themselves able to meet professional goals and standards, or perhaps begin redefining their notions of professionalism' (Ursell, 2003: 34)

As the previous chapters have shown, due to the insecure, freelance nature of television work, workers are forced to invest high levels of time and energy maintaining a steady flow of work, through networking and work socialising. Furthermore, under the current deregulated and highly commercialised conditions of production in the freelance independent sector, (self) exploitation is rife for a large number of workers, with research showing high levels of stress, insecurity, overwork, lack of pension and holiday pay (Ursell, 2000; BFI, 1999; Sparks, 1994). Despite the celebratory policy rhetoric of the 'creative industries', in fact my research shows that this transformed production environment has had a detrimental effect on skills and on the potential for creativity within the industry.

As a result of a labour market that requires high levels of investment of time and abilities in terms of networking, as well as an institutional lack of investment in skills training for freelancers, there is less opportunity for today's television workers to develop production and craft skills. The casualisation of the industry has also produced an ideological shift from *vocation* to *contract* for these workers. The constant spectre of unemployment and 'uselessness' (Sennett, 2006) haunts my interviewees, forcing them into developing a number of time-consuming strategies to cope. Indeed, many of them have turned this process of navigating risk into a skilled practice in itself, one which demands abilities of communication and enterprise which take time and effort to

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develop. These skills of networking and maintaining a career have become a primary part of the talents of a successful television professional.

As the last chapter argued, strong interpersonal skills are necessary to navigate network sociality in this industry, where the ability to network and present yourself well is a key skill needed to get on in the industry, and find work. Indeed, these skills were often mentioned *over* creative skills such as imagination, talent, and craft, as prerequisites to being successful. However, a significant generational difference emerged in my research, with the older, more established interviewees stressing the need for creative skills as opposed to networking, social skills, as key to their success, whereas only a minority of the younger (below 30 years old) interviewees did.

Here I shall investigate a number of vital questions that flow from this analysis. What happens to craft and creativity in this 'creative industry', under such precarious labour conditions? Have the skills of networking in some way replaced, or detracted from, the skills of production? How do individuals become skilled professionals, in the absence of job security and institutional training provision? What can be meant by creativity and craft in such a context? Can we begin to approach the vexed question of *quality* in television, through an understanding of the production values and labour market conditions that are prevalent in the industry?[50]

The chapter presents an analysis of discourses around production values, creativity and entrepreneurialism within the independent television industry. To put these views in a historical perspective I shall explore how factual television, and its production values and genres, have changed in recent years. Production values have been transformed under the forces of deregulation, commercialisation, multi-channel programming, casualisation and the rise of independent production. From a political economic perspective, these values have altered partly because of policy interventions designed to commercialise the television marketplace, and stimulate competition. I argue

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[50] The vexed question of quality in television has a long and controversial history within media studies. In my view, it is important to remember the vital questions of class and power that lurk beneath debates around 'dumbing down' and lowering standards on television. As Brunsdon has argued, such debates around cultural value easily become embedded in suspicions of their ideological foundations – Quality for whom? Judgement by whom? On whose behalf? (Brunsdon, 1990: 73). These cultural value judgements are often 'shaped by legacies of social class hierarchy' (Richardson and Meinhof, 1999: 117).

that the dominant production values held by contemporary television professionals are radically removed from those that were held in the past.

This chapter explores the contested nature of 'production values' within the television industry. To focus on the concept of 'production values' implies that there are a set of hegemonic and institutionalised norms which govern the field of production, impacting on individuals as they move through the industry. However, as a result of regulatory and commercial shifts, the prevailing orthodoxy of production values has changed in recent years. The chapter examines the altered professional status of television workers, particularly under the pressures of a changing occupational ethos and the impact of deskilling in the industry. This involves assessing the impact of 'multiskilling', and of commercialisation, on the professional norms of these creative workers. As Sennett (2006) has argued, the logic of work in the new economy operates to negate values of 'craftsmanship', and against the steady development of skills and abilities which are accumulated through the course of a lifetime. Rather, today's 'new economy' logics demand constant evolution, adaptivity, and the ability to retrain throughout one's working life. These broader issues have a great relevance to the production of factual television. Finally, the chapter explores the implications of this changing production environment on the nature of creativity within factual television production, exploring the decline of craft within the industry, and the impact of commercial and temporal pressures which my interviewees experience.

What emerges most strongly from the fieldwork is a discourse in terms of attitudes towards creative labour in the field of independent television production that is neoliberal, favouring enterprise, commercialism, competition, flexibility and individualism. Yet, evidence exists of another competing discourse, one that promotes the values of craft, talent, co-operation and public service. This tension is generational, with older participants more likely to espouse the values of the latter discourse. Yet that alone is too simplistic an analysis, for often these competing discourses are evident within the same individual. Crucially, the tension between these two discourses is ideological, between two competing visions of factual television, its purpose and its future. Therefore this research shows that television production has become a discursive battleground for two radically opposed visions of cultural production.

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7.1 Changing production values: from Grierson to the 1990s

Over an extended period there has been a significant shift in production values in factual television. Previous generations of programme-makers underwent a long apprenticeship, learning their skills on the job and over many years of accumulated experience. Television in this sense was very much a field where the notion of the 'apprenticeship' was both culturally central and institutionalised (Tunstall, 1993). In today's cost-cutting and commercially driven climate, television professionals, particularly those in the freelance independent sector, have experienced a transformation in their professional environment, particularly in terms of the ethos of production values and in terms of training. Individuals are often obliged to pay for their own training, a difficult and expensive task in a fast-changing digital environment (Skillset, 2001). The Skillset (2001) survey shows that 69 per cent of freelancers have training needs. However, only 15 per cent of freelancers received training funding from their employers (Skillset, 2001: 16). They are encouraged to multi-skill, often filming, directing and editing entire programmes single-handedly. They are also forced to be highly flexible about the nature of the content that they work on in order to stay in employment. This shift has occurred concomitantly to a wider change in factual content, with the growth in popularity of reality formats and factual entertainment, as well as regulatory changes which mean that independent producers are able to profit from secondary markets for their intellectual property (DTI, 2003). As a result of these changes, and at the broadest level, the 'traditional' value and skills of television production are being steadily replaced by those of the commercially astute entrepreneur who sees the market opportunity for successful global formats.

So, what kind of production values existed in the past, and what kind of production values can be detected today? To answer this question is to revisit the history of factual television as it evolved from documentary television to more contemporary genres. Documentary television emerged in the UK in the 1920s as a result of the creative efforts of John Grierson and a collective of filmmakers and technicians who surrounded him. They made up what has become know as the British Documentary Movement, and included names such as Paul Rotha, Humphrey Jennings, Harry Watt, and Alberto Cavalcanti. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s these self-consciously 'artistic'

film-makers produced a number of classic early documentary films, such as *Night Mail* (dir. Basil Wright and Harry Watt, 1936), *London Can Take It* (dir. Humphrey Jennings, 1940), *Coalface* (dir. Alberto Calvalcanti, 1936) and *Fires Were Started* (dir. Humphrey Jennings, 1943). These middle- to upper-class male filmmakers, largely Oxbridge educated, believed in the power of film to change society for the better and were driven by a sense of social purpose. Grierson described the moral values driving early documentary production:

> This sense of social responsibility makes our realist documentary a troubled and difficult art, and particularly in a time like ours… realist documentary, with its streets and cities and slums and markets and exchanges and factories, has given itself the job of making poetry where no poet has gone before it, and where no ends, sufficient for the purposes of art, are easily observed. (Grierson, quoted in Hardy, 1979: 25)

Many of these films were shot during the worsening social conditions of the 1930s and then during World War II, and had a clear propaganda objective, designed to raise national morale, and to inform viewers of the war efforts. They dealt with social issues, but have been criticised for failing to ask questions that might have challenged the social structure that produced such social conditions (Winston, 1995). It is argued that these films, while on the surface concerned with the social, evade social meaning through an aestheticisation and romanticisation of poverty. As Winston argues: 'This meant a tendency to seek the picturesque topic, but the search for the picturesque is to be found in even the least 'aesthetic' subjects' (1995: 38).

Two key ideologies can be seen to guide early documentary: the aesthetic ideology of realism, and the prevailing ideology of culture as an educational tool which should provide 'uplift' for the 'masses' (Swann, 1989: 176). Realism as an artistic movement emerged in the 19th century, and was concerned with the scientific, rational depiction of society, in contrast to the then prevalent forms of romanticism in art, literature and theatre.[51] It was a form that had its roots in a radical socialist vision, with a desire for progressive change (Winston, 1995: 30). This gave early documentary in the UK its social and educational agenda. Indeed, in Grierson's view, documentary was first

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[51] Classic realist texts include George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, the plays of Anton Chekhov, and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, and focus on depicting everyday life and events 'as they are' rather than being overtly artistically constructed. For an in-depth study of realism in the nineteenth century, see Byerly (1997).

and foremost a medium of social engagement – an exalted calling. His was an elitist stance, where 'the elect have their duty'. Indeed, he declared 'I look on cinema as a pulpit, and use it as a propagandist' (Rotha, 1966: 42).

7.1.1 Onto the small screen: documentary on television

Following World War II, things changed swiftly. First, the emergence of television moved mainstream documentary from the cinema onto television. Second, technological advances in filming allowed directors to experiment with smaller hand-held cameras and sound recording equipment, allowing them access to shoot material that would previously have been impossible. This shift was vital to the emergence of the *cinéma vérité* movement in the 1950s, which evolved from the French New Wave, and allowed filmmakers to shoot action as it happened.[52] Third, with the rise of public service broadcasting following World War II, and the subsequent creation of ITV, the model of state funding for factual content that was utilised by the British Documentary Movement of the 1930s and 1940s altered dramatically.

Most obviously, mainstream documentary and factual content moved from the cinema to television. This had significant ramifications for the nature of the content. While the work of the British Documentary Movement was self-consciously 'poetic' and artistic, the form changed as the values of television journalism entered documentary practice. If filmic documentary (and so factual television more generally) began as a form of *cinematic essay* ('impressionism put to promotional ends; an exploration of the modern through evocative, metonymic use of images and sounds' (Corner, 1996: 2), then the form shifted under the medium of television and much documentary became more journalistic, a form of extended reportage (ibid).

The shift away from commercial and state funding also had a dramatic effect on the production values of documentary makers working within television (Ellis and McLane, 2006: Chapter 12). Whilst the Griersonians were able to make films that

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[52] *Cinéma vérité* was in many ways a reaction against studio film restraints, allowing film-makers such as John Cassavetes, Richard Leacock and Barbara Kopple to film events on location as they happened. There were often no sit-down interviews, the film would show events unfolding, and the large amassed amount of material would be carefully edited down into a coherent whole by the editor.

depicted an aesthetic view of poverty, without asking more critical questions about the causes and effects of social inequality, film-makers working in television, although still constricted by regulatory and ideological pressures, were able to take a more critical view of social issues. That is not to say that the factual television being made in the early days of the medium was radical in content, but rather that it was produced using journalistic principles of examination, critique and analysis, rather than being essentially propaganda for the war effort. This change from film to television also meant new strictures for documentary makers, as powerful but implicit norms regarding 'public interest' and 'due impartiality' come into play, moving documentary into the same climate as news production. As Winston suggests, documentary in this period began 'encountering problems of non-cooperation from official sources, anxious monitoring from interested parties and potential self-censorship from nervous production executives' (1995: 23).

7.1.2 The 'golden age' of television?

The period from the 1960s to the 1970s is often perceived as a halcyon era for television production where budgets were large, schedules were flexible and generous, and there was plenty of scope for directors to make highly personal, single-subject programmes with scope for artistic freedom. Dennis Potter described the period from the late 1960s into the 1970s as television's 'golden age' (Wattis, 1994), whereas others have been less specific about the time-frame, but are clear that this 'golden age' existed before the deregulated, multi-channel environment of today (Hutton, 2006).

Whilst the constant evocation of the 'golden age' is in my view overly nostalgic and ignores the innovations and creativity of more recent content, it is instructive to examine the reasons why this is felt to be the case, and to explore what has changed. Most clearly, this was a period of professionalism and high status for factual television production staff. The broadcasting climate was favourable: for example, this was a 'time of plenty' in television, where an ITV franchise was once famously called 'a licence to print money' by Scottish Television's Roy Thomson (cited in Crisell, 1997: 108). This was also a period before the highly competitive multi-channel environment of today. Job security was high, pay was higher relatively than now and highly regulated, with specified minimum rates of pay and common terms of employment agreed between broadcasters and unions (Saundry, 2001). Moreover, there was a different kind of cultural attraction to

working in factual television, as it was a career path that was highly attractive to idealistic progressive graduates with creative aspirations.

Exploring this, Garnham, writing about his early career in television production, describes the attraction of working in the industry in the 1960s:

> I joined the BBC in the immediate aftermath of the Pilkington Report and at the birth of BBC2. It was the precise moment at which a whole generation of the British creative intelligentsia moved into television because they saw it as a progressive medium of popular education and enlightenment against the background of an increasing radicalization of British politics. (2005: 472)

Similarly, Paul Woolwich, a senior editor within BBC current affairs, notes:

> Twenty five years ago, young Turks embarking on a TV career wanted to work in the BBC's current affairs department with the aim of changing the world. Today they would rather be working on *Changing Rooms*. (Woolwich, 2000)

An ideological sea change can be seen to have occurred in factual television production, where new entrants to the industry are no longer lured by such idealistic aspirations. This represents a significant cultural shift within television production, where the values that inspired a previous generation are no longer the norm.

