Staying, remaining and surviving: Researching women's costume careers in UK film and television

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Centre for Cultural Policy Research

School of Culture and Creative Arts

College of Arts

University of Glasgow

2023

Abstract

A narrative of absence surrounds women's careers in film and television work. Headline figures of a shortage of women in key creative positions or the loss of women to the workforce after having children, pervade the narrative that surrounds women's contributions to film and television texts. In response, this thesis argues that there are women who *are* present in the film and television workforce whose voices have yet to be heard. Through the use of interviews and audio diaries, this thesis centres close-knit networks of freelance women costume workers, working together on a semi-continuous basis as they stay, remain and survive in the film and television workforce.

With this thesis I answer two questions: (RQ1) How can we understand the relationships between women working in film and television costume departments? (RQ2) Which perceptions and practices facilitate women's workforce participation in costume work? Drawing on moral economy theory and an ethic of care, I produce an empirically grounded account of the everyday ethics of film and television work.

I examine the minutiae of participants' interactions to explore how commonalities amongst participants did (not) preface their desire to support others, and how their constructions of the ideal worker implicitly rely on gendered stereotypes. I build to an account of how participants create a normative way of existing as a woman in film and television work, which acts to both include and exclude. I analyse participants' capacities to enact care and develop a nuanced understanding of their agency in structuring their working conditions to make them survivable.

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Acknowledgements

My foremost thanks go to the women of this research who all graciously gave me their time and experience during a very busy period in film and television work.

Throughout these turbulent times I've had the guidance and support of my supervisors, Mark Banks and Doris Ruth Eikhof, to whom I am immensely grateful. I am also thankful for the mentorship provided by Rowan Aust and Michelle Reynolds, along with our chats on a Thursday – they have meant a lot to me.

Thanks also to SGSAH, M4C and the AHRC for funding this research.

I would like to thank my parents, Barbara and Martin, for their constant support, encouragement and belief in my abilities. Thank you to Sandy for your tireless proof-reading. A big thank you to my personal cheerleader, best friend and partner, Thomas, for your support, patience, and cooking. Finally, to my son, Osian, who came along three years into this project, and has made the last year of writing beautifully complicated and all the more worthwhile.

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Introduction

Research into women's careers in the UK film and television industries has illustrated a litany of obstructions to their participation in the workforce.[1] My normative understanding of 'participation' includes the ability to sustain a career free from discrimination, harassment and bias, the opportunity to advance to decision making roles, to be given work based on merit, and to receive equal pay for equal work. Participation *should* be in a work environment that is conducive to positive mental health, and conducted within a number of daily hours that is sustainable over the course of a working life. At present, a strong case can be made that women are not participating fully in the film and television workforce. The structural conditions of networking, insecure job contracts, long hours, informal hiring practices and a working culture that legitimises discriminatory attitudes, bullying, and sexual harassment, mean that the film and television industries are in need of significant improvement if it is going to become an equal, diverse and inclusive place to work (Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; O'Brien, 2014; Conor, Gill and Taylor, 2015; Wing-Fai, Gill and Randle, 2015; Eikhof and York, 2016; Hennekam and Bennett, 2017; Liddy and O'Brien, 2021).

Throughout the last two decades of research into women's careers in film and television work a growing body of evidence has demonstrated that there are far fewer women than men in key creative roles, such as director or writer, and a loss of women to the workforce after the age of 35 (ScreenSkills, 2010; European Women's Audio Visual Network, 2016; Cobb, Williams and Wreyford, 2018; Directors UK, 2018; Percival, 2019; Lauzen, 2023; Smith, Pieper and Wheeler, 2023). Evidence of inequality in the film and television industries has proven powerful. The work of Directors UK, Lauzen's 'Celluloid Ceiling', and the 'Calling the Shots' project, have made it possible to categorically state that there is a lack of women in key creative, decision-making roles (Follows, Kreager and Gomes,

[1] The terms 'women' and 'men' are used throughout with a gender inclusive understanding, which is not intended to oversimplify or dualize gender identities, but provide a basis on which to explore how power is unevenly distributed. The terms 'female' and 'male' are only included when in direct quotes from participants or secondary sources. (See also Verhoeven, 2019, p.136, for an eloquent statement on conducting gender inclusive research).

2016; Cobb, Williams and Wreyford, 2019; Lauzen, 2023). Seen throughout the narrative of absence and discrimination is a focus on the experiences of women in the minority, those who have beaten the odds to survive, or the reasons for women exiting the industry (Wing-Fai, Gill and Randle, 2015; Raising Films, 2017; Wreyford and Cobb, 2017; Percival, 2019). These are extremely important areas of concern for research, but there are other data sources that we can turn to that can offer an alternative narrative to the one of absence. These sources hold the potential to shift the research focus and answer questions about how women might be facilitated to stay within the workforce. So far, proving gender inequality has dominated the research agenda, but this thesis attempts to turn the metaphorical corner to seek out women who are present in the film and television workforce to ask what we can learn from them (CAMEo, 2018; Eikhof et al., 2019).

Creative Diversity Network's (CDN) 2022 report on the film and television workforce found that in craft roles those over the age of 50 were best represented in the costume department (Creative Diversity Network, 2022b, p.36). In my experience as a costume worker in UK film and television costume departments, I have worked with women who have had careers of 40+ years, yet their voices have not been included in research hitherto. With the costume department, we are in a relatively unique position to research the women who are present within the industry, to understand how they continue to pursue their careers despite the multitude of barriers that often deter them from doing so. At approximately 73% women working on a majority freelance basis, the costume department offers an important data source of women with medium to long term careers in film and television production (ScreenSkills, 2012). With a gender-unequal workforce participation in favour of women, costume departments are a promising and novel site for research. [2]

Yet, whilst the costume department is relatively unique in its gender make-up, it is important to question whether there are simply more women with long term

[2] The hair and make-up department is the only other department that is majority women (Creative Diversity Network, 2022b, p.20). An equally valid and insightful study could be undertaken with women in hair and make-up departments, but the costume department is where I have personal experience and access.

careers as a result of the historic feminisation of costume work. Or does the costume department have a unique ability to retain women? At present, no data sets can prove either way, but I argue in favour of viewing the costume department as a hitherto unresearched pocket of UK film and television work that has its own distinctive norms, principles and ways of existing. The careers of the participants of this research have important differences when compared to their counterparts in other men-dominated parts of film and television production. Across the research landscape attention has centred on more prestigious, 'key creative' workers trying to carve out careers in large, open networks of individuals (Antcliff et al., 2007; Blair, 2009; Grabner, 2010; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Lee, 2011 etc.). Instead the novel data set presented in this thesis centres close-knit networks of women in less prestigious, craft professions.

By researching the UK's women costume workers, I produce new knowledge that can inform innovative understandings and approaches to facilitating women to remain in the film and television workforce. With a new empirical focus this thesis responds to calls for understanding gender inequality beyond workforce statistics, with emphasis on notions of morality and care. In cases where women are working semi-continuously within their close-knit networks, the thesis explores the moral principles and ideologies that guide ideas of support, solidarity and care for one another to construct an applied and grounded account of the ethics of everyday work.

With this thesis I examine women's costume careers in terms of remaining, staying and surviving. For many months I have debated the ontological framing of women's careers in terms of 'survival'. It suggests that the film and television industry is something inherently negative that requires a continuous uphill battle. It suggests an industry that is actively against the continuation of women's careers and that *thriving* within film and television work is out of the question. To some extent, and for some participants that has very much been the case. For some, at every turn they have encountered a barrier to their desire to build a career in costume work, and for others there have been periods of struggle accompanied by relative ease. The use of the term 'survival' is highly apt in some cases. Yet, without wanting to frame the film and television industry as an entirely hostile

environment for women - which would be to overgeneralise, I use a mix of terms to analyse women's career longevity. These terms include remaining, staying and surviving.

Research questions

Firstly, I seek a theoretical framework to understand, interpret and analyse women's careers in the costume department (RQ1). Drawing on moral economy theory and an ethic of care, I centre the moral principles that underpin participants' decisions to enact care and support one another's careers in a close-knit network. Secondly, I ask how these discursive ideas of morality, care and support manifest themselves in the perceptions and practices that enable some women to maintain careers in film and television work (RQ2). The following section explores how each of these questions were selected and developed.

RQ1: How can we understand the relationships between women working in film and television costume departments?

RQ1 was developed out of the desire to rethink how cultural workers are studied. Throughout the academic canon on cultural workers studies of large networks made up of individuals with multiple 'weak ties' to one another have dominated the research agenda (Granovetter, 1973; Blair, 2001; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Lee, 2013 etc). The individuals in these networks are often seen as atomised in their experience of work, and often characterised as entirely self-reliant and self-serving with little care or concern for their colleagues. (Ursell, 2000; Wittel, 2001; McRobbie, 2002; Blair, 2009). Such characterisations did not match up with my own experiences of film and television work, and nor did it accord with data I was collecting. Far from being self-reliant, participants relied significantly on their relationships with others, and as data collection continued, I began to gather evidence of acts of altruism, care and support. To analyse data collected I sought new theoretical understandings of cultural worker relationships, and in turn, theory became an important part of this thesis and its contribution.

RQ2: Which perceptions and practices facilitate women's workforce participation in costume work?

RQ2 was selected for its ability to add usefully to the body of knowledge. The current research terrain contains multiple examples of women in film and television work in the minority, often in prestigious, key creative roles. There are significantly fewer examples where women are in the majority. The narrative surrounding women's careers in film and television is often one of lack and loss, that is, the lack of women in senior positions and the loss of women to film and television work. In response, the choice of RQ2 was born out of a desire to turn existing research questions on their head. The body of research has produced a fairly consistent understanding of how and why women leave the workforce, but little attention has been paid to how and why they might remain. By shifting the research focus and drawing on alternative theoretical frameworks, I explore how ideas of morality and care play a role in facilitating women's workforce participation in film and television work.

Outline of the thesis

This thesis is divided into three parts: (1) Part one: 'What we know and how we know it' reviews the relevant theoretical literature that has shaped how careers in film and television work have been understood in the academic canon (Chapter 1). Then, I explore relevant research on women's careers in film and television work (Chapter 2).

(2) Part two: 'Researching the costume department' details how the research was designed and carried out, along with the guiding epistemological and methodological concerns of the research (Chapter 3). I gather relevant research and draw on participant testimony to provide a grounding in the realities of working in costume departments in the UK (Chapter 4).

(3) In part three: 'Findings' data are analysed by exploring the moral principles and ideologies that guide participants' relationships (Chapter 5). I explore participants' ideas of gender and shared experience to understand how they

influence participants' decisions to enact care (Chapter 6). Then, I detail the perceptions and practices that appear to be facilitating some women to remain in the costume workforce and examine participants' agency and power to alter their working conditions (Chapter 7). I conclude with a summary of how the thesis has answered the research questions, an outline of the thesis' novel contribution, and the implications of the findings (Chapter 8).

The PhD process

Before the main body of the thesis begins, the following section offers my experience of the PhD process and how various global events have impacted it.

Throughout the nearly four-year process (2019-2023) of completing this piece of research, the film and television industries have undergone significant change. From the coronavirus pandemic, a partial shutdown of the film and television industries, the Black Lives Matter movement, a production frenzy, and now as I write, a production slowdown - this thesis has spanned a period of significant change (BECTU, 2020; Brazanti, Howe and Cortvrient, 2021).

I began this project in 2019 with lofty ambitions – I had grown tired of the conditions within which I worked as a costume maker and felt that research offered a viable route to contribute to making film and television a better place to work. I began the PhD in the context of change: the trial of Harvey Weinstein was beginning, the #MeToo movement was still making headlines, and the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) agenda in film and television work was increasingly coming to the fore. Yet, despite a sense of recognition, change felt somewhat slippery, especially with the onset of the pandemic that was widely considered as likely to exacerbate existing inequalities (Eikhof, 2020).

After only six months in-person, this project moved entirely online and from a distance. The partial shutdown of film and television work in March 2020 was followed one year later by one of the busiest years for UK film and television production due to an increase in demand for content and subsequent inward investment from streaming companies (BFI, 2021b; Brazanti, Howe and Cortvrient,

2021). Despite these drastic changes, my ambition was still to contribute to improving the film and television workforce in some small way, and so my attention turned to how best my research could do this given the scope and the scale of a PhD, and the restrictions placed on interactions by the pandemic.

After immersing myself in the literature, I realised that my strengths lay in understanding the worker experience, and this was also where I had access. From much of the literature, it seemed that the voices of craft women were absent; attention seemed to focus on the more prestigious and men-dominated areas of cultural work. Rarely captured was the 'normalness' of cultural work, the day-to-day mundanity that, in essence, amounts to a career. Networking literature tended to largely centre on notions of exclusion, and women who did feature in research were often interviewed about their negative experiences or their decisions to leave the industry. Aside from a few notable outliers, women with long careers were nearly entirely absent from the literature, and if they did feature, they were unique examples of women who had beaten the odds (Cobb, Williams and Wreyford, 2018).

From the start my intention was to turn existing empirical areas of study on their head by centring women with medium to long term careers remaining in the workforce, as opposed to why they leave, and in close-knit networks of strong ties as opposed to large networks of 'weak' ties (Granovetter, 1973). The atomised and individualised cultural worker had been well-researched, and so I was keen to discover if centring relationships within the context of groups of women yielded new results.

Worker retention and skill shortages were fast becoming a significant problem for film and television work, and so questions of remaining in the workforce seemed more pertinent than ever (ScreenSkills, 2021; BFI, 2023). I wanted to answer the question of 'how' women stay, but rather than simply providing a taxonomy of tips for how certain women, in certain positions managed to carve out careers, I wanted to think more broadly about the impact of their actions and their relevance for women in other areas of film and television work.

In March 2021, I began interviewing women working in close-knit groups, and with that came examples of participants intervening in the careers of others to help colleagues to remain in the workforce. I had so many questions: was working in this type of group a key part to providing a sense of solidarity? Or was it perhaps a shared ideological understanding of what it means to be a precariously employed woman in film and television work? Was there an emotional element of support between women, and does this make a woman's likelihood of surviving in the film and television industries more likely? Furthermore, if these groups were functioning as a material form of support, i.e. for finding jobs, as well as an emotional support, does that present a challenge to the neoliberal workplace or was this simply a way of making working pressures more bearable?

As the data collection progressed, I struggled to find a theoretical framework to guide my analysis of data. Ideas of care in the economic context seemed more pertinent than governmentality inflected critiques of the cultural worker. I drew on multiple fields of thought namely, an ethic of care and moral economy theory to arrive at a theoretical framework that centred relationships, ethics and morality in their economic context.

Ultimately, I designed a piece of research within the requirements of a pandemic. The project that follows is not what I had originally in mind when I began my PhD in October 2019. Still, I wanted this piece of research to, in some small way, satisfy my lofty ambitions to help in the push for positive change in film and television work. Guided by feminist thinkers before me, I have placed emphasis on conducting research that could not only add to the body of knowledge, but research that could be referenced by the women of the costume department as a reflection of their careers and treatment in the workplace, and by others who are trying to improve women's participation in film and television work (Acker et al., 1983). A short report accompanies this thesis that will be made publicly available through costume worker forums (Appendix i). In doing so, I hope that this thesis can contribute to current conversations about women's participation in film and television work and be the start of more research.

Part One: What we know and how we know it

Part One charts the development of a theoretical framework for this thesis, and how the study of women's careers in film and television fit into it.

I map the evolution of cultural worker research over the past two decades and explore how Foucauldian-governmentality inspired accounts have dominated understandings of cultural work. I illustrate the challenges to governmentality inspired approaches to arrive at the theoretical framework that guided this thesis (Chapter 1).

I review the literature that is specific to film and television work, before focusing on women's careers (Chapter 2). I detail how the current body of literature stands, and how the gaps within it have informed and shaped this project.

Chapter 1: Threads of theory

1.1. Introduction

Film and television work sits within the broader study of cultural work, with many similarities in how work is organised across the cultural industries. In this first chapter, I chart the development of academic cultural work research from English language outputs and discuss the relevant theoretical concerns and ideas from which this thesis draws. Beginning with the changes to working patterns and worker behaviour since the deregulation and fragmentation of the UK job market in the 1980s, I explore how workers have been characterised and understood through Foucauldian-inspired governmentality theory. The chapter then moves to think about alternative ways of understanding cultural workers, namely through ideas of a moral economy and an ethic of care. Finally, I build to a theoretical approach that weaves the various ideas found in moral economy theory and an ethic of care together to form the backbone of this thesis.

First, there are some points of clarification around the use of terminology. The study of film and television costume work sits within the wider study of the 'cultural' or 'creative' industries. In their broadest definitions, both terms refer to the similar sub-set of industries that make a profit from the production of 'symbolic' goods (Banks, 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). Banks (2007) describes the cultural industries as,

> '…those involved in the production of 'aesthetic' or 'symbolic' goods and services; that is, commodities whose core value is derived from their function as carriers of *meaning* in the form of images, symbols, signs and sounds.' (Banks, 2007, p.2, *emphasis in original*).

Defining the 'cultural' or 'creative' industries remains a site of unresolved debate (Garnham, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2008). For the purpose of this thesis a distinction is noted between the political connotations in the labelling of the cultural or creative industries. The 'creative industries' label is often invoked by more policy-facing bodies who are interested in the economic value of the 'creative industries', whereas the use of the term 'cultural industries' implies something

more than simply an economic activity, but a form of work that has the potential to have valuable societal and political impact (Drake, 2013). Not wanting to belabour a well-hashed argument, for the purposes of this thesis I use the term 'cultural work' and 'cultural industries' to align with the dominant terminology in the literature upon which this thesis draws, and also my personal views on the value of cultural work as something more than an economic activity.

1.2. Studying careers in cultural work: the evolution of thought in cultural work research 1980-present

The world of work underwent dramatic transformations in the latter half of the twentieth century. Understood through a variety of terms such as 'late modernity', 'new capitalism' or the 'new economy' to describe the ways in which our political, economic and social underpinnings have been transformed over the last 40 years (Giddens, 1991; Leadbeater, 1999; Sennett, 2006). Globally speaking these transformations have been realised unevenly, but the aforementioned terms are often used to contextualise a series of shifts in the nature of work, how work came to be organized, and how work has been experienced by the worker (Held et al., 1999).

Commentators on the shifts in the global job market have suggested that in 'post-industrial' or 'informational' economies, industries no longer deal in tangible goods but ideas (Lazzarato, 1996; Brophy and de Peuter, 2007; Gill and Pratt, 2008). In jobs such as finance, consulting and in the cultural industries, the skills that were valued in this 'brave new world of work' were often referred to as the 'soft' skills of 'culture, knowledge and creativity' (Ray and Sayer, 1999, p.17; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). No longer could workers be guaranteed a 'job for life' (Hall, 1996), and no longer did trade unions retain the power they once held (Saundry, 1998; McKinlay and Quinn, 1999; Heery et al., 2004). Instead, workers began facing increasingly short-term contracts, longer hours, a lack of job security, and the imperative to be flexible and geographically mobile (Sennett, 2006).

With the fragmentation of work, and increasing flexibility required on behalf of workers, theorists noted how the distinction between work and non-work had begun to collapse (Giddens, 1991; Lazzarato, 1996; Hardt and Negri, 2001; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). In the 1990s theoretical attention turned to the processes through which identities of individuals were being shaped by these wider structural changes in society and in the job market (ibid). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) suggested that the changes in contemporary capitalism, which included a rolling back of the welfare state and a decline in the traditional divisions of labour between men and women, meant that individuals had to construct and manage their lives through a series of individual choices.

Similarly, Giddens used the concept of 'reflexivity' – the idea that individuals now have to actively construct their own biographical narratives instead of passively inheriting their identities, to argue that individuals had become disembedded from traditional social structures like churches, social groups and communities (Giddens, 1991). Furthermore, theorists such as Sennett contended that in an ever competitive and fragmented job market workers are faced with continuous demands to be flexible which erodes interpersonal relations as individuals move from job to job (Sennett, 1998, p.10). According to Sennett, the fragmentation of the job market held the potential to have damaging impacts on an individuals' character, eroding loyalty to an employer, and mutual commitment between colleagues (ibid). For Sennett, the rise of the new, individualised and atomised worker corresponded to a decline in collective bargaining and a derecognition of trade unions.

Although these transformations in the world of work were by no means unique to the cultural industries, the work of Beck, Giddens, and Sennett has foregrounded much investigation into cultural work and the theory used to understand it. For many cultural industries commentators (e.g. Deuze, de Peuter, Leadbeater, Landry, Garnham, Gill, McRobbie, Pratt, and Ross) in the early 2000s, the cultural industries took on the role of 'weathervane' for the rest of the economy, as it reflected the deregulation, freelancing, and fragmentation of work that was

becoming symptomatic of the changes in contemporary capitalism that came as a result of a neoliberal policy environment (Pratt, 2008).[3]

1.3. Cultural work and cultural industries studies

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, changes to the world of work appeared to offer great promise for 'detraditionalized' and autonomous labour (Florida, 2002; Leadbeater, 1999). This new way of working was predicted to eschew hierarchal structures and forms of discrimination seen in 'traditional' work (Beck, 1992). In the case of the UK, the New Labour government was spurred on by thinkers such as Leadbeater, Landry and Florida to view cultural work as offering freedom, self-realisation and autonomy, allowing workers to engage in fulfilling and economically advantageous pursuits (Oakley, 2011). Work would be organised around benign networks of co-operation and knowledge sharing, which would negate the need for bureaucratic intervention as networks of creatives would be self-regulating (ibid). Importantly from the perspective of New Labour, having risen to power in 1997, it was hoped that the economic potential of the cultural industries could re-invigorate towns and cities left behind by heavy industry (Florida, 2002; Evans and Shaw, 2004; Nathan, 2005). As a result, the cultural industries received, and still do receive, significant attention from policy makers who want to tap into the untold economic potential of this new and emerging form of 'cool, creative and egalitarian' work (Gill, 2002).

Outside of New Labour's instrumentalist take on the cultural industries, within academic research the work of artists, fashion designers, television workers, came under closer scrutiny to assess the validity of the aforementioned claims. Far from New Labour's original promises, cultural labour had become paradigmatic of how the collapse in 'traditional' employment models had not brought about the emancipatory changes that they were heralded as bringing (Banks and Milestone, 2011; Gill, 2002; Oakley, 2004). Although many of the cultural workers that formed the basis of these studies loved their work and were passionate about their

[3] Here 'neoliberalism' is broadly understood as the ideological political shift toward de-regulation and free-market capitalism (Harvey, 2005).

creative products, their passion was coupled with a high degree of financial and job insecurity, low pay and long hours (Blair, 2001; Hesmondhalgh, 2008). Far from breaking free of traditional hierarchies and the discriminatory practices of sexism, racism, classism and disablism, empirical research found that 'old' patterns of discrimination were still deeply entrenched (Gill, 2002; Randle, 2007; Banks and Milestone, 2011). Instead of offering the foretold benefits of benign co-operation and support, in this highly competitive job market workers were understood as atomised individuals each seeking their own personal success, 'commodifying' their relationships with others in the name of personal advancement (Ursell, 2000; Blair, 2001; Wittel, 2001). Contemporaneous with the rest of the UK workforce, there was also a marked decline in forms of collective bargaining and trade union membership (Saundry, 2001; Heery et al., 2004).

Within recent years, the field of cultural work research has expanded to study the emergence of new markets in form of online platforms, as well as the new forms of governance over cultural workers and their products (Magaudda and Solaroli, 2020; Nieborg, Duffy and Poell, 2020). Studies of the endemic inequality of access to cultural work have continued to demonstrate deep-seated structural barriers to inclusion and the evolving policy landscape that tries to tackle them (Conor, Gill and Taylor, 2015; Randle, Forson and Calveley, 2015; Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020; Nwonka, 2020). There have also been calls to rethink how the cultural industries can act as a progressive ally in aiding efforts to curb climate change (Oakley and Banks, 2020). Most recently, we have seen a growth in literature that examines the effects of the coronavirus' impact on the cultural industries, how it may further entrench inequalities, and the unevenness of support for cultural workers throughout the UK (Eikhof, 2020; Arditi, 2021; de Peuter, Oakley and Trusolino, 2022).

1.3.1. The 'self-exploited' cultural worker

In the early 2000s, as studies that demonstrated the injurious side of cultural work grew in number, researchers were beginning to see recurrent patterns emerging. Excessively long hours, low or no pay, and unpredictable work patterns seemed to characterise cultural work from fashion designers to television workers to

musicians (Blair, 2001; Dex et al., 2000; Gill, 2002; McRobbie, 2002 etc.). Particularly in the UK context, the work of Angela McRobbie (2002a) drew on Foucault's governmentality theory to explore how, in contemporary capitalism, pleasure in work had become a new disciplinary power. Foucault (1991) understood governmentality as the 'conduct of conduct', or the way in which individuals are governed through self-regulation. Rather than subjects being dictated to by the state, in liberal democracies individuals are encouraged to self-govern and act in ways that are in accordance with prevailing rationale of the state, in turn individuals see these actions as their own (Foucault, 1991). Foucault's thinking about governmentality became particularly influential in understanding why cultural workers seem to act in ways that were against their personal interest, such as working themselves to the point of burnout. Work was no longer simply a means to an end; the modern worker had come to believe that through work, and in particular cultural work, the individual could achieve a form of self-realisation. Influentially for the UK, McRobbie (2002a) popularised the term 'self-exploitation' to explain how the prevailing discourse around 'creativity' encourages workers to act against their own interests in the pursuit of work in the cultural industries, in turn exploiting themselves.

A key feature for McRobbie's (2002) study of London fashion designers was the extent to which her participants derived pleasure from their work; workers were passionate about their creative products, and poor terms and conditions were the price to be paid for doing what you love. For McRobbie (2002), the cultural worker seeking meaning and fulfilment in their work internalises the discourse of creative fulfilment to believe that through accepting the exploitative conditions of cultural work they are on the path to self-realisation. The promise of cultural work acts as a disciplinary power that entices workers to 'self-exploit' themselves, and it is capital that gains not the individual.

Similarly, Gillian Ursell used the UK television industry in the 1990s as a prime case study to understand how the changes in contemporary capitalism were impacting workers. Symptomatic of changes in the wider economy, the television industry in the UK had undergone significant fragmentation from in-house, publicly funded broadcasting to a constellation of independent production companies (Saundry,

1998; Saundry and Nolan, 1998) (See also Chapter 4.2). Ursell's (2000) investigation into how television workers had come to accept and adapt to these changes proved insightful in the understanding of how cultural workers organise themselves, and their attitudes to work. Having found that Labour Process Theory (LPT) inflected accounts fell short in explaining the worker's ability to organise their own job markets, Ursell turned to post-structuralism and the work of Foucault and Nikolas Rose. Whereas a LPT inflected account of the relationship between capital and work would portray workers as working against their own interests, duped into accepting the demands of capital, Ursell built on LPT accounts to portray the cultural worker as aware of their own exploitation, but actively choosing to submit to the imperatives of capital. Like McRobbie, Ursell constructs the television worker as enthralled by the alluring nature of television work and its 'tantalizing possibilities' of social recognition, which explains why workers 'volunteer for exploitation at the hands of others' (Ursell, 2000, p.821). Ursell argues that this is further evidence of Foucault's ideas on the process of subjectification; when workers pursue their 'own' existential goals of self-actualisation, praise and recognition, these goals have been created and conditioned by the discourse of the industry and internalised by the worker to believe that they are their own.

Ursell builds to the argument that workers *do* exert some influence over their labour markets and the way they are organised. As television workers are required to hire other workers, as opposed to a top-down employment system, workers have the partial autonomy to choose who is allowed into their job market, but the criterion of who is hired is often dictated by the broadcaster's preferences (the entity with control over commissioning). Ursell argues that television workers take on the preferences and value systems of broadcasters (their contractors) and perceive them as their own. Whereas a LPT inflected account would construct capital as having total power over the labour market, Ursell asserts that the 'economy of favours' found within television production ensures that workers have some degree of control over who enters the job market (Ursell, 2000, p.813). Workers are not simply passive subjects of the imperatives of capital but can play an active role in shaping their conditions but often to the detriment of others.

Whereas LPT inflected accounts construct the relation between structure and work as linear (structure controls the worker), Ursell suggests that the relation is dialectical (structure shapes the worker, the worker shapes the structure).

Although Ursell does not subscribe to Foucauldian interpretations that understand the formation of the subject as entirely incapable of acting outside of the dominant discourse, Ursell's understanding of the power of the worker is still relatively limited. It is only the reserve of some workers who have the capacity to shape the dominant discourse, but again those workers sit inside the value-systems, norms and beliefs of the broadcasters so the likelihood of counter-hegemonic discourse is slim, but according to Ursell, not impossible.

Both Ursell and McRobbie are persuasive on the disciplinary power of pleasure at work as explaining why so many people are willing to accept poor working conditions, but some have pointed to the shortcomings of governmentality theory to explain the agency of workers to subvert prevailing discourse, for example in the form of strike action, refusals or wilful sabotage (Banks, 2007; Burkitt, 2008). One can love what one does and not be all-consumed by it; and within more recent research there have been studies that demonstrate how the collapsing of work and life does not always entail the widespread acceptance of poor conditions (Banks, 2006; Lee, 2011; Percival and Hesmondhalgh, 2014; Naudin, 2015).

1.3.2. Networked relations in cultural work: the calculating cultural worker

Academic research has illustrated how a significant number of cultural industry jobs are disseminated through informal networks where workers have power over who enters those networks (Blair, 2003; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Ursell, 2000 etc.). As a means of recruitment as well as a means of exclusion, the formation, composition and function of networks have all been extensively explored with varying objectives in mind (e.g. Antcliff et al., 2007; Blair, 2003, 2009; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Lee, 2011; Randle et al., 2015; Starkey et al., 2000 etc.). The practice of networking has been approached from a multitude of angles; from the more theoretical interest of organization studies looking to classify and predict the flow of resources and information, to Bourdieusian analyses of the exchange of

capital and its facilitation of exclusion (Antcliff et al., 2007; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012 for comparison of different approaches).

Sparked by the shifting terrain in the world of work in the late 1990s and 2000s, there was an influx of research into the rise of networking as the 'new' means of organisation in a more fragmented job market (Castells, 2010; Christopherson and Storper, 1989; Marchington, 2005). Film and television work provided a prime example of the changes seen in labour markets due to its drastic shifts in industry structure from the late 1980s onwards. These changes meant that work was becoming increasingly dispersed through independent production companies that relied on assembling ad hoc groups of workers at short notice and on a freelance basis (Saundry and Nolan, 1998). Networking became a key part of the distribution of work and a cornerstone of film and television worker research (Dex et al., 2000; Antcliff, 2005).

As studies of film and television workforce networks have developed, two key strands of research can be identified. The first strand can be largely seen as the initial output of research that was concerned with how networks form, and why workers engage in them (Blair, 2003; Dex et al., 2000; Starkey et al., 2000). The first strand of research was focussed on understanding the phenomena of networking as a point of theoretical interest. It drew on broader sociological discussions of individualization, and often focused on workers' motives for participating in networks (Ursell, 2000; McRobbie, 2002; Blair, 2009). This strand tended to posit a worker who instrumentally and strategically engaged in network behaviour based on economic rationale i.e. to find one's next job (Blair, 2009; Heelas, 2002; McRobbie, 2002). The worker in these accounts was often described as having internalised market rule and economised every aspect of their lives, including personal relationships (Heelas, 2002).

Many of these accounts of cultural worker networks drew on sociological theories of the individualization process to explain the changing nature of workers' responses to increasingly insecure conditions. The individualization thesis averred that the shift in job market patterns forced a greater reliance on the self, due to a rolling back of state support, a fragmented job market that threw individuals back

on themselves to become self-reliant to survive in the 'new' world of work (Giddens, 1984; Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Sennett, 2006).

Sennett (2006) extended the individualization thesis to suggest that the changes within the world of work had a corroding effect on workers' motivations and sense of morality. Sennett argued that the short-term nature of contracts and the requirement for workers to move locations frequently leads to a loss of trust between colleagues, loss of commitment to the task at hand and a loss of loyalty to the organisation. Sennett suggested a workforce of dissocialized individuals with no strong societal connections, shared experience or history, leads to the corrosion of enduring friendships, responsibility and trust. According to Sennett, this 'new' world of work under late-capitalism, with its 'new' values of flexibility and enterprise mean that relying on others is seen as a weakness and the 'idealized person eschews dependency; he or she does not cling to others' (Sennett, 2006, p.46). Ideas of individualisation filtered into research of cultural worker networks and how scholars understood workers' motivations at work. Within the fiercely competitive environment of cultural work, self-interest and self-promotion were argued as negating more communal and supportive aspects of workers' natures (McRobbie, 2002).

The types of networks often researched tended to consist of individuals with multiple 'weak' connections to others in large, 'open' networks made up of multiple individuals (Granovetter, 1973). Social network analysts such as Granovetter argued that information was more likely to travel further between large groups of people who did not know each other very well (weak ties), rather than those who had strong ties with a small number of people (Granovetter, 1973). Here, the strength of ties is understood as based on levels of trustworthiness, frequency of interaction, emotional affection, and reciprocal behaviour (Granovetter, 1973). Drawing on Granovetter's (1973) seminal paper '*The Strength of Weak Ties',* Andreas Wittel attempted to pinpoint how the changes to work and life brought about in contemporary capitalism were altering social relations between individuals. In his study of new media workers in London, he coined the term, 'network sociality' to describe a phenomena where social relations are informational, not based on mutual experience or common history,

but the exchange of data in 'fleeting and transient, yet iterative social relations; of ephemeral but intense encounters.' (Wittel, 2001, p.51). As such, 'network' is seen more as a verb than a noun; networking is understood as what people do, as a constant practice that workers undertake as a prerequisite for merely functioning in the job market.

Within the context of 'new' informational based work, Wittel built on Granovetter's understanding of the power of 'weak ties' to argue that 'weak ties' created relationships whereby interactions were largely seen as a form of exchange. In these relationships some individuals had more valuable 'goods', i.e. information, to exchange than others. Wittel characterised these relationships in market-based terms wherein the worker commodifies social relationships like goods to be traded in a marketplace. Similar to other Foucauldian inflected analyses, Wittel argued that the fragmentation and intensification of work has created a worker who has internalised the value systems of capitalism to the extent where market rationale comes to be perceived as the workers' own.

In the realms of cultural work research, Wittel's theory became influential in the understanding of the networking of cultural workers. For instance, Blair (2009) draws on Wittel's (2001) paper to suggest a culture of 'active networking' amongst television workers 'in which actors knowingly and instrumentally engage' (Blair, 2009, p.116). Blair's contribution is important because like the Foucauldian inflected accounts of Ursell and McRobbie, she examines the motivations of television workers and suggests that their abilities to act contra to the imperatives of capital are extremely limited. For Blair (2009) workers are motivated by personal gain and seem incapable of acting in ways that are not entirely within their own interests.

The implication of job market deregulation and reliance on informal hiring methods was widespread exclusion. The exclusionary nature of networked job markets can be seen as the second strand of cultural work network research. This strand featured a number of academic research papers demonstrating that only a certain subsection of the working population was actually entering the cultural workforce, and that subsection tended to be white, middle-class men (Grugulis and

Stoyanova, 2012; Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Lee, 2013; Randle, Forson and Calveley, 2015; O'Brien et al., 2016). To explain why cultural workers seemed to be replicating themselves along the same socio-economic, gendered and racialized lines, accounts of cultural work increasingly drew on the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

Bourdieu's (1990) account of the worker was not entirely reliant on structuralist ideas of subject formation and offered an alternative, but tangential, way of looking at the relationships between workers. Studies of cultural work drew on Bourdieu's ideas of 'symbolic capital', a term which he uses to expand traditional understandings of capital as not simply related to economics, but to refer to wider anthropological and cultural forms of exchange (Grenfell, 2012). Cultural, social, as well as economic capital, combine to advantage certain workers to surpass the structural boundaries such as working for free, being based in London, and being known to someone already within the network (Lee, 2011; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Randle, Forson and Calveley, 2015). Having surpassed such barriers workers then self-replicate the 'logics of practice' that normalise values and behaviours such as accents and dress codes, in turn excluding those without such prerequisites from entering (Bourdieu, 1990). Like Foucauldian-inflected accounts of the cultural worker, the Bourdieusian inflected accounts still couch the workers within the imperatives of capital. The very nature of symbolic capital as something to exchange within the social marketplace means that worker interactions and relationships are still understood in market terms (Banks, 2006). Similarly, relationships are commodified as forms of exchange of capital as opposed to relationships of support.

1.4. Challenging the narrative

The influence of Foucault's thinking on cultural work studies also brought with it critiques often associated with Foucauldian thinking. Those who had drawn on the work of Foucault to explain the disciplinary power of pleasure at work had seemingly created a caricature of the cultural worker as willing accomplices in their own exploitation and the exploitation of others. Cultural workers were conceived of as ideological dupes, unaware of their self-exploitation, and driven purely by market rationality to achieve what they perceive as their own goals at

the expense of others (e.g. Blair, 2009; McRobbie, 2002; Ursell, 2000). Implied within such a characterisation was that workers had a very limited sense of agency to act with motives other than the imperatives of capital.

In contrast, there were those who still believed cultural work could offer its originally prophesised potential of providing autonomy and self-actualisation at work (Hesmondhalgh, 2010). Cultural work studies turned to more politically engaged accounts on the future of work, namely those in the Autonomist Marxist school of thought, to seek alternate understandings of the self-exploited cultural worker (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008; Ross, 2008). Prompted by the changes in the nature of work in post-industrial societies, commentators (e.g. Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, Maurizio Lazzarato), from the Autonomist Marxist or 'post-operaismo' school of thought, explored the potentials for the worker at the forefront of the transformations in the economy. Autonomist Marxists were interested in the *new precariat* who experienced precarity in all aspects of their lives, including their jobs. At its core Autonomist Marxists were attempting to understand how 'the precarious generation' could generate a cross-class coalition capable of unifying against the imperatives of capital (Raunig, 2004). As Neilson and Rossiter put it,

> '…an attempt to identify or imagine precarious, contingent or flexible workers as a new kind of political subject, replete with their own forms of collective organization and modes of expression' (Neilson and Rossiter, 2006, p.2)

These debates began to perforate into studies of cultural work and were marked by a 2008 special issue of *Theory, Culture & Society*. The Autonomist Marxist seemingly offered a more optimistic view of the future of the precariously employed; they captured the idea that the increasingly blurred distinction between work and life had led to a situation where the whole life of a worker becomes harnessed to capitalism for economic gain. Rather than seeing this as a disadvantage, Autonomist Marxists argued that this disorganisation could act advantageously by creating new forms of solidarity between workers.

For example, the work of Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2001) saw the decline in the role of industrial factory work as ushering in a new world of work which relied on the 'new' skills of communication and cooperation. Hardt and Negri used two key ideas to describe this new form of labour: immaterial labour – labour that produces an immaterial good such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge or communication, and affective labour - the labour of human contact and interaction that does not produce material goods, but a 'feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement or passion' (Hardt and Negri, 2001, p.290–3). In an attempt to suggest a form of labour seemingly very similar to Hochschild's idea of 'emotional labour', Hardt and Negri emphasise how wealth creation now lies with the individual's capacity to perform 'affective labour'. In their highly person-centric account they view this form of labour as producing 'social networks, forms of community, [and] biopower.' (ibid, p.293). Their emphasis on interpersonal relations, as opposed to over-arching structures as formative of the subject, seemed to speak to those disillusioned with post-structuralist accounts of work. The utopian thread that ran through a lot of Hardt and Negri's work claimed that this new form of work could offer a form of 'elementary communism' as continual social interaction would somehow lead to benign relations between workers (ibid, p.294).

In critique of 'affective labour' and its application to cultural work, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2008) problematise Hardt and Negri's account of work as 'lack[ing] any theoretical or empirical engagement with the specificity of culture' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008, p.99). In what they term, 'rampantly optimistic Marxism', Hesmondhalgh and Baker criticise Hardt and Negri for their overly positive interpretation of human relations, pointing out that not all forms of co-operation fall within the realms of benign. The emotional or affective element of work, although can be an enjoyable feature of cultural work, can also be equally characterised by high levels of stress and anxiety. Far from only eliciting benign forms of cooperation, from the perspective of cultural work, the transformations in the world of work mean that cooperation is never simply benign, but often instrumentalised in a competitive job market in order to achieve one's next job.

Although Autonomist Marxist accounts do not necessarily sit contra to Foucauldian ideas as the discourse of capital is still seen as formative of workers' subjectivities and precarity is seen as an exercise in capitalist control (Lazzarato, 1996), Autonomist Marxists see far greater potential for the worker at the juncture of changes in the nature of work than had be offered in Foucauldian inflected accounts. The Autonomist Marxist emphasis on social relations and benign cooperation, although without sufficient basis in empirical evidence, may still prove useful in imagining a better cultural workforce. The Autonomist Marxists captured the idea of recognition between workers of exploitation, and the power of interpersonal relationships to shape workers' understandings of their positions. Although it is largely accepted in all of the aforementioned accounts that market-rationale dictates a significant part of worker relations, perhaps there is also room to suggest that workers can hold more than one motive in their actions and that intense socialisation at work can lead the way to notions of solidarity and support.

Further, there are empirical cultural work studies that have challenged Foucauldian inflected accounts' overemphasis on structure as formative of the subject (Banks, 2006; Coulson, 2012; Naudin, 2015; Alacovska, 2021; Alacovska and Bissonnette, 2021). Though fewer in number, these studies suggest that some cultural workers may be using networks for reasons other than instrumental gain, and provide evidence of cultural workers embedded within their own communities and engaged in improving them. For instance, Naudin's (2015) research found that amongst her participants there was,

> '…the possibility for strategic networking *and* genuine relationships...Individuals are able to distinguish between market-governed relationships and social relations.' (Naudin, 2015, p.302, *emphasis in original*)

In what Banks (2006) refers to as the 'moral economy of work', workers hold simultaneously co-present and intersecting values. Workers navigate the terrain in which they find themselves with a level of agency and ethicality towards their fellow workers. Similarly, Coulson's (2012) research on collaboration between musicians in the Northeast of England offers another example of non-instrumental relationships being utilised within precarious employment. Coulson calls for less

focus on the market-driven use of networks, to conceptualising cultural work as something more than purely a means to making money. Although Coulson's insight could be criticized for having a romanticized view of cultural work as the 'need to make money' cannot so easily be dismissed, Coulson's participants seemed to have a strong sense of being part of a community and having a common identity. As these studies highlight, and as the field of cultural work studies has developed, there have been an increasing number of challenges to the dominant narrative of the cultural worker as calculating and instrumental in their network behaviour.

Lee's (2012) research on UK documentary filmmakers questioned whether market rationale precluded workers from acting with a sense of ethical and moral practice. Although Lee acknowledges that there are workers who can be characterised as 'self-exploited victims of the neoliberal workplace', he also calls to further the debate 'by exploring the possibilities for ethics and agency within the field, despite the many pressures that workers experience.' (Lee, 2012, p.481). As Banks (2006) notes, the drawbacks to theorising cultural workers as atomised, self-serving individuals is that it leaves very little room for how some individuals act with agency and in ways that contradict market rationality (Banks, 2006, p.460). As Hesmondhalgh argues, Foucauldian inflected accounts of the worker close down the possibilities of uncovering examples of 'good' work, as workers who act within the realms of capitalist imperatives are all too quickly dismissed as succumbing to the allure of cultural work (Hesmondhalgh, 2010).

In recent years, research into cultural worker networks has focused on the results of networking, namely impact on workforce participation (Lee, 2011; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Lee, 2013; Randle, Forson and Calveley, 2015; Wreyford, 2015a). This outcome focused approach has done much to aid our understanding of exclusion and the barriers to career progression within film and television work. Less attention has been paid to other aspects of worker participation in networks, such as the sense of support and collaboration they can provide, as well as how they *could* facilitate inclusion for some marginalised groups. Film and television network research has centred on the large, open, 'address-book' types of networks, whereby workers have multiple weak ties to others. In contrast, there have been far fewer studies into 'close' or small 'work-group' types of organisation

save from a few notable examples e.g. Antcliff et al., 2007; Blair, 2009; Dex et al., 2000.

Antcliff et al.'s 2007 study of 'work-groups' or semi-permanent groups of workers who tend to gravitate around a head of department, is one of a few examples of studies into close-knit networks (see also Blair, 2009). The study included 37 television freelancers who had a number of weak ties to a roster of background contacts, but also a small number of strong ties on which the research focused (Antcliff, Saundry and Stuart, 2007). The authors used their data to contest the idea that workers enter into networking only for instrumental gains; instead, they suggested a more nuanced and ambivalent involvement in networked behaviour (ibid). They argue that the functions of these work-groups differ significantly to their 'open' counterparts, and offer collective functions such as support, mutuality and trust (ibid, p.383). They acknowledge that being a member of certain networks offers competitive advantage, but they note that networks also provide the interim benefits of social support, and a sense of professional identity and cohesion (ibid). It is this type of small network that best characterises data gathered for this thesis.

1.4.1. Ideas of a moral economy

As the cultural work canon of literature progressed it is possible to see a pushback against the use of Foucault-governmentality inspired theories, and to look to new ways of reconciling the intensely social nature of cultural work with market imperatives. With evidence of workers holding both instrumental and non-instrumental motives in their actions towards others, it was suggested that the possibility of finding 'good' cultural work may be more likely (Hesmondhalgh, 2010). Rather than focusing on the instrumental nature of individual actors, the emphasis was placed on understanding relationships and interactions within their market contexts (ibid).

In the early 2010s, with a marked emphasis by the *Work, Employment & Society* journal, there seemed to be a revived interest in the concept of a 'moral economy', and its possible relevance to the cultural industries. Within moral

economy-based understandings there was far greater emphasis on the communitarian aspects of networks that challenge some of the harsher conditions of cultural work, such as financial insecurity, intense competition and alienation. By drawing on ideas of a moral economy, cultural work researchers began re-centring ideas of workers' agency and capacity to shape their local industry in ways that were not simply for their own personal gain or motivated by the enticing promises of cultural work.

In this offshoot of cultural work research, engagement with the concept of a 'moral economy' was mainly through the work of Sayer (2000, 2004, 2011). Broadly speaking, moral economy theory can be said to encompass the idea of the embeddedness of social relations within economies that are underwritten by common ideas of what is considered morally good conduct (Sayer, 2000). For Sayer (2004) economies cannot be understood in abstraction from the social and the cultural. By trying to analyse economies as separate from the social world, Sayer avers that we can only offer an alienated and unrealistic picture of how economies operate (Sayer, 2004, p.2). Sayer defines the study of a moral economy as,

> '…the study of how economic activities of all kinds are influenced and structured by moral dispositions and norms, and how in turn those norms may be compromised, overridden or reinforced by economic pressures.' (ibid)

Sayer contends that under capitalism, exchange is dependent on non-economic forms of interaction and communication, therefore all economic relations have ethical or moral implications (Sayer, 2004). By such a definition all economies have a moral dimension, but the extent to which an economy operates on morally 'good' principles is highly variable (ibid). In the revolving relationship of the economic and moral, Sayer convincingly captures the complex and ambivalent relations that occur when our moral and ethical understandings as human beings collide with the pressures and rationales of capitalist economic activity.

For commentators on moral economy theory outwith of Sayer, the juxtaposition between 'moral' and 'economy' remains open for debate. Some argue that it is

not possible to separate the two since markets are dependent on social conventions: all market activity requires some level of social 'embedding' and so to theorise that the moral and the economic as separate spheres is to create a false division (Krippner, 2004; Fligstein and Calder, 2015). Others argue that moral sentiment could never truly disrupt markets because the two are inherently reliant on one another and the market has the ability and power to supersede workers' rights and conditions (ibid). Depending on one's theoretical standpoint and case study, researchers can give varying weight to how market forces interact with ideas of morality. For example, Alacovska (2021) sees the power of moral sentiment and care as presenting a challenge to market forces. Umney (2017) also insists that even though market power may appear all-consuming, 'it leaves spaces in which community can be built, through the staging of events or the provision of unremunerated work to the benefit of good causes.' (Umney, 2017, p.838).

Here, I argue that juxtaposing morality with market pressures is a useful distinction to analysing how the two sit in tension with one another. Social relations and moral sentiment do not only serve market imperatives, rather the relationship is dialectical. Although markets are reliant on social relations, moral sentiments and principles, these facets of human interaction play an important role in how markets are shaped and governed. Rather than conceptualising social relations as mere facilitators of economic activity, if we are to understand the relationships of workers with nuance, then attention must be paid equally to the moral side of work in its market context. A moral economy framework enables a form of analysis that can account for how these facets of work sit in tension with one another.

Certain cultural work studies draw on moral economy thinking to build to an understanding of cultural workers as agentic beings with the capacity to act ethically to structure their job markets (Alacovska & Bissonnette, 2021; Banks, 2006; Coulson, 2012; Hesmondhalgh, 2017; Kennedy, 2012; Umney, 2017; Vail & Hollands, 2012). Workers are faced with multiple decisions and market pressures surrounding their relationships to other workers, but their capacity to engage in altruistic acts of care and support are not entirely negated.

The use of a moral economy critique succeeded in re-centring the worker as a thinking, relational being, capturing the tension faced by any worker in a given economy to act morally given the demands of capital. Although these studies are still a relatively small subsection of cultural work research output, there are some interesting similarities between those who have chosen to apply a moral economy theoretical lens. A significant proportion of these studies relate to the music industry, or groups of workers who have a strong connection to place (Coulson, 2012; Naudin, 2015; Umney, 2017). The participants of these studies are often not at the 'commercial' end of the cultural sector and conform to more 'bohemian' approaches and outlooks to art and life (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Ross, 2003). Although none of these studies relate to film and television work, all of the authors were keen to explore and recharacterize the nature of relationships within cultural work, and the participants of these papers often saw their supportive measures as the morally 'right' thing to do in recognition of the struggles they also face as insecurely contracted freelancers.

In particular, the research of Alacovska and Bissonnette (2021) uses the concept of a moral economy to discuss the possibilities of workers creating non-market spaces. They suggest spaces that are outside of the reach of capital, which mitigate hardship incurred as a result of structural conditions, and challenge market imperatives. For the authors, moral economies are underpinned by ideas of community, non-instrumental action and solidarity; workers recognise the precarity that they collectively face and actively try to shield against its effects through practises such as favour giving, informal mentoring, or resource sharing. The foundation of these moral economies is the idea of shared understanding of the moral principles that link the group of workers together. Shared principles of communitarianism, solidarity and mutual support are seen as exemplifying how some cultural workers are morally invested in their relations to others. The authors argue that for too long cultural work has been understood through a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (drawing on critique by Parker and Parker, 2017), that negatively views workers' motives as suspect or only for self-serving gains. They argue that attention should be directed to where workers 'orient themselves positively—i.e. caringly, affectively and relationally— towards others for the sake

of living well together, building communal relationships and maintaining a good community.' (Alacovska and Bissonnette, 2021, p.137).

Although there seems an inherent danger here of focussing solely on the benign aspects of work, the authors make an important point about how the academic canon of cultural work has lacked engagement with the mutually supportive side of cultural work. That is not to suggest that self-centred or self-serving workers do not exist within the cultural industries, but that there should be a space for recognising examples of communitarian behaviour. For Alacovska and Bissonnette, the bonds formed by workers act in opposition to market forces and are a way of mitigating and challenging the market rational. Framed in this way, the authors pitch the moral economy of cultural workers as a form of both insulation from and challenge to the market forces that so often seem to determine the careers of cultural workers.

Yet despite its merits, Alacovska and Bissonnette do not see a moral economy critique as entirely sufficient. They note that ideas of a moral economy are useful on the macro-scale of analysis by foregrounding ideas of social responsibility and communitarianism as important for a 'good' existence within a given economy, but they also advocate for the addition of an 'ethic of care' approach. They argue that the addition of a care lens can recentre the role of relationships and interdependencies between actors, rather than solely relying on the 'abstract' principles seen in moral economy theory (Alacovska and Bissonnette, 2021, p.137). The authors seek to 'concretize' broader ideas of creative justice by concentrating on the nature and dynamics of relationships as opposed to the overarching principles of a moral economy, such as fairness, mutuality and egalitarianism (ibid).