7.1.3 The 1990s: deregulation, 'reality TV' and the rise of factual entertainment

In the mid-1990s the nature of factual television began radically to shift. Many of the more traditional forms of content were still being made, but new forms rapidly became dominant. These forms were so-called 'reality television' formats: including emergency formats, 'docu-drama', factual entertainment and 'gamedoc' shows which meshed factual formats with traditional game-show features (Corner, 2000: 687). The reasons for this shift are culturally complex and contested. Some have argued that the turn to 'reality' reflects a democratisation of television (Bazalgette, 2001: 20); others that it is indicative of a 'dumbing down' of factual television output (Dunkley, 2001). Indeed, as Holmes and Jermyn have argued:

> The discussion concerning definitions of Reality TV has indicated the extent to which issues of cultural *value* have been on the agenda – enmeshed within the

wider maelstrom of what can be described as the high-profile discursive
circulation of the form. (Holmes and Jermyn, 2004: 8)

The rise of reality television represents a significant shift for factual television,
one that is bound up with a seismic shift in production techniques and production
values, undermining traditional documentary's status within the industry. As Barnett and
Seymour (1999) have argued, the traditional analytic documentary suffered a long decline
in popularity over the course of the 1990s, with BBC 2 becoming the main home of
serious political, economic and social analysis. Analysing this change, Corner has
suggested that we now live in a 'post-documentary' culture:

> There has, then, been a decisive shift towards diversion. This has not had the
> effect of completely displacing 'serious' output but it has certainly had the effect
> of reworking the identity of this output both within television's generic system
> and within the pattern of viewing habits and expectations. (Corner, 2002: 149)

Corner's argument is that there has been a shift in purpose towards 'documentary as
diversion' coupled with the 'radical dispersal' of a 'documentary' look across programme
forms and schedules. Here, significant financial reductions in the cost of making
documentary-style television have driven its ubiquity across television output. As Ellis
and McLane note:

> The cost of small-format video is a fraction of older technologies. In the twenty-
> first century one or two people shoot major television documentary projects that
> once required lavish funding and at least four-plus crew members [...] This.. has
> considerably lowered the bar as to what television audiences accept as
> documentary. The speed of this kind of filmmaking, its low cost, and the fact
> that a person with almost no technical skill can perform it, has opened the field
> of documentary making to the entire industrialized world. (2006: 294)

As such there is a vastly extended space for 'factual' programming across the schedules,
which problematises documentary's status (Roscoe and Hight, 2001: 7). Winston has also
argued that 'there are increasing signs of documentary being put under pressure to win
larger audiences by becoming "lighter". Moreover, some of the most significant hybrids
in recent programme development have had a marked "infotainment" character' (1995:
24).

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Fundamentally, the shift to factual entertainment has some key political economic drivers. They involve global factors such as the expansion of satellite broadcasting, and national factors such as the 1992 Broadcasting Act requirement that twenty-five per cent of programmes should be produced by independents (Brunsdon *et al*, 2001: 31). As Brundson *et al* have argued, '[b]oth, in different ways, increase pressure on programme-makers to provide more and cheaper programming, in a context where a substantial proportion of the national audience is opting out of terrestrial broadcasting for, in particular, sport and film viewing on satellite and cable' (2001: 31).

7.2 New times, new values

In this transformed context, production values have undergone a radical shift. In the qualitative analysis that follows I shall explore the nature of that change, and the implications of it for creativity and innovation within television production. The key changes to the production environment that have impacted on production values can be described as: commercialisation, deprofessionalisation and multiskilling. These changes have occurred under general conditions of casualisation, as discussed in chapter 5. Alongside these changes, there has been the rise of a new discourse around creativity, which is highly neoliberal, geared towards economic growth, and encourages the values of enterprise, entrepreneurialism, and self-actualisation through creative individualism.

7.2.1 Commercialising creativity

As explained in chapter 3, neoliberal governmental policies towards media regulation allowed the introduction of satellite and multi-channel television systems throughout the 1980s and 1990s. By the mid-1990s multi-channel became a reality, leading to the introduction of much greater choice and competition in the industry. As Sparks argues, during this period 'neoliberal ideology increasingly favoured competition and markets as against the combination of political and cultural paternalism that had dominated the main national broadcasting organisations' (Sparks, 2007). In this context, audience share for the major terrestrial broadcasters has been steadily falling since the 1980s (ibid).

This has had a major impact on factual television, putting far greater pressure on broadcasters to maintain high ratings, in the face of this growing competition. Mainstream broadcasters have had to develop programmes that are able to attract as large an audience as possible and also hold on to hard to reach demographic groups such as young people (ibid.). This has led to the creation of new forms of popular factual television, such as emergency formats and reality television, which attract high audiences. As Dovey has argued:

> The explanation [for the rise of reality television]... is to be found in the increased commercial pressure on all TV producers which follows from varying degrees of deregulation and increased competition for audience share with new channels. This, it is argued, has driven down the costs of production throughout the early years of the 1990s, as well as increasing the necessity to produce more and more ratings-friendly programme forms. (2000: 83-4).

At the same time, broadcasters have responded to the economic threat to their business model by forcing through a series of measures aimed at their employees, which have had the effect of casualising the industry. This has involved moving from predominantly in-house production to subcontracting production to independent companies, which for many workers involved a shift from permanent, full-time, organised employment to a succession of short-term contracts under precarious and harsh conditions (Sparks, 1994).

During the 1990s, casualisation combined with the cutting of programme budgets, particularly in factual television, which has continued unabated to this day.[53] As factual based programming has dramatically expanded to fill the schedules, budgets have been slashed, and production times significantly reduced (Ellis and McLane, 2006: 294-5). The commissioning focus now is on commercial return, and popular formats, rather than on one-off documentaries, which are expensive to make.

In my research, all but one of the freelancers studied believed that their industry has become far more commercialised, with a large proportion believing that this has had negative consequences on the content produced. The commercial imperatives that now

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[53] This has hit the BBC's documentary department very hard, with department staff reduced from 120 to 70 in the last two years (Silver, 2006). In 2006 Mark Thompson, the Director General of the BBC, introduced a series of budget cuts for indies and in-house production alike and announced 50 per cent cuts in the BBC documentary department.

dominate within the independent television sector have created an obsession within indies to capitalise on intellectual property rights. As Paul commented:

> I think the industry is heading that way more and more: returning series, series that you can make money on beyond the screen, you know, a book, merchandise and follow ups. And every company knows that it is a potential business changing commission if you get a returnable format series, so every company I think really is prioritising that.

My interviewees contended that the new commercialised climate has impacted negatively on production values. Sarah told me that she thinks 'that the content has changed mainly because television, factual television has become so much more entertainment-driven'. Because entertainment programmes now have much bigger budgets, she said that she thought 'that documentaries have suffered from the falling away of high production values'.

It also appeared that the impact of this squeeze on budgets was significant. For example, Sarah described the impact of a compressed production schedule on the making of a programme about Obsessive Compulsive Disorder:

> I was expected to start shooting after about 2 weeks. I managed to get it up to 3 weeks. But 3 weeks to find contributors for a film, and bear in mind that people with OCD are so ashamed of their condition...That programme was a nightmare to work on from start to finish... because constantly we were being squeezed and squeezed and squeezed, and the anxiety levels that I experienced on that were really high.

A number of my interviewees also felt that commercialisation impacted negatively on the quality of individuals working in the industry:

> Eleanor: I've been away [from the industry] for 4 years and in those 4 years you've seen the rise of certain mega indies and they're making a lot of money and the moment you're looking at people making a lot of money you're looking at a horrible drop in standards ...the quality of the people that work in the industry has declined. That's happened because you pay peanuts. If you pay peanuts what you tend to do is you get runners, and push them into positions of power, where they'll do anything because they are so happy to be elevated, they'll do anything to get someone on a morning talk show.

Other interviewees described how the high production values held in the past were increasingly being put under pressure with the shift towards factual entertainment.

This was linked to the fact that more factual programmes are being commissioned and produced by industry figures with a background in entertainment programming, where a different emphasis would be placed on core documentary and current affairs skills such as fact-checking:

> Louise: One thing that I do think is that when I was at the BBC one thing that was hammered into me was production values and if you were doing a factual programme you bloody well checked every last damn fact and checked it and checked it and not a thing would go into the script that wasn't absolute. And what I've find in the Indies is that I've had to fight for that, and there's an awful lot of hand waving and people going 'does it really matter, will anyone ever really bother' and I think 'yes it does matter'.

Commercialisation was felt to be eroding the barriers between the programme content and the advertising, as the boundaries were becoming more blurred:

> Emma: it's a business, and there are people whose job it is to get people in *CDUK* wearing their clothes, and television does sell things. I mean the barrier between adverts and programmes has eroded.

Ultimately, a sense emerged that commercialisation impacted negatively on creativity and innovation. One of the most senior interviewees, who has worked in the industry since the 1950s, argued that the structural changes happening within the industry, with the rise of the 'super-indies', were having this effect:

> Ivan: If you finish up with seven super-indies, and you get what I've called in that speech an OPEC of super-indies, very soon they will start determining what is economically viable for them, and that's all the broadcaster will get to look at, and they will have killed off all the little furry mammals which are busy beavering away making all kinds of different programmes, and creating and maintaining the diversity, they will all get killed off. And if the big beasts do rule the jungle and all the little furry mammals are being chased away, well I think that jungle could very quickly turn into a desert...

7.2.2 Entrepreneurialism

> During the course of the 1980's, the idea of an enterprise culture has emerged as a central motif in the political thought and practice of the conservative government in Britain. Its radical programme of economic and institutional reform has earlier been couched primarily in the rediscovered language of

economic liberalism, with is appeals to the efficiency of the markets, the liberty of individuals and the non- interventionist state. But this programme has increasingly also come to be represented in 'cultural' terms, as concerned with the attitudes, values and forms of self understanding embedded in both individual and institutional activities. (Keat and Abercrombie, 1991: 1)

In the place of established television production values oriented around craft, quality and public service, a new set of values have become dominant amongst television workers, which are connected to entrepreneurialism, individualisation and self-promotion in the free market of ideas and opportunities. Here, we see how a new discourse around creative labour emerges which promotes self-enterprise and self-commodification, and sits uneasily alongside older values associated with talent, skill and craft. This new discourse, closely associated with neoliberalism, can be seen most clearly amongst the younger interviewees, while it is most contested by the older workers (although it appears in both groups, and sometimes is contested within a specific individual). For example, the majority of the younger freelancers expressed the importance of marketing oneself as a commodity in the television labour market, as this exchange with Rachel indicates:

DL: Entrepreneurialism. How important is it to be entrepreneurial in television?
R: I mean I think it's essential to be able to think ahead and market yourself, and plan your next move.
DL: So self-promotion is important?
R: I don't think you can do it without it.
DL: What does it mean to you being entrepreneurial?
R: I think to me it means constantly talking to people about the way the industry is going, about what companies are doing what, constantly making sure I'm abreast of what's going on...making sure I know what's out there, knowing what the options are for me and kind of making myself more marketable so that I'm more employable.

Jack, 36, also expressed the importance of being 'proactive', and entrepreneurial, telling me that in order 'to get on in the business you do need a certain amount of innovation, enthusiasm, developing your own stuff, just being proactive basically'.

Here, we can see how the discourse of enterprise, so favoured by New Labour, can be seen in the values and language of my respondents. The very language used to describe their careers, particularly amongst the younger freelancers, is full of words and expressions such as 'opportunity', 'being proactive', 'entrepreneurial', 'making it', and

'drive'. The values of competitive individualism are internalised, and form a key part of a enterprising discourse which shapes these individuals' working identities. The promise held out by this discourse is that of self-actualisation through enterprise, adaptivity and flexibility. This can be seen in the hope amongst the younger interviewees that despite the rigours of the competitive, individualistic labour market, everything could be transformed by that one big opportunity. For example, Jenny described the challenges she had faced in her career, having to move from short-term contract to short-term contract, interspersed with episodes of temping work, and parental pressure to 'get a proper job', with a pension and security. However, despite this, she is holding on in there, because of the prospect of career transformation, in which the phrase 'opportunity' is repeated like a mantra:

> You've just got to rise to every occasion, you've got to seize those opportunities, you've got to take those opportunities, you've got to find opportunities.

Often these entrepreneurial sentiments were highly individualised, stressing an association with enterprise and self-reliance, self-motivation and self-promotion. Indeed, a strong theme emerges from the interviews showing the commodification of the self that occurs in the cultural economy of television production. As described in chapter 2, social transformations associated with reflexive modernisation mean that particular discourses have emerged which orient the self around self-enterprise and self-commodification in keeping with the values of neoliberal society. As Rose argues 'Contemporary individuals are incited to live as if making a project of themselves: they are to … develop a "style" of living that will maximise the worth of their existence to themselves…[and] transfer ourselves in the direction of happiness and fulfilment' (1996: 157). The emergence of an individuating discourse of choice and self-enterprise in society means that the neo-liberal subject is positioned as a 'stand-alone' individual, able to thrive in a new socio-economic environment (Walkerdine *et al* 2001, 2), one that was highly evident amongst my participants.

In the television labour market freelances have organised their own labour market in such a way as to produce 'an intensification of the self-commodification processes by which each individual seeks to improve his/her chances of attracting gainful employment' (Ursell, 2000: 807). Jack told me how important it was to be enterprising within the industry:

> I think to get much higher in the business you really have to be developing your own ideas and projects really. 'Cause otherwise if someone else comes up with the cracking perfect idea they're not going to go to someone else to make it for them, they're going to make it themselves.

Similarly, Sarah, described how '[y]ou have to be able to sell yourself with flair quite a lot... in order to get ...in the door somewhere'.

But while the values of enterprise (and networking) are powerfully expressed by my interviewees, this is by no means the consensus view. Again a discursive schism appears to open up, raising important questions. For example, Simon, whilst acknowledging the importance of enterprise, argues that talent is still the key factor in success:

> I think entrepreneurialism to me is coming up with new ideas and creating new opportunities... I think that for the producer/director that's not what really gets you... I don't think that's what gets you on. I think it's being creative and knowing your job.

Equally, Colin stressed the values of co-operation and a mutually supportive network above a ruthless individualism:

> I've never found any of my fellow editors to be competitive... As a bunch, certainly the ones I know, and I know a few, we are always very keen and enthusiastic for our fellow editors to be picking up work. And there is certainly an informal network of you know 'do you know anyone else', 'yes well I do', and passing names and numbers on.

From this point of view, a clear tension emerges in the discourse of my interviewees between the naked individualism engendered by the casualised, precarious labour market on the one hand, and the need to be supportive and co-operative in order to find work on the other.

7.2.3 Deskilling and altering professional identity

In the commercialised, self-enterprising context of contemporary television production, a new set of values appears to have come into place in the television

industry. These can be largely attributed to changes in the regulatory environment, and in the conditions of work and employment. For example, in the commercial sector of broadcasting, but also with close parallels at the BBC, Ursell has noted how 'the valued media professional and creative individual is in train to becoming either de-professionalised and/or subordinated by cost-driven production criteria' (2003: 45). The current change in production values can be traced back to a political change in the way broadcasting was perceived by free-market ideologues during the 1980s. Before the Peacock Report, the deleterious effects of competition were always traditionally recognised in broadcasting, with the BBC being seen by government as a patron for creative workers (see Briggs, 1961b, Chapter 5). This was based on an early belief that for the BBC, the task of educating, informing and entertaining the public would be at risk if workers were explosed to a working environment driven purely by market forces. Television production was understood as a craft, and creativity as fragile, needing a secure environment to flourish within. This was affirmed in 1977 by the Annan Committee which reported British broadcast products as being 'hand-made by craftsmen' (Annan, 1977: 28). However, this can be seen as the last time that 'Parliament reasserted PSB values with regard to the perceived crucial contribution of broadcast workers seen as "professionals"' (Ursell, 2003: 35).

This all changed in the 1980s under the free market ideology of the New Right, as described in chapter 3. The protected environment for broadcast workers became a target of these ideologues, as evidenced in the words of Sir Alan Peacock, the man charged with leading a review into public service broadcasting in the 1980s:

> [W]e received evidence… that the broadcasting industry was wasteful of resources through over-manning and self-indulgent working practices. In particular the cost for productions by the BBC and ITV have been compared with those for independent production which… are cheaper but just as good. (Peacock, 1986: 532)

In 1987 Thatcher challenged the ITV companies as 'the last bastion of restrictive practices' (Crisell, 1997: 235) – and in so doing the Reithian idea of the broadcaster as craftsman and valued media professional, which had been reasserted by Annan Committee, came to be associated with trade unionism, which the free marketers wanted to stamp out (Ursell, 2003: 36).

The effect on television production has been dramatic. For example, in her study of journalism, Ursell has noted that:

> In such conditions, there is a question mark about the ability of television workers to produce 'quality' output. Quality is measured as consisting of accuracy, factualness, completeness and impartiality, yet they are seen as being achieved against the odds, with lack of time, too few people, and not enough training. (2003: 40)

Learning from colleagues on the job diminishes or disappears, as older media professionals are either forced out of the industry, or have no time to informally train younger colleagues. For Ursell, '[t]he loss of colleagues, particularly the older and more experienced ones, in the context of more pressurised production schedules, constitutes the erosion of relational structures and temporal space allowing journalists to think and to reflect on their practice' (2003: 41).

My research suggests a similar trend, indicating that in this highly commercialised climate, the professional status of programme-makers has altered, along with the desired skills base required by broadcasters and production companies. Before the deregulation of the industry, programme-makers, editors and camera operators had the security of a 'job-for-life', and were able to spend their career steadily accumulating expertise in specific areas of programme-making. As Jack told me:

> It was different back then [in the 1970s –1980s]. You spent five years as a researcher, another five as an assistant producer, and then you were a director. You spent years learning your craft. There was a career path, there was security and the pay was much better.

This training ensured a professionalism within television production of a particular type, one that existed within large bureaucratic organisations such as the BBC, and came with a particular public service ethos. The status of the documentary film-maker in this period can be seen as one with high professional status, echoing the wider culture of professionalism at the time, especially within large bureaucratic organisations (Parker, 1977). In factual television, the shared ethos, inherited from a long-standing public service broadcasting tradition, was one that placed an emphasis on television's educative, social purpose. However, Richard noted that this focus on skills and craft was vanishing. Instead he said that '[t]oday, it seems to happen far more by chance and luck, and

without the same learning process. Directors today seem to wing it far more; they don't have the same knowledge of the medium and how to make bloody good television'.

Again, a generational difference emerged in attitudes towards production, with my data persistently showing that amongst both the younger freelancers *and* the older owner-managers, there was a feeling that the past was associated with 'quality' television, whereas the future was highly uncertain, with high production values under threat. Again this finding was biased generationally, with a greater proportion of the more established, older participants expressing this feeling. Generational differences are key here, as older television workers have an earlier reference point to previous production values and conditions, whereas the younger ones are more completely immersed in the contemporary, more commercial values. Although my sample is relatively small, it is interesting that only one of the under-30s expressed any awareness of different production values in the past, whereas all but one of those over 35 years old did.

For James, there was 'far more freedom to try ideas out' in the '1970s or 1980s'. Colin talked about the length of time that was spent training individuals in the past, and said that 'the Beeb expected people who were going to be cameramen or editors to train for five, six or seven years. Far longer than you ever did in the freelance sector'. For him, that was part of the BBC's 'commitment to quality' which 'appears to be going out of the window now'. In its place, '[t]here is the belief that anyone can film, anybody can edit, and I just don't believe it to be true'.

In this context, the past appears to have become talismanic for my participants, evocative of a lost 'golden age'. Sarah described how new commercial values had become a priority for her, yet the spectre of the 'glory days' clearly hangs over her response:

> Sarah: Yeah I think it's you know I'm just a little bit too young to remember the glory days of documentary making in British television but the sort of emphasis on branding for programmes that you make and I mean ratings have always been a preoccupation but I think more than ever and I think the sort of 'is it a returner?' that sort of question.

Paul, at 26 also part of the younger generation of production staff, also exhibited a clear awareness of older values in programme-making:

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> ...the time frame has telescoped in so much as the kind of landmark programming that people were making in the 70s...and the 80s, you know, things like *Disappearing World* you know, that kind of programming is almost impossible to get commissioned these days...You've really got to be able to squeeze the pennies to offer something for the best possible value.

Therefore, in a discursive sense, the values and production climate of the past haunt the present, showing how the new values of commercialism are far from readily accepted and internalised, but instead are being constantly contested by my interviewees.

For my respondents it would seem that the professional ethos and the production values of factual television have altered significantly from the past. Furthermore, new technology, and the prerequisite for 'multi-skilling', are pushing down the barriers to entry to this profession. Training and skills provision is in decline, as there is less investment by companies on the professional development of their staff (Ursell, 2000). The apprenticeship that was traditionally undertaken to enter the industry, as a film-editor, cameraman and director, is now vanishing, as digital technology makes it commercially viable for broadcasters and production companies to employ people to make programmes with far less skills than previously. The short-termist profit-oriented culture described earlier that typifies the flexible organisations of the independent television industry mitigates against a long-term craftsmanship which stems from a particular professionalism.

Within television, my research would suggest a process of deskilling has taken place in the industry, which has led to an altered professional status. Much as Braverman shows how contemporary capitalism leads to the deskilling of 'craftsmen' in a number of areas, as there is an increase in the interchangeability of labour and a decline in the levels of training (Braverman, 1974), so too can this process can be witnessed in television production as craft skills embedded over time are increasingly eroded, and carried out by interchangeable production staff. In factual television production this means that editing is increasingly done by producers, filming is done by assistant producers, and the skilled technical production staff become marginalised, and too expensive.

Alongside this process of deskilling, there has been a cultural and economic shift away from the values of what Sennett (2006) calls 'craftsmanship'. For Sennett, 'Getting something right, even though it may get you nothing, is the spirit of true craftmanship'

(2006: 195). In what he calls 'the new culture's idealized worker', the commitment of the craftsperson is missing, the belief in 'doing something well for its own sake' (2006: 195, 105). As he notes, 'Understood this way, craftsmanship sits uneasily in the institutions of flexible capitalism... Institutions based on short-term transactions and constantly shifting tasks, however, do not breed that depth' (Sennett, 2006: 105). Here, we see how the erosion of craftsmanship in new capitalism takes place at the same time as the erosion of the traditional moral anchor of lifetime workplace identities (Sennett, 1998).

Like other professionals, programme-makers are less likely to work in a clearly defined role throughout their working life, and are increasingly likely to work in complex flexible and fluid organisations with the expectation of numerous changes in location and role specification over a career (Johnson, 1995). This trend is undermining traditional certainties about what a career in television involves, as Rachel noted:

> To tell you the truth, I personally wouldn't want a job for life. I think we've all grown up in such a consumer society, and we do want the best all the time, and be able to take the best option all the time. No I don't think jobs for life really do exist, and I don't think we want them to either. Most people I know are planning to do lots of different things in their life. So in a way I just see it as part of the society that we are creating around us.

Indeed, this sense that television is a temporary 'job', rather than a vocation, was particularly evident when the freelance group were asked if working in the industry could be a job for life, with the majority expressing that they did not believe working in television was a permanent occupation for them. This was perhaps typified in an exchange with Jack, who has since left the industry to work in higher education:

> DL: Do you think that television is going to be your job for life?
> Jack: I don't know. I'd like to think that it might be. I'd like to find a way where I could combine it with having a life outside of work. So because this is where my skills are, this is the industry that I can actually make a decent living in. So the straightforward answer is I don't know. But I wouldn't hesitate to switch to something else if it gave me a stable income and allowed me to have more of a home life.

7.2.4 Multiskilling

The trend towards multi-skilling in the industry has exacerbated the increasing ambiguity my respondents feel towards their professional identity. Multi-skilling in factual television production refers to the trend for creative staff to increasingly have knowledge of a range of different skills. So, for example, the vast majority of camera operators working in factual television must now also have the ability to record sound. Previously, these were seen as radically different disciplines, with their own clear professional demarcations. Similarly, in the same field, producer/directors (the title itself indicative of the blurring of two previously distinct occupational identities) will often be expected to be able to film their own material using lightweight digital cameras, and increasingly to edit it themselves. My findings clearly show the impact of this trend on creative practice, and echo research done in other areas of audio-visual production. For example, in his study of BBC news production, Cottle noted the deleterious effects of multi-skilling on news journalists, making them computer-bound and more pressurised (1999). Similarly, studying the rise of multi-skilling in television news production in Spain and the UK, Avilés *et al* note the risks that it poses for accuracy and depth, and suggest that 'multi-skilling leaves journalists less time to fulfill traditional journalistic practices, such as double-checking of sources and finding contextual information' (Avilés *et al*, 2004: 99). However, despite this they write that 'multi-skilling seems to be a trend that will increase in the near future mainly because of economic reasons' (ibid.).

My field research demonstrates this shift towards multi-skilling, which came across as a major issue, particularly for the freelancers, with all of the group discussing the necessity to be able to multiskill these days. As Jack told me:

> In terms of how it's made, um, I think that the multi-skilling thing is going to continue even further and I think it will be standard that people like me will be expected to shoot, direct and cut in fact.

Indeed, according to Jack, clearly many film-makers are increasingly expected to manage all aspects of production, from 'directing', 'shooting', to 'getting access, researching the storylines, negotiating access with people, building relationships, [and] planning what the storyline is going to be'. Andrew also told me how as an assistant producer he was now expected to multi-skill to previously unprecedented levels:

> Well yeah I went for a job recently where they said they wanted an AP to be able to edit with final cut pro and avid, to film on Z1 and VX9000... I was like you've

got to be kidding. And because it's an AP they wanted to pay cheaply. And I was like you want someone who's a cameraman, a producer/director and an editor all in one and pay £700 a week for it. But I am aware that maybe I should get more skills.

These interviewees told me how their craft suffered as a result of these new demands, with the majority of the freelance group expressing their concerns in this regard. Some suggested that there will be a 'two-tier' television industry in terms of production values now, where there will be expensive, big-budget programming, and cheaper material made by people with less experience who are carrying out multiple aspects of the production process:

> James: I mean I see TV going this way - on the one hand there are a lot more international 'co-pros',[54] there's a lot more big budget stuff than there used to be...But then there's a whole other tier of programming that is obviously filling the gaps and channels. That's where they are going to start getting people to shoot, direct, edit... there is going to be this move to let the AP do the whole thing on their salary of £600 a week. Can't wait to see the result.

Indeed, when I pressed James about the impact of multi-skilling on the industry, his prognosis was gloomy:

> That is going to be the biggest disaster ever to hit television. I'll tell you what happens now. People are expected to go out and expected to shoot. So they go out and they shoot hours of totally shit rushes, I mean appalling rushes... Then they get an experienced editor who pulls his hair out rescuing their appalling rushes, but really using all his skill to cut around the worst examples of their camera work and salvage something resembling a story with their appalling rushes yeah? As soon as you get these people a) shooting b) researching and c) editing you know they are too stretched...So they're really going to stretch themselves too thin. You've just about got away with it up until now because it feels rough and ready, but there's somebody skilful putting it together anyway. This is just going to be, quality-wise, the straw that broke the camel's back.

Therefore it was clear that the trend towards multi-skilling is something that worried my interviewees significantly, in terms of how they felt it undermined the quality of the programme that they were working on. It was felt that a key issue was that the actual 'skills' being produced by this new economic demand for multi-taskers were inferior to those that were available before. For example, when describing the shift

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[54] 'Co-pros' are co-productions, projects which are jointly funded by a number of media company partners.

towards employing assistant producers or researchers who can also film, Simon was troubled by a widespread lack of skill in using the camera:

> They are detailed skills that you have to learn, and the problem with say for example the camera is that you can switch on these cameras and see a picture, but it doesn't mean that you can film. There are a lot of people going out there filming who really don't know how to film. They really don't understand how to film. And you cannot replace a good cameraman easily.

Throughout, the research findings suggest a sense of loss of craft, which was associated with a previous time, where people were trained over an extensive period of time.

A strong sense emerged from the research that the multi-skilling environment meant experience and knowledge was being lost from factual television production which was impacting on the quality of the programme:

> C: If we go back to this cameraman/producer/editor being one person, how, for the majority of people, are they going to turn out films that have a quality the conventional production route would produce? You know normally of course you'd have the producer who came up with the idea for the film would be given a commission to make the film... A cameraman would shoot it, an editor would cut it. And that has a consistency, you have experience from the cameraman, experience from the editor, and they combine together to make the film. How can one person ever hope to replicate the work of three people and maintain the quality? I think as I said before that it's a very rare person who is able to do that. And yet they will be held up as the example to everyone else.