Drawing on the work of Tronto (1993) and Held (2006), Alacovska and Bissonnette note how an ethic of care approach can focus attention on the minutiae of social relations between workers as they see the power of relationality and human interdependence as a greater driver of action than competitive, individualistic and self-centred behaviour (Alacovska and Bissonnette, 2021, p.147). In a shift away from ideas seen at the beginning of the century, Alacovska and Bissonnette argue

in favour of rethinking characterisations of cultural workers, to uncover workers who value mutual support, compassion and interdependence in order to persevere through the harsh realities of cultural work.

1.4.2. A relational theoretical approach: an ethic of care

Although fewer in number, references to an 'ethic of care' to examine the cultural industries are growing (e.g. Alacovska, 2020; Alacovska & Bissonnette, 2021; Aust, 2020; Langevang et al., 2021). An ethic of care can be broadly understood as a moral philosophical approach that is grounded in the idea of human interdependencies and the need for care as fundamental to modern societies (Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1993; Held, 2006; Barnes, 2012). Fisher and Tronto define care as:

> 'A species of activity that includes everything we do to maintain, contain, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves and our environment.' (Fisher and Tronto, 1990, p.3)

An ethic of care as a moral theory advocates for understanding individuals in their relational contexts, whilst stressing the importance of compassion, nurturance and support to build a more moral society (Tronto, 1993). The approach originated from feminist thinkers who critiqued the prevailing moral theory in Western philosophy of the rational, individualistic moral actor detached from the need of care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Ruddick, 1990). As Held (2006) points out, liberal individualism failed to account for the moral actor as dependent on the care of others to survive; prevailing moral theories such as an ethic of justice, Kantian Deontology or Bentham's utilitarianism conceptualised the moral actor as entirely self-reliant. Instead an ethic of care as a normative moral theory sought to demonstrate how we are all interdependent on the care of others in order to function and survive (Held, 2006). Proponents of an ethic of care also pointed out that the analytical potential of 'care' had hitherto been undervalued because of its feminized legacy. In particular the work of Gilligan, Noddings, Tronto, to name a few, recentred previously neglected ideas of compassion, attentiveness, responsibility and meeting others' needs. All of which had been traditionally

associated with women, and in turn had been devalued and excluded from public debate.

In work and employment research, a useful example of using an ethic of care as a theoretical framework, comes from Raw and McKie's (2020) article. The authors review studies that use 'care' as a theoretical lens to research women in low-paid work in the UK and Finland. The authors develop a concept called 'care accounts' which centres on informal forms of exchange between groups of women workers who cover each other's shifts (ibid). The authors do not see the exchange as based on strategic motives or expectations that the favour will be returned. They note that the phenomenon is 'intuitive', and the commitment is based more on ideas of group recognition of others' struggles than about individual exchange (ibid, p.58). Raw and McKie's analysis more closely aligns with ideas of workers choosing to enact care because of commonly held principles and a sense of empathy, as opposed to personal gain.

In film and television research 'care' as a concept is distinctly lacking from how we have hitherto understood film and television workers. The work of Rowan Aust (2021b), which draws on the work of Jane Tronto, is perhaps one of only a few examples. In the article, Aust uses Tronto's four phases of care: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness (Tronto, 1993, p.127). Tronto argues that in order to practice care, firstly we must be *attentive* to the reality that we are not entirely self-supporting or autonomous individuals devoid of ties to others, and in turn we need to recognise others' need for care (ibid). Secondly, a desire to take *responsibility* for the care of those around us becomes a necessary foreground to enacting care (ibid, p.131). Thirdly, in order to enact care, one has to have the *competence* to provide it (ibid, p.133). Finally, *responsiveness* to others' care needs not simply through reciprocity, but cultivating an openness to accepting care and understanding how care is experienced by others (ibid, p.134-5).

Aust uses Tronto's four phases to demonstrate that although broadly speaking the film and television industry has recognised the need to 'care' in light of the Weinstein and Saville investigations, the industry has yet to enact any form of

meaningful or active care for those that create and produce television product (Aust, 2020). Evidence from screen worker research, along with the rise in number of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives that call on the industry to care about equitable hiring practices as well as the accessibility of working environments and hours, have placed pressure on production companies to invest in the well-being of their workers. In turn, production companies are being publicly required *to appear* to care for their workers, yet as Aust has pointed out, at present caring for workers is understood in terms of 'defensive' measures (Aust, 2020, p.120). That is, production companies are being asked to *not* bully, harass or discriminate - practices that they should not be doing anyway, rather than being required to actively better the working conditions of those whom they contract (ibid).

In what she calls the 'turn to care', Aust argues that discourse surrounding care for workers in the film and television industries is now more ubiquitous, but employers are yet to produce any form of 'active care' (Aust, 2020). Aust demonstrates how centring the relational and moral dimension of worker interactions can aid research in developing insights about how new discourses that surround film and television work are experienced by workers. Further to this, Tronto notes how,

> 'Caring is by its very nature a challenge to the notion that individuals are entirely autonomous and self-supporting. To be in a situation where one needs care is to be in a position of some vulnerability.' (Tronto, 1993, p.134)

By the very nature of precarious employment practices, workers are in a vulnerable position. An ethic of care recognises this vulnerability and begins on the basis that every individual requires care to function. Viewing data through a 'care lens' provides the emphasis on relational everyday practices and opens up questions of attachment and support between workers that have been lacking in the film and television worker academic canon.

1.5. Weaving together the theoretical threads: the theoretical framework

The dominant theoretical underpinnings of cultural worker research that rely on interpretations of governmentality theory have not aligned with data collected for this thesis. In turn, I have sought new and emerging theories to understand the participants of this research. I have no intention of extolling the virtues of individualisation, but I intend to argue that whilst freelancing necessitates a level of self-preservation and self-reliance, the demands placed on workers under contemporary capitalism instil a greater need for co-operation and mutual dependence amongst workers (Butler, 2012; Lorey, 2015). Unlike more well-known network sociality critiques via Wittel (2001), my data suggests the transactional relationships under the workings of freelance, capitalist enterprise are not devoid of care and strong social bonds. Rather than beginning with the 'economic subject', who, having been produced through the workings of power, lacks the ability to engage in relationships with anything other than market logic, this thesis begins with the worker who holds multiple rationales and values co-presently.

Ideas of a moral economy are fitting to understand workers' motives with nuance and complexity, but still has scope to account for capitalisms' reliance on the 'morality' of others in order for markets to function (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). A moral economy critique provides the normative foreground to assert that some workers' actions are immoral and counter to the flourishing of others, but leaves space to understand their contradictory and unclear motives. Working with ideas often considered to be constituents of a moral economy and an ethic of care, I explore ideas of responsibility, accountability, loyalty, trust and interdependence to understand how the participants of this study navigate the film and television workplace and build relationships within their networks. I develop an understanding of film and television worker interdependence that creates space to analyse how the aspirational ideas of care and support are too often compromised by their economic context. By drawing on both of these theoretical approaches, I produce an empirically grounded account of the everyday ethics of film and television work.

Chapter 2: Women's careers in UK film and television

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I begin with an overview of the research that has been conducted into UK film and television work: who has access to work, what work entails and how work is organised. Then, I map the industry-facing research landscape to highlight the various stakeholders who conduct research, what they research and how they research it. Thirdly, I focus on women's experiences of the film and television workplace and the thematic concerns that dominate the research agenda. Finally, I explore ideas of (a lack of) progress in the postfeminist context and how the recent developments of the #MeToo movement and the coronavirus pandemic have impacted women's careers.

To begin, there are terminological distinctions to consider when writing about 'cultural' work. Within the study of cultural work, there has been a focus on those in 'symbol' creator roles: those in visible, prestigious roles such as directors, actors and writers. Such roles remain dominant in both the public arena and the research agenda, whilst the input of craft workers often receives far less attention (Banks, 2010; Mayer, 2011). Like Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), I take a more expansive view of 'symbol' creators to not only include those in 'creative', design focused roles, but also those whose work is directly involved in making 'symbols'. Craft workers are integral to any creation of a 'symbolic' text, therefore when referencing 'cultural workers', I refer to those who design cultural goods *and* those who make them.

Similarly, creative versus craft debates also play out in the film and television industries. In the US context, the distinction is referred to as 'above-the-line' – the 'symbol' creators, and 'below-the-line' – the craft or technical roles. As Miranda Banks (2009) explains,

> 'Above-the-line' and 'below-the-line' are industry terms that distinguish between creative and craft professions in production. The distinction is derived from a particular worker's position in relation to a bold horizontal line on a standard production budget

> sheet between creative and technical costs, establishing a hierarchy that stratifies levels of creative and craft labor.' (Banks, 2009, p.89)

This line often correlates to the level of prestige and remuneration that each role invokes. Even though this thesis does not employ the 'above' and 'below' the line terminology as it is concerned with the UK context, there are a number of craft or 'below-the-line' studies from the US context which are relevant to this thesis, (particularly the work of Miranda Banks, 2009). I refrain from using the US terminology of 'above' and 'below' the line because of its distinctions of privilege. Instead, the terms 'key creative' and 'offscreen workers' are used when specifically referencing film and television workers.

The majority of the participants of this study worked fluidly between film and television within similar working patterns, therefore, I treat the film and television industries as one entity (the industry). Although in most other contexts they have distinctive differences, when studying patterns of employment and treatment of workers, the similarities are significant. Furthermore, when referencing 'film and television work', I am referring to the physical production of scripted film and television texts where costume work takes place.

2.2. Film and television work in the UK: an overview

Work in the UK's film and television industries is characterised by its flexible, precarious, and individualised nature (Gill, 2002; Deuze, 2007; Gill and Pratt, 2008). Since the early 1990s cultural work research from the academy has demonstrated the injurious side of film and television work: excessively long hours, low or no pay, unpredictable, freelance work patterns and hiring based on personal networks (Dex et al., 2000; Blair, 2001; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012).

In film and television production work, workforces or 'crews' are often assembled quickly and based on pre-built networks of contacts in attempt to minimise risk in the often high-stakes process of beginning production (Ursell, 2000; Blair, 2009; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012). Workers tend to move from one short-term PAYE (Pay As You Earn) contract to another, some operate as limited companies, and a

minority work on a full-time contractual basis (ScreenSkills, 2020b). ScreenSkills estimates that film and television production has the largest proportion of freelancers, (50%), out of the screen industries (ScreenSkills, 2019, p.7).[4] Both ScreenSkills and the BFI estimate the number of freelancers in film and television work to be twice the number of the wider UK labour workforce (ScreenSkills, 2019; BFI, 2021a, p.16). Notably, the term 'freelancer' is not a recognised category of employment status by the Office for National Statistics, and ScreenSkills itself cautions the accuracy of their statistics (Raising Films, 2017; ScreenSkills, 2019). The term 'freelancer' often takes on many different meanings, only loosely relating to the project-based work in film and television, despite being widely used and monitored in official surveys. According to research conducted by Raising Films in 2017, many in the film and television workforce operate simultaneously across the three categories of worker, employee and self-employed (Raising Films, 2017, p.11).

In order to attain jobs, workers are required to build and maintain memberships of large networks (Dex et al., 2000; Antcliff, Saundry and Stuart, 2007; Lee, 2008; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012). Work is often distributed by word-of-mouth, or in more recent years through Facebook groups (ibid). Significant emphasis is placed on building relationships with fellow workers in a highly socialised environment whereby the distinction between personal and professional becomes extremely blurred (Rowlands and Handy, 2012). Grugulis and Stoyanova (2012) have pointed toward the intensive socialisation periods such as the long hours (up to 11+ hour days), location shoots and hotel-stays that are involved within film and television production, to explain how networks reproduce quickly (see Swords et al., 2022 for evidence of long hours cultures). Workers' attitudes toward participating in networks have been found to be highly ambivalent, with some citing them as a means to an end and an added chore, whilst others enjoy the social side of work (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Lee, 2012; Rowlands and Handy, 2012).

[4] ScreenSkills define the screen industries as: 'animation, children's TV, film, games, high-end TV (HETV), unscripted TV and VFX' (ScreenSkills, 2019, p.12).

'50%' is the most recent statistic offered by ScreenSkills on the number of freelancers in film *and* television work at the time of completing this thesis, but the figure is most likely higher for those working soley in production.

Networking culture in film and television has been the subject of multiple research papers, and it is often cited as an important factor in determining the composition of the film and television workforce (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Lee, 2013; Randle, Forson and Calveley, 2015).

With some surety we can assert that the film and television offscreen workforce does not reflect the diversity of the wider UK workforce (CAMEo, 2018; Directors UK, 2018; ScreenSkills, 2020a; Nwonka and Malik, 2021; Creative Diversity Network, 2023). According to Creative Diversity Network's (CDN) 'Project Diamond', the film and television offscreen workforce has an uneven spread of women across departments, with the majority concentrated in costume and hair and make-up, and women also remain underrepresented in key creative roles (Creative Diversity Network, 2023, p.10).[5] In terms of the race and ethnicity of offscreen workers, there are different levels of representation dependent on one's specific racial or ethnic background, but CDN's data suggest that on average those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds are represented in line with the wider population in offscreen craft roles, but there are specific crafts which remain underrepresented such as Lighting and Sound (ibid, p.16). There is a consistently strong representation from those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (ibid, p.22). When compared to the UK labour force, those over 50 are under-represented offscreen (ibid, p.25), but CDN's 2022 report found that those over-50 were best represented offscreen in the costume department (Creative Diversity Network, 2022b, p.36). There are insufficient data on transgender offscreen workers to make conclusive remarks, but the latest data suggests that contributions made by transgender offscreen workers are rising (Creative Diversity Network, 2023, p.13). There is a severe lack of disabled workers, with disabled workers consistently the most underrepresented group within those monitored (Creative Diversity Network, 2022a).

[5] Project Diamond data is used here to offer a general overview of the offscreen workforce as it is the most recent and comprehensive data set available. The project collects data from the productions broadcast by BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Paramount, UKTV and Sky about the composition of the workforces on the television productions they commission. (See Chapter 2.3 for discussion of how these data are gathered and their accuracy. Chapter 4.4 explores the quantitative data that relates specifically to the costume department).

The structure of the film and television industries is one of the most commonly cited barriers preventing a diverse workforce (Randle, 2007; Follows, Kreager and Gomes, 2016; Directors UK, 2018; Raising Films, 2019). By 'structure' I refer to the short-notice, temporary freelance contracts, informal recruitment practices where jobs are gained through word-of-mouth networks, long hours work cultures, a reliance on socialising outside of work hours to make 'contacts', and the need for flexibility to seek work throughout the UK. These structural constraints are in some cases accompanied by (un)conscious bias, overt discrimination and/or harassment, all of which often goes unreported and unreprimanded due to an unregulated hiring system (Wilkes, Carey and Florisson, 2020; Swords et al., 2022).

Each of these barriers to participation impact individuals differently dependent on their personal background. For example, the industry revolves around short-term contracts, workforces are assembled quickly and based on pre-built networks of contacts. Those without the established networks, or those without family members working within the industry, face difficulty in gaining work (Randle, Forson and Calveley, 2015). Many of those entering the industry will initially need to work for free to establish experience and to network (Allen et al., 2013; Percival and Hesmondhalgh, 2014). Those without the funds to work for free will be disadvantaged, and as a result there is a higher proportion of privately educated film and television workers compared to the wider UK labour force (Carey et al., 2017). Financial barriers also intersect with race, class and gender; research has evidenced a tendency for 'homophily'- the tendency for people to seek out those similar to themselves, amongst those in powerful positions who tend to be white, middle-class men (Randle, 2007; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020). Those with caring responsibilities, primarily women, might not be able to afford childcare, find care arrangements at short notice, or have the time to network outside of work hours (Raising Films, 2019).

From data gathered over the past decade it is clear that certain groups of people are being excluded from film and television work, and research has shown that the group which is most *advantaged* by such conditions tends to be white, middle-class men (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020). Yet, although academic research has done much to establish the link between the

structure of the industry and the composition of the workforce, tackling the lack of diversity in film and television work remains an ongoing challenge.

2.3. Monitoring the film and television workforce

In terms of monitoring the film and television workforce there has been emphasis placed on the gathering of quantitative data through projects such as Project Diamond, ScreenSkills' censuses, and the BFI statistical yearbook. These data sets are primarily concerned with the numbers of those who identify as having one or more protected characteristics as identified in the 2010 Equality Act. The protected characteristics of sex, ethnicity and age are the most commonly monitored, followed by sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, and religion (CAMEo, 2018). Notably, protected characteristics do not include class or caring status, although caring status has been monitored by groups such as Raising Films.

As noted in the previous section, there is a substantial body of evidence that details the lack of diversity within the film and television workforce. Industry-facing organisations such as the BFI, Creative Diversity Network, Directors UK, and ScreenSkills, have invested in evidencing inequality in the film and television industries. For the offscreen workforce, this has proved to be an extremely difficult task due to the transient and precarious nature of a predominantly freelance workforce. One of the more comprehensive data sets on both the film and television industries are ScreenSkills' censuses (ScreenSkills, 2004; 2007; 2012). From 2004 to 2012, ScreenSkills conducted workforce censuses based on employer responses from registered companies on a chosen census day, but importantly their data do not include freelancers not working on the chosen census day. Such a method is inherently problematic for the majority freelance workforce. Although these censuses have been supplemented by more recent workforce surveys, these no longer track individual production departments. By the absence of a more recent census than 2012, it seems that ScreenSkills have shifted their focus onto skills forecasting rather than monitoring specific workforce numbers.

Creative Diversity Network's Project Diamond offers a more centralised data collection system. Project Diamond collects contributions from broadcasters (BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Paramount, UKTV and Sky) about the composition of the workforces on the productions they commission. Project Diamond offers far greater granular detail than other monitoring programmes as it breaks down their data by department and protected characteristic. But notably for the research conducted for this thesis, Project Diamond's data does not cover programmes from subscription video on demand services (SVODs) such as Netflix, Amazon Prime or Disney+ who remain a significant employer of the participants of this cohort.

Across the data sets available there is no standardised research framework, and aside from Project Diamond, there is very little clarity on when data refers to employed or freelance professionals, or when it refers to those in production, distribution or exhibition. Not only is gathering data difficult, comparing and collating data across multiple sources is also arduous. Unpicking which data sets pertain to the costume department remains a challenging task, which is outlined in Chapter 4.4. Yet, despite their shortcomings, there is consistency across the available data sets which reveal notable absences in the workforce. Therefore, with some certainty I can assert that the film and television workforce is not reflective of the wider UK workforce (ScreenSkills, 2012; CAMEo, 2018; Ofcom, 2019; Creative Diversity Network, 2022b).

2.4. Women's careers in film and television work

Despite the empirical difficulties in monitoring the film and television workforce, gender is the most studied protected characteristic of the film and television workforce (CAMEo, 2018, p.26). With the combination of research from the academy and industry facing bodies, we have a fairly consistent picture of how women's careers in film and television progress, and why there is a recurrent trend of women leaving the workforce or not advancing to senior roles.

Despite there being a relatively even spread of women entering the offscreen workforce, women are underrepresented in senior key roles such as directing and screenwriting, as well as technical roles in departments such as transportation,

sound, and camera (ScreenSkills, 2012; Follows, Kreager and Gomes, 2016; Creative Diversity Network, 2023). Conversely, women are over-represented in roles such as costume and hair and make-up (ibid).

Barriers to participation in the workforce are felt unevenly for women from different personal backgrounds; 'women' cannot be understood as a homogenous mass. Women's careers have been evidenced as shaped by their race, their class and their disability and caring status (Raising Films, 2017; Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020; Creative Diversity Network, 2023). As this section discusses research concerning 'women' in film and television work, it is important to note that research is largely referring to cis-gendered, non-disabled, white, middle-class women. This group makes up the majority of women in the workforce, and has been the centre of research into women's careers.

There has been an emphasis within the research agenda on quantitative monitoring of women in 'key creative roles' which is reflected in projects such as Lauzen's 'Celluloid Ceiling' (Lauzen, 2023), the USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (Smith, Pieper and Wheeler, 2023), and in the UK context, the 'Calling the Shots' project (Cobb, Williams and Wreyford, 2018). These projects track the number of women in 'key' roles such as director, producer, cinematographer, in which they are consistently the minority. Such data collections play a powerful role in shining a light on the women who are not present, those who were never afforded the opportunity to work in the film and television industry or excluded from it at an early stage (Wreyford and Cobb, 2017).

Recently, the work of Verhoeven et al. (2020) has advocated for a move away from quantifying individuals to instead focussing on the relationships between them using social network analysis (SNA). Verhoeven et al. argue that by using SNA to visualise relationships in groups of filmmakers and characterise network structure, they identify the strategically important people in the network. By doing so, they explore a variety of 'what if' potentials of what would happen if the gender balance within these groups is changed (Verhoeven et al., 2020, p.2). Their results suggest that the most critical way to improving women's chances in film work will involve improving connections between women and powerful men (ibid, p.1).

Whilst quantitative research has evidenced areas of absence of women, qualitative research has added depth to understandings of women's careers. Qualitative investigations into the barriers to women's participation have illustrated a myriad of attitudinal and structural barriers. (1) The attitudinal barriers based on negative perceptions of women's creativity (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015), their association with childcare (Dent, 2020), and the perceived 'risk' of hiring them (Coles and Eikhof, 2021). (2) The structural barriers faced by women include exclusion from men-dominated networks, and the difficulty in adhering to long hours cultures and short notice contracts because of their greater likelihood of being primary caregivers (ScreenSkills, 2010; Raising Films, 2017; Percival, 2019; Berridge, 2020; 2021; Dent, 2020).

Eikhof et al.'s (2019) review of literature on the role of gender and film and television careers highlighted how knowledge production on the role of gender often constructs motherhood as an essential component of gender (Eikhof et al., 2019). Gender is often collapsed into meaning 'woman', and barriers faced by women are often collapsed into barriers faced by mothers. Parenthood and caring responsibilities are not gendered issues per se, but research conducted by Raising Films and Dent (2021) has shown how the 'stigma' of parenthood disproportionately effects women's career chances within the industry (Raising Films, 2017; Dent, 2021).

Gill (2014) and Dent (2021) have suggested that continual references to motherhood mask the structural barriers and discriminatory attitudes that continue to prevent women from having long-term careers in film and television regardless of whether they have children or not. Gill (2014) has noted that to point toward motherhood as the singular issue as to why women leave the industry obfuscates from the structural conditions that create the barriers to work and continues to reinforce the link between women and childcare.

Research has found evidence of attitudinal cultures where women are viewed as 'risky' hires, judged based on negative perceptions of 'women's' creativity or on their association with childcare responsibilities (Gill, 2014; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015; Coles and Eikhof, 2021; Dent, 2021). Preconceived ideas about

women's abilities and their capabilities play an important role in hiring practices (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015; Jones and Pringle, 2015). Ideas of the 'type' of person who is considered 'creative' and competent to work in the cultural industries result in women creatives often being overlooked or deemed too 'risky' (Wreyford, 2018; Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020).[6] Within research on film and television workers there have been numerous examples of interviewees reluctant to 'risk' training and investing in women (Gill, 2014; Jones and Pringle, 2015; Dent, 2020). When in work, bullying and sexual harassment become a feature of many women's careers further preventing women from fully participating the workforce (Wilkes, Carey and Florisson, 2020; Bull, 2023). All of these barriers are compounded for women with caring responsibilities who cannot adhere to long hours cultures, changeable schedules and have no maternity or sick pay (Raising Films, 2017).

Research into how women navigate and mitigate against these barriers is also growing. Ann O'Brien (2018) has suggested that women adopt a 'liminal' position where they are never fully 'in' the industry, but never fully excluded from it. By taking a 'liminal' position, O'Brien suggests that women are acknowledging their shared precarity to collaborate in a 'homosocial' fashion, for example, a woman director consistently working with a woman camera person. O'Brien argues that by working in 'homosocial' teams women establish long term relations of trust similar to how men operate within the industry (ibid, p.685). In the absence of regulated hiring procedures informal groups of workers become important routes into work. In turn, she argues that women undermine the masculinist, individualized norms found within the television industry (ibid, p.687).

Ideas of women's collaboration are also echoed by Cobb's (2019) conference paper on women directors and producers working in 'sisterhoods' 'to circumvent the 'subtle' and 'informal' sexism of the creative industries' (Cobb, 2019). Similarly, Directors UK reported that films headed by a woman director, are more likely to

[6] Despite a recent upswing in the number of women winning Oscars for key, creative roles, systemic change has yet to be borne out in data. The Annenberg Institute's review of the number of women directors in the top grossing films in the US, notes a short-lived look toward inclusion with the figure rising to 15% in 2020, and falling down to 9% in 2022 (Smith, Pieper and Wheeler, 2023, p.2).

have other ‘female key creatives’ in their productions (Follows, Kreager and Gomes, 2016, p.8).

There is further evidence to substantiate ideas of collaboration, solidarity and support found in homosocial groups of women costume workers. Warner’s (2018) research on costume designers’ contributions to the magazine publication of the *Costume Designers Guild* offers insight from the US context. The magazine is a quarterly publication for the 800+ members of costume designers of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IASTE). Warner convincingly argues that the career stories costume designers tell each other in the magazine can be understood as ‘subversive acts of “speaking out” against a neoliberal production culture that attempts to silence them.’ (Warner, 2018, p.37).

Prior to Warner’s research, career stories told between offscreen workers about their struggles have been characterised by what Caldwell calls ‘against-all-odds allegories’ (Caldwell, 2008, p.38). In these allegories the worker frames themself in their own narrative as overcoming harsh conditions due to their own individual strength of character (ibid). Interestingly, Warner finds evidence of an alternative form of storytelling whereby the stories of costume designers focus on collectivism over individualism. She notes an emphasis on collaboration with other costume workers, the use of equalizing language with the costume designer’s role and others in the department, and a recognition of a shared experience of adversity (Warner, 2018, p.47). Yet, notably Warner contends that by interweaving informational and personal anecdotes in the magazine, the costume designers ‘construct a collective identity for a specific community in order to increase its social power’ (Warner, 2018, p.41). Whilst the storytelling of costume designers creates a sense of solidarity and shared experience, it is a sense of solidarity built within certain parameters and those outside the specific remit of the designers’ experiences of being white mothers, are excluded. Still, Warner recognises that the costume department is an untapped resource in understanding how some women can sustain careers in an increasingly precarious and exclusionary industry. She notes, ‘We must recognize the pockets of resistance wherever they occur—in personal experience stories or in acts of kindness—as legitimate acts of “doing” politics.’ (ibid, p.54).