7.2.5 Reframing professional identity

What emerges strongly from my research is that the discourse and practice of entrepreneurialism and commercialisation within broadcasting has led to a rejection of some core values of traditional television professionalism and a re-framing of others. A clear trend emerges from the fieldwork showing that in stark contrast to the Griersonian approach to documentary as public duty, which persisted as a legacy through public service broadcasting, there has been a de-coupling of public service vocationalism in factual programme-making from professionalism for my respondents. This echoes other research done on professionalism. For example, within the medical sector Jones *et al* have examined a radical shift within medical primary care, noting that 'vocation is no longer a normative trait of positive professional identity, and has been devalued as characterising old-fashioned, over-burdened and dysfunctional approaches to primary

care' (2006: 948). In my view, a similar shift from *vocation* to *contract* is true for my interviewees. Many of my interviewees exhibited largely ambivalent feelings about television as a vocation; rather, as explored in chapter 5, it was seen as a way of getting 'nice work', interesting and sometimes glamorous work that was somehow perceived as more interesting than a 'nine-to-five' job.

When the freelance group was asked what it was that particularly attracted them to working in television, the idea of it being somehow different from the norm was clearly evident, with the majority of them maintaining that it was attractive because it was so interesting. Here we see the the *pleasure* that is expressed in being involved in a creative profession. The younger interviewees in particular consistently expressed the pleasure that they derive from working in this industry. As Colin told me:

> DL: What does it mean to you personally to be doing a creative job?
> C: Well it means everything. I've always had a creative bent if you like. Always, from childhood. And so to be working in an industry like this, I feel privileged, and very lucky to be able to do it, and I still get a silly kick out of telling people what I do, and get the reaction 'wow, that must be interesting' and I have to say 'well yes it is'.

Equally, Jenny told me that she 'loved' 'being in an environment which is not 9-5'. This was the pleasure of 'being around people who interest you, doing something that you feel involved in and that you can contribute to, and that you can make it your own, and your creative juices are flowing, and you are meeting really interesting people…And I just want to do it, I just can't explain… It's madness, you just want to do it.'

Therefore, excitement, and the self-actualisation associated with creative labour, are powerful motivating factors for working in television. However, despite claims that creative labour such as television is largely dominated by discourses around celebrity and glamour (McRobbie, 2002b; Ursell, 2000), my findings show that a public service discourse remains a powerful factor in motivating individuals to work in factual television production. In both the freelance cohort (younger, and more shaped by the discourse of creativity and glamour), and in the employers' group, a sense of public service endures, although it may well be under threat. For example, when asked why he wanted to work in television, Simon described his motivations:

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[It's] interesting. Get to delve into the lives of other people, and it's diverse as well. And there's always a hope of giving a message and have a vision of a world that you want to be in. I suppose its success for yourself and also to do good in the world.

Abigail also felt the 'need to kind of do work that feels like it matters'. David T. described how he had formed a production with an 'ethical approach', because of a deep 'belief that films can be used… to create change'. Richard had a strong public service ethos, and told me that:

[O]ne of the reasons I wanted to make television programmes is to actually tell the viewer something new about something. I don't want to make television for the sake of television if you like. And I think there's a lot of television that's made for the sake of it.

Yet, on the evidence of my research, it would appear that the public service ethos is increasingly being culturally eroded from within the industry, as it becomes seen as something old-fashioned, worthy but dull. As Abigail suggested, particular types of content are increasingly marginalised within industry circles:

One of my friends, my old series producer, who's now deputy commissioner for Channel 5, he's like 'why do you want to do these worthy programmes? Do I want to slit my wrist?'

7.2.6 Competing visions of creativity

A powerful tension emerged between individualism and collaboration in this research, which was identifiable in the discourse of my respondents, and which played out in regard to understandings about the nature of creativity itself within television production. The creative process in television, as in many other cultural industries, is a collective endeavour, involving numerous personnel For example, in their work on creativity, Negus and Pickering note that 'creativity arises not from a cultural context which exists in monolithic isolation, but from cultural borrowings and transactions' (2004: 40). Yet the new subjectivity engendered by the values of individualism, and self-enterprise, acts against co-operation, making all social exchanges acts of competition. This creates a tension between the values of individualism and of collectivity in the creative act itself. As Born has noted, in the context of the BBC, but with clear

implications for the independent sector, the casualisation of the broadcasting industry, by attuning workers always to be looking for the next job, has inhibited collaboration and led to the privatisation of ideas and intellectual property:

> The public qualities of the workplace are weakened. Ideas are effectively privatised; they become a currency by which future employment may be transacted. Intellectual property issues become pervasive in workplace politics; legalistic concerns can prevail over substantive creative ones. (2004: 191)

As argued earlier, the instrumental discourse around creativity associated with New Labour has created a very particular vision of creativity, one that is individualised, autonomous, self-reliant and associated with economic growth. Yet many different concepts of creativity exist, which form competing discourses (Banaji *et al*, 2006). The tensions which are evident in my interviewees' understanding of creativity reflect wider uncertainties, and a broader discursive struggle over what constitutes the purpose and meaning of creativity.

Some have expressed a belief in the primacy of individual talent, showing that the Romantic understanding of creativity, which promotes the idea of the individual, creative genius remains powerful and attractive for creative workers. This view of creativity is highly prevalent and often portrays creativity as constantly constrained by 'institutional, bureaucratic and economic monoliths' (Negus and Pickering: 58). Yet this view is simplistic, because it fails to acknowledge the sociological nature of creativity, in short the 'asymmetries of power and resources' (ibid.) between different actors working in cultural production, which work to reproduce particular tastes and definitions of what is socially constituted as 'creative'. Others, as described earlier in this chapter, hold on to a particularly public service *neo-Reithian* understanding of creative work and television's purpose.

However, a powerful feeling was found amongst my interviewees that creativity was under threat within the new production climate. Simon argued that the commercialisation of television production content has had a detrimental effect on the creative ability to take risks, and to innovate, as it has led to a heightened form of standardisation:

I think what's really happened more as time has gone by, that commercialism has driven people not to take as many risks… and what they tend to do now is if something works everyone else will chase that similar format and repeat it to death, I suppose to keep their jobs for as long as possible, and until it's completely dead then they're looking for the next trend. So commercialism has led to a kind of standardisation rather than in most industries where you expect commercialism to provide people with a wide range of products, but in TV it seems to be the opposite, and create a homogenous kind of [product].

Other interviewees actually questioned the creative nature of television *per se*, expressing a sense that television has become just another consumer commodity marketed to the widest possible audience:

Rachel: I don't know if television is that creative really. I don't really know. There is a creative process, but I don't think it's creative like a modern artist is. There's just not that space for it, because you are constantly trying to market to wider and wider audiences, and I think that means that creativity probably has to go down because it's got to have mass appeal, so if anything I feel that television is probably getting less creative.

James, when asked what impact the insecure environment, both for freelancers and for independent companies, has on the content, argued that:

The content becomes much safer. You have companies like October who are doing one-offs, doing the difficult documentaries, making the challenging thought-provoking films who are now finding themselves having to go for the format market in order to be able to survive. Um and there's nothing wrong with the format industry, but what's wrong is that people are now refusing to risk something because they think something is not going to work, *and because they need to fit in with what the broadcasters want.*

Perhaps most powerfully, however, comes an understanding of creativity which is essentially neoliberal in flavour: individualistic, enterprising and geared towards the marketplace. In this view, particular modes of creative endeavour are legitimated, while others are dismissed as irrelevant. In the neoliberal vision of creativity, creativity is eviscerated, ensuring that the only legitimated forms of creativity are those that produce commodifiable, profitable outcomes and products. Alternative creativities associated with collectivisation, 'culture jamming', or even skateboarding do not figure in this creative economy script 'in part because they are perceived as socially disruptive, but also because they are less easily transformed into (capitalist) accumulation strategies' (Gibson and Klocker, 2005: 100).

Such an attitude was clear at times in the discourse of my respondents. In particular, this comment from Anita, a highly successful company owner and series producer, typified this attitude, where she argued that in the current creative climate in television, 'innovative' content was seen as outmoded by the broadcasters:

> Even though they [the superindies] might not be doing that much more innovative programming, I think that they will still be able to do programming that will fit the bill because most of the channels aren't looking for innovative programming. Innovative programming is sort of seen as a bit studenty. It's not where money gets made and it's not what people are that interested in.

In the new networked, commercialised, entrepreneurial context of independent television production, making connections, and having the right 'people skills' becomes more important than the creative process:

> Sarah: I'm never going to be someone who comes up with some enormously original idea about how to shoot something. That's just not where my talents lie. But being able to get access to people and to build their trust enough so that they tell me something that they've never told anyone before on camera, get them to open up, that's what I can do really well. I don't think I've ever had a contributor who's been upset about the way that they've been portrayed but equally I don't hold back from telling the truth and all of that. So that happens to be a very good thing if you're like that for working your way through the industry. It's exactly the same set of skills.

7.3 Conclusion: insecure production values

As chapter 3 described, the television industry has become far more commercialised, as a result of multi-channel growth and deregulation. In the independent sector this has been marked by a process of consolidation, the marketisation of 'super-indies' in financial markets, and regulatory changes which allow independents to hold on to certain secondary rights. My research suggests that this is having a significant impact on production values across diverse levels and professional groups within the industry, from younger researchers to established managing directors of production companies.

Clearly, multichannel television environment has created a major *cultural* shift within factual television. As Brundson *et al* (2001) have showed, key parts of the schedule became dominated by factual entertainment and lifestyle formats during the 1990s, typified by programmes such as *Ground Force, Changing Rooms, Animal Hospital,* and a plethora of programmes on fashion, home improvement and cookery. Since then, reality and celebrity based formats have continued to rise in popularity, particularly shows with an element of gameshow competition to them, that employ reality television techniques (for example, *Pop Idol, Celebrity Big Brother, I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here!)*. Moreover, such formats are now highly lucrative intellectual properties, as independent production companies are able to exploit the rights in hitherto untapped areas. As one interviewee argues, television has become increasingly about 'returning series, series that you can make money beyond the screen, you know, a book, merchandise and follow ups', with a pressure on finding successful formats that can deliver these alternative revenue streams. In this context, 'traditional' analytical one-off documentary has continued to be marginalised in the schedules, largely now being shown on 'specialist' digital channels such as BBC 4.

Contemporary factual television production is now being produced within a far more commercialised environment than in the past. My interviews explored the impact of this commercialisation on production values, and the implications of this changing landscape in terms of the type of content being produced. All of my interviewees agreed that factual television had indeed become more commercialised, and reflected on how this had affected their careers, and the industry more broadly. Traditional values, associated with 'quality' television, were seen as being under threat from commercial concerns, with my research showing a feeling amongst television workers that there has been a subsequent decline in standards.

A number of my participants have argued that factual television has become far more homogenised, and formatted. In this highly commercial environment, broadcasters have become risk-averse, often reflexively adapting each other's successful formats. This echoes the environment that Gitlin (1994) described in his study of commercial television production in Hollywood, where producers nervously reversion successful formats, as a means of mitigating the risk inherent in cultural industries. Today, the independent television industry is producing increasingly standardised products,

accommodating the logic of the market's demand for successful formats and 'returnable' series.[55]

In the commercialised world of 'mega-indies'[56] and global competition, increasingly it seems that there is less space for the innovative independent production company:

> Dave T: When was the last time that a small indie came up with an innovation that you can remember? They don't really get a look in. And innovation to a certain degree is not encouraged. Um, so much so that very often commissioning editors will say 'we're looking for this, these are the sort of films we want'. Anything that falls outside that tends to be um just shoved away because there's no room for the slot. It's all done by slots which does kind of... Especially for small indies... You can't innovate if you don't have money coming in, you know? Innovation is a luxury in this industry so I don't know.

The trend towards consolidation and commercialisation would appear to challenge the very principles of public service broadcasting that have been established in this country, creating a situation where, as one interviewee put it 'And ultimately what's going to happen is that the strongest will survive. The strongest aren't necessarily those who are the most creatively interesting'. This is partly the logic of digitalisation, as the new regulatory structures attempt to negotiate the challenges of ensuring the continuation of public service broadcasting in an age of video-on-demand, and niche programming (Ofcom, 2004b). As Hutton has argued:

> Broadcasters... are much less confident about building schedules in which the populist and market-driven is mingled with giving audiences television they should be watching because it is good, challenging and important. Everything has to be popularised or given a personal hook; whether the news, a feature film about fatness or documentary about violence in schools, and which reaches its nadir in reality TV. They are responding to 'the market. (Hutton, 2006)

As my research demonstrates, the wider cultural tension about production values and quality are also felt extremely keenly at the individual level for production staff. The

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[55] Returnable series are those that are regularly recommissioned by the broadcasters, and run over a number of years.

[56] This is the latest trend in the restructuring of the independent sector, as greater consolidation is leading to the creation of new so-called 'mega-indies', amalgamations of a number of 'super-indies'.   See http://www.broadcastfreelancer.com/broadcast/content/ViewEditorialContentStory.do?conten tId=4512.

two conflicting discourses of public service values versus commercialisation can be clearly seen at the political, macro level. This conflict is played out in debates about 'quality' and 'dumbing down' within the industry. However, the political dominance of the logic of commercialisation is evident in recent cultural policies which are oriented towards greater commercialisation, such as the Communications Act 2003, or a recent policy report which called for the television industry to become even more commercialised, seeking global markets (Nesta, 2006). Yet the tension between these two discourses does not just exist in a media policy vacuum, but rather is played out at the microcosmic level of individual subjectivity within the industry, as the competing values and demands of neoliberal commercialisation, and what Born has called a 'neo-Reithian' attitude in British broadcasting (Born, 2004), can be detected in the language and attitudes of production staff.

Ultimately, the prevailing consensus is with the neoliberalisation of culture, as the 'creative industries' are exemplars of casualisation, and flexible specialisation. The impact on creativity, risk-taking and innovation is beginning to become clearer after more than a decade of this structural shift in the broadcasting industry. Just as independent companies are dependent on broadcasters for the next commission, so too are workers dependent on the independents for their next job. As Born has noted, this has had a detrimental impact on creativity:

> Given the chronic insecurity, the individual freelancer's relations with the current employer became a microcosm of the relations between the insecure independents and the broadcasters: the need to secure another contract militated against risk-taking or originality and towards the need to flow with prevailing trends. (2004: 186)

Here lies the true impact of the values of entrepreneurialism, commercialisation and neoliberalism on the television industry, in the threat it poses to creativity and innovation within the industry. When Channel 4 was created, and with it the independent production sector in this country, the indies produced some highly innovative content, because the demand was there from the broadcaster, and because of the regulatory context in which those companies were operating (Harvey, 2000, 2003). Now, as public service broadcasting values find themselves increasingly under threat, we also find an independent sector that is increasingly consolidated, commercial, and in fact further and further from being 'independent', as ever more companies are being bought

into by commercial investors, who are looking for a return for their investment. In this new context, the very values that inspired the creation of the independent sector, from the Channel Four Group campaign onwards, are under massive structural pressures. As Darlow, one of the founders of the campaign for Channel 4, and a pivotal figure in the evolution of the independent television sector, has argued, this raises serious issues for the ability of those working in the independent sector to take risks, to innovate, in short to be creative:

> Dare they speak out or take creative risks in a climate of all-pervading commercialism, working on short-term contracts for the broadcast institutions or separated from each other in a myriad of independent production companies which are themselves terrified of doing anything that might lose them favour with the broadcasters? Dare they repudiate the morality of the market and the attitude that says broadcasting should be valued only according to the sum of those things that can be counted or measured? (2004: 617-8)

Chapter 8. Conclusion. From independent production to capital accumulation: Creative labour and public service broadcasting

> Television devours ideas which stem either from individuals or from teams which have worked together over a long period, whose members spark ideas from each other. The nature of the teamwork is immensely important, not only in the sense that it is a team — writer, director, designer, cameraman, sound engineer, lighting engineer and others — that finally puts the programme on the air, but in the sense that the television organizations consist of creative nuclei from which ideas spring by contact, argument, collaboration. (Hood, 1970: 71)

> Broadcasting, like other cultural industries, is innovative or it is nothing. It must continually generate new ideas. [The goal should be] to create a community of employees, one that chatters, invents and criticizes. Excessive marketisation limits the collective innovation that comes from a free flow of information. In the market paradigm it is assumed that competition will fuel innovation. Now we know that it is much harder to create an innovative environment and much easier to destroy it than anyone imagined. (Mulgan, 1993: 76-80)

This thesis provides a detailed qualitative account of the nature of creative work in independent television production within a broadcasting industry that has been transformed in the last two decades as a result of political-economic, technological and sociological change. By focusing on the working lives of a relatively small group of individuals working within factual television production in the independent production sector, it depicts an industry through the testimony of casualised workers who have experienced the force of this transition within the industry. As the preceding chapters have shown, they experience a working life marked by uncertainty, networking, short-term contracts which has been accompanied by a dramatic shift in production values. They are working in an industry that has experienced the full force of deregulation and market liberalisation.

This aim of this thesis has been to assess the implications of these shifts in the structure and organisation of creative labour in the ITPS, and to consider these changes alongside wider social, political and economic change. This concluding chapter will summarise the research findings, and will then consider the overall central contributions provided by this study. It will also provide a wider context for this study, considering the

implications of my findings for the production of television in the digital age, for public service broadcasting, and for assessing the social and cultural significance of the emergence of new modes of creative labour.

8.1 Television production: continuity and change

The primary research for this thesis, backed up by secondary literature, suggests that the production culture of the television industry is in a context of rapid and deep transformation. However, it is important to recognise that these changes coexist alongside various forms of continuity. My research indicates the continued presence of modes of work and production values which have existed within the industry for many decades. However, such forms of continuity that exist are constantly being challenged by a highly commercialised logic of labour and production. For example, as chapter 7 argues, public service broadcasting values persist within factual television production, but they appear to be are increasingly under threat from a number of directions, in particular a new aggressive logic of commercialisation, consolidation and commodification in the industry. Similarly, the networking culture described in chapter 6 is to a degree an extension of the 'old-boy' club culture that has always existed within creative professions such as television; however, casualisation, technological and social change, and new modes of networked workplace sociality have precipated a sea change in the organisation of this labour market from previous periods. My research shows that for my interviewees the values of craft and skill persist, yet as chapter 7 shows, they face an acute challenge because of accelerating commercialisation, shorter production schedules, and an erosion of skills training. This echoes wider transformations within late capitalism itself, where mobility and potential are valued over deeply embedded skills accrued over time (Sennett, 2006).

The broader political economic history of the sector, as described in chapter 3, shows that despite the continuity of certain established modes of working within the television industry, the sector has undergone a significant transformation in terms of how creative work is organised. At the political-economic level, this is most clearly evident in the structural reconfiguration of the industry, away from the duopoly of the BBC and ITV, and a labour market which offered stable, protected, unionised employment (but often operated as a 'closed shop', open only to those already within the

industry), to the multi-channel production context, with a multitude of independent and quasi-independent production companies producing content on a commission basis for broadcasters. As Chapter 5 indicates, the result of this has been the creation of a labour market defined by extreme insecurity, short-term contracts and exploitation (particularly of junior production staff). Chapter 6 suggests it is a labour market where recruitment and access is organised largely through the dynamics of network sociality. As the sociological literature in this area shows, social networks offer fortunate individuals an efficient means of overcoming information asymmetries within a flexible labour market (Friedland and Robertson, 1990; Granovetter, 1990). However, my research suggests that this also creates an opaque recruitment dynamic where individuals can be unfairly excluded on grounds such as cultural capital, class and race. As chapter 7 argues, production values and skills are another area where continuity and change co-exist uneasily. In the past, the BBC and ITV companies acted as a skills incubator for the industry, investing in training for many of those who now hold senior positions within broadcasting. Today, skills training that was offered through permanent employment within the public broadcasters has been devolved to the individual. Taken together, these factors denote a shift in the organisation of labour in the industry that works predominantly in the interest of companies and capital accumulation, rather than individual creativity.

The reconfiguration of the television labour market which has occurred alongside the growth of the independent production sector means that many of the features of work which are described in this research have existed since the early 1990s. However, the rapid growth and commercialisation of the independent sector in recent years, coupled with an increased policy emphasis on labour flexibility and encouraging a more competitive economic environment, means that far more people are now experiencing these working conditions. These changes are largely the result of policy decisions taken with the aim of liberalising and deregulating the television industry and which have radically altered the structure of the broadcasting landscape in Britain, and the nature of work within it. Television production has been transformed under the wider economic and ideological context of free-market, neoliberal policies towards broadcasting, which have sought to open up the market to greater competition, to liberalise labour laws and to 'let the market rip'. A series of policy interventions since the creation of Channel 4 have favoured the growth of the independent sector, such as the

establishment of minimum quotas for commissions from independent companies, and the legal changes which have been introduced which allow independents to exploit their intellectual property through being allowed to hold on to the ancillary rights for their ideas. These developments lie behind the current financial interest in the independent production sector, driving the process of consolidation and the emergence of the 'super-indies'.

The 'super-indies' are currently in the process of buying up many of the smaller indies, who often find it impossible to compete against the financial and production strength of the larger companies. This trend is compounded because commissioners, desperate for ratings and populist factual formats in a competitive multichannel environment where audience share is declining, increasingly procure the majority of their factual content from a smaller number of larger companies who they trust will deliver commercially viable programming. Thus the formative structure of the ITPS, which emerged with the creation of Channel 4 and consisted of a large number of small production companies and 'one man bands' which specialised in particular areas and produced a diverse range of creative content, is vanishing in favour of a highly consolidated sector, with a handful of large, powerful companies dominating, and whose main obligation is to reward their shareholders with a strong commercial return on their investments.[57] In this context, the search for the 'big hit' format arguably now occludes cultural concerns about the cultural, democratic purpose of television, with a decline in creative public service broadcasting (Hutton *et al*, 2005). As new priorities begin to dominate the industry, these companies inevitably produce more formulaic and populist formatted content which can be capitalised on through merchandising deals, exports and other ancillary rights.

8.1.1 The commercialisation of television content

These structural changes go some way towards helping us understand the turn to factual entertainment within the industry. In the past factual television was predominantly delivered in the forms of 'traditional' documentary and current affairs.

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[57] Indeed, some of these companies (such as Talkback Thames) are no longer 'independents' in the strict sense of the word, as they are increasingly owned by larger multinational conglomerates.

The entrance of entertainment style devices (such as are found in reality television, make-over shows and so forth), and their immense popularity, has transformed the factual production landscape. This transformation has occurred at the same time as the independent television production sector has been increasingly commercialised and marketised. Factual entertainment genres, which are delivered as formats which can be duplicated across a number of media platforms, with the potential for book spin-off deals, merchandising deals and international export sales, have become the focus of the independents' efforts. As Moran and Malbon argue, 'the formatted TV programme is a global commodity (2006: 16). The holy grail of the 'returnable series', where a series is recommissioned, ideally creating a strong brand which can lead to secondary rights exploitation deals, is where development teams focus their efforts.

Simultaneously, other factors are also driving the shift towards less innovative content. The shift towards more generic, 'safe' content is backed up by statistical research, and is part of a wider shift within broadcasting towards more populist content within the multichannel environment, where the battle for viewers is far more fierce. For example, in his study of the delivery of public service broadcasting in the digital era, Bergg (2002) argues that broadcasters have become less innovative in recent years, a claim he illustrates with several key statistics. He shows how the number of unique programme titles on BBC 2 and Channel 4 (which he uses as examples because they have held on to their share of audience far more successfully than BBC 1 or ITV1) has experienced a dramatic decline.

Table 2: unique programme titles on BBC 2 and Channel 4

Unique programme titles on BBC2 and Channel 4			
	1993	1997	2002
BBC 2	699	570	439
Channel 4	577	522	463

Source: Bergg (2002: 11)

Equally, examining figures across all the terrestrial channels, Bergg also shows the decline in traditional forms of public service broadcasting, with current affairs

programming experiencing a 35 per cent drop between 1992 and 2002, and arts programming a 52 per cent decrease (ibid.: 12).

Therefore, in a multichannel context of vastly expanded choice, the ability of audiences to choose freely what they watch is a key catalyst for the shift in the types of public service programmes being made. Key studies suggest that what they want to watch are entertainment based programmes, not 'worthy but dull' traditional public service genres. For example, examining data from Germany and the UK, Tambini (2002) has shown how viewing figures for the traditional public service genres decline dramatically when viewers are offered greater choice through multichannel television. As he argues:

> Where there is increased choice and control, however, entertainment will win. Education and culture are, almost by definition, cultural phenomena that require external discipline. Public service broadcasting has provided some of that discipline, but as channel choice has increased, it is no longer able to make viewers' choices for them. (2002: 56)

These trends in viewing behaviour are also being accelerated as a result of the increased popularity of devices such as Personal Video Recorders (PVRs), which allow audiences to record only the programmes that they are interested in, and avoid content that they are not interested in. These shifts, which all work to marginalise public service broadcasting, are then intensified by the global context, and the rapid globalisation of the media industries within a free-market ideological context, which as Barnett has argued is seen most acutely in countries such as the UK 'with deeply embedded social democratic traditions which privilege public interest values and those institutions which exist primarily to make a positive contribution to civil society and the quality of public life' (2002: 35).

Here then we can see how technological change, leading to increased choice, a neo-liberal ideological climate advocating free-market globalisation, and the transformation of an industry through consolidation and the valorisation of commercial imperatives have converged to weaken public service broadcasting on all sides. However, if these changes are fundamentally macroscopic, impacting on the production of television from above, so too have internal sociological and cultural changes within the production environment had a radical effect on television production. My research

suggests that changes in creative labour pose an equally serious threat to the traditional values of public service broadcasting.

8.2 Creative labour

The new modalities of creative labour in the ITPS raise important questions for the public sphere, and for the nature of creative work more generally. This thesis is illustrative of an industry where working conditions for the majority are risky, where exploitation is commonplace, where access to work is based on exclusionary networks which require high levels of cultural and social capital, where traditional production skills are under threat due to heightened temporal production pressures and lack of funding, and where new production values that place commercial success over formal innovation have become dominant. These negative features are important to note, in a political context where creative labour is being feted by government and policy-makers. The reality of creative labour for many is far removed from the celebratory image of Florida's 'creative class' (2002), or any number of images of 'creative entrepreneurs'; mobile avatars of the 'creative economy'. Rather they are often atomised, anxious and individualised workers, working in industries that favour individuals with economic, social and cultural capital. All of these trends undermine the fragile creative ecology of television production.

In the context of industry transformation, a focus on production adds a necessary qualitative analysis to the traditionally top-down political-economic oriented debate about public service broadcasting. By examining the structural transformation of the industry alongside the organisation of creative labour within it, it is possible to see how debates about public service broadcasting are intimately connected to shifts within the working environment of broadcasting. On one level, the transformation of the industry is being driven by economic and technological imperatives, which in turn are altering viewer behaviour. Yet my research suggests that these changes are also internalised at the subjective psychological level for production staff. The restructuration of the factual television industry driven by commercial imperatives would appear to be having a major impact on the working lives of production staff. The values and actions of the creative workers in the sector are not solely determined by economic or technological forces. Yet, how they reconcile the demands of the industry with their

creative abilities within this changed context is an area of vital interest for the public sphere. This thesis suggests that there is an ongoing discursive battle occurring within the production community itself between the values of commodification and those of PSB, echoing the wider political-economic battle between those who argue that PSB is more vital then ever in this age of digital multichannel convergence (Miller, 2003), and those who argue that these very factors render the traditional justifications for PSB irrelevant (e.g Cox, 2004; Elstein, 2004).

My analysis suggests that the ideology of commodification is winning out over a public service ethos within the production community. As such, for my respondents, the values of entrepreneurialism and accumulation often supplant creative imperatives. They operate within a sphere where individualised and competitive networking used as a means of negotiating the risk of a precarious working culture acts against cooperation and collective learning. Just as research has pointed to the fragility of the cultural economy (McRobbie, 1998; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005), so too is creativity within cultural industries a fragile entity. For example, whilst there has been little study of the impact of insecurity on creativity within creative organisations, research from the field of education is suggestive (Shallcross, 1981), demonstrating that creativity needs careful nurturing within a secure environment where risk-taking is encouraged. Despite the constant policy focus on creativity and innovation (Bakhsi *et al*, 2008), my research suggests that the flexible accumulation imperatives of late capitalism eviscerate creative innovation through the constant anxiety of unemployment and individual competitiveness. As Paterson (2001a) has shown, the creative ecology within television production is a fragile entity which has been damaged by the deregulatory changes that have taken place in the last twenty years.