As this thesis develops, I introduce examples of groups of women costume workers working in a 'homosocial' fashion to support each other and find work. As the current body of research stands, we do not know how these groups function, upon what foundations they are built, and how they influence career retention. The current body of literature can aid us to a certain extent, but from here I hope to build on existing research to understand how certain groups of women remain in the film and television workforce.

2.4.1 Postfeminism

From the available research on women's careers in film and television work, the conditions and barriers to work encountered by women appear largely static. In order to explore reasons for the stagnant status quo ideas of a 'postfeminist' sensibility are often drawn upon (Gill, 2014; O'Brien, 2015; Berridge, 2019; Dent, 2020; Liddy and O'Brien, 2021). 'Postfeminism' is not a position or a perspective, but a critical analytical term used to understand the patterning of gender in the current cultural and political moment, and the erosion of the emancipatory power of feminism (Gill, 2016). Postfeminist beliefs are reflected in ideas of the redundancy of feminism, and the mistaken belief that in terms of gender equality, 'all the battles have been won', as gender inequality is something of the past (ibid). In a working culture that consistently asserts that gender is no longer grounds on which to complain about maltreatment, and that to make such a complaint would be seen as 'whinging', there is a strong body of research that illustrates the presence of a postfeminist sensibility in cultural work (Gill, 2014; Jones and Pringle, 2015; O'Brien, 2015; Wing-Fai, Gill and Randle, 2015; Dent, 2020).

In the Irish television context, O'Brien (2015) has suggested a culture where women are not willing to recognise the relevance of gender to their work or make challenges based on the grounds of gender because of a culture of dismissing these claims. Working in an insecure and precarious job market, women are required to adapt to masculinised norms for career survival (ibid). In a form of self-governance, O'Brien notes how her interviewees internalized the problems they faced to believe that the solution was to adapt or change their behaviours, e.g.

becoming more confident (ibid).

Adjacently in broader studies of women at work, researchers have suggested that the entrenchment of gender inequality in many modern workplaces is underpinned by a neoliberal rationality (Rottenberg, 2014; Banet-Weiser, 2018). In this context, neoliberalism is not taken simply to mean a set of economic principles characterised by privatisation and the deregulation of markets. The tendrils of neoliberalism extend much further from the presiding rationale of the state, to the interpellation and construction of individuals as entrepreneurial subjects (Foucault et al. 1991; Lemke, 2002; Rottenberg, 2014). More acutely, the implications for women working in this political-economic context has, according to Rottenberg, produced a 'neoliberal feminist subject' (Rottenberg, 2014, p.420). Feminism has been co-opted by neoliberalist thinking and hollowed out its potential emancipatory power (ibid, p.418). Although the subject is 'feminist' in the sense that she is aware of gender-based inequality, the structures that enable and perpetuate this inequality are disavowed or denied (ibid, p.410). According to Rottenberg the problem of gender inequality becomes 'individuated to the extreme' (ibid); personal responsibility, individual risk and self-regulation convert a structural problem into an individual one, and therefore the possibility of collective resistance becomes increasingly less likely.

Even those who are fully aware of the limitations that working in film and television place on their lives, are deterred from taking action by the neoliberal economic imperatives of the industry that individualise women to believe that facing difficulties within the industry is their personal problem, and not caused by the structural conditions within which they work (O'Brien, 2015; Berridge, 2020; Dent, 2020). Due to the individual and reputation-based nature of freelance work, women are further prohibited from speaking out about unfair or unjust working cultures for fear of losing future jobs (Gill, 2014). For some, this explains why there have been very few examples of women's resistance to film and television working cultures.

For those seeking formal solutions to gender inequality in film and television work, the role of unions has been somewhat limited. Frances Galt's 2020 book on

women's activism in offscreen work charts women's union participation from the 1930s to 2017 (Galt, 2020). Clear throughout Galt's chronology is women workers' reliance on self-organisation in order to put gender equality on the union agenda, yet their work was frequently undermined by masculinised union structures (ibid). A key event in women's resistance to gender inequality in film and television work was the 1975 Patterns of Discrimination Report written by Sarah Benton for the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT, 1975). The report provided 'concrete' evidence of discrimination against women in film and television work, and recommendations to address the stark levels of inequality in pay and respect afforded to women workers (Galt, 2020, p.103). Although there was a great sense of optimism attached to the report, when ACTT's first Women's conference took place six years later little had changed for women in film and television work (ibid). Cycles of movement and inertia followed the 1975 Patterns report, but many of its criticisms still stand today. The head of the Broadcasting Entertainment Communications and Theatre Union (BECTU), the union that now represents film and television workers, speaking in 2022 noted how women's participation in the union still faces challenges (Aust and Childs, 2022) (See Chapter 4.5).

The treatment of women in film and television work is historically entrenched, and whilst there are now insightful critical lenses such as postfeminism, to understand why women continue to not participate at the same rate as their counterparts who are men, evidence of widespread change is yet to be forthcoming.

2.5. Contextual change: #MeToo and COVID-19

Since the surge in the public attention surrounding women in film and television work with the 2016 #MeToo movement, the industry's deep-seated culture of harassment and discrimination against women has become more visible (Cobb and Horeck, 2018; Boyle, 2019). With the increased focus on women's careers in film and television, no longer does it *seem* that harassment and discrimination are 'unspeakable' (Gill, 2014). Whilst the spotlight has been on well-known perpetrators' acts of harassment, sexual assault and rape, there has been apparent

shift in industry discourse to centre on ideas of safeguarding for workers (Aust, 2020).

However, whilst there may *appear* to be attitudinal change in the wake of #MeToo, it remains questionable whether increased recognition has translated into tangible forms of support or simply the impression that support is there. In what Rowan Aust calls the 'turn to care', Aust argues that discourse surrounding care for workers in the film and television is now more ubiquitous with production companies making shallow attempts to *show* that they care. The current state of industry discourse is reminiscent of what Gill has termed, 'progress talk' (Gill, 2014, p.521). A view held by workers of a progressive outlook on history which sees society as moving toward a better future, in turn negating the need for critical reflection on the shortcomings of the present (ibid). (See also Bull, 2023 for a recent investigation into how sexual harassment remains a feature of film and television work in the wake of #MeToo).

In addition to the #MeToo movement this research project has also witnessed the COVID-19 pandemic which proved disastrous for many film and television workers, many of whom were left out of government support measures (BECTU, 2020). The film and television industries slowed to a near halt in 2020 and returned to a production frenzy in the spring of 2021 (Brazanti, Howe and Cortvrient, 2021). A report conducted on behalf of Raising Films into the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on those with caring responsibilities working in television noted that the pandemic had been, 'nothing short of a disaster for mothers working in the UK television sector.' (Wreyford et al., 2021, p.10). Unable to work because of a lack of available childcare, projects postponed, managing home-schooling and intense workloads, the report noted a marked decline in the financial and mental well-being of those with caring responsibilities who often tend to be women (ibid).

As the workforce returned to work over the course of 2021, there were an increase in the number of flexible working arrangements on offer in the form of job-sharing or nurseries based at studios (e.g. The WonderWorks nursery at the Leavesden studios). The activism from organisations such as Raising Films, Media Parents, Share My Telly Job, and Women in Film and TV, has also played an important role

in advocating for women with caring responsibilities, and for safer and fairer working conditions.[7] But, as Aust (2021) highlights, not only is flexible working only on offer to parents, it serves to highlight 'women's maternal status, further ghettoising and dividing women into mothers and non-mothers.' (Aust, 2021, p.111). Seemingly, there is no quick or simple solution to facilitating women's workforce participation and the recent fluctuations in the industry have served to compound pre-existing problems.

[7] **Raising Films** is an organisation that researches, offers training programmes, publishes resources and advocates for parents and carers in the UK screen sector (Raising Films, 2022).
Media Parents is a website and organisation which advertises short term, regular hours, job share and part time jobs in the media for freelancers who want to work flexibly (Media Parents, 2022).
Share My Telly Job advocate, research and facilitate job sharing for freelancers in television work (Share My Telly Job, 2022).
Women in Film and TV UK is a membership organisation that hosts events, runs mentorship programmes, collaborate on research projects and lobby for women in film and television work (WFTV UK, 2022).

Part Two: Researching the costume department

From a research perspective, relatively little is known about the working experiences and careers of women costume workers in UK film and television. The paucity of data about the costume department extends to both quantitative and qualitative research.

In this part of the thesis, I begin by explaining how data was gathered to help fill this knowledge gap (Chapter 3). Secondly, I offer a baseline understanding of costume work; I patch together the available literature using sources from both the UK and US context, along with participant testimony, and my own experience of working in UK costume departments (Chapter 4).

The aim of this part of the thesis is two-fold: (1) to outline how this project was designed and data obtained, and (2) to offer a grounding in the composition and organisation of the costume department in its industrial context.

Chapter 3: Epistemology, methodology and method

3.1. Introduction

This chapter sets out the foundations of the research design, and my approach to epistemology and methodology. Inspired by feminist approaches to research, I detail how my personal positioning as costume worker and researcher were reconciled. Then, I detail the chosen methods of the project, and how data collection was carried out.

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, I began this research with the guiding idea of producing *useful* data, rather than simply *more* data. When designing this research, not only did I want to address gaps in the body of literature, but also produce data which could be built upon. As someone who had previously worked in costume departments, I wanted to be producing knowledge and insight 'for' the women of the costume department, as opposed to 'on' them (Cain, 1993; Harding, 1993). My intention was not to simply extract knowledge from my participants and then desert them once I had achieved my aim, but to have a reciprocal form of knowledge exchange that produced a tangible outcome for participants and the wider industry. For that reason, I have also produced a short form report on my findings to be circulated amongst costume workers and the wider industry (Appendix i).

It is also important to note that the research was undertaken within the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Less than six months into the project, the UK was sent into lockdown by the spread of the coronavirus. As 2020 progressed it became clear that all data gathering would need to take place online. Original ideas for data collection had included in-person interviews and on-site observations, with the possibility of an ethnographic element to the research. These ideas quickly became infeasible and so new online alternatives had to be sought, all the while attempting to maintain some of the initial intentions for the research. The solution came in the form of Zoom interviews (see Chapter 3.6), and audio diaries (see Chapter 3.7).

I do not believe that it is useful to dwell on what has been lost to data collection, and my PhD experience more generally, as a result of the pandemic, but it remains important throughout the thesis to continually reflect on how the substantive quality of my data may have been altered, and to draw attention to the strategies devised to continue to collect data during a pandemic.

Data collection began in March 2021 and finished in January 2022. During that time 20 Zoom interviews, 6 audio diaries, and 6 follow-up interviews were conducted.

3.2. The production of knowledge: questions of epistemology

> 'All feminists are concerned with how knowledge which is helpful to women can be best produced and with what such knowledge should be like. These are epistemological questions.' (Cain, 1993, p.73)

The following section addresses the first of the three main components of designing this research - epistemology. Cain's (1993) quote noted above sums up my initial guiding concerns when developing the epistemological backdrop of this research. My approach has been informed largely by feminist thought and a desire to produce knowledge which is helpful to the women of the costume department. It would be inaccurate to present feminist epistemology as a singular, unified approach to knowledge production, instead, as noted by Harding (1993), I see the tensions within feminist theory as a productive site of understanding. The following is my interpretation of feminist thinkers' insight, which is, of course, one of many possible interpretations (Fonow and Cook, 2005).

I came to questions of epistemology seeking to understand and account for my approach to knowledge, and the basis upon which I believe we can study the social worlds of others. A feminist approach to epistemology seeks to understand how being (ontology) became known (epistemology) through the workings of gender and difference (Benton and Craib, 2011). Feminist thought has done much to counter the flaws in the positivistic slant to social research that dominated approaches throughout the 19th and 20th centuries that made claims of objectivity, neutrality

and rational thought, most commonly from the perspective of men (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007). Feminist epistemological thought has highlighted how a positivistic emphasis on the objective researcher obscures their influence, and their subjective role in the production of knowledge (ibid). The epistemological basis of this research is informed by the understanding that knowledge is situated and historically specific (Haraway, 1988). This research does not seek to find an objective truth but acknowledges that claims to knowledge are situated, always partial, and influenced by the role of the researcher.

In terms of ontology, my understanding aligns with a critical realist take, that there is a reality 'out there', not simply one that we construct, which we can make value judgements about (Law, 2004). For example, violence is an objective reality that women face, even if sometimes they, or we, are not aware of it as being violence. That is not to say that there is one 'true' meaning of 'violence', only to suggest that an ontological understanding of 'violence' is situated and relative but can be understood as knowable. My stance remains 'critical' in the sense that it proceeds by making claims to knowledge without resorting to essentialism, and with an awareness of how both the knowledge produced, and the knowledge of participants remains situated and partial (Haraway, 1988).

Of course, not all feminists are realists in this way; some poststructuralist approaches are more radically social constructionist, suggesting there is no underlying reality, just ways of constructing reality. The postmodern rejection of all forms of value judgement such as freedom, rationality and truth has led many to criticize this logic as relativistic and 'retreat[ing] from politics' (Fraser, 1984). I would argue that fundamental understandings of certain concepts are required in order to push for progressive social change, i.e. our assumptions about what comprises oppression and freedom. If we do not make value-judgements about what constitutes freedom, how can we hope to push for it? For example, there is no one 'true' meaning of 'good', but our understanding of 'good' is situated, relative and knowable (Sayer, 2011). This thesis begins on the basis that we *can* make value judgements based on a collectively held understanding of certain concepts.

3.3. My approach to research: questions of methodology

I turned to feminist approaches to methodology with questions of power relations within the research process, and how to account for my responsibility to my participants and the knowledge that I produce (Harding, 1987; Skeggs, 1995; Lawler, 2000). Much like there is no 'correct' or singular feminist epistemology, there is no unified 'feminist' approach to methodology. As Oakley notes, 'the complex political and social relationship between researcher and researched cannot easily be fitted into a paradigm of 'feminist' research' (Oakley, 2016, p.195). Throughout this section, I draw on the experience and advice of other feminist researchers to reach my own negotiated approach to methodology.

To walk the line between ex-colleague and researcher, I turned to feminist accounts of the researcher-participant relationship. Feminist researchers have reflected extensively on the power dynamic between the researcher and participants, to unpick the complexities of interactions (Fonow and Cook, 1991; Kelly et al., 1994; Mies, 1979; Skeggs, 2012 etc.). Feminist thought offers diverging views on the embeddedness of the researcher in the researcher-participant relationship. Oakley (1990) advocates for reciprocal, intimate relationships with participants, whereby feminist researchers should be friendship-like in their interaction with participants, arguing that the traditional understanding of the researcher as detached from the research setting serves to grant more power to the interviewer, and objectifies the participant. Others have questioned the ethical issues that arise from embedding oneself deeply into the participant-relationship. Lawler (2000) questions whether shared gender is enough commonality on which to build a friendship-like interactions, and also notes that Oakley's stance assumes that friendship is something that participants want to gain from the interaction (Lawler, 2000). Kelly et al. (1994), notes how the desire to be part of the group being researched may be a product of the researcher's desire to shirk responsibility or remove the researcher's sense of power (Kelly et al., 1994).

Initially, I experienced a similar desire to divest myself of my role in the production of knowledge. By leaving costume work I had created a distinction

between myself and the people who would be contributing to my research. I was aware that my position as researcher came with the power to decide which women's experiences count as legitimate knowledge to be included in this thesis (Skeggs, 2012). I turned to ideas of reflexivity to account for my dual positioning. As Byrne notes, I understand reflexivity as,

> '…involv[ing] critical self-scrutiny on the part of researchers, who need, at all stages of the research process, to ask themselves about their role in the research. Reflexivity involves a move away from the idea of the neutral, detached observer that is implied in much classical survey work. It involves acknowledging that the researcher approaches the research from a specific position and that this affects the approach taken, the questions asked and the analysis produced.' (Byrne, 2017, p.224)

Even so, despite Byrne's description of reflexivity aligning with how I wished to approach research, there seemed to be a gap between theory and practice. Skeggs has suggested that 'reflexivity' is too loose a term to describe her attempts to create distance from her overwhelming emotional engagement with her research participants (Skeggs, 2012, p.36). To reconcile her positioning in the production of knowledge, Skeggs approaches her role with 'responsibility' in mind, which involves continual reflection and acknowledgement of the role of the researcher in constructing knowledge (ibid).

Skeggs (2012) suggests that the positioning of the researcher can be accounted for with a transparent methodology, a constant critical reflexivity, prolonged contact with participants, and a heightened sense of epistemic responsibility (Skeggs, 2012). When Skegg's participants disagreed with her findings, Skeggs made the decision not to change her analysis to fit those of her research participants (ibid, p.30). Instead, she advocates for using interpretations produced through dialogue, 'but over which [she has] ultimate responsibility' (ibid). Skeggs' ideas have heavily influenced my approach to methodology; throughout this thesis I attempt to maintain a level of transparency in my role in the selection of data, noting when data may be insufficient to reach any wider assertions, or when participant's ideas may be inconsistent or contradictory. I have also made the conscious decision to use the first-person throughout the thesis to continually highlight my role in the

production of knowledge. I am acutely aware of my responsibility to my research participants to authentically reflect and interpret their experiences, but also to defend my interpretations and analyses in my contribution to the body of knowledge.

Furthermore, it has been suggested by some feminist researchers that research participants should be invited to collaborate in the analysis of the data (Mies in Fonow and Cook, 1991). Such collaboration would not only incur difficulties with maintaining anonymity of participants, but also entails additional work for the participants who have already given up their time in order to partake in the research. As the funded researcher, I do not believe it would be ethical to engage participants in further 'work' unless I could reimburse them for their time. Instead, as the research process progressed and as participants expressed a keen interest in hearing about the findings of the project, I would share some of my initial thoughts and receive their feedback. This form of collaboration became a generative contribution to the research. In the spirit of a reciprocal form of knowledge exchange, I also sent participants emails about the books or papers that I had referenced in the interview, in which they had expressed an interest in reading.

Foremost, I wanted to avoid constructing my participants as objects of knowledge but produce knowledge 'for' the women of the costume department, as opposed to 'on' them (Cain, 1993; Harding, 1993; Skeggs, 2012). In line with my aim to produce 'helpful' knowledge, I made the decision to distil my findings into a digestible research report that can be read by members of the department once the thesis has been completed (See Appendix i). The report will be circulated on costume Facebook forums, and a copy will be sent to the costume branch at BECTU. The aim of creating the report is to not only share the knowledge of this thesis with participants and a wider audience, but also to publicly recognise the issues that participants have highlighted. Often participants related how their specific difficulties and challenges were often overlooked; the report offers the opportunity to publicly highlight the issues raised by participants. The report also acts as a public calling card for future research and seeks to highlight how the

costume department is a rich vein of research about women's careers in film and television.

In sum, following the works of the feminist thinkers detailed above, my chosen methodological approach was guided by ideas of responsibility in the research process and repeated interactions with participants. I have endeavoured to remain transparent in the findings presented herein and take responsibility for my role in the production of knowledge.

3.4. Methods for studying cultural workers

Foremost, qualitative approaches offered the route to exploring ideas of relationships, attitudes and practices within the department, and how they relate to women remaining in the workforce. A broad church of methods have been used to study cultural workers, from qualitative interviews (Berridge, 2020; Dent, 2021; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010; Lee, 2019 etc.), recording oral histories (Cobb and Williams, 2020), in-depth singular career histories (Eikhof and York, 2016), as well as participant observation (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015). This section reviews some of the most relevant methods used to study cultural workers and their utility in answering the research questions of this thesis.

Semi-structured interviews are by far the most common method utilised in researching cultural workers. There is a strong tradition of the case-study and the use of small-scale qualitative methods which aim to offer detailed insight as opposed macroscopic applicability. For instance, McRobbie defends her localised approach to researching the fashion industry,

> 'It [the localised study] 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, p.19)

McRobbie goes on to emphasise how localised studies can provide the opportunity to witness how people respond to wider changes in their working lives. For my

research, a small-scale, localised study offered the ability to comb through the minutiae of participants' working lives, as well as the opportunity to see how broader, more abstract theories of work under late capitalism fit (or do not fit) into their lives. Particularly in times of change due to the coronavirus pandemic and industry fluctuation, the localised account offered insights into how societal and industrial change was impacting workers' attitudes to remaining in the workforce. In turn, I designed this project to centre local, situated accounts, not necessarily seeking a representative sample, but a sample that could offer depth about the subjective experiences of women of the department (Haraway, 1988).

Initially, semi-structured interviews with a small cohort (20-30 participants) seemed like the most well-suited method given the qualitative nature of the research questions and the desire for a small-scale study. Even so, the focus of my research questions on longitudinal ideas of 'remaining' and 'staying' in the film and television workforce leant themselves to incorporating a longitudinal component to the research. Especially given the turbulent context of 2020 and 2021, I was particularly keen to capture the changes in workers' perceptions of the industry, and how their changing industry landscape was impacting their experience of work. I also did not want to have one-off, extractive encounters with participants, and was increasingly keen to incorporate participants into the research process as mentioned in the previous section.

Although one-off semi-structured interviews appeared to be the most common choice of method, a literature review of the methods used to research cultural workers uncovered a minority number of research outputs that utilised longitudinal data (Dex et al., 2000; Paterson, 2001; Lee, 2018). For example, Paterson (2001) used the BFI Television Industry Tracking Study to look at the attitudes, experiences and work patterns of factual television workers in the late 1990s (Dex et al., 2000 also use the BFI Tracking study). In this tracking study, data were collected twice a year from a panel of more than 450 creative workers between 1994 and 1998. Paterson uses the data of different age cohorts to plot wider trends, along with case studies of certain individuals from each age cohort to highlight differences and similarities between the age groups of participants. Whilst the tracking study took the somewhat outdated form of a written postal

questionnaire, it demonstrated how a low threshold of effort could be useful in retaining participants over a long period of time.

Prior to coronavirus restrictions on research, I was particularly interested in Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2015) site observation visits where they were able to observe how workers interacted and arranged themselves in the minutiae of the day-to-day. As my working background would enable me access to costume workplaces more easily, I had originally thought that site observations would be a fruitful way of answering questions about how workers interact, and their perceptions and practices at work. There could have also been a longitudinal element to the observations where I revisited over the course of a production to understand how worker relationships were being built or eroded by conditions.

Due to the context of coronavirus restrictions, ideas of site observations did not come to fruition because of the need to conduct research online. Instead, I sought the compromise of weekly audio diaries recorded by participants over the course of four weeks (see Chapter 3.7). Then, to further enable a longitudinal element to the method design, I decided to conduct follow-up interviews at the beginning of 2022, to ascertain how participants' attitudes had (or had not) shifted over the course of the turbulent year in the industry. As a result, the chosen methods for the research included a combination of semi-structured interviews and audio diaries (See Chapters 3.6 and 3.7).

3.5. Reaching participants: sampling and participant recruitment

Cultural workers are a notoriously difficult to reach group due in part to the transient, last-minute nature of freelance work, as well as fears from participants of being identified (see Dent, 2016; Lee, 2008; Wreyford, 2015 for those who have faced similar challenges). Due to the experience of recruiting participants for my master's research, I anticipated that there may be a number of workers who were reluctant or too busy to take part. I was also reluctant to recruit solely through personal networks because of the impact it may have on the diversity of the sample, and the attendant ethical considerations of participants being intimately

known to one another. With these considerations in mind, the following section details the process and rationale behind the sample of research participants.

Participant recruitment proceeded with the knowledge that there is a 'missing voice' within the research canon of those who simply have not been able to pursue their chosen career in film and television, or have been reluctant to take part in research (O'Brien et al., 2016; Wreyford and Cobb, 2017; Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020; Creative Diversity Network, 2022b). Particularly in the case of film and television work, workers' personal backgrounds remain key determinants of careers (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020). Data available on the personal backgrounds of costume workers can be considered piecemeal at best (see Chapter 4.4). The data available suggests that the majority identify as women, are most likely white, university educated, located in London and work in a freelance capacity (ScreenSkills, 2012; Carey et al., 2017; Creative Diversity Network, 2022b). As the research questions of this thesis centred on women's careers, I was aware of the risk of constructing the category of 'women' as a homogenized group. It remained important to not assume the experience of the white, middle-class woman as the only experience of costume work. Therefore, I was reluctant to solely rely on personal contacts who all tended to be from white, middle-class backgrounds.

The original intention was to seek a purposive sample of diverse participants in order to capture the variety in women's lived experiences of costume work. It was hoped that attaining a diverse sample of participants would enable an intersectional understanding of costume careers that was attentive to influencing factors such as race, age, disability, class and location (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016). A concerted effort was made to try to innovate recruitment methods and find new ways of reaching participants outside of my personal network.

Initially, recruitment began on online forums as a large number of costume workers are present on Facebook group pages where jobs are advertised. It was decided to utilise these groups to advertise the research. Initially, a recruitment request was posted to the Facebook group, 'COSTUME GUILD ANYBODY?', with the permission of site moderators. The group consists largely of UK-based costume

workers, totalling 11,000+ members (Facebook, 2022). The group's purpose is for sharing sewing advice, job advertisements and research requests. Although this is a private group, membership is relatively lax compared to other more exclusive costume groups. More exclusive groups tend to require mutual friends with someone already within the group, and for prospective members to provide a list of previous productions. The exclusive groups are generally smaller, region specific and solely for advertising jobs with research requests generally unwelcome.

There are no membership questions for 'COSTUME GUILD ANYBODY?', and so the group has both professionals and hobbyists. The less exclusive group was chosen with the acceptance that time would need to be allocated for filtering out participants without the appropriate levels of experience. Although targeting exclusive groups would be more likely to yield participants with appropriate levels of experience, I would not reach those who had been excluded from such groups because they did not have the prerequisite contacts. Not only would using exclusive groups perpetuate the highly problematic network culture of film and television employment, but these groups would also not provide the breadth of experience that I was hoping to capture with the sample. On the research advertisement post, a low barrier to entry was set at a minimum of one years of combined experience to enable those who may have had intermittent careers and worked in other non-creative roles in between pursuing a costume career to take part. It was also explicitly stated that I wanted to hear from those who had left or retired from the industry, so that the possibility of hearing from all perspectives remained open.