For my respondents, casualisation has also eroded their skills base. The erosion of stable employment within the public service broadcasters, traditionally the incubators of creative talent within the industry, means that skills provision is now devolved to individuals and to companies who are not motivated to invest in the skills provision of the future generation of cultural producers. Indeed, ongoing research for Skillset suggests that the casualisation of the industry in the UK has severely damaged regional skills in the film and television industries, as production companies are reporting a virtual absence of a skilled local production community in northwest England (Skillset and

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Burns Owens Partnership, 2007). Such findings suggest that government rhetoric celebrating Britain's cultural and creative achievements and strengths mask the fact that neo-liberal policies towards broadcasting serve to undermine the creative ecology of the industry, not strengthen it.

8.2.1 The casualisation of creativity

The casualisation of creative labour that has occurred within independent television production is not a new phenomenon, indeed it has existed since the formation of Channel 4, and the emergence of the sector. However, what is new is the scale of casualisation within the sector. It is estimated that 57 per cent of all independent television production staff are now freelance (Skillset, 2007). Many of the remaining 43 per cent do not show up on the official figures, but of those a sizeable percentage could hardly said to be 'secure', working as they often do on recurring fixed-term contracts inside the BBC or on a similar basis within indies. This means that creativity is now fundamentally organised within the sector through the structure of a casualised workforce.

This insecurity impacts on all aspects of the production process, and is deeply connected to the structural changes within the industry. Casualisation raises important questions about the lived reality of creative work, showing it to be far removed from the glamorous image traditionally associated with such work, where constant insecurity fuels anxiety, exploitation and frenetic, exhausting networking. But what impact does such an environment potentially have on content? Whilst such a question is impossible to answer objectively, given so many factors enter into this issue, it is vital to reflect on this crucial question. In terms of creativity, my research suggests that insecurity inhibits risk-taking. It is far more difficult to take creative risks when one's livelihood is so precarious. This indicates that the lack of security and the heightened commercial pressures of the industry potentially limit opportunities for creative risk-taking, because of the emphasis that is put on producing successful formats, which leads to imitation and risk-avoidance. As Gitlin (1994) has shown in his study of the Hollywood television industry, executives seek to negotiate the risks inherent in television production by employing such tactics, yet the downside is a lack of creative innovation within the industry. Although this study can only speak to the experiences of a small sample, their experiences, backed up with

research such as Bergg's (2002) would suggest that a similar process has intensified in British television production, under commercial pressures.

This would suggest that casualisation acts as the catalyst for a more conservative production culture. This dynamic for my respondents is intensified by the atomised nature of a casualised labour force, where there is no opportunity for them to form strong bonds within the production community. As chapter 6 suggests, weak ties provides them with competitive advantage through a dense social network, rather than deep ties forged over time. This process of moving around constantly, often on contracts of a few weeks or months, means that for my respondents there is a marked lack of a collective identity, a collective work-place politics, and a common consensus about the cultural importance of television as cultural form. Despite their intense efforts to make a living in this industry, they appear to be missing a clearly articulated sense of the purpose of factual television production. Therefore it is easy for values of capital accumulation and individualism to step into that vacuum.

8.2.2 Networking and diversity

In turn, casualisation drives the networking culture that is described in chapter 6. The long-term shift towards opaque forms of recruitment and access to the industry raises difficult questions about the demographic composition of the industry. In recent years, the lack of diversity within the media industries has been recognised, and there have been a large number of initiatives to address the problem. Greg Dyke famously announced that the BBC was 'hideously white' and set about attempting to boost BME employment within the organisation (BBC, 2001). At the policy level, interested parties such as Skillset and Bectu have sought to increase the diversity of the media industries. However, despite these efforts, the media industries are overwhelmingly populated by people from wealthy middle- to upper-class backgrounds and are predominantly white (Holgate and McKay, 2007). Holgate and McKay's (2007) research finds that while over a third of the London workforce are from ethnic minority communities, just 8 per cent of workers in the audio-visual sector in London are black or Asian. This can be partly explained by the fact that entry to the media industries is poorly paid, if paid at all, and so many from less well-off backgrounds are unable to sustain the financial penury that entry to the creative industries entails.

My focus on labour market processes for a small group of individuals helps to explain why this might be the case. The lack of transparency caused by networked labour markets generates opacity and exclusion for my respondents. For them, jobs and entry to the profession is largely governed by personal contacts. This raises the question: how does someone from outside of an established middle-class network make the necessary contacts to enter the industry? To the outsider, these industries often appear hopelessly remote, with no clear way in. For my respondents, routes into television often come about through personal contacts (often family networks), and through working for nothing to gain 'work experience'. Again this is a major factor working against diversity: clearly it is very difficult for someone who does not have the economic backing of their parents to survive entering an industry that is predominantly London based (and therefore costs of living are very high) where you are expected to subsidise yourself for lengthy periods of time in order to gain the experience to get paid work. Therefore diversity in the industry rests on access to forms of capital which marginal groups do not enjoy.

Clearly this lack of diversity matters on a political level, and on a creative level. Politically it is important because, following Anderson (1991), television, as part of our common culture, plays a fundamental role in the imagining of community (see also Gillespie, 1995). If the role of representation is only available to those from comfortable backgrounds, then it fails to represent the nation adequately. Marginal groups are further excluded from the public sphere because of their inability to access jobs in the media industries, with obviously negative consequences for social inclusion and democracy. Secondly, from a creative level, it is vital that all parts of society are able to express and develop their creative abilities. Surely, if the industry is peopled predominantly by middle to upper class individuals then many creative people are excluded, and the industry risks stagnation. Difference is vital to creativity. Research has shown that creativity thrives in conditions of diversity (Amabile, 1996), suggesting that a creative labour market that is closed off to many potentially talented entrants through lack of resources, be they cultural or financial, is prone to stagnation and timidity. The closed network culture stifles creativity. As Fukuyama (1997) has shown, tight-knit networks can be slow to adapt and unaware of new ideas. Coleman (1988) has also argued that the importance of social norms within networks, and the threat of sanction for contravening such norms

can stifle creativity and innovation. As Antcliff *et al* have argued, 'networks can be associated... with nepotism, favouritism, patronage, a lack of transparency and opposition to change' (2005b: 6).

I would argue that for my respondents the network dynamics of the creative labour market in television erode creative diversity. While this is not to criticise networks *per se*, it is to recognise that the current dynamics of closed networks that function within the ITPS make entry difficult to outsiders, and allow for nepotism, favouritism, and an erosion of the social democratic culture of equal opportunities which was created through political struggle in the twentieth century. As McRobbie has argued, in relation to the emergence of 'network sociality' in the cultural economy, '[t]here is hardly any need to deal with bureaucracy, and without any of the anti-discrimination legislation in place what happens is that old and more elite and socially exclusive patterns re-emerge and come to distinguish the world of the ... small scale creative economies' (2007: 4).

8.2.3 Production values and the erosion of creativity

For my respondents, within the casualised, networked, individualised context of their working landscape, a new set of production values have emerged. As chapter 7 shows, highly commercial and entrepreneurial values are commonplace amongst my respondents. If their experiences were replicated more widely across the industry then this would denote a widespread change in production values. This of course is work for a much larger study, but what do the experiences of my interviewees suggest in this respect? I would argue that they indicate that structural change in the industry (leading to an increasingly commercial environment) combined with a political and social cultural of neoliberal individualisation, compounded by the shift away from a culture of public service towards personalised consumption (echoed in the wider shift from citizen to consumer (Marquand, 2004)), have all contributed to a transformation of the traditional public service values within factual television production. In their place a new set of values become evident in the testimony of my repondents, that emphasise commercial success and individual self-actualisation. The 'artist-as-networker' archetype that Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) describe can be seen in vivid colours in the attitudes of many of my respondents where a public ethos appears to be being displaced by individual motivation towards success.

As chapter 3 argued, the political-economic transformation of the broadcasting industry had a radical structural impact. Yet, as chapters 5-7 show, the transformation of factual television production can also be detected through my respondents testimonies at the more intimate discursive level, through the emergence of particular working identities within this new, more commercialised context, and in the subtle but forceful shift in production values that was evident in the interviews and field-work conducted. As chapter 7 indicates, the new production values that my respondents display are very different from the craft based values of an earlier generation of producers and programme-makers, indicating that a new generation of television professionals is adapting to the transformed commercial realities of the broadcasting industry. The PSB tradition emphasises the importance of broadcasting in terms of its public and civic role, focusing on the vital role of the media in terms of education, the public sphere and the role of the media in terms of creating a healthy democracy. But in the commercialised context, these values appear to be under threat. Just as there are growing political tensions about the continued relevance of public service broadcasting, so too is the validity of public service broadcasting ethos under threat within the production values of the production staff themselves, and within the working community. Thus, at the very localised level which this study is based, there is evidence that echoes Ley's assertion that 'public service broadcasting is giving way to market-driven broadcasting' (2001: 110).

By focusing on the reality of the production environment in this thesis, my research would suggest that for my respondents at least there is a clear gap between the rhetoric of creativity employed by New Labour, and the reality of media policy decisions on the capacity for creativity within the ITPS. Britain is world-renowned for excellence in broadcasting (Nesta, 2006). Yet much of this reputation rests on the infrastructure that existed to support creative endeavour in this field, which largely existed within the protected and subsidised field of public service broadcasting. This protection is currently being eroded, as witnessed for example in new funding arrangements force the BBC to make huge cuts in their programming provisions in order to make up the £2Bn shortfall in the licence fee settlement (Conlan, 2007). Political and economic forces, sharpened by debates about digitisation, are gathering to threaten the future of public service broadcasting in Britain. But these changes are also occurring internally at a discursive level. This research is indicative of the impact of a sea change in attitudes towards television production on the internal cultural of production within the industry. Much as

Born (2004) argues in relation to the BBC, the independent television sector has also seen a dramatic commercialisation of creativity in recent years. The new values that emerge within this context threaten the values of public service broadcasting from within the industry.

8.3 Creative labour and public service broadcasting

Debates about PSB must be connected to a broader discussion about the organisation of creative work in this industry. This research takes place within the context of a heated debate about the future of public service broadcasting in the UK, which is being fuelled as digitisation becomes a reality for ever more viewers. The future of public service broadcasting is at a crossroads, with the critics of public funding for PSB growing ever more vociferous. They argue that as digital television brings vast choice to the viewer, the key justification for public subsidy, market failure, is no longer viable. With near unlimited spectrum, they argue that the market is more efficient at meeting consumer needs, and should in theory be able to provide consumers with all the areas of niche programming that they need. Furthermore, they argue that as a multichannel, converged media environment produces far greater competition for viewers, that this leads broadcasters such as the BBC away from their original charter, of educating and informing, and far more down the line of entertainment in order to compete for audience. For these reasons, they argue that the licence fee should be abolished, and that the market should be left to its own devices. In this vein, influential authors such as Cox (2004) and Elstein (2004) have argued that public service broadcasting should now be funded by subscription.

Economic pressures are also threatening public service broadcasting in the commercial sector, as advertising revenues for airtime have fallen dramatically (Cowling, 2002). This has been highly damaging for the commercial public service broadcasters such as ITV and Channel 4, and raises questions about how future television content will be funded. Trends that have evolved as a result of this include sponsored television and product placement, where advertisers pay a premium to have their brand associated with a particular programme.

At stake within this transformation of an industry is the future of factual television production in Britain. Traditional PSB genres such as current affairs, arts programming and one-off documentaries have suffered a precipitous decline, simply because they fail to attract the levels of audience that the broadcasters want, particularly at peak times. While developments such as BBC 4 have provided a home for this kind of programming, the danger is that such content has become permanently marginalised within the schedules. Yet, as this research has shown, this marginalisation has occurred not only at the macro-economic level, but also within the production community itself.

In this context, the debate about the future of PSB can not only be seen to exist in external policy debates about market failure and digitisation but must also take into account the transformed production culture of television production. Just as at the policy level there is a heated discussion about PSB, with the very idea of PSB itself coming under attack, so too is there a discursive battle within the television production community as to the future and purpose of television. It is clear that much of the research that has examined the future of public service broadcasting approaches the subject from a policy perspective, focusing on abstract issues such as market failure, supply and demand, spectrum scarcity and convergence. However, the issue of production is rarely discussed. Here, I have approached the issue of PSB from a more unusual perspective, by focusing on the changes that neo-liberal media policies and market transformations have brought to the production community.

While government policy has consistently recognised the economic value of creativity to the UK economy, there has been a radical neglect of the fragility of the creative ecology in terms of the working environment that creatives are operating within. As all creative endeavour becomes framed within the 'big hit' meritocratic economic context of globalisation and free markets, this key issue has become lost. This research shows the importance of refocusing cultural policy towards the issue of labour. There are welcome signs that this is happening at a tentative level. Recent reports on the creative industries for policymakers have stressed the fragility of creative economies, and the challenges facing creative workers as a result of trends such as flexible accumulation (Oakley and Knell, 2007). Furthermore, there has been an explosion of academic interest in the area of media and cultural labour in the last couple of years (Deuze, 2007; Hesmondhalgh, 2007). However, there is still much more research to be done - in

particular, in my view, empirical evidence that examines the detrimental effect unmitigated free-market policies have on the creative ecology.

In the case of broadcasting, this thesis suggests that over twenty years of deregulation and neo-liberal media policies towards broadcasting have resulted in a working community in which creative innovation is now secondary to profit. In this context, for my respondents, skills and craft have been eroded from within and without. There is a sense in which the industry may be starting to feel the effects of such a shift, as a result of the recent crisis of trust at the BBC and within the ITPS as a result of various 'faking' scandals (Wray and Holmwood, 2007). Concerns have been raised about how to restore faith in broadcasting standards, and how to ensure particular values and standards, within a climate where these have been steadily deconstructed from within (Hewlett, 2007). Furthermore, there are increasing concerns about how to maintain innovation and creative experimentation within a broadcasting culture that has become antagonistic towards such values (Hutton *et al*, 2005). In this respect, the findings of this research suggest an intensification of trends which Barnett and Seymour (1999) found in their research on television in the late 1990s, which 'found a depressing consensus amongst those at the creative coal-face that as competition and commercial imperatives had increased, there was far more emphasis on re-commissioning existing success stories or sticking to standard formulae' (Barnett, 2002: 40). This thesis indicates that there is still a great deal of creative energy amongst television production staff. However, the wider context suggests that it needs political will to protect and enhance it.