Accompanying the post on 'COSTUME GUILD ANYBODY?' was a 50 second animation explaining the research and asking people to email my research address.[8] I designed and created the animation to be eye-catching as the forum receives multiple posts per day. The initial animation video received 5 likes, but there was not further interest expressed via email. The low response rate may be due to the timing of the post; participant recruitment began March 2021 at a time where

[8] Link to research advertisement video: https, p.//youtu.be/yseJm5fOZSc

there was rapid growth in the number of productions filming because of unprecedented inward investment from streaming companies such as Netflix and Amazon (BFI, 2021b; Brazanti, Howe and Cortvrient, 2021). The busy nature of the industry was a double-edged sword in terms of data collection; on the one hand it meant that participants were in work, and therefore their thoughts and experiences of the industry were current. On the other hand, it meant that participants' availabilities were extremely limited. Since having spoken to participants about response rates, they noted that work was extremely busy and simply forgot to respond to the post or did not see it amongst the numerous other posts.

After the initial lag, it was decided that ex-colleagues would be contacted in order to begin data collection, with the hope that responses to the Facebook post would increase over time. I contacted ex-colleagues via email with an information sheet attached that informed them about the nature of the research (see Appendix ii). From the initial interviews with ex-colleagues the majority agreed to forward an introductory email about the project to those within their networks, and two participants offered to post a blurb for the research on their private group chats or on their current production's Whatsapp group. Initially, I had considered the lack of responses to my call for participants as a reflection on my own career, that my ex-colleagues had forgotten me in my absence from the industry, but even well-connected and senior colleagues advertising the research on my behalf did not yield any further responses. Despite reposting the advertisement one month after the initial call, no further participants were yielded from the Facebook posts. In total, 20 participants joined the research, 5 of whom were recruited through other participants.

Information about the participants' personal and educational backgrounds was gained through self-identification in the interview process. Whilst the original advert had been open to people of all genders, the entire cohort identified as women.[9] All of the participants had attended a costume or fashion training

[9] The original title of the project had been 'Gender, Participation and Inequality in the UK's film & TV costume workforce', and I had been hoping to attract people of all genders to the research, but

course, the majority at undergraduate level. There was a spread in the number of years spent in the industry with the majority considered to be mid-career level (See Appendix iii). The majority of participants presented as white, and one participant self-identified as coming from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background. One participant self-identified as neurodiverse, half of the participants had had experience of caring responsibilities, and three participants had left the industry in the last year. In recent years, class has become a widely explored variable in cultural workers' career progression, but at the time of designing the research it was not a principal variable of interest.[10]

After reaching 16 participants, 3 of whom had been snowball contacts, I was beginning to reach saturation point within data collection. Glaser and Strauss (2017) describe theoretical saturation as,

> '…no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category. As [s]he sees similar in stances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated.' (Glaser and Strauss, 2017, p.61)

I had reached a point where answers from participants about their experiences and career trajectories were becoming very similar. I was gaining confidence that I was reaching a saturation point with this particular group of participants, most of whom presented as coming from similar backgrounds. Although Glaser and Strauss suggest looking for new groups to 'stretch the diversity of data', I decided that keeping the project confined to this particular group was practical in terms of the difficulties in data collection, and leant itself to conducting a detailed and localised analysis (ibid). I continued to conduct interviews until July when responses dwindled with the rise in the number of jobs filming. Toward the end the of the year I received more responses from ex-colleagues and conducted 4 further interviews. In total 20 interviews were conducted, with 5 out of the 20 recruited through snowballing.

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as the project evolved and it became clear that the whole sample identified as women, the project became a localised study of women's careers.

[10] As class did not feature significantly within the interview questions, I decided it would be disingenuous to retrospectively include an analysis of class.

By the end of 2021, it became clear that it had been an extraordinary year within the film and television industries. The attitudes of those interviewed at the beginning of the year, often filled with optimism for returning to a 'better' workplace, differed greatly from those interviewed toward the end of the year. Those interviewed near the end of the year noted how they were feeling pressured by the shortage of crew which had meant they had to take on multiple roles that would have previously been filled by more than one person. I decided to re-contact participants for follow-up interviews to discuss how their attitudes and experiences had evolved over the year. 'Catching up' with participants also fitted my personal approach to knowledge production that sees research as a collaborative and iterative experience with participants (See Chapter 3.3). Participants were emailed invitations to 'catch-up' and were informed that the questions would be about their experiences over the year. It was also mentioned that it would be an opportunity for them to add anything further if they felt it was necessary to understanding their careers, and that we could discuss how the research project was going. The catch-up interviews took place in January and early February 2022, and 6 out of 20 participants agreed to take part.

3.6. Interviewing

Semi-structured online interviews were chosen as the main method for data collection. The following section details the framework for the interview questions and interview style.

To begin, a guiding framework for the interview questions was created (Appendix iv), and questions were divided into the themes informed by the literature review. The themes were: looking for work, relationships with colleagues, usage of Facebook/Whatsapp, working life and personal responsibilities, value of costume work, coping and sustaining a career. These themes were chosen to guide participants through the interview process, most of whom had not taken part in a research interview before. Certain themes elicited more expansive responses than others, for example, 'relationships with colleagues' became a prominent theme that informed much of the later analysis around sustaining a career. Topics such

as ‘usage of Facebook/Whatsapp’ often only elicited the response of ‘yes I use them to find work’, and therefore do not feature significantly in later analysis.

The themes were ordered to begin with descriptive questions, requiring the participants to narrate their career histories, with subsequent themes requiring more abstract discussion on ideas of value, coping and sustaining a career. It soon became clear that not all themes and ideas gained traction with participants in the practical interview setting. Questions with more abstract ideas such as, ‘Is the costume department valued by other departments?’ elicited, at best, ambivalent answers. Additionally, switching between themes detracted from the natural flow of conversation and became jerky, gear-changes in otherwise engaging interactions. I soon learnt that participants were far more engaged and comfortable to talk about an experience on a specific production rather than assessing abstract ideas like value systems in the hierarchy of production. Instead of asking, ‘how is costume work valued in the production hierarchy?’, I asked, ‘have you had experiences of feeling (de)valued on-set by other departments?’.

As I gained more confidence and understanding of the skill of interviewing, I began to see how the addition of my voice created a more enjoyable and fruitful experience both for me and the participant. Eventually, the interview process evolved into a far more natural and conversational interaction as I became more skilled at ensuring the various themes were covered in a natural progression of thought. By the end of data collection, the interviews had become enjoyable exchanges of experiences and thoughts and were the highlight of the PhD process.

3.7. Audio Diaries

Alongside conducting interviews, I had the original intention of including a longitudinal element to data collection with some form of ethnographic component. Despite the need for data collection to take place online, I was still seeking an accompaniment to the interview data that would align with my collaborative ideas of knowledge production noted in Chapter 3.3 and offer some insight into the everyday minutiae of worker relationships. The solution came in the form of audio diaries.

The body of literature available on the use of audio diaries argues in favour of their ability to capture participant responses to daily events, as well as a chance to witness sense-making periods as a participant recounts their most recent experiences (Monrouxe, 2009). In the more personal setting of diary entries, Crozier and Cassell (2016) suggest that participants may be more open and relaxed in sharing their experiences when compared to the somewhat unnatural semi-structured interview.

In the context of this piece of research, it was hoped that the diaries would capture interactions at work to aid in understanding worker relationships. Audio diaries seemed to offer an insightful way to capture those more private and sometimes inexplicable dynamics between colleagues. The diaries also had the possibility of forming a chronological account of costume workers' experiences of returning to the workplace and beginning jobs in a 'new' COVID-secure way of working.

In cultural worker research audio diaries are relatively uncharted territory, (aside from Patterson, 2001 where diary entries were written), but audio diaries are more commonplace in other disciplines such as sports research, work psychology and geography (e.g. Holt and Dunn, 2004; Latham, 2003; Monrouxe, 2009). I was reliant on literature from other disciplines to judge appropriate parameters of the method. Holt and Dunn (2004) suggested keeping participant numbers low, proposing as low as 4, due to the possibility of a high attrition rate. Further, Latham (2003) suggests that issues of high attrition could be linked to the researcher not providing enough structure in their requests to participants. Crozier and Cassell (2016) gave their participants 10 prompts and told them to devote as much or as little time to each in order to try and prevent participants dropping out. In light of this advice, instead of 10 prompts I chose to simplify the process further to 5 prompts, and like Crozier and Cassell (2016) it was decided that a period of 4 weeks was of sufficient length to track change, but not too long as to risk losing participants from the research.

WhatsApp was the chosen means of recording and sending the audio diaries, the reasons for which were three-fold. Firstly, WhatsApp is encrypted end-to-end

which ensures that data cannot be accessed by WhatsApp (the University of Glasgow data management team were consulted on the use of WhatsApp). Secondly, using one app to record and send, simplifies the process as much as possible, and thirdly, from my career experience I was aware that many colleagues used WhatsApp to communicate about work and were therefore likely to be already familiar with the app. Out of the 20 participants, 6 agreed to send an audio diary once per week for four weeks.[11] Participants received a WhatsApp message to remind them to record and chose the day on which would be most helpful to receive a reminder message via WhatsApp. The prompts were:

1. How's your work week been?

2. Have you been talking to any costume friends outside of work?

3. Did you have any notable interactions with costume colleagues or events that have stayed with you?

4. How has your work-life balance been this week?

5. Have you had any further thoughts about the interview questions?

(See Appendix v for audio diary information sheet).

The prompts were designed to be relatively open-ended to offer participants the space to reflect. Certain questions were more specific, such as question 2 and 3, which invited participants to talk about examples of interactions with colleagues. It was hoped that a mix of specific and non-specific questions would offer the participants the choice to reflect on their experiences throughout the week, depending on what they thought was most important.

Crozier and Cassell's (2016) participants found that recording the diaries was convenient and instantaneous, but some had concerns over having a private space

[11] One participant who was working part-time requested diaries be sent every other week as she felt she had very little to talk about as she was only working 2 days per week. Here, it was agreed that she would send diaries every 2 weeks over the course of 8 weeks.

to record without interruption and feeling self-conscious when starting the process. I was therefore flexible in my request to participants and stated that if participants were unable to record due lack of private space, they could take some quick phone notes. Participants were informed that the diaries could be as short or as long as they wanted, but the idea was to capture their immediate thoughts and experiences throughout the week, and therefore a long voice note was not necessarily required. Although having stated this, one participant felt more comfortable writing notes beforehand to discuss on the recording, and another decided to dictate straight to her phone instead of recording an audio file.

As the diaries progressed the prompts became repetitive for the participants. Participants used the diaries to ask if I wanted them to answer any other questions, if they were talking about the 'right' things, and some apologising for 'rambling'. Many noted that it felt weird talking into the phone and there was also the common theme of participants feeling like they were running out of things to say. This 'real-time' feedback was extremely useful, it meant that I could offer different prompts dependent on their individual situations, i.e. some were based on-set, some in the workroom and some in the costume office (See Glossary). It also allowed for me to tailor questions specially to those in different working patterns, i.e. those in job-shares and those in part-time work.

The use of audio diaries within the data collection process was largely experimental, but yielded fruitful data to inform analysis. The value of the method seems to lie in its simplicity and ease of use. All participants completed the 4 audio diaries, albeit at varying intervals not always strictly within the once per week time frame. Even so, data collected through the diaries was rich in its reflective content and forms an important ancillary to data collected during interviews. Participants were far more reflective on their working conditions during the diaries than in the interview setting. It also seemed that specific experiences were easier for participants to recall as they were fresher in their memories. The method was not without its faults; it often required working on weekends when participants requested reminders, as well as keeping track of various diaries at different stages in their four-week periods. On reflection, the method was a useful tool in complementing interview data, but if the method was

to be implemented again, I would seek to automate the reminder messages, and lengthen the interval time so that I could track changes over the course of an entire production.

3.8. Ethical considerations

Aside from the standard ethical considerations for conducting research with human subjects (see University of Glasgow, 2023), there were two added components to the ethical considerations of the research: (1) issues that arise from interviewing ex-colleagues and participants known to one another in a highly networked industry, and (2) the entirely online nature of interactions.

Costume jobs exist within a precarious job market and a participant's employment may depend on personal relationships with other participants. Interviewing ex-colleagues entailed an added layer of reflection on my personal positioning within the research. As noted in Chapter 3.5, interviewing ex-colleagues was a necessity to complete the research, but as the research progressed, I came to see my positioning as costume worker and researcher as an advantage that enabled rapport and greater insight into the lived experience of costume work.

Close attention was paid to ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of each participant given the greater risks involved. The data collected was anonymised, which entailed redacting all identifying information from interview transcripts and removing any links to the consent forms, so that it would be extremely unlikely that anyone could deduce the identity of participants. Participants were made aware when giving informed consent that complete anonymity may be impossible to guarantee, but all identifying information like names, locations, numbers of children and production names will be removed. To further reduce the potential of participants being identified, highly specific experiences are generalised rather than quoting verbatim (Byrne, 2017, p.225). Participants seemed satisfied with the measures taken to ensure anonymity, and they were asked to verbally consent at the beginning of each interview alongside having signed the consent form to ensure that the information had been communicated effectively.

During data collection there were tendencies for some participants to become what Naudin (2015) has called, 'gossipy', wanting to know who else I had spoken to or what productions mutual colleagues were working on. On these occasions I steered the conversation away from such questions, by either telling the participant that I was not sure or changing the topic. As it was my ethical duty to prevent participants coming to harm, (which extends to impacting their job prospects), at such points I would also re-iterate the need for me to maintain everybody's anonymity.

The second added ethical consideration arose from the online nature of interactions; some procedures were not altered from typical in-person methods such as stating that the participant can leave at any time, not answer a question or choose to have their comments removed up to a certain date. Nevertheless, there were other more nuanced acknowledgements to be made before entering the interview process. Assessing the risk of participants coming to harm in the interview was made more difficult in research based purely online (Eynon, Fry and Schroeder, 2017). It was harder to judge participants' reactions to questions, for example if a participant felt distressed or insulted it was more difficult to judge body language. Therefore, I was more reliant on verbal queues to continually assess participants' reactions to questions.

Prior to interviewing, I began by reviewing research on the practicalities and efficacy of online methods. A common concern within the literature was that trust and rapport become far more difficult to build with participants when interviewed online (O'Connor et al., 2008; Gaiser, 2011; Irvine, 2011; Bampton, Cowton and Downs, 2013; Eynon, Fry and Schroeder, 2017). In light of this, I chose to build into the interview process certain strategies such as sharing my career background and allocating more time for informal chat at the beginning of the interview in order to try and mitigate for any loss of rapport due to the online nature of the interaction. Nevertheless, I did not experience the lack of rapport and depth that I had feared. Speaking to people in their own spaces seemed to enable an added sense of intimacy, along with already having familiar frames of reference to the participants due to my career background.

The available literature on online research methods suggested strategies to build into the research process to mitigate against participants coming to harm (Nosek, Banaji and Greenwald, 2002; Hewson, Vogel and Laurent, 2016). At the beginning of the interview, it was made clear where the 'leave' button was located, and the nature and types of questions that were going to be asked were explained (ibid). It was important to be continually aware of the current contextual constraints that might be affecting a participants' ability to participate, and their desire to talk about their recent lockdown experience (Ravitch, 2020). Throughout I endeavoured to be attentive to the participants' various situations, checking first before I broached the topics of lockdown, whilst also remaining flexible in altering interview times to suit the participant's schedule.

In practice, interviewing via Zoom allowed me to reach participants very quickly around their schedules. The majority of participants were accustomed to using online conferencing systems like Zoom as it had been one year since the beginning of coronavirus restrictions began. This meant that I could interview participants after they had finished work, in their office at the end of the workday, on their lunch break as they were working from home, or on the weekend. All of these instances may not have been suitable or practical if I had been interviewing in person. Such a schedule required a high degree of flexibility on my part, with some interviews being arranged with less than 24 hours. I am accustomed to this ad hoc style of working, but it is also important to acknowledge my privilege in doing this as a funded PhD researcher without caring responsibilities at the time.

In terms of the other practicalities of researching online, there was some advice in the literature about consent forms, with best practice for participants to physically sign rather than type their name or tick a box (O'Connor et al., 2008). I was aware that access to a scanner or a digital signature may be a limitation for some, and so I asked participants to take a picture of their signature and paste in onto the form. Despite having asked this, the majority of participants chose to type their name.

With these added considerations and informed by the University of Glasgow's ethical framework and the aforementioned literature, ethical permission was granted in March 2021 and data collection began.

3.9. Analysing data

After manual transcription of the interviews and audio diaries, data analysis began. At first, I was struggling to synthesise and collate the large quantity of data collected, and so I turned to more experimental ways of visualising, comparing and contextualising each participant's experience through the use of career logs.

I began with each participant's career histories that they had narrated at the beginning of each interview. There was much commonality between each participants' experiences and so, in order to visually breakdown each participant's career, career logs were created using Excel (see Appendix vi). These logs consisted of tables with the various turning points and experiences throughout participants' careers. For example, how they attained their first job, and the point they considered to be a 'launching point' of their career, if they had children, if they chose to return to work after having children etc. Each career log was then ordered by number of years spent within the industry.

Categorising participants' experiences in such a way provided visual points of comparison, which then afforded the opportunity to see the similarities and differences between participants' careers. For example, the difference in the experience of those with children and those without, and between those at different levels of seniority. From these tables I was able to build a more cohesive picture of how careers tended to progress, and reasons that participants felt for career stagnation or career advancement.

These tables became particularly insightful when answering questions about the specific practices that seemed to facilitate some women remaining in the workforce. Extra columns were added to the table if the participant had been the recipient or provider of a practical measure that supported their career, such as job-sharing. Another column contained short quotes that characterised the participants' attitude to maintaining a career.[12] The table was useful as a data

[12] These columns are not included in Appendix vi due to risks of identifying participants.

organisation tool, and meant that I could quickly return to a career history and see its stages of progression.

Once data was visually broken down into the table, the mass of data seemed more manageable. I moved on to analysing participants' more abstract ideas of career success and emotional experience of the workplace. Here, Nvivo 12 was used to thematically analyse recurrent ideas about participants' relationships to their colleagues, and their understandings of how others should navigate the costume workplace (Appendix vii). It became clear that certain themes were not extensively engaged with or were not considered to have a notable impact on their careers by participants and were thus set aside. The process involved an iterative approach of re-reading transcripts to refine the emerging themes or 'nodes'. Common ideas emerged about relationships, ideas of care, loyalty, responsibility, and ideas about the 'right' way to pursue a career and behave within the industry. Even though there was commonality within these themes, I was continually aware of the danger of creating a homogenized understanding of attitudes based on the highly selected quotes that slotted neatly into various themes.

I have found the work of Skeggs useful when thinking about approaches to data analysis. Skeggs (2012) notes,

> 'A traditional approach when dealing with numerous in-depth transcripts, notes and tapes is to search for themes. I did this to begin with but felt that it was producing a greater homogeneity than I was experiencing. Noting contradictions and differences helped me to pursue not only the gaps between words and deeds but also to note how many contradictions are held together on a daily basis and how searching for coherence is an impossibility, an ideal and a fantasy.' (Skeggs, 2012, p.32)

Skeggs' approach offers a way of embracing the inconsistencies amongst participants' responses and emphasising differences as the route to unpicking participants' complex relations to their careers. In line with such ideas, I acknowledge that my subjective positioning will have impacted the selection of quotes and themes, but I have tried to ensure that commonalities and inconsistencies are reflected in the analysis through a process of continual

immersion in the data collected. Contradiction in views between participants and even contradictions within a participant's own testimony, have proven insightful windows into how film and television work is experienced by the women of the costume department. For instance, opinions on the relevance of gender to one's career featured a degree of contradiction, but as will be explored in Chapter 6, these inconsistencies in these data were a fruitful starting point to explore how a postfeminist sensibility was operating in the costume workplace.

Concurrent to the interview data analysis, analysis of the audio diaries took place after all of the diaries were completed. The diaries were analysed entirely in Nvivo 12, using the same themes and sub-themes as the interview data. Analysis of the audio diaries was less structured than the interview data, primarily because there was less of it and therefore it did not require visually breaking down in the same way. As there were far fewer participants (6), who were all at different stages in their careers and their productions, it was more difficult to plot commonalities in the timelines over each participant's 4 weeks. Instead, the diaries were approached individually, and notable experiences were noted and used to augment the wider themes with specific examples of interactions.

Chapter 4: The costume department

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a baseline understanding of how costume work functions. As will become clear, there are notable gaps in the body of literature regarding costume work. This chapter seeks to fill some of those gaps and lay the groundwork for the analysis in Part 3.

Firstly, the chapter provides an overview of the industrial context and changes to the film and television industry since the 1980s. Secondly, due to the paucity of literature available, the chapter offers novel empirical data about the organisation of the department, gathered from participants and my personal experience. Thirdly, the chapter reviews quantitative data specific to the costume department as well as revisiting some of the attendant flaws in the monitoring of the workforce. Finally, having offered a grounding in the realities of working in a UK film and television costume department, the chapter explores ideas of the value of costume work by introducing participant testimony in response to a lack of data available elsewhere.

4.2. The industrial context: changes to the film and television industries, 1980-present

Film and television production in the UK has undergone drastic change since the 1980s; legislative reforms to funding models have altered how work is organised and the power of trade unions (Saundry, 1998; 2001; Saundry and Nolan, 1998; McKinlay and Quinn, 1999). Many production workers move between the mediums of film and television in order to sustain the constant level of work (BFI, 2022). The following section provides an overview of the changes to both industries that have spanned the course of participants' careers, starting with the film industry.[13]

[13] The participant with the longest career began in the early 1980s. See Appendix iii for participant career lengths.

In the case of the UK film industry, the 1990s saw a renewed interest in film production from the Labour government for its potential to offer 'good quality' jobs in the 'new' knowledge economy (Blair and Rainnie, 2000). Policies of this period centred on creating more stable production bases in the UK, but as Blair and Rainnie (2000) note, film production in the UK remained 'inextricably linked' to American production finance. This connection to the US market has meant that many film workers' careers have also remained tethered to the peaks and troughs of US film financing decisions (ibid, p.187). In 1991, the British Film Commission was established and introduced tax relief for productions' expenditure in order to attract inward investment (House of Lords, 2022). In turn, the early 2000s saw a shift in the UK film industry, as Hollywood studios began to invest heavily in British productions. The success of films such as *Harry Potter*, demonstrated the quality of UK film crews and facilities. British film success stories led to an increase in the number of large-scale Hollywood productions being shot in the UK (ibid). To offer some cursory context for the size of the film and video production workforce i.e. those involved in the physical making of a film, in 2000 24,939 people were employed in film and video production work (UK Film Council, 2002, p.74). By 2019, 66,000 people were recorded as working in the film and video production workforce (BFI, 2020b, p.205–6).[14]

In the case of the costume department and the participants of this research, there are more work opportunities on 'world-building' productions, whereby costumes need to be made specially to create the 'world' of the production. Such productions are often financed by US production companies, often with large budgets to accommodate such high production costs. Typically, these films are classed as sci-fi, historical or superhero films, and they form a key part of many participants' careers.

In the UK television industry, with the advent of Channel 4 in 1982, and its funding model of outsourcing programmes to small production companies, the independent sector of television production grew considerably (Lee, 2018, p.2). With the

[14] It should be noted that these figures, provided by the British Film Institute (BFI), are indicative and may not capture the entire size of the workforce.

Conservative government's 1986 Peacock Committee report, it was recommended that the BBC outsource 40% of its productions by 1996 (but eventually settled on a 25% quota by 1993) (Peacock, 1986; Saundry and Nolan, 1998; Goodwin, 2016). The report argued that the outsourcing of commissions instead of making programmes 'in-house' would allow for better performance of the industry which was seen as hindered by bureaucracy and strong trade union membership (ibid). By ending the BBC and ITV duopoly on broadcasting and television production, the 'new independent' broadcasters such as Channel 4 were predicted to add more competition to the market by outsourcing television production to independent production companies (Harvey, 2000, p.94). In turn, this shift in funding models entailed permanent contracts being replaced with freelance short-term contracts along with the removal of pension schemes, canteens and childcare facilities, arguably heralding a decline in the quality of work on offer outside of the big broadcasters (ibid).

The increase in the outsourcing of television production has meant a rise in the number of independent television production companies ('indies') who bid to win commissions from broadcasters (Lee, 2018). Lee notes, how during the late 1990s and early 2000s, the independent television sector was (and still is) a deeply precarious industry as many production companies failed to develop sustainable business models and collapsed (Lee, 2018, p.39). Since the end of the BBC and ITV duopoly in the 1980s and rise in the number of independent productions, the lives of workers in project-based production today have been shaped by the freelance, precarious employment models that began with the advent of Channel 4 and the Conservative government's neoliberal policy output (Lee, 2018).

In more recent years, and most relevant for the workers of the costume department, the rise of US-based Streaming on Demand services (SVODs), (e.g. Amazon Prime, Apple TV, Disney+ and Netflix), has had a significant impact on the number of productions filming in the UK (BFI, 2021b). Further enticed by tax relief incentives in 2013, the SVODs have become a significant employer of film and television workers and have continued to grow in dominance in recent years (Paterson, 2017; BFI, 2021b). ScreenSkill's 2020 report on high-end television work (HETV) noted that demand from SVODs was 'driving up crew rates and sucking up

high-quality crew and studio space' (ScreenSkills, 2020a, p.6). [15] The report noted how it was feared that UK broadcasters would be less able to compete with the budgets of US studios or SVODs (ibid). Indeed, US studios and SVODs remain important employers of UK film and television workers as has been reflected in the figures for the amount of money inwardly invested in UK-based productions. The BFI records that,

> 'Production spend has increased from £3.4 billion in 2017 to over £5.64 billion in 2021, driven largely by inward investment and the rise of high quality productions made for streaming platforms.' (BFI, 2022, p.2).