8.4 Creative work, new subjectivities: towards a progressive agenda?

To conclude, I want to consider the implications of my research findings from a broader sociological perspective by speculating on the social, political and cultural significance of the micro-conditions of the labour dynamics apparent in the ITPS. Clearly, the conditions of labour experienced by many television workers that this thesis has uncovered raise important questions about the challenges facing knowledge workers under conditions of late capitalism. Here we see the consequences for the individual of extreme forms of post-Fordist labour, which while superficially providing 'freedom', 'glamour' and 'self-fulfilment' for creative workers, finds new modes of oppressing and exploiting individuals for the purpose of capital accumulation. Here we see how

capitalism associates with a particular technology of the self that subjectivises individuals so that they embrace this exploitation and oppression in the name of creativity.

The rhetoric of creativity has become a core script of governments around the world, illustrating that culture cleaves ever more closely to the skin of capitalism, just as Jameson perceived over twenty years ago (Jameson, 1991). Creativity in this context is seen by government as an instrumental device, capable of generating economic growth, whilst in the UK context it has also been aligned to traditional leftist values of tackling social exclusion. However, within the creative industries themselves, there is ample evidence that suggests that the modes of working that are associated with a creative life are far from idyllic, and indeed allow for the possibility of heightened exclusion and exploitation within society. Therefore, policy needs to look afresh at the impact of deregulation and neo-liberal policies designed to encourage flexibility and growth on the lives of growing numbers of individuals who are living out their lives in the context of precarious creative work.

However, despite the many negative aspects of such work, it is important to recognise that the shift towards creative labour within late capitalist societies offers the potential for a more hopeful politics of affect. The fact that my interviewees, along with so many other individuals today, seek 'pleasure at work' is more than just evidence of their ideological subjectivisation to the demands of capital. In short, they are more than just passive dupes of an illegible capitalism. Rather, they are often indeed happy in their work, and more than that, *they expect happiness*. Caught between the enterprise culture and the new governmentality of adaptivity, they seek to find ways to find self-actualisation through work. This is a significant shift to a situation where increasing numbers of young people expect pleasure in work.

Here lies hope for a new politics of resistance to the inexorable demands of unleashed capitalism. For in its very immateriality, creative labour expresses a utopian longing, for work that is beyond the mundane alienation of capitalist logic. That is not to say that these workers are not alienated, atomised or exploited. Clearly they are all of these things at times. But in the turn to creative labour we can see the potential for a new progressive agenda. In their refusal of mundane, repetitive, tedious work, a new generation expect self-fulfilment through their working lives. However compromised

those expectations may be, we can see that capitalism is forced to accommodate those expectations, even if new forms of exploitation emerge through the rubric of creative work. This romantic idealisation of work is more than false consciousness, but reflects a sociological shift, and a space for a more collective progressive politics to emerge from.

Therefore, while the creative economy bears all the hallmarks of the 'winner takes all' culture, where creatives are endlessly searching for a way out of exhausting networking and anxious precarity through the elusive 'big hit', we can also see that the normalisation of the artistic project-based mode of life is also making apparent the new precarity of social and economic relations within neo-liberal freemarket capitalism. As McRobbie has argued recently, 'what remains of class struggle is now deflected onto this field of precariousness' (2007: 7) The bigger political question, beyond the scope of this thesis, is whether these new modes of creative labour and its massively expanded sphere of activity will lead to a reflexive critique of capital hegemony on a broader cultural basis, with creative labour at its heart. This would demand a turn to a collective culture to re-energise such a critique, arguably one which would be most likely to emerge from the cultural industries, as the primary conduit of political communication. How, and if, this might emerge from the individualised, competitive, precarious landscape of contemporary cultural production is a pressing political question for our time.

Appendix 1: Email to television production website[58]

Please help - academic research into the television industry

Hello,

My name is David Lee, and I'm researching a PhD at Goldsmiths College, in the Media and Communications department. This PhD is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). My research is looking at working lives in the independent television industry, at a time of radical change within the production environment.

Before doing this PhD I worked in television production myself for about five years, as a researcher and assistant producer, mostly on current affairs programmes, and documentaries, in the independent sector and for the BBC.

I would like to interview users of this forum for my field research. Amongst other things, I'd want to ask you about your experiences of working in the television industry, how you manage your careers in a deregulated working environment, how creative decision making takes place within an organisational setting. All interviews will of course remain confidential, and I would be happy to provide an official signed letter confirming both this anonymity and my identity from my supervisor at Goldsmiths College.

I hope that my research will provide an important source of information about the experiences of people working in such an important cultural industry in the UK, with implications for wider debates on media policy.

If you would like to know more about taking part in my research, please contact me on david.lee@gold.ac.uk, or if you'd prefer you can call me on 07708 83xxxx

Thanks very much for your time,

David Lee

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[58] The email was sent to the website http://www.tvfreelancers.org.uk.

Appendix 2: Details of participants

(all names have been changed)

Name	Date initially Interv'd	Date of final interview	Position	Age	Gender	Location
Sarah	Jan 2006	July 2006	Producer/ Director (PD)	31	Female	London
Anthony	Oct 2005	N/A	Chief Executive	n/a	Male	London
Emma	Nov 2005	May 2006	PD	38	Female	London
Dave T	Dec 2005	Jun 2006	Executive Producer	41	Male	West Yorkshire
Paul	Jan 2006	July 2006	Assistant Producer (AP)	26	Male	Manchester
Colin	Oct 2005	April 2006	Film Editor	43	Male	London
Simon	Nov 2005	May 2006	PD	34	Male	London
Rachel	Dec 2005	Jun 2006	Researcher	25	Female	London
Jenny	Nov 2005	May 2006	AP	30	Female	London
Andrew	Oct 2005	April 2006	PD	31	Male	London
Ivan	Dec 2005	n/a	Managing Director	n/a	Male	London
Eleanor	Jan 2006	July 2006	AP	37	Female	London
James	Nov 2005	May 2006	PD	34	Male	London
Abigail	Oct 2005	April 2006	AP	32	Female	London
Deborah	Dec 2005	Jun 2006	Film Editor	34	Female	London
Jonathan	Dec 2005	Jun 2006	AP	24	Male	London
Robert	Oct 2005	Not possible	Film Editor	33	Male	London
Louise	Jan 2006	July 2006	Series Producer	32	Female	London
Anita	Dec 2005	Jun 2006	Series Producer	32	Female	London
Jack	Nov 2005	May 2006	PD (now left the industry)	36	Male	London and Newcastle
Sara	Oct 2005	Not possible	Production Assistant	30	Female	London
Richard	Dec 2005	Jun 2006	PD	30	Male	London

Appendix 3: Interview guide

Interviews were semi-structured, and used to guide discussions. As such in every interview that took place there was variation in the order of topics, and the length of time spent discussing them. The following questions should be seen as a guide, rather than a comprehensive catalogue of questions asked and areas covered

General

What is your name/age?

Can you describe what you do for a living?

What have you worked on in the last year?

Have you worked for a number of companies, if so how many?

Indies

What are the main features of working in independent television?

Tell me about the trend towards multi-skilling. How does that make you feel?

Are there practical issues about the pace of change [probe for issues around skills]

Production process

Describe the production process in your area of work.

How is new technology and innovation generally changing the television industry?

Market conditions/structure of industry

Has the independent televison sector changed in the time that you have been working in it? [probe for commercialisation, the rise of formats]

Do these changes this have any implications in terms of doing your job? [probe for the impact on working in the industry; generating ideas for programmes]

Making a living.

What is it like working in television?

Describe your feelings about working in television

Is it a secure environment to work in?

If not, how does the lack of job security make you feel?

Does it have any impact on the process of production?

Do you expect that TV will be your job for life?

What hours do you tend to work?

What are the pleasures of your job, the upsides?

What are the downsides?

Do you ever think about leaving the industry?

If so why?

Competition and flexibility

How competitive is your industry?

Do people work for nothing to get experience, to get in?

Do people move around from job to job, and have 'mini-careers' or portfolio careers, doing a range of different things?

Entrepreneurialism

Do you think you are entrepreneurial? Why? How?

How important is that trait in the industry that you work in, do you think?

What does being entrepreneurial mean to you?

Education and Skills:

Can you describe your education?

What education do you need for the job?

What skills are important? [probe for 'softer' people skills, etc.]

Networking and Finding work:

How do you tend to find work in the industry?

What is most important in terms of finding work?

Is networking important?

How important are contacts and how do you go about maintaining and creating contacts?

Do you think that some people get left out of the network culture of your area of work? Why is that? Who gets left out?

Is there a 'club' mentality in terms of how networks operate in your field, in terms of who gets to be part of the club and who doesn't?

How would you describe the demographic mix in your industry? [If participant feels that it is not diverse, probe for why they think that is the case]

Unions:

Is there any kind of union for communication workers? Do you belong to it? Is it helpful?

What does workers rights mean to you?

Is there a sense of community in television?

Have you come across the online forums for freelancers, like tvfreelancers.org? What do you think of them?

Creativity:

How would you define creativity?

What does it mean to be creative in television? Do you consider it a creative job?

Do you have any thoughts about the process of being creative within a commercial environment such as television?

How important on a personal level is it for you to be working in a creative field?

If you could be doing anything within television, and market conditions were no obstacle, what would you be doing?

Appendix 4: Sample interview

"Rachel" / First Interview / Date: December 2005

DL: If you could just tell me first of all what you do for a living and describe your job.

R: I'm a researcher, I work for [xxxx]. At the moment I'm working on a programme about British summers, which is a series of programmes, and I'm the researcher across all four of those.

DL: Just generally what kind of things does your job involve?

R: Um well this series is slightly different from other ones I've worked on, because they are also assistant producers. So normally my job would involve finding contributors for the programme. I mean I suppose the first step is you find out an awful lot about what the programme's about and what the main themes are. And then finding people who can talk about them, because you know I work in documentaries. This series is slightly different because the producers have done more of that, so I tend to be given sort of research tasks, like you know we want to find out about abortion in the '50s, so I'll go off to libraries to find out things about individual research topics.

DL: So generally you are doing factual research across a range of documentaries which could involve finding contributors, or doing more general background research?

R: I suppose I'm doing a lot more background research on this programme, which has been interesting, it's taken the pressure off actually because that's the bit I enjoy the most....It's lovely, they are so nice. They really do value thorough research and they don't mind you going off and being very independent about the way that you do that. And a lot of production companies I find like to keep you chained to your desk because they are a bit worried about something coming up. [Company x] is a lot more... They trust you basically.

DL: Can you just tell me about your previous experience of working in the industry, and the average length of the contract

R: Well, I have been working in television on and off for a year and a half, and they're not that long really. I mean contracts are always short and that is always a worry to tell the truth. And of course there is all this stuff, you know you work very very long hours. I did the whole... I started off as a runner and worked my way up, so

did an awful lot of overtime in order to prove yourself and get up the ladder, but I mean I was quite lucky and I did get up the ladder quite quickly...

DL: Yeah I'm quite interested in the length of contracts and the experience of the researcher/runner; can you give me any examples of the hours that you have had to work?

R: It was hard because I had a really good first class history degree from Edinburgh university which I would have thought would stand me in quite good stead going into history documentaries, but I rapidly realised that it didn't count for anything at all and that if I was going to get anywhere I would have to make tea for quite a long time. And that's fine I'm not snobby about my work, but I was quite shocked by that at first. and trying to get that first runner's job is really really hard, and I sent off about 50 applications, and two people got back to me, and I went to interviews and in the end I got my first... actually I didn't I got a job transcribing for a documentary about porn, which was really funny. So I spent this ridiculously long week again being paid an absolute pittance I would sort of arrive at 9 am and work until 9 o'clock at night trying to type in these porn tapes. And actually at the end of a couple of weeks of doing that a runner job came up and I got my first runner job. And again it paid a tiny amount of money, and you know I worked extremely long hours, but really luckily because they were on such a tight budget for that programme they hadn't employed a researcher, and really quickly I became a researcher on that programme.

DL: So is being flexible is an important attribute in order to move up..?

R: Definitely, and just realising what's needed, like just being able to spot where people need to be helped, and need some ideas, or whatever that might be. I just think that having an eye for that was definitely what enabled me to move on quite quickly.

DL: Just in terms of your feelings about why you wanted to work in television, what was it about television that particularly attracted you?

R: Well I knew ... I love history. I studied history at university and I loved history, but I didn't want to go into academia, I just found that really stale, and I thought if I could work in history programmes that would be the best way of using my knowledge and love of history. But also working with dynamic people, and also just sort of being something that it is in touch with everyday life, not something that is set apart, and you know television seemed like the best way of doing that.

And amazingly actually I've been really lucky, and I have worked in history programmes, and actually all those hopes have been fulfilled by my work so far.

DL: Was there something about it being a creative industry that attracted you?

R: Funnily enough it wasn't actually that. To be honest in general I don't know if I find television documentaries creative. I think film seems to me to be much more creative. It wasn't that it attracted me; it was more something about it being accessible, being an everyday media that was related to normal people.

DL: Yeah I can see that, and you know that what you do is going to be watched by lots of people

R: Exactly, and to have an audience. And it's not going to sit on a dusty dry shelf being yet another report or pile of paper and nothing seems to happen.

DL: Just generally, what are your feelings now about working in TV?

R: I really really enjoy it. I don't see myself being in it forever, I don't think I could face the short contracts, the worry about the next job, forever. I just think I don't want that in probably 5 years time. But I do, I like the change, I like meeting new people. I can just see that the novelty of meeting new people will wear off, when you've done it for the 30th time, and obviously this constant need to prove yourself, because it is extremely competitive. I mean I've not worked with somebody who's bad at their job yet. I think everybody is brilliant, and how on earth people choose between people I don't know. And I think that endless competition and change I think will lose its appeal for me

DL: Yeah I think that's interesting because I think there is this constant need in television to update your skills all the time.