The increase in the amount of work available in 2021 contrasts sharply to participants' experiences of 2020. In March 2020 the majority of filming was shut down as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many workers remained without work for an entire year and did not qualify for government support due to the way in which their work is structured (BECTU, 2020). In the famine to feast rhythm often attributed to film and television work, when restrictions ended, the number of productions requiring workers was unprecedented and resulted in crew shortages and reports of burnout (Wilkes, Carey and Florisson, 2020; Brazanti, Howe and Cortvrient, 2021; BFI, 2022).

Unsurprisingly, the career trajectories of the participants of this research have been subject to these fluctuations and wider industry trends. For example, the financial crash in 2007 impacted the numbers of productions filming, meaning that many were left without work and had to seek employment elsewhere (Christopherson, 2013). Those participants whose careers pre-dated the 2000s often began in theatre work which at that time offered stability and more regular employment (Tomlin, Saunders and Bull, 2018). As the number of high-end television productions expanded with the increase in inward investment from US production companies, film and television had become the main employer of all

[15] In line with the BFI'S High-End Television classification, 'high-end' is taken to mean, 'drama (which includes comedy) or documentary production intended for broadcast on television and/or the internet with an average core expenditure per hour of slot length of not less than £1 million. (The slot length in relation to HETV programmes must be greater than 30 minutes).' (BFI, 2020b, p.234)

participants, with high-end television productions in particular the most common employer of participants. The participants who began their careers from 2010 onwards have primarily worked in film and television with only occasional jobs in theatre production.

It is important to note some key distinctions between the entrants into the film and television industry pre-2000 and the entrants of recent years. Whilst the allure of 'creative' work, noted in Chapter 1.3 remains unchanged, the discourse that surrounds entrants to film and television today has altered, as have the number of jobs on offer. Particularly in film and television work, a career in the 'creative industries' is now advertised as just that - a career (See ScreenSkills 'Starting your career' website; also see Screen Alliance Wales initiatives in primary schools). Work in film and television is marketed as a viable career, and as a skills shortage that needs to be filled (ScreenSkills, 2021; BFI, 2022). There is some evidence to suggest that newer entrants, particularly those who were without financial assistance during the coronavirus-induced hiatus of work, are becoming less tolerant of excessive work hours (Bale, 2022).[16] Discontent with working conditions has been reflected publicly in the rise in the number of Instagram accounts where film and television workers share exploitative experiences (ibid).

Whether the newest cohort of entrants enter with a greater sense of resistance to exploitative demands of film and television work is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is worth noting how contextual and generational shifts amongst costume workers may be altering participants' outlooks for their careers. For that reason, when quotes from interviews are included, years spent in the industry are noted next to each pseudonym. When discussing 'careers', the use of the term can often construct a linear trajectory whereby workers enter at a junior level and progress to reach seniority. Like freelance careers elsewhere, careers in costume are rarely linear and for many of the participants, their careers have involved spending time working in other industries or taking more junior roles when there

[16] The impact of the coronavirus lockdown on participants' attitudes to work is explored in a separate article as this topic was beyond the scope of the thesis. The article uses the same data set that was gathered for this thesis.

was limited choice available. When I note the length of a participant's career this may not take into account the months spent out of work or working in other industries. When I reference those with long careers, it is with the acknowledgment that they may not have solely done costume work for that period, but that the majority of their working life has been occupied by costume work. During Part 3 where findings are discussed, it remains important to consider how participants' careers have been subject to the wider fluctuations in the wider industry.

4.3. The organisation of costume work

As there is a paucity of literature on the organisation of the costume department, the following chapter offers some practical context for how the costume department operates. The descriptions herein are gathered from the experiences of the participants of this research, and my personal experience of the costume workplace. The below description relates to a high-end television (HETV) production where the costume department is often housed in a building on a studio lot. This section is intended to provide readers with a practical understanding of how the department operates, and it will be drawn upon to contextualise the experiences of participants throughout the thesis.[17]

Like their counterparts in other areas of the cultural industries, costume workers tend to operate on short term contracts, (anywhere between a few days to approximately to a year), jobs tend to be filled at short notice, with sometimes less than 24 hours before beginning work. Work is distributed mainly through personal connections, networks or through adverts on Facebook groups. Commonly there are two types of contracts on offer: (1) a 'daily' or 'dailies' are workers who

[17] It should be noted that there are many variations on the working set-up described herein. The description is intended to provide an outline to readers of how work is organised, and should not be taken as the 'only' way that costume work is organised. The description of roles offers a brief insight, and does not claim to have included every role or responsibility conducted by each worker. For further detail on roles see Glossary.

work on the production for a period of days to help with busier workloads, and (2) those who are contracted for the length of the entire production.

When in the physical workplace, the costume department exists in five spaces: the costume workroom, the costume office, the costume tent, the costume truck, and on-set. The 'costume workroom' is where the majority of sewing work is conducted; in larger productions individual workrooms will be dedicated to womenswear or menswear. The costume makers and those who cut out the fabric pieces to make a garment (cutters) work in the workroom and tend only to work in this space, with generally limited interaction with the rest of the production.

The 'costume office' typically consists of the costume supervisor, the costume co-ordinator, the costume buyer and in some cases the design team will also operate from a conventional office space often near to the costume workroom or tent.

The 'costume tent' refers to a temporary structure that houses the costumes for the supporting artists (SAs) or 'crowd'. This tent is also used to fit the costumes of the SAs and dress them when they are required on set. Those who oversee the SA costumes are referred to as the 'crowd team'. This team includes the crowd costume supervisor who oversees the management of the team, the crowd costume standbys who travel with the SAs to set and ensure the continuity of their costumes during filming, and the crowd costume fitters who fit the costumes to the SAs.[18] The crowd costume standby is one of the few roles which will have a large amount of interaction on-set.

The 'costume truck' refers to a mobile caravan-type vehicle that houses the principal costumes, here the principal standbys will maintain and organise the costumes of the principal cast. The principal standbys are responsible for dressing and maintaining continuity for the principal cast; along with the crowd standbys they have the most interaction on-set.

[18] It is becoming increasingly common for multiple roles to be undertaken by the same person in efforts to cut costs or as a result of skill shortages (ScreenSkills, 2021).

Finally, ‘on-set’ is the only place where the costume department operates in a non-dedicated costume space. It is generally the standbys who work on-set to ensure costumes are worn correctly, that there is continuity from one scene to the next and that actors and SAs are kept warm if their costume is not practical for the temperature conditions. The designer and their design team will also have an intermittent presence on-set (For a full list of role descriptions see Glossary).

There is a level of complexity to the operations of the department, as illustrated by the description above. For this thesis, the important aspect is the spatial dimensions of costume work; the vast majority of work takes place in costume-only spaces. Whilst those in the workroom or crowd tent may liaise with the hair and make-up department or the art department, generally, it is when costumes enter the set that costume work and workers interact with other members of the production. The craft(wo)manship of constructing, fitting, and dressing the costumes often takes place in the private sphere of the workroom, truck or tent. Those working in these private spaces will in some cases share lunch with the rest of the crew or lunch as a department, but dependent on production a significant portion of the department will never enter the set and will only have limited interaction with those in other departments. This unseen nature of costume work is an important factor when thinking about how costume work is valued in the production hierarchy later on in this chapter (Chapter 4.5).

4.4. Quantitative data: Who works in costume?

The available quantitative data on costume workers in the UK have largely been collected by industry-facing research bodies such as ScreenSkills, Directors UK and Creative Diversity Network. There are a number of shortcomings with datasets presented here, but broadly across the collection we can understand the number of women within the UK’s costume workforce to consistently sit around the 70-90% mark (ScreenSkills, 2012; Follows, Kreager and Gomes, 2016; BFI, 2022; Creative Diversity Network, 2023). Gender is by far the most frequently monitored protected characteristic of the costume department, with data on other protected characteristics becoming more piecemeal thereafter. This section pieces together

available data, to explore how these data have been used and the narrative that has been constructed around them.

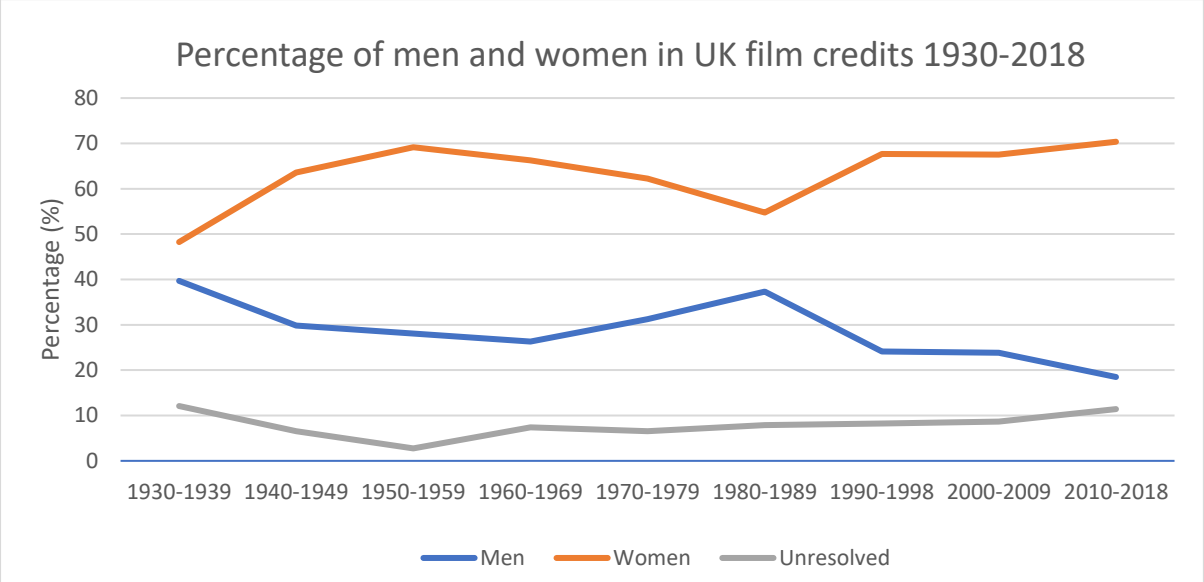
The latest ScreenSkills census places the number of women in the costume department at 73% (ScreenSkills, 2012, p.15). It notes that 67% of the costume workforce were employed in a freelance capacity which is the fourth highest proportion of freelance workers in television production (ibid, p.11). Costume workers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds made up 5.4% of those surveyed, which is also the average across all subsectors (ibid, p.18). According to ScreenSkills' data, the figure for costume workers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds has risen slowly from under 3% in 2004 (ScreenSkills, 2004). Within the census there are no specific data for the number of workers with any other protected characteristics.

As noted in Chapter 2, throughout the quantitative monitoring of the film and television workforce, there are a number of important caveats to introduce when presenting data. The aforementioned ScreenSkills census data is 10 years old at the time of writing, but it is one of the more comprehensive sources as it includes both film and television workers. It is therefore more pertinent to the film *and* television focus of this research than more recent data sets, but still remains lacking in offering up-to-date accurate figures. It should also be noted that ScreenSkills cautions its figures as 'indicative only' due to the fallible nature of recording a workforce that is predominantly freelance on one day of the year (ibid, p.4). In 2019, despite not continuing their annual census of the industry, ScreenSkills 2019 annual assessment concluded that,

> 'Since the data does not allow us to delve deeper into the composition of the workforce at the level of individual subsectors, more research is needed to establish which areas and occupations are most affected by diversity issues.' (ScreenSkills, 2019, p.26)

There are other sources available to ascertain the gender breakdown of the costume department that can also offer some historical context. For example, the BFI Filmography tracked the gender of the first name of film credits from all films deemed 'British' released to cinema since 1911. It showed that in the year 2018,

of the 422 costume credits, 71.09% were women, 16.35% were men, 12.56% unknown (BFI, 2022).[19] In the same year, the number of costume design credits were 78.3% women, 11.67% men, and 10% unresolved (ibid). Consistently, the number of women costume designer credits remains slightly higher than the total number of women in the department, suggesting that this is one of the few head of department roles that consistently remains women dominated (see also BFI Diversity Standards reporting). Notably, since 1942 the costume department has had a majority of women credited for costume roles.[20]



[Figure 1: Percentage of women and men in UK film credits 1930-2018]

Similarly, Directors UK's analysis of British films shot between 2005-2014 put the number of women in the UK film costume departments at 81.8% (Follows, Kreager and Gomes, 2016, p.28). Their data set was supplied by the BFI (above), but they also built on the data set by 2,591 films that were budgeted lower than £500,000, which the BFI did not track prior to 2008 (ibid, p.101). Interestingly, for the same period of 2005-2014, the BFI Filmography shows that 68.3% of credits were women, revealing some of the inconsistencies dependent on criteria of which films are

[19] The BFI Filmography functioned as an interactive tool and was taken offline in 2022. The year 2018 was the most recent data set on offer.
[20] Caution should be noted in ascertaining gender from a film credit. Gendering an individual simply based on their first name involves a margin of error and is implicitly problematic in not giving individuals the opportunity to self-identify.

tracked. These data, unlike the ScreenSkills data, do not include television productions. When researching the relationship between the gender of the director and the gender of other key creative roles Director's UK found that,

> 'In all but one of the key creative roles, female representation increases when a woman is directing. The one exception is the costume designer, where women account for 78.6% costume designers on female-directed films and 78.8% on male-directed films.' (ibid, p.32)

Directors UK's data suggests that when a film is directed by a woman, the other key creative roles are also more likely to be women. This is not the case for the costume designer role who would more likely be a woman anyway.

The BFI Diversity Standards require that in order for films to qualify for funding from BFI, BBC Films and Film4, they need to meet the minimum criteria on at least two of four standards. In their review of applications for 2016-2019 they found that applications for Standard B, (the employment of department heads, other key roles and other project staff on their productions), 71% referred to gender to fulfil this requirement (BFI, 2020a, p.12). The BFI Diversity Standards demonstrates how interventions in funding requirements to improve diversity with an emphasis on 'lack of' certain protected characteristics, bypass women-dominated departments.

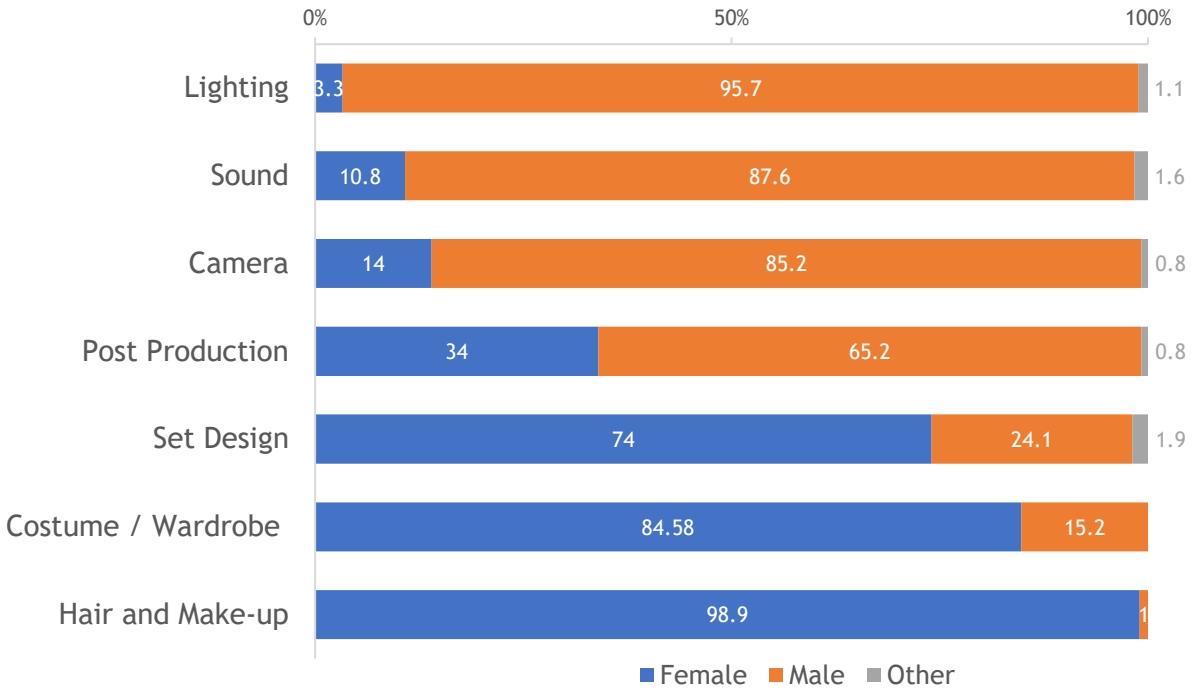
We can shed some light on the educational background of the costume department. Using data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the Work Foundation 2017 skills audit have compiled data on the uptake of film and screen courses undertaken in the UK in academic year 2014/15 (Carey et al., 2017). Although costume is grouped under 'Theatre studies' which includes design, makeup, costumes, and management, these data can still offer some insight into the likely educational background of the UK costume workforce. The skillsets taught in costume courses are often considered to be transferrable between sectors, and many participants had trained in theatre studies related courses despite working predominantly in film and television.

Within the 'Theatre studies' grouping, 68% of students undertaking higher education study in 2014-15 were women (Carey et al., 2017, p.35). This was the

highest proportion of women out of all screen related degree programmes. The percentage of minority ethnic students enrolled into the Theatre studies grouping was 17% which is the average percentage across all groupings, although the audit noted that, 'those studying subjects related to theatre are more likely to be white and have been educated privately compared to the student population as a whole.' (ibid, p.31). The report estimates that 10% of theatre studies learners identify as disabled in comparison to 5% working in industry (ibid, p.2). The majority of Theatre studies learners were aged between 16 and 24, which is reflective of funding allocation throughout further education (ibid, p.40). Using the HESA data, Theatre studies students are reflective of the costume workforce in terms of gender but notably, minority ethnic students are better represented at student level than at workforce level.

On costume courses specifically, Directors UK used UCAS' data for university applicants between 2007-2014, to suggest that the number of applicants for costume courses was 100% women (Follows, Kreager and Gomes, 2016, p.56). However, it is worth noting that Directors UK's study only included two costume degree programmes and is therefore less indicative than data provided in the Work Foundation Skills Audit (Carey et al., 2017).

The most recent data set comes from CDN's Project Diamond monitoring. Similar to other figures available on the costume department, the fifth iteration of the Diamond reports put the number of women in the costume department at 84.8% (Creative Diversity Network, 2022b, p.20).



[Figure 2: Craft groups by gender % - Creative Diversity Network 2022, p.21]

The report notes a recent increase in the number of costume workers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, suggesting a figure of 15.1% (ibid, p.28). This figure is a stark increase on the 4.8% recorded in their 2020 report (Creative Diversity Network, 2020, p.19).[21] Project Diamond also suggests a figure of 4% for the number of disabled costume workers, and notably CDN are the only research body to have monitored the number of disabled workers in the costume workforce (Creative Diversity Network, 2022b, p.17). Again, to offer a caveat to these data, they do not include film productions, and they only include television productions commissioned by the aforementioned broadcasters, and not the SVODs services who are the main employers of the participants of the research conducted for this thesis.[22]

[21] This jump in figures may be in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020 and genuine drive to recruit more racially diverse workers. It is also possible that as the number of contributions in costume was comparatively low in 2020, it would take fewer contributions overall to cause a jump in percentage points. Also, it is important to note that Diamond counts contributions, not people. Therefore, if a small number of Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic costume workers recorded a small number of jobs then it would have made a more significant impact on the statistics. Project Diamond also had a campaign to submit data during this period which might have increased disclosure rates.

[22] Currently there are no publicly available figures from SVODs about the diversity of their UK crews.

Yet, drawing on data from costume degree courses, along with ScreenSkills, the BFI Filmography, Directors UK, and Creative Diversity Network, the costume department is, in all likelihood, women-dominated and majority white. There is no data about the class of the film and television costume workforce, but it is most likely that due to the structural barriers of working for free, the requirement to be geographically mobile and a reliance on networks built at university level, that costume workers from working class backgrounds face the same barriers as those in the rest of the workforce (Allen et al., 2013; Percival and Hesmondhalgh, 2014; Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020). However, there is insufficient data to support that statement fully. All of these data sets cannot tell us whether women costume workers are more likely to maintain a career due to a unique facet of the department that supports their careers, or because the majority of costume graduates are women.

When thinking about diversity from the perspective of the costume department, industry quantitative data may shed some light on the distribution of some workers, but offers very little insight into the personal backgrounds of costume workers aside from their gender. Nor can it offer any insight into the quality of work, or the pay offered and conditions experienced. Moreover, by conceiving of a dominance of women as unproblematic and therefore not worth further investigation, women-dominated departments have been overlooked. When thinking about equality and diversity from the perspective of the costume department, the dominance of workers from the same identity category should remain a point of concern. The current paucity of data limits our understanding not only of women's costume careers in film and television, but of women's careers in other departments as well.

In instances when the costume department *is* referenced it is most commonly in relation to the dichotomy in numbers of women and men in offscreen departments. For example, the number of women in costume and make-up roles are often compared to the number of men in camera or lighting roles (CAMEo, 2018; Creative Diversity Network, 2020; ScreenSkills, 2010 etc). The CAMEo (2018) evidence review noted that gender is primarily constructed as a binary and tracked as the number of men in comparison to the number of women. This comparison is

frequently made in academic output as well, and the number of women within the 'traditionally female' roles is used as an evidence marker of the occupational segregation that persists within the industry (Connor et al. 2015, Gill, 2014; Jones and Pringle, 2015; Wing-Fai et al., 2015). For example,

> 'Within TV and film women were over-represented in makeup and hairdressing and wardrobe and costume occupation, fairly represented in business and legal occupations, but under-represented in other occupations, such as audio, lighting, camera and editing.' (CAMEo, 2018, pp.23–24)

> '…only traditionally "female" crew roles and departments are filled predominantly with women. The departments with the highest percentage of women employed are Costume (81.8% women), Make-up (80.5%), and Casting (60.3%). The most heavily male-dominated departments are Transportation (6.6% women), Special Effects (7.2%), and Sound (9.0%).' (Follows, Kreager and Gomes, 2016, p.28)

> '…extremely low levels [of women] in 'traditional male dominated' areas such as camera, sound, and lighting, compared with 'traditional female' occupations such as make-up and hair and costume and wardrobe.' (ScreenSkills, 2010, p.2)

The dichotomy in numbers is often stated, but only to evidence how women are found in 'traditional' roles. The costume and make-up departments are often used as an illustrative point of the dominance of men in other offscreen departments such as camera and lighting. Arguably, the tacit inference is that women in 'traditional roles' are funnelled into less valued, less well compensated work. Rarely is this disparity interrogated from the perspective of the costume department. Instead, studies focus on women in other roles who have left the sector or the minority of women who have sustained a career (O'Brien, 2015; Wing-Fai, Gill and Randle, 2015; Wreyford, 2018; Dent, 2020; Lauzen, 2023).

4.5. Costume in the production hierarchy: the value of costume work

Feeling devalued formed a significant part of the participants' experiences of work. Instances of feeling devalued were often felt when being rushed on set, through interactions with other crew members, and on issues of pay. This section

explores the literature that surrounds notions of value in film and television work, and makes a case for the relevance of gender as an important factor in understanding how work is valued. I unpick the hierarchical distinctions of film and television work starting with the distinction between the 'symbol creators' and offscreen roles (or below and above-the-line in the US context), and then the rivalries and distinctions amongst offscreen departments themselves. I review notions of value in two distinct but inter-related ways, firstly in terms of pay, and secondly in terms of the discursive (de)valuing that costume workers experience through their interactions on-set.

4.5.1. Craft vs. creative

Whilst the participants of this study work entirely in the UK context, there is a more developed field of research into offscreen film and television work in the US context. Therefore, the following section draws from both US and UK literature to understand how production hierarchies operate.

Offscreen workers' pay and public recognition vary drastically within the highly hierarchical realms of film and television production (Caves, 2000). Both in the UK and the US offscreen production context, power hierarchies have crucial bearing on how work is valued and remunerated (Stahl, 2009). Much like the rest of the cultural industries, distinctions between 'craft' and 'creative' hold sway over pay and value of workers (Caves, 2000). In the US context the distinction falls along a line on a spreadsheet that delineates 'above-the-line' creatives such as directors, writers and actors from their 'below-the-line' counterparts in 'craft' or 'technical' departments such as costume, lighting and camera. According to Caves (2003) it is these distinctions between those who 'create' and those who 'facilitate' that form the 'bedrock structures' of the cultural industries (Caves, 2003, p.76).

Often within cultural work, workers are judged against the principle of substitutability or non-substitutability, for example the lead actor in a film is more 'valuable' than a costume cutter (Banks, 2017; MacIntyre, 2007). These distinctions of value are well-rehearsed in cultural work research and actively felt by workers themselves (ibid). In the US context, Stahl (2009) has explored the

legal and institutional foundation for privilege in the Hollywood system of production. Recognition and remuneration for roles falls within a messy web of unionisation and institutional precedent (Stahl, 2009). Stahl questions the 'common sense' distinctions and divisions seen throughout the highly hierarchical work environment. As he puts it,

> '…arrangements of privilege and distinction in production worlds are cumulative results of struggle between industry groups. These results, codified in law/or custom, become normalized over time, to the point that they seem to be "reflections" of "inherent" differences between categories of workers, rather than basic elements of difference.' (Stahl, 2009, p.55)

Stahl suggests that these distinctions in privilege and value, are not based on measurable or comparable differences in creativity or responsibility (ibid). Stahl avers that terms such as 'creative' and 'technical', 'author' and 'non-author', are constructed to sustain power relations and legitimatise existing institutions (ibid, p.65).

Whereas Stahl suggests a hierarchy imposed from a top-down perspective - institutions legitimising their power through a strictly enforced hierarchy, Mathieu (2013) offers a differing perspective from the European context. Mathieu's study of auteur ideology in the Danish film industry takes a more 'cultural' stance on what or who maintains these distinctions. Mathieu (2013) argues that the Danish industry has a far greater reliance on a director-centric model of production, in comparison to Anglo-American 'Hollywood' modes of production where producers have greater authority. Mathieu notes how ideological formations of deference to an 'auteur' or the director of a production as an artistic visionary, form and legitimate the division the work and the division of credit. Mathieu suggests that the indoctrination by the ideologies that inform production, are so far ingrained that they become unquestioned. In turn, the limits and confines of artistic expression within each role become accepted (ibid, p.52).