R: I love that. at the moment I'm going on my first camera course at the weekend and I'm really excited, I'm really excited about learning new things actually, and that's part of the job I really like, constantly being pushed to learn new stuff. I just do have this worry at the back of my mind that one day you know somebody just won't pick me for a job, and the fear of being unemployed is not great...

DL: I think that's the real insecurity sense...

R: It is a real shame. but then you know my first job I did after university before I decided to get into TV, I signed a contract for a year, and actually after 6 months I was bored witless, and I know there is that side of my personality which does like change. I just sort of also know that at one point in my life I don't think I'll relish it as much. Regarding the insecurity I don't think I mind it so much because I think

I've been lucky so far, but there is always that worry that one day you might not be quite so lucky.

DL: What sort of ... if you look forward to the future and you've mentioned that you might consider leaving the industry in the future, what sort of circumstances might you see that happening?

R: I think if I hit a period of unemployment I guess, or um... if I ended up programmes I really didn't want to be doing, if I had do sort of some kind of other programmes, I just don't think I'd be interested. If I ended up working on Big Brother I think that would be the time for a change of career.

DL: But are you happy with the content of programmes you are working on...?

R: Yes absolutely, sometimes I think oh god I should try and diversify, but actually I just don't enjoy it, I'm really happy doing what I'm doing.

DL: Do you think... You are obviously working at [xxxx] who specialise in high quality programmes, but do you ever feel that you are quite lucky in terms of the content you are working on?

R: I think I'm really really lucky. I don't know how it's happened, I think it's been complete luck of the draw, and that's what I do think about working in television, it just involves a hell of a lot of luck. And you know I just can't believe it will carry on, but ... I just do think I'm lucky to be doing what I'm doing. But I suppose everybody does. I mean probably there are loads of people who love making programmes about difficult children or whatever.

DL: In terms of... you've already said that you don't think that television is necessarily a job for life. Do you think that you can have a job for life these days?

R: To tell you the truth, I personally wouldn't want a job for life. I think we've all grown up in such a consumer society, and we do want the best all the time, and be able to take the best option all the time. No I don't think jobs for life really do exist, and I don't think we want them to either. Most people I know are planning to do lots of different things in their life. So in a way I just see it as part of the society that we are creating around us.

DL: In terms of the hours you work, what hours do you work?

R: Well at [xxxx] I'm working really nice hours, I'm sort of working 9.30 'til 7pm which is a lot better than other jobs I've done. And I see that as pretty good. But still it's a hell of a lot longer than other ... like my flatmates all work 9-5. But then I don't mind that. Like I really love my job, I don't mind being in the office doing it,

you know I enjoy it. But again I couldn't see that being compatible with family life, and I do want to have children at some point. I just think that would be awful. I look at some of the directors I'm working with who have little children and hardly see them and I just think that's a shame.

DL: You mentioned it's a very competitive industry. Do people tend to work for nothing to get experience?

R: Well certainly. I mean I definitely did. I did a six month internship in America for free, and then I did two months at the BBC for free. I think that's absolutely... I just don't think you've got a hope in hell of getting a job in television without doing free work. Or the only way that you would do is if you've got really amazing contacts.

DL: How do you feel about that?

R: Well, I mean I hadn't done any training for television, and in a way I thought this is a free training course. I mean I think that it is a practical job, and you do need to learn basically how television works, and unless you've studied it... I think it would be wrong to employ somebody straight out of university.

DL: Especially when as you say there are so many people doing work experience, it would suggest it's more about contact than ability...?

R: Yeah I don't think that's fair at all. I think you do need to learn the nuts and bolts. I have come across a few people who have got into, you know they are researchers or APs or whatever and they got there through contacts, but I find that they are just lacking in the nuts and bolts of what it takes to make television work. I think you need to do that kind of transferring tapes, and all that sort of thing, just to understand the logistics of how everything works.

DL: One of the things I'm quite interested in is if people belong to unions. Do you belong to a union?

R: No I don't. I mean I'd love to join a union if I thought it would help, but I just can't see how it would. I mean I don't know what the unions would really be able to do for me. That's maybe because I don't know that much. But I just think that... I have to say that I did... there was that sort of petition a while ago trying to get runners sort of better rights. I thought that was a really good thing, because I think it's not fair that people should work unpaid for years and years, which it seems that some people do have to do.

DL: Have you ever seen exploitation?

R: To tell you the truth when I came into telly a year and a half ago I think people were very aware of not exploiting. A company, [xxxx], the first company I worked for, they wouldn't have work experience people in for more than a week, because they know that it would be breaking regulations, and the BBC as well, I think it's only a month that they are allowed to have them, even though I think I did more than a month unpaid. But ... So I've personally seen exploitation in the fact that people are kept in roles for far too long, when they clearly have skills that are way beyond them, but you need to have cheap staff that you can rely on. And certainly in not promoting someone you know, then I think that's how companies stay within the law.

DL: What sort of people thinking about what you just said, what sort of people tend to get on in TV?

R: Well certainly the people who seem very young, and seem to have shot up the ladder, are people who stand up for themselves and say now, I think I should be a researcher now, I should be an AP now. And also people who are good at their jobs. It's not just about being bolshy; I mean I think if you are good then I think generally you are recognised for that.

DL: Are there ... so certain sorts of attributes, so it's partly about skills, about also about being entrepreneurial perhaps. When you look at recruitment, sometimes recruitment in industries like television can seem perhaps to lack a bit of transparency in a sense. Do you ever see that?

R: Well it's a joke really the recruitment process. I mean you just never see jobs advertised, which again is very very daunting, you just think god if I haven't got a list of contacts, which of course you don't have when you are starting out, how on earth will you get follow on jobs. Because they are just not advertised. And that is difficult. And coming up the end of a contract you know that it's that way, because you can't do a standard application process, it's a matter of talking to people. But also in a way it's not cliquey in that jobs are only going to friends, it's just that jobs aren't advertised, and people do everything through word of mouth.

DL: Just thinking about that, how do you tend to find work?

R: Well it has been through word of mouth, it's been through different directors I've worked with, they've all actually said you know I know so and so needs a researcher, and they put you in touch with them. But it is such an ad hoc way of

doing it, and you think god if what next time they don't have anything for anyone, but so far that's how it's worked for me.

DL: So in terms of the process, it's word of mouth. Is networking quite important?

R: Well it's essential. It really is. None of the jobs I've got have ever been advertised, and it has been... and although ... I hate the work networking and I hate the idea of being nice to people because you want something from them, and actually so far I haven't had to do that, so far it's been people I like, and you know who like me. I don't know if I could bring myself to do that. You do hear that's what people do; they go to the right parties, and the right pubs. I haven't done that, and I don't think I could... I think I'd be awful at it. But then I mean if networking just means going for a drink with people you like and hearing about a job then there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with that really. ... I think in an ideal world, things would be a little bit more um transparent I guess. I don't know if transparent is the right word, but I guess in an ideal world it would be nice if more jobs are advertised. I can see from the companies why people don't. They'd suddenly get inundated with a million applications, and it's just an awful lot easier to do it slightly word of mouth.

DL: Having said that, and thinking about the network culture of finding work in television, do you think that it's possible that some people might get left out?

R: Absolutely, and again the networking happens if you've got time to go to the pub after work and dedicate your social life to your job as well. I mean I think it's very very difficult if you're not prepared to do that. Yeah I definitely don't think it's an ideal state of affairs at all. And I know that most of my friends aren't in the industry and they all find it kind of amazing, that that's how it works. I don't know if really any other profession does work that way.

DL: I think a lot of creative industries work in that way, and that there's an elision between work and play, a kind of night-time economy

R: But it does spill over so easily. Often if we're out we will be talking about ideas for programmes, and ideas for what's going into programmes. You're right, there is a very fine line which is great and that's why I love it as well, and that's why I enjoy it.

DL: How would you describe the demographic mix in the industry?

R: Do you mean gender?

DL: I suppose I mean age, gender, race and class

R: That's another thing that annoys me and another thing that makes me think I wouldn't want to be in the industry in ten years time is that there doesn't seem to be anybody over 35 in this industry. Or you get higher up execs who are normally men. I mean this is my limited experience, you know I'm not saying ... this is just what I've seen. Lots of young women and young men, but it just seems like there is a sort of pyramid where there are tonnes of us at the base, and then a tiny number at the top. I don't want to scrabble for that top position; I don't care enough about working to direct my life to that.

DL: Well, the BFI did a big survey of the industry and found that a lot of women in particular were leaving at early 30s

R: How interesting, because that really is my exact plan.

DL: A lot having families...

R: It has crossed my mind, could I be developing any other skills which might help me in other fields of life which I might go into later. And I actually can't think of any, because it's quite a unique job. I mean if I handed in my CV to you know a school, what would they think? Oh great, she's found 20 contributors, wow. Do you know what I mean? I mean there are lot of different skills in terms of communicating with people and things like that, but in terms of your day to day life, they are quite different from many other professions.

DL: Just in terms of education... could you describe your education?

R: I've got a degree from Edinburgh, and I've also got a masters from Cambridge, which again that was a real decision to do that, because I'd always wanted to do one, and I'd finally got my foot in the door in telly, and done my first year, but I decided that I would do it. I was worried that if I did do it I wouldn't be able to get back in again, but I did it anyway, and it was absolutely fine.

DL: S o you did a year in television and then did the masters? Was that in history?

R: Yes

DL: Oh right ok. And do you think you need that kind of education for the job?

R: No I don't think ... to tell you the truth I don't think you even need a degree to work in television. It was just what I wanted to do and I was just being quite selfish about it. I actually thought it would be hindrance more than anything, that people might think 'oh she's a bit up herself' and over-qualified, to the extent that I've actually left it off some CVs. But I definitely don't think it helps in this industry.

DL: And what skills do you think are important to have generally in television?

R: For what I'm doing, I think people skills are the most important thing. I think the thing is that you work really long intense hours, and so the most important thing is to be able to get on with people, and kind of be flexible about getting on with people. Then I think being really resourceful is really important. You know when you've got to find a can-can dancer in 24 hours and they've got to be free, you've got to really be able to think on your feet and think laterally, and have good ideas.

DL: Just thinking about the production itself, could you just describe the production process in your area of television.... just in terms of the time frame, and technology in terms of HD and self-operating?

R: Well it makes me feel quite sad. One of the things I really love about my job is working with camera and sound operators who are just so experienced and knowledgeable and real artists you know, and I really admire that skill and creativity with film. This move towards directors doing a lot of their own shooting seems to me a bit sad actually. I mean selfishly it's quite exciting, I'm really excited about getting involved in it myself, but really I do think it's going to be detrimental for the industry.

DL: What are the implications of that for quality?

R: Well, the budgets are... I'm sure people always say the budgets are low, but it really does seem to be the way it's going, and more and more stuff that you see on TV is self-shot, but I mean that there's no doubt that it doesn't look as good. It can be good when you've got that intimate feel, with kind of observational documentaries, I think is quite good. But when you are trying to get beautiful shots I think it's a real shame.

DL: Just a few more questions. Thinking about creativity, I'm interested in how government has become so interested in the notion of creativity, creative industries... I just wondered if you've got any thoughts on that, and why creativity has become so central to talking about television.

R: I don't think I know I can only assume that they are so obsessed about it because they are worried that there's not enough of it about. I don't know if television is that creative really. I don't really know. There is a creative process, but I don't think it's creative like a modern artist is. there's just not that space for it, because you are constantly trying to market to wider and wider audiences, and I think that means that creativity probably has to go down because it's got to have mass appeal, so if anything I feel that television is probably getting less creative.

DL: How important is it to be entrepreneurial in television?

R: I mean I think it's essential to be able to think ahead and market yourself, and plan your next move.

DL: So self-promotion is important?

R: I don't think you can do it without it.

DL: What does it mean to you being entrepreneurial?

R: I think to me it means constantly talking to people about the way the industry is going, about what companies are doing what, constantly making sure I'm abreast of what's going on. I suppose it should mean marketing yourself, but I really can't face doing that. But making sure I know what's out there, knowing what the options are for me and kind of making myself more marketable so that I'm more employable.

DL: It's a very freelance industry, and you become quite individualised in terms of your career progression?

R: I think there is a tremendous sense of community, I mean that's something I really love about it, just everyone I work with is good fun and nice and keeps in touch, and I just find that I've got a huge network of friends in the industry. Many of my friends just go to work and they come home at the end of the day, and they wouldn't stay in touch with people. So in a way I think the slight hardship of it all fosters a closer knit support.

DL: So actually although it's very freelance and individual, there is a wider community of freelancers?

R: Definitely. I mean it's just so nice because every company that you come to there is invariably many people who know people who know people that you were working with last time. you can go out for drink with people from the old company and the new company and you know it's actually a very nice sense... and in a way I find that very reassuring because I sort of think in five years time I'll still be working with... it may not be the same company at all, but we'll all have people in common. And I really like that.

DL: What would the implications be of falling out with someone?

R: Luckily that hasn't been a problem yet. I think that's absolutely true though, definitely you can't fall out with anyone.

DL: Everyone I've talked to has said that the most important thing in television is getting on with people, and it's interesting that one of the first things you said was that

R: Oh it is, I mean the thing is that if you can't fit in to a team rapidly then you're screwed, because if your contact is only three months you know, and if you're a bit difficult and scratchy with people then you might get to the end of your three months and not have made a friend, and that would be really miserable.

DL: And also people aren't going to employ you again...

R: Exactly, at the end of the day people know that if you're easy to get on with, then you're going to be a more amenable person and they are going to want you back probably. And I really haven't come across anybody who is difficult yet. Well actually I came across one person, but I know she will never be employed by the company again.

DL: What does that mean, in terms of if you are asked to do unreasonable hours, for example?

R: I think there is an element of that. But then I think the companies that are really pushing you it tends to be certain individuals that are doing that, and they tend not to be widely liked.

DL: So they are quite well known within the industry?

R: One of the companies I worked at, there was one really unpleasant one who was making everybody stay back later, and none of us would ever work for that person again. And I can't believe that the company directors haven't noticed that sort of thing. You know what I mean; I just don't think it does you any favours being pushy like that.

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