> 'The argument here is that the operative power of auteur ideology does not come from top-down steering but from the confluence of more partial cultural understandings that support the idea of an artistic sovereign director.' (ibid, p.45).

Mathieu suggests that his case study supports the argument that it is the workers who enable a situation where the 'creatives' are seen as more important than craft input. Mathieu's suggestion of the hierarchy of value mutually constituted and enabled by workers themselves seems to resonate with some costume workers as well. Below is an extract taken from a costume blog on advice on 'Set Etiquette for Standbys: 12 Top Tips'.

> 'FIVE - RESPECT THE CREATIVES
>
> Remember that the director and designer should be treated with the utmost respect... If either of these two asks you to do ANYTHING then you do it, you don't answer back or try to be funny. They can and will fire you, you will pick this up very quickly and the chances are that neither of them will speak to you on a large-scale production but that's how it is.' (The Wardrobe Chronicles, 2022)

Regardless of who enforces and maintains hierarchical structures, they instil a sense of deference to the 'creatives' that in some cases goes unquestioned. These distinctions of value hold important sway on pay, and how craft workers' discursive value is perceived on-set. In this messy web of valuing factors, distinctions between 'creative' and craft are the first marker of difference.

Distinctions are not only made between 'creative' and craft roles, but also between craft departments themselves. In the US context, the Costume Designers' Guild has a long-running campaign for costume designers to achieve pay equity with production designers, the majority of whom are men. They argue that,

> '…costume designers, who are 83 percent female, are paid 30 percent less than production designers (their organizational-chart peers), who are 80 percent male, according to research from the U.S.C. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative and the Annenberg Foundation.' (Friedman, 2022)

In a culture of fierce competition and the fear of being replaced, pay secrecy is the norm. Whilst in the US context, the Costume Designers' Guild can draw on figures from the Annenberg initiative, in the UK there is no such equivalent data

resource of pay. In the UK context, making comparative statements about pay proves a challenging task not only because of a paucity of data, but also because comparing 'equal' work is often highly subjective. For example, how can the input of a costume maker be compared to a camera operator when value hierarchies in offscreen work are production dependent and, as I argue, implicitly gendered.

4.5.2. The monetary value of costume work

In the UK context, accessing pay data and making pay comparisons remains a complex task. This section highlights the current publicly available data on pay, and in the absence of data sources it also introduces participants' testimonies.

Across the recent research outputs on film and television workers there has been very little engagement with pay. Using the ONS 2017 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) to monitor pay in the screen industries, ScreenSkills (2019) notes how the ONS data, which only covers earnings for payroll workers, does not take into account the earnings of the self-employed or freelancers (ScreenSkills, 2019, p.23). When in work costume earnings can be considered above average when compared to the wider UK economy.

> 'Research suggests that those working in the screen industries earn more per week on average (again with the exception of film exhibition) than workers across the UK economy. However, the data for earnings accounts only for payroll employees, leaving the overall picture incomplete.' (ibid, p.7)

For example, the participant below described how, when in work, the pay was often favourable.

> "This seems like a common theme amongst costume: Why are we doing this? But frankly, I don't know what else I would do that can afford me the lifestyle that I've just starting to get a grasp of now. Like what, what else would I do where I can earn pre-tax £1200 a week? Not a lot."

[Claire, Costume Standby - 5-10 years of experience][23]

When asking questions about the monetary value of costume work there are very few data sets available for *actual* pay figures for the film and television industries, and none, as far as I am aware, for costume workers.[24] At present, one of the few publicly available sets of data available for *recommended* pay rates are BECTU's rate cards (BECTU, 2022a; 2022c; 2023). BECTU's rate cards are limited in the sense that they are only recommendations, but they are based on branches surveying their members and offer some indication of the rate that workers are expecting. The recommended rates are stratified by department, by grade, and by the budget of the production.

BECTU itself does not offer any form of comparison data between the rate cards of departments, the below is a comparison made for the purposes of this thesis.[25] There is not a standardised grading system for levels of seniority across departments, which complicates pay comparisons. There is also no standardised agreement on years required for each role, and in the cases of more experienced workers, pay rate is negotiated on an individual basis, making it more difficult to ascertain actual pay levels. [26]

The entry level trainee role is one of a few comparable positions found in nearly every department. The below table compares the base hourly rate of a costume trainee, a camera trainee and a make-up and hair trainee, working on a production of the same budget.

Role	**Recommended hourly rate (£/h)***
Costume trainee	12 – 12.82
Camera trainee	15
Make-up and Hair trainee	15-16

[23] All names used are pseudonyms.
[24] The Time Project asks workers to track their hours and in doing so workers can see the number of hours they have worked for free and calculate their hourly rate (Swords et al., 2022).
[25] With the exception of the art department branch which has run a survey comparing art department rates to construction rates see (BECTU, 2022b).
[26] There are levels of training required for particular roles, for example a specific electrician's qualification to be a lighting technician.

*Hourly base rate (not inc. holiday pay) working on a television drama production with a budget of £3+ million per hour (Band 3 and 4). Based on the most recent data published by each branch (BECTU, 2022a; 2022c; 2023).

These hourly rates might seem relatively high for an entry level role, but it is important to remember that these rates are for freelancers who would not necessarily work full-time throughout the year, and will most likely experience weeks or months without income. In the case of the trainee roles, the make-up and hair department trainee (a women-dominated department) has the same recommended rate as the camera department trainee (men-dominated department) (see Chapter 4.4 for gender breakdown of departments). These figures offer some insight into how pay disparity does not *only* fall along gendered lines, but also on union precedent and wider discursive ideas of value of different craft roles (see also Chapter 6.2).

At the other end of the seniority scale, below is the highest paid hourly rate listed for each department of the same production budget.[27]

Role	**Recommended hourly rate (£/h)***
Costume supervisor/HOD	40.91-49.09
Steadicam operator (labour only)	88
Hair and Make-Up supervisor/ HOD	42-46

When moving up the pay scale, making accurate comparisons becomes even more difficult. The figures included are the highest paid role in each department, which can offer some insight into the difference in the pay-ceilings for each department. In these roles, the make-up department is far more closely aligned with the costume department. It remains difficult to pinpoint exactly how such differences in pay have been historically embedded without more longitudinal data which is not on offer. Participants themselves were keen to unpick the pay disparities, and many alluded to the make-up department being better remunerated than costume.

[27] BECTU rate cards do not offer the hourly rates for a costume designers or cinematographers on a £3m+ p/h production, because these pay rates are often by individual negotiation. Therefore, the highest paid role on each rate card is included in the table.

> "I think make-up get slightly more respect because they are dealing with the actors' face, so they get they- you know, the daily rate is slightly higher for a make-up artist and it is for a costume [worker] on-set."
>
> [Natalie, Costume Designer – 25-28 years of experience]

> "Because other departments, for example, make-up and hair, are really strongly unionised and they've got a really good deal because of that, you know, because they're strong and they don't undercut other people, they are a unified workforce and because of that they have really good deals."
>
> [Olivia, Costume Worker – 33-36 years of experience]

There is a high degree of specialised knowledge possessed by costume makers and cutters, but according to some participants, production companies do not class costume work as requiring a qualification. That is, costume work is a skill that could have been taught at home and it therefore requires no formal training.[28] There is no formal requirement for costume workers to have a qualification in costume. On this basis, participants argue that production companies justify paying costume workers less, even though a significant proportion of costume workers have some form of fashion or costume training at foundation level or above. [29]

The domestic links to sewing never seem to quite leave the costume department, even when such work is taken out of the domestic context into the cultural industrial arena. More broadly within work and employment literature, a strong case has been made for the devaluing of work that has traditionally been carried

[28] I have yet to engage with a BECTU official to verify this claim, but it was widely stated by participants. BECTU have been contacted for comment, but I have received no response.
[29] There are some parallels here to the Australian women script assistants in the 1970s, studied by Baker and Connors (2020), who went on strike in 1973 to achieve recognition for their skills. The script assistants were derided as being 'just typists' despite their role requiring a high degree of skill and responsibility (Baker & Connors, 2020: 845). They went on strike to be recognised as part of the production team instead of the secretarial/keyboard group and thus gain better pay (ibid: 844).

out in the home. Women remain concentrated in work that relates to the 5 Cs of caring, cooking, cleaning, childcare and clerical – all roles that remain considerably less well remunerated and classed as unskilled (Wharton, 2005; Blau and Kahn, 2017).

Recognition of skill has bearing on remuneration, but it remains very challenging to find written evidence that costume work is classed as unskilled. Still, the number of participants who raised the issue of pay and being considered unskilled is striking. Despite it not being possible to conclusively state that costume work is classed as unskilled, it remained an important point of contention for many participants in their experience of feeling devalued and their perception that they were paid less than their counterparts in other departments.

4.5.3. The discursive value of costume work

'Discursive value' refers to how costume work's (lack of) occupational status is created and experienced. I argue that there are three main factors that work together to create a sense of discursive devaluing: the feminisation of costume work, the 'invisibilization' of costume work, and the space where costume work takes place. This section attempts to unpick a messy web of intersecting factors using both relevant research sources and participant testimony.

The feminisation of costume work refers to the process through which certain roles become closely associated with the gender of those who carry them out (Wharton, 2005; Rubery, 2015). Wharton (2005) notes how jobs become gendered over time and are seen to take on the characteristics of those who typically perform them. Certain gendered traits become associated with particular roles which naturalises ideas that women or men have a greater propensity for them (ibid). For example, the belief that women are more suited to detailed, dexterous tasks, or that women are more caring and therefore better suited to nursing (ibid). There is no tangible foundation to the gendering of work, but specific job roles become instilled with the characteristics of those who perform them. Parts of the job that are considered more 'feminine' are emphasised, and the more 'masculine' tasks are downplayed (ibid). Although there had been hope these archaic ideas of gendered

roles would be left behind in the 'brave new world' of cultural work, research has suggested that outdated ideas persist within the cultural workplace (Banks and Milestone, 2011). Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2015) study of women in marketing and public relations suggested how certain attributes or stereotypes ascribed to men and women influence occupational segregation. For example, women were perceived as 'good communicators' and 'more caring' which was used as a rationale for women employees being asked to arbitrate arguments (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015, p.31). The accuracy of these attributes was a moot point, as fundamentally people working in the cultural industries had 'come to see gender in this way, and this has opened up a space for women, and perhaps closed one down for men.' (ibid).

Similarly, Jones and Pringle's (2015) study of New Zealand's film and television workers noted a trend amongst workers for explaining gender segregation through naturalised or physical traits, as well as the use of stereotypes such as 'girly' or 'lad' behaviour to account for difference (Jones and Pringle, 2015, p.44). Most notably, workers explained the lack of women camera operators through the reasoning that women would not 'be able to lift things all day' (ibid, p.45). The idea of 'feminine' attributes increasing or decreasing a woman's propensity for work in a feminist context would seem archaic, but gendered stereotypical attributes are *still* used to positively explain gendered segregation in the workplace. For example, in an interview in 2022 the head of the union BECTU, Phillipa Childs, noted that,

> 'There are still parts of the industry, particularly craft, that are still very much male-dominated, and people don't think there's a problem with that. They just think either, oh, well, you know, it's a very physical job so that's why men do it, or women wouldn't want to do it, women won't do the hours, all those sorts of things.' (Aust and Childs, 2022)

Specifically to costume work, Miranda Banks (2009) discusses how the role of costume designer becomes socially constructed through gender. Gender becomes inherent in how the role is articulated by workers themselves; as costume roles involve working intimately with actors, helping them to dress, and ensuring they

are comfortable, the role becomes conflated with skills and traits traditionally associated with women.

Miranda Banks (2009) also extends the relationship between devaluing and women to think about how the very nature of costume work contributes to its lack of value. She argues that because a costume is designed to blend seamlessly into a character's world, to notice that costume would be a poor reflection on the designer. There is an intentional 'erasure' of costume work which leads to a lack of respect and value afforded to it (ibid). Especially in contemporary productions, the costumes should blend seamlessly into the visual world. She notes how audiences often mistakenly conflate costume with fashion, or simply buying clothes. Further to this, a participant quoted below noted how even those within the industry, such as directors and producers, have very little understanding of how much work goes into constructing a costume and how long it takes.

> "And quite often producers will say stuff to us about, 'Oh, why can't you do that in this time?', and you just know it's because they just have absolutely no clue, even though they might have done loads of films, they've no idea what goes on in a costume department…"
>
> [Natalie, Costume Designer – 25-28 years of experience]

Many drew a connection between the devaluing of costume work and its unseen location, whereby the majority of costume work is undertaken off-set (Chapter 4.3). In the private space of the costume workroom, much of the craft(wo)manship needed to construct a costume is unobserved by the rest of the crew. As the participant below explains,

> "I don't think it [costume work] is as much [valued] as it should be. And I think, I think part of the reason for that is because all of our work really happens off-set - and so once you get - the only costume people that the other departments see are the standbys… But I think to the untrained eye, it's a bit like you've just got somebody there who hands out coats and slippers."

[Alice, Assistant Costume Designer - 15-18 years of experience]

Costume work, much like women's domestic work, takes place in the private sphere of the costume workroom, truck or tent. When costumes are worn on set, the many hours of craft(wo)manship may be appreciated but are rarely comprehended.

Ultimately, costume workers have not been the historic gate keepers of culture; their input into the film and television text has never been seen as integral as those in men-dominated departments such as camera and lighting. The costume department is a prime example of how the intersection between craft, industry, and women combine to create an uneasy tension that ultimately devalues women's contribution to the film or television text. I argue that gender has a significant part to play in explaining why costume work is afforded less monetary and discursive value, but importantly for this thesis, not all participants agreed with me. Therefore, Chapter 6.2 revisits questions of value from the participants' perspectives to explore why the participants themselves thought their work was considered of lesser value.

The aim of this section has been to stress how important notions of devaluing were to participants' experiences, and the difficulties in providing 'concrete' evidence of how these feelings are not only felt but rooted in reality and reflected in data.

Part Three: Findings

Part 3 begins by outlining how participants organise themselves in close-knit networks. I use a moral economy lens to analyse the underpinning principles that guide and frame how participants interact, and their decisions to enact care. I argue in favour of moral economy theory and an ethic of care as a productive theoretical framework that aids in producing an empirically grounded account of the everyday ethics of film and television work (Chapter 5).

Then, the role of gender is explored and how it shapes participants' experiences and understandings of costume work. I explore how commonalities amongst participants did (not) preface their desire to support others, and how their constructions of the ideal worker implicitly relied on gendered stereotypes. I build to an account of how workers create a normative way of existing as a woman in film and television work, which acts to both include and exclude (Chapter 6).

I outline the perceptions held by participants about why they continue to work in the film and television industries, and detail the practices that costume supervisors and designers engage in to facilitate women's workforce participation. I finish by analysing participants' agency and power to alter their conditions (Chapter 7). Finally, the findings of the thesis are summarised, and the wider implications of the research are outlined (Chapter 8).

Chapter 5: The moral economy of the costume department

5.1. Introduction

The most common method of finding work for participants was through networks of contacts. Networking culture entails an intensive form of socialising and necessitates dependence on others to find work (McRobbie, 2002; Ursell, 2004). This dependence on others extends further than simply seeking one's next job, to the need for creative collaboration, as well as providing emotional support. In what Antcliff et al. (2007) call the 'contradictory mix of individualized competition, collaboration and co-operation that characterizes freelance employment', film and television workers are caught within the paradox of being self-reliant and dependent on others both at the same time (Antcliff, Saundry and Stuart, 2007, p.373–374). It is within the 'contradictory mix' of self-reliance and dependence that I begin the analysis of the findings.

The majority of participants had a network of contacts whom they worked with on a semi-continuous basis. These networks tended to be made up of tens of people (as opposed to hundreds), and ties between those in the network could be characterised as 'strong'. Granovetter defines the strength of ties as,

> "…[the] combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie." (Granovetter, 1973, p.1361)

Participants would socialise outside of work with those in their networks, check-in with each other via social media or messaging, some attended each others' weddings, shared costume craft knowledge, as well as confided in each other about the struggles of costume work. Using Granovetter's definition of 'strength', I characterise the ties between participants in their networks as 'strong', due to the frequency, intimacy and reciprocity of the relationships participants described to me. By the use of the term 'close-knit', I refer to the interwoven nature of relationships where 'everyone knows everyone', members hold common frames of reference, and are often centred around one geographic location.

To unpick the social relations within a given economic context, Sayer (2004) notes how social scientists often turn to norms, values and habits as the bread and butter for understanding a particular society or sub-section of it. He makes the point that to view a society, and in turn its economy, through the lens of its 'norms' would only offer a watered-down and alienated understanding of what it means to partake in it (Sayer, 2004, p.3). When it comes to the actions we take at work, Sayer argues that we do not treat one another well simply because norms dictate we should, or that there would be sanctions if we did not (ibid). Our understanding of morality i.e. good and bad, is formed outside of the economic realm. That is not to say that economic imperatives do not sometimes override one's desire to act morally or that many choose to ignore the morally 'right' decision, but that both the moral and the economic influence on our decision making should be viewed in symbiosis.

Herein, I use 'morality' and 'ethics' interchangeably, using both terms to refer to normative understandings of what is 'good'. By morally 'good' and 'acting with care' I am referring to a normative idea of the humane way to act toward others that sustains or supports the wellbeing and/or careers of others (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). I also extend the term 'enacting care' to refer to workers intervening in the careers of others to support their continuation. I use the term 'economy' or 'the economic' to refer the capitalist production of film or television.

As noted in Chapter 1's literature review, small networks have received significantly less attention in comparison to the large, open networks that feature in the work of Ursell and Blair amongst others (see Chapter 1.3.2). The data gathered for this thesis focuses on small, close-knit networks of workers who interact on a semi-continuous basis, with strong ties to one another. As has been evidenced elsewhere in social network analysis literature, strong ties can be seen to foster a greater sense of social cohesion, occupational identity, and aspirations to support one another (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998). This chapter pivots away from the use of Bourdieusian theory to understand film and television worker networks. Bourdieusian characterisations of relationships as forms of exchange of capital did not capture the multitude of motives that participants were relating to me. That is not to suggest that Bourdieusian accounts of networks preclude the

possibility of care, support or morality, but that such accounts simply do not centre the importance of these facets of relationships.

The data collected on participants' relationships with colleagues featured many instances of the collision between economic pressures and the desire to enact care. Rather than analysing these relationships as cold exchanges of capital, or simply trying to note the norms and practices of the given social group, this section seeks to understand the underlying guiding moral principles that influenced participants' relationships with colleagues. This section demonstrates how there is evidence of moral values within costume work and that they have significant bearing on participants' relationships, and their decisions to enact care.

The aim of this chapter is to answer RQ1: 'How can we understand the relationships between women working in film and television costume departments?'. I make the case for understanding worker relationships within the framework of a moral economy, where the desire to enact care is both hindered and facilitated by networking. I begin by exploring the conditions in which worker relationships are formed: the participants' connection to place and time. I explore how craft ideals form a key constituent of costume workers' occupational identity, and consider how a sense of devaluing, noted in Chapter 4.5, results in the department turning inward. I examine the ties between participants or the 'glue' of relationships (loyalty and trust), that engenders a contradictory mix of social cohesion and a sense of obligation. Then, I centre those at the head of the costume department (the supervisors and designers), and their sense of responsibility in order to understand their decision making in enacting care. Finally, the chapter pulls these threads of enquiry together, to argue in favour for viewing the costume department as a moral economy with its own notions of the morally 'right' and 'wrong' ways to exist within film and television work.

5.2. Place and time

Participants tended to view the costume 'world' as small, where 'everybody knows everybody', and the levels of interconnection between workers were multiple. Whereas social network literature places emphasis on the weakening of bonds in

the context of large-scale networks, here the focus is on strong bonds within small, close-knit networks. Sennett (1998) bases many of his arguments about the dissocialized worker around the notion that freelance workers are geographically mobile, coming into contact with a large number of workers, and not working with the same people on a continual basis. In respect to the data presented here, although work may be fragmented by short-term contracts, there was a sense of permanency in participants' geographic location and the amount of time spent in one another's company. Although many of my participants had to travel for work in the beginning of their careers, they tended to work around the various hubs of production activity within the UK repeatedly with the same people. Here, the scale of relations is far smaller than those often presented in wider television networking literature. Far from being disconnected from place workers seemed very much rooted around their various hubs of production.

> "[Region] is different from London. [Region] is a sort of very cliquey in a family-based sort of way. Where London is very cliquey in that you have the crews that work together at all times and, you know, those crews that do Disney, and those crews that do Marvel and you kind of get that sort of clique."
>
> [Tara, Costume Crowd Supervisor – 9-12 years of experience]

Geographic differences seemed to manifest themselves in rivalries and suspicions of workers from different areas. An example of these rivalries features in the audio diary data: a London design team were treating a regional making team with suspicion, believing that the regional team would not be of the same standard as a London team. In the audio diary instalments, Martha constructs an 'us and them' mentality to describe the regional workers' treatment.

> "They've [the costume design team] all worked in London and this is their first [regional] job – I've personally never worked with them – but from what I've heard it's a very different kind of vibe down there, and the ways that teams interact with one another within the department is very different down there, so I think it's just a lot of differing opinions

> on things, and I feel like a lot of people have clashed because of that, because when I'm working within the principal team and the crowd team who I have worked with before, and we've all sort of got, you know we're not friends as such, but will get on, and we've all worked with one another before and all know we're very capable of doing our jobs well. Obviously, they haven't got that kind of, they haven't got that with us, that rapport then. So, there's been a lot of feeling like we've had to prove ourselves and prove our capabilities in their eyes..."
>
> [Martha, Costume Standby – 5-8 years of experience]

Another example of connection to place came from a participant in a costume workroom talking about setting up a regional workspace for makers in the area. The extract below comes from Lucy's audio diary.

> "…we talked about the idea of like a hub in [regional city]. One of the girls in- women in the workroom she's part of building this kind of [other regional city] hub of individual costume people. Like almost, like how they all rent like a workspace, but there within this hub so that they can take on bigger projects together if they want to. And um, me and the [regional] girls were very keen on the idea of bringing that here. It just means…it's nice, you know, kind of gives you another opportunity to find work if you're part of a community of individuals, and you're then considered for more things if you were a team rather than just individuals, because as an individual, you know if you are taking on a large project you need more time, but if you are as a group or a team, then it's much nicer."
>
> [Lucy, Costume Maker – 5-8 years of experience]

Participants' links to a certain region or city created a constellation of connections between workers who rotated around the local studios. A connection to place seemed to play an important role in a sense of social cohesion and a sense of continuity within freelance work. Participants who worked in a region were often

members of a regional branch of the union that had its own WhatsApp group, which became a particularly important means of communication during the COVID-19 lockdown.

This sense of permanency of relationships was also created through the amount of time spent in one another's company. The time spent at work held considerable bearing on how costume work was experienced by participants. Ten to fourteen hour days are the norm for the majority of those who work in offscreen film and television production (Swords et al., 2022). For some, spending more time at work than at home meant that work ostensibly becomes their home, as the participant below explains,

> "So then actually, your work environment becomes your reality and then your home environment becomes more foreign in aspects and that, that's probably has some part to play in it. Because you do, you spend more time with these people than you do with your own family. You know, you eat, drink, work together, you know, have your good and bad days together, they see you at your very worse, when you're exhausted and tired and you can't take anymore."
>
> [Tara, Costume Crowd Supervisor – 9-12 years of experience]

This highly socialised form of working means that boundaries between work and leisure become extremely blurred (McRobbie, 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010). For many, excessive time spent within the industries was a key factor in building strong social ties with colleagues, but research has also shown that it is a key factor in declining mental health and reports of burnout (Wilkes, Carey and Florisson, 2020). The shared experience of challenging working conditions seemed to create an 'in-the-trenches' mentality for participants, similar to that described in Caldwell's (2008) research where offscreen workers used 'war-allegories' to describe their career experiences. In such descriptions there is almost a positive spin on the excessive work hours,

> "…when I went into film and it was like till 8[pm] if not longer, and 60-hour weeks, it was a bit of a shock to the system. But I really enjoyed it because I was actually creating things and actually doing things… it just had that vibe of almost camaraderie…"
>
> [Rachel, Costume Maker – 9-12 years of experience]

Participants would refer to the excessive amount of time spent in one another's company as an integral part of how close connections are formed, and how a sense of 'costume family' is built. Yet, importantly excessive time spent at work creates excessive tiredness, and within participants' testimonies there was a sustained emphasis on 'getting along' or maintaining 'good vibes' (see Chapter 6.6).

> "…for me was well, workroom based jobs, for me, are just…so, I find them quite stressful and I think unless you're in an environment where you've got a really good team that gels together and everyone gets on, it can be quite a bitchy environment, and I just don't, I'm just too old in the tooth for that anymore."
>
> [Paula, Costume Standby and Maker – 13-16 years of experience]

> "And it can get quite intense because in a way they, your workroom, do kind of *become your family*. And - which is lovely if you get along, but if the dynamics aren't quite right, it can be really stressful and really, really like detrimental to, to everybody, and I think from my experience it can take just one individual to change the whole dynamic of a workroom for the good or the worse…"
>
> [Rachel, Costume Maker – 9-12 years of experience, *emphasis mine*]

Within these intense periods of socialisation, maintaining relationships matter, and whilst notions of a 'costume family' imply a benign set of relations, which was not always the case. The costume department operates as an intense terrain of social interaction where relationships are built quickly during intensive periods of time

spent together in challenging conditions. Instead of having an atomising effect as noted elsewhere in cultural industries literature, the intensive socialisation and connection to their production hub served to root participants.

5.3. Craft ideals and occupational identity

Although not strictly a profession in terms of the traditional understanding of an occupational group with a regulatory body, or a strict code of ethics, the occupational identity of the cohort assembled around a set of shared craft values that operated in a similar self-regulatory capacity to a 'profession'. As has been discussed among the likes of Hodson (2001), Pye (1968) and Sennett (2008), there are seemingly consistent core principles that unite craft workers. An emphasis on quality material production, a knowledge of materials, physical aptitude, and lengthy periods spent learning and perfecting a skill. These values evoke romantic imagery of the craft worker-producer often attributed to artisan clock makers or furniture makers, rather than the frantic freelancer working under ever-increasing budgetary and time constraints. Still, remnants of these craft ideals still featured in participants' understandings of their work. This section outlines some of the key constituents of the participants' occupational identity and the conditions that create it.

Particularly in the workroom setting, knowledge of craft was integral to how the space was experienced, which also extended to the physical craft tools. For the costume department, the sewing machine is both an industrial tool and a domestic machine. Used to construct garments en masse in factories around the world, or to hem curtains at home. There sits an uncomfortable tension between craft(wo)manship of costume work, the industrial factory context and the domestic connotations of the sewing machine.

It is an acknowledged reality that many aspects of craft work are replaceable by a machine, or simply with another willing body (Sennett, 2008; Banks, 2010; Hambleton, 2018). However, costume makers are generally contracted for the production of bespoke garments; unlike fashion garments which have standardized sizes, costumes are made-to-measure to the actor/model. In some cases, if a

large number of a certain garment are required for supporting actors or stunt doubles, then a prototype of the garment will be cut and constructed in the UK, and then sent to factories around the world to reproduce. For the costume maker, this distinction between 'factory' work and bespoke garment-making is what elevates costume work above repetitive and low-skilled factory work.

Sennett has argued that the crafts(wo)man has certain 'primordial markers of identity' such as a commitment to 'quality' (Sennett, 2008, p.25). Participants took immense pride in the costume worlds they were creating, as Bridget explains:

> "We've got some amazing people producing beautiful stuff and I get a kick out of all of that, and you have to, I feel you have to find your own joy in it, because the stuff that's within your control, if you enjoy that, and that's wonderful because there is so much outside your control."
>
> [Bridget, Costume Supervisor - 37-40 years of experience]

In her study of Canadian scenic artists, Hambleton (2018) offers a relatable summation of occupational identity.

> '…the occupational identity of scenic artists, while ostensibly 'not creative' entails a romantic notion of what this work is, but with a caveat. The way that they understand their work as romantic and artistic is tempered by a collective craft ethos in the context of work that is decidedly unglamorous manual work…' (Hambleton, 2018, p.54)

Participants aspired to romantic craft ideals, but their ideals were tainted by the reality that industry constraints meant that high standards of craft(wo)manship are not always possible to attain (see also Lee, 2018). Participants of this research were under no illusions that their jobs were emblematic of a romantic 'craftwork', but there was still evidence of craft values playing a role in their sense of collective identity. Participants seemed to congregate around ideas of their craft being compromised and devalued from the outside.

> "It's, it's just watered down. It used to feel like you were part of something that required, you know, experience and skills and people who'd worked hard at their craft and took pride in what they did and now it's, it's not…it's wherever they can fill the gaps really."
>
> [Tara, Crowd Costume Supervisor - 12-15 years of experience]

Importantly for the costume department, participants seemed well aware of the lack of value afforded to their work, but they did not necessarily seek approbation or recognition from the wider production. Instead, value was often derived in their own sense of 'doing a good job' or from the praise of others within the department.

Hambleton (2018) identifies some key constituents of scenic artists' occupational identity, namely a sense of enforced humility, and the recognition that talent comes from within the community of other scenic artists, not outside it. A sense of 'enforced humility' corresponded to participants' testimonies as well; throughout participant interviews and audio diaries there was a sense of being the 'unnamed and uncelebrated' (Banks, 2010, p.312). In film and television work recognition and reward are normally reserved for the 'creatives', as a result a closed circle of recognition within the department is created.

A recurring reference throughout the interviews was the those outside of the department having little understanding of costume skill. Participants' perspectives were highly ambivalent when it came to praise from the rest of the crew. Although many were keen to please the wider production, and fulfil their often-untenable demands in order to be asked back for their next jobs, they were also keen to emphasise that they were not seeking approbation. Somewhat contradictorily, participants were keen to emphasise they did not desire the praise of the wider production, but they still harboured feelings of underappreciation. As the participant below explains,

> "…it's really infuriating, and it makes you feel underappreciated and yeah, it's just…I think I got one, I got one line from the director as we

wrapped, 'oh hey, looks good, yeah, thanks.' I was like, 'sure, sure'. But it looks beautiful! Even if the film's rubbish, and you know it's gonna be rubbish, and the costumes look great then that's all I care about, that's all I can ask for. Did we do a good job? And you know, that's all you can ask for at the end of the day."

[Isabel, Assistant Costume Designer - 9-12 years of experience]

As noted in Chapter 4.5.3, common misconceptions such as costume work being akin to shopping and not requiring technical skill were commonplace encounters for participants. A sense of devaluing was pervasive for participants in their interactions with other parts of the production. Regardless of how costume is valued by other members of the crew, costume still has a role to play in any production. I broached the topic of the importance of costume in the production process with a participant, I asked, 'surely if the quality of the costumes declined the production company would have to improve working conditions?'.

"I don't know if anyone would notice or care that much about the quality decline, like I don't think a producer – I might be really cynical – but maybe as a whole like, if a crew isn't able to, isn't able to facilitate a job, and it's been done in a rubbish way, then a production would notice it. But I think, if it's like a costume department, the quality, quality is different in different people's eyes. Like I don't know, I don't know how bad it would have to get before someone was like: this isn't good enough.

…

…if a production can put clothes on, specially like contemporary, they'll end up just, what they'll do is just start making contemporary dramas where they can send their wife to the shop and buy the clothes because it's halfway that bad anyway when they sort of say, 'ohh my wife's a fashion enthusiast, can she come to a fitting?' I mean that happens and it's like, 'yeah, cool, okay', like you know

> [laughs]. So, I do think they'd just turn to contemporary things and you can go to Primark and the actors will buy their own clothes, I don't know. I do think as a department, I'm not sure if we are respected enough in some cases for them not to think there's a way around it."
>
> [Zara, Crowd Costume Supervisor – 13-16 years of experience]

From Zara's perspective, costume is so far down the production hierarchy that their contribution is seen as replaceable and unskilled which is, as argued in Chapter 4.5.2, reflected in pay rates. But importantly here, the external devaluing of costume work seems to have turned workers inwards to creating their own systems of value that are not contingent on the ostensibly men-dominant 'outside' of the department. External pressures become an important factor in building a sense of cohesion amongst participants and buffering them against a lack of respect faced outside the department. Participants instil their own craft standards on their work and the work of those within the department. Their recognition of their subordination to the rest of the production is an important component of their occupational identity because it requires them to find strategies to compensate for their treatment outside of the department.

The internal craft values of costume work and approbation from within the department, threaded across participants' understandings of their relation to others. The internal nature of costume values seemed to provide a bulwark against the negativity or devaluing seen outside of the department. In turn creating a sense of connection and solidarity from those on the 'inside' of costume work. The adversity faced outside of the department acts as a form of common enemy that induces ideas of communal support and cohesion in the face of a common struggle.

For many participants the disregard of the skill of costume work extended to a disregard of their personal well-being. In an industry that continuously reiterates to its workers that they are replaceable by another willing body, of whom there are many, unsurprisingly amongst my interviewees there was very little

expectation of care from their production companies (Allen et al., 2013; Percival and Hesmondhalgh, 2014).

Impossible demands and hours featured heavily in the interview data. There were multiple stories of participants forgoing sleep, working 70 hour weeks, as well as references to the multiple crew members in the US and UK who have lost their lives from driving tired or from poor health and safety regulations on-set (Curtin and Sanson, 2016; BECTU, 2017; Wilkes, Carey and Florisson, 2020). These frustrations were often followed by exasperation – how could production companies not understand that making people work excessive hours was not conducive to their productivity or quality of their work? Caring for the wellbeing of workers was framed, by the workers themselves, as making economic sense, rather than there being any moral imperative for production companies to care for those whom they employ.

> "But until it affects the people at the top, coins falling into their pocket – they don't care unfortunately, because it doesn't affect them and it trickles down in every encounter, like when they're like, 'oh we need this costume tomorrow,' and you're like, 'but you told us about it today – we can't just go to the shop like this is a bespoke made garment.' There's not like a main character specific shop that we go to. But because it doesn't affect them, they're like, oh no, you can do it, it's fine."
>
> [Rachel, Costume Maker – 9-12 years of experience]

For a number of participants, a lack of care for their wellbeing also extended to a neglectful approach to coronavirus protocols from some production companies.

> "I think because the COVID rules and regulations which have changed on a weekly basis and change from production to production, they change, you know, whether the budget's available or not. I have found that productions are cutting corners in terms of health and safety for their crew members."

[Tara, Crowd Costume Supervisor - 12-15 years of experience]

In turn, notions of care and support came from inside the department. There was an acknowledged lack of care from production companies both for costume as a craft and for workers as individuals. As a result, participants appeared to create their own systems of value, work-satisfaction and care.

5.4. Responsibility and accountability: the role of supervisors and designers

Within the general hierarchy of the costume department, the costume supervisor is the head of the department in charge of the managerial side of work, and works closely with the designer (see Dex et al., 2000 for similar research on the role of the head of department in film and television work). On lower budget productions the same person may fulfil both roles, but on high-end projects often designers form a close relationship with one supervisor, and would work consistently with that supervisor moving from job to job together. These two roles often have a roster of contacts to call upon, as well as a smaller group whom they work with consistently, and they hold significant power when it comes to hiring decisions. This section explores who enacts care in the department, and the factors that precipitate their actions.

Within social network literature the supervisor and designer would generally fit the role of 'broker' between 'structural holes' in large networks (Burt, 1992). The supervisors and designers have access to both production companies looking to crew a production, as well as the various smaller networks of workers within the costume 'world'. The supervisor or designer can be seen to take on a brokering position, whereby they have significant power to provide work as well as connect junior workers to other costume networks. Whereas social network literature portrays the position of 'broker' as offering significant entrepreneurial advantage, the supervisors and designers here tended to conceptualise their role in terms of their moral positioning as opposed to their market value.

Ideas of responsibility and accountability were sparked by my first interview with a costume supervisor – Bridget. The relationship she described to those within her

department was a complex mix of care, friendship, pride, responsibility and accountability based on shared histories and experiences.

> "So right now, if I think about who's in the room here, my very best friend is in the workroom here, [name]. [Name] is a very dear friend in the dye room. There are other people on this job who, there are girls, I say girls – not really - there are crew on here who have worked with me now for about 8 years who I've seen through leaving school, leaving college, being a trainee, a junior and are now rocking it and are being brilliant and I take great pride in that.
>
> …
>
> It's also, I mean, for me the worst thing I could ever do would be to lose the trust and faith of my crew, not, not the management – none of that. If I thought the people, I work with didn't respect me, or if I felt I was letting them down that's the biggest motivation you have, I feel."
>
> [Bridget, Costume Supervisor - 37-40 years of experience]

As the number of interviews with designers and supervisors grew, it became clear that many had difficulty describing the complexity of their relationship to those whom they worked with frequently.[30] It seemed that the supervisors and designers cared for those in their close-knit network, but there were limits to how they could enact care. Ideas of responsibility and accountability often surfaced when supervisors or designers referenced their desire to help those struggling to maintain a career. Most recognised their power to aid in the careers of others now that they had attained a position of relative power themselves.

> "We were determined that it [a job-sharing initiative] was going to work. It wasn't always easy and it wasn't always great, but I felt very strongly

[30] It should be noted that all of the supervisors and designers of the cohort worked mainly in high-end television or film. Many were very well established in their careers and had 15+ years experience.

that if I'm in a position where I am now, where I can have some say about how working practices happen, that I was going to try and make it better for them than it was for me."

[Bridget, Costume Supervisor - 37-40 years of experience]

"But it's really important, I think, that we try and help women who have children still be able to do the job that they love to do. We have a duty to make that happen and I think the more we do it, the more people go, 'actually it does work, it can work...'"

[Natalie, Costume Designer – 25-28 years of experience]

I turned to literature on an ethic of care, particularly the work of Jane Tronto to understand the moral component of the supervisors' and designers' positioning (Fisher and Tronto, 1990; Tronto, 1993; 1995). Tronto argues that in order to enact care one must first be 'attentive' to the needs of others (Tronto, 1993). The supervisors and designers of the cohort had experienced the harsh realities of freelance work, most having had experience of combining costume work with childcare. Amongst the supervisors and designers there was a strong desire to help others in recognition of the help that they themselves did, or did not, receive in their early careers. This desire was often accompanied by tangible examples of supervisors and designers intervening in order to ease the struggles of film and television work for others, especially for those with children. This form of help took many guises, from emotional support, (in)formal mentorships, offering leniency and flexibility for those with childcare needs, creating reduced hour days for those with children, or instigating job-sharing schemes. (Details of the interventions can be found in Chapter 7). Within the context of vulnerability and precarity, the supervisors and designers displayed a generational sense of self-awareness, as the supervisor quoted below explains:

"So when I became a supervisor, I have always made sure that I learned from the mistakes of others so that I would, you know, employ as many mothers as possible, really fight for half days, really fight for not keeping

people on for the full 14 hours if they didn't need to be there for the full 14 hours. Ensuring that everybody knew the location of where they were working, the hours that they were working, what time they were starting. You know, with a few days' notice if the schedule allowed."

[Tara, Crowd Costume Supervisor - 12-15 years of experience]

The supervisors and designers appeared to be taking on a form of responsibility for those within their close-knit networks, in recognition of their own adverse experiences. 'Responsibility' is the second component to Tronto's (1993) theorisation of enacting care. Tronto notes that unlike 'obligation', where bonds between individuals entail a set of duties or formal agreements, 'responsibility' is much more voluntaristic in nature. She notes,

> 'Responsibility is a term that is embedded in a set of implicit cultural practices, rather than in a set of formal rules or series of promises.' (Tronto, 1993, p.131–2).

Here I use 'responsibility' to refer to the pre-cursor of action that precipitates a worker's decision to take a form of ownership of the working conditions in their department, and go above the formal duties ascribed by their job role, to enact care. This act could range from simple words of encouragement to the implementation of a job-sharing scheme. These acts are in direct recognition of the lack of care from employers and the wider production.

The form of responsibility that participants talked of was not a pure altruism and had its limits. When asked directly about responsibility, some participants were less keen to answer in the complete affirmative. The participant quoted below, Diane, had taken on the formal role of mentor to new entrants within her union, but had also informally taken on the role in the past. Although she answered in the affirmative that she feels responsibility for new entrants, she qualified her answer by specifying that she was 'enabl[ing]'.

"**TB:** Do you feel a sense of responsibility at all for them [her mentees]?

> **Diane:** Yes, inasmuch as [Diane's mentor] used to give us opportunities that would challenge us, but not ones that we couldn't cope with. And getting that balance, getting that: what can they achieve is about…my mantra is to encourage, challenge, enable."
>
> [Diane, Costume Supervisor – 37-40 years of experience]

Key to Diane's understanding seemed to be that she felt some form of pastoral care for trainees, but she was not liable for their behaviour or their future career success. Rather than a form of voluntaristic engagement with responsibility as described by Tronto, participants' relationships with ideas of responsibility were far more ambivalent, the quote below comes from a designer.

> "**TB:** And is it your, do you feel like it's your responsibility to help out the women of the department?
>
> **Natalie:** Yeah, I think we have to, I think we have to respect each other and if you know it's a give and take, it's, it's like you can't just go: 'well I'm alright', you know, I am alright but it's hard, it's been hard for, you know, everyday feeling like, you know…also, and it's often from other women that you get that thing like, 'how could you have a nanny? I mean, don't you feel like you should spend more time with your child?', I'm like, 'wow, I've never had that from a man, actually.'"
>
> [Natalie, Costume Designer – 25-28 years of experience]

Natalie's answer seems to illustrate the conflict between aspirational desire to enact care and self-preservation. Although Natalie had previously described it as her 'duty' to help other women and notes how the struggles in her career have led her to want to acknowledge them for others, she goes on to note antagonism from 'other women' about her decision to have a nanny. Tied up in this quote are ideas of gendered behaviour and class distinction (see Chapter 6), but in terms of responsibility she recognises that she cannot simply disregard the struggles of others. It is difficult to capture the ambivalence of her response, but she

highlights the highly complex nature of how designers and supervisors see their role in supporting the careers of others.

In combination with the benign notion of support, is the freelance mentality that the individual takes the ultimate responsibility for their career survival. Many of the supervisors and designers of the cohort were in an established position with their careers and seemed to have the capacity to now help others with theirs. Tronto's idea, inter alia the work of Simone Weil, of suspending one's own goals, ambitions and concerns in order to recognize the needs of others seems to be a key part in why supervisors with relative job security had greater capacity to care (Tronto, 1993, p.128). Tronto argues, in order to be attentive to the needs of others, one needs to be attentive to one's own needs before being able to 'competently' care. Yet, whilst there was the sense of moral obligation from supervisors and designers, there was also the recognition that everyone operates in a system that often makes it difficult to enact care, and in a working culture that is ultimately individualised. Although the supervisors and designers did not abdicate moral responsibility, with the majority very keen to express how they *desired* to help, there was the sense that responsibility, and the care they could enact, had its limits (see Chapter 7.4. for discussions of power). For some, the individualization of freelance work seemed to necessitate an uncomfortable relationship with responsibility and interdependence, on the one hand recognising their power, but also resenting the social pressure to care.

There was some suggestion amongst supervisors and designers that their position of relative power and others' dependence on them was not always borne comfortably. The role seemed to entail a significant degree of emotional management for example, effecting a sympathetic countenance in order to boost the morale of their workforce, as described in Natalie's audio diary extract below (Hochschild, 1979; 2012; Callahan and McCollum, 2002).

> "This week has been quite emotional, some of my team are not coping with change much, I'm finding me and my supervisor acting as a therapist for some of the making team. Same as last week every night

> getting home between 7.30 and 8.30 pm, so many meetings but not a lot decided."

And in the following week,

> "This is something that always seems to come up on a big production, my costume supervisor and I tend to have an awful lot of conversations [with costume makers] that seem to be more like therapy, than just moving forward with costumes."
>
> [Natalie, Costume Designer – 25-28 years of experience]

The added emotional load did not always seem to be voluntarily engaged with amongst supervisors and designers. Natalie seemed to feel the moral obligation to care for the emotional well-being of her team, but at the same time she felt ambivalent that this was both beyond her responsibilities as a designer, and was beginning to go beyond the emotional load that she can bear herself. She seemed to face the economic pressure to ensure costumes were completed by a motivated workforce, but also the moral obligation to help people who are struggling.

Natalie's emotional work here makes work bearable for others, but also came with an added form of work for herself.[31] Within participant testimonies maintaining 'good' working relations appeared particularly important due to the long hours and highly socialised nature of film and television work, as well as the highly reputational nature of hiring. The emotional side of work was a significant factor that seemed to shape the day-to-day experience of costume work, and how the costume department operates as an insecurely employed group.

The audio diaries captured a particularly difficult week for one participant who was struggling with her mental health and excessive tiredness from the number of

[31] Following Callahan and McCollum's (2002) distinction between emotional labour and emotion work, emotional work is understood as 'situations in which individuals are personally choosing to manage their emotions for their own noncompensated benefit.' (Callahan and McCollum, 2002, p.221). Emotional labour is understood as emotion enacted in exchange for a wage or other forms of compensation (ibid).

hours she was working. Here the participant, Claire, is referencing a conversation she had with a supervisor that week.

> "…I said, 'well, to be honest, I don't have a whole lot of a life right now. This is me and I'm just happy to do it,' and almost as a counterpoint to what I was saying in my audio diary last week about my work being so wrapped up in my identity and maybe that's not a healthy thing. That's exactly what [supervisor's] point was about, she said, 'you have to make sure that you live your life because this work will not thank you.' She said, 'I have seen so many casualties, so many people just get sucked into this completely and work is their whole life, and you don't want that to happen.' She said, 'you have to go out there and make your life. You have to build it; you can't just be here all the time.'
>
> … [she said], 'listen, I've seen far, far too many people in the industry lose their lives to this and you get nothing back from it. You get nothing back.'"
>
> [Claire, Costume Standby – 5-8 years of experience]

The lack of care from production companies creates a vacuum and in some cases supervisors and designers take it upon themselves to attempt to fill it. The structure of the industry places the onus, and the 'work' and pressure of responsibility on the individual supervisor or designer to engage and enact a form of care.

As mentioned, there was never a sense of pure altruism on the behalf of supervisors and designers, but neither were relationships reduced to a form of quid pro quo. Ideas of intervention and responsibility also did not exist in a vacuum - they were often coupled with economic rationale. One participant described her three reasons for creating job-sharing within her department: her first rationale was because there was a shortage of qualified crew to fill vacant positions. Secondly, she felt a moral imperative based on her own experience of struggling with childcare and costume work. And thirdly, she was of the implicit

understanding that it was within her power as a senior and respected costume supervisor to bring about the practice. Her decision-making is a prime example of moral economic intention: her sense of the morally 'right' course of action – to support other mothers in the workforce was suffused with the economic imperative to recruit enough skilled crew.

Although a sense of responsibility seemed to factor into participants' desire to help, the interventions often seemed to be ad hoc responses to the shortage of crew, or the lack of highly skilled crew available. That does not mean that their benefits are intangible or that the moral and economic rationales are not somewhat aligned on this matter. Facilitating the careers of others had the 'economic' benefit to the supervisor or designer in creating a sense of gratitude, and in turn, loyalty. A number of the participants who had been recipients of help from supervisors were keen to express their gratitude. The participant below had been part of a job-share.

> "I don't think I would have got a job on [production name], if [costume supervisor] hadn't pushed to get the job-share. I don't know if that just might be my loyalty. Like, 'All hail [costume supervisor]!'"
>
> [Lucy, Costume Maker – 5-8 years of experience]

Both Lucy *and* her supervisor gained from the supervisor's intervention. The supervisor now has a loyal member of her team to call upon, and Lucy has a sustainable way of working. Yet, 'gratitude' is not necessarily an entirely benign facet for the film and television worker. Aust (2022) explores the currency of gratitude and its disabling effect on care in unscripted television in a report for the Screen Industries Growth Network (SIGN). She argues that gratitude enables existing inequalities to be maintained insomuch that workers' expectations for working conditions are so low that workers become grateful for what would be considered basic in other industries such as regular hours and pay (ibid).

Whereas in Aust's research workers were beholden to their employers to be grateful for even vaguely favourable conditions, within the data gathered here,

there was some suggestion that the power dynamic also works in the opposite direction, with some supervisors noting how they felt accountable to their crews. The following extract is from Bridget again, a supervisor who had a tense discussion with production management when she pushed for financial support for her team when the production company had to suddenly halt production because of the coronavirus lockdown.

> "It's also, I mean, for me the worst thing I could ever do would be to lose the trust and faith of my crew, not, not the management – none of that. If I thought the people I work with didn't respect me, or if I felt I was letting them down that's the biggest motivation you have, I feel."
>
> [Bridget, Costume Supervisor - 37-40 years of experience]

Bridget seems to see herself as accountable to her team, above her accountability to her employers. Bridget's example highlights that in some cases, the relationship between junior and senior colleagues can be reciprocal in nature and that for some, accountability is a significant factor in decision-making. This sense of accountability is informal; rather than being 'policed' by a regulatory body, accountability is upheld both by the supervisor or designer's own ideas of morality, and the wider network's opinion of them. A sense of personal moral duty in the face of an uncaring industry uneasily binds workers to one another.

Wider literature in social network research notes that within close-knit networks made up of a select number of people, the smaller scale of interaction facilitates a greater sense of regulation of peoples' behaviour because of the nature of reputation (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). In comparison, the reputation-based nature of employment in film and television work has been shown to deter women from voicing complaints of maltreatment over fears that they would not be hired again, thus silencing or disinclining workers from challenging poor treatment (Coles and Eikhof, 2021; Gill, 2014; O'Brien, 2014). As O'Brien notes, women risk the possibility of gaining a reputation as 'difficult' or 'troublesome' and in turn risking future work (O'Brien, 2014: 1214).

Putnam (2000) makes a strong argument to suggest that the size of the network is important in terms of reputation-based behaviour regulation; the bigger the network gets the less powerful the threat of reputation, and trust becomes less likely (ibid). There is a level of cynicism within Putnam's argument as similar to the more instrumentalist take on social actors, in Putnam's summation, actors are adhering to moral standards because of the threat of reputational damage. Participants here seemed inclined to act ethically for both the motive of reputation and the rationale of it being the 'right' thing to do. Within the data presented here, reputation created a sense of moral arbitration in how supervisors or designers behaved. As shown in Bridget's quote, there was the suggestion that reputation can incline individuals to act morally, or at least honestly, as the value of their reputation remained important to them in a close-knit network.

The close-knit nature of relations, a sense of moral duty, and a generational recognition of struggle, develops a sense of responsibility and accountability for some supervisors and designers. For some these factors led to a greater willingness to intervene in the careers of others (see Chapter 7 for further discussion on interventions). But it is important to note that the individualised nature of freelance work still meant that a sense of responsibility had its limits, and compromised participants' capacities to enact care (see Chapter 7.4 for discussions of the limitations to supervisors' and designers' power). Workers' relationships have multiple competing pulls as they walk the line between acting ethically and personal survival.

5.5. The glue of relationships: loyalty and trust

Along with a sense of the morally 'right' thing to do, the 'glue' that appeared to sustain participants' relationships over long periods of time (years), was the idea of loyalty. These two components were ostensibly baked into the unwritten manual of maintaining a career in costume work. In a reputation-based system of hiring, and especially in the 2021 context of a shortage of crew, loyalty was referenced multiple times by participants.

Participants tended to use the word 'loyalty' to refer to being loyal to a supervisor or designer, by not leaving a job prior to its completion, not making disparaging remarks about someone, and in some cases making oneself available for a specific designer or supervisor. Most ideas of loyalty surfaced around recommendations cultures and remaining loyal to a supervisor or designer who had provided work. Similar to ideas of 'gratitude' mentioned previously, joined to ideas of loyalty also came ideas of a 'moral debt' to those who had recommended them or given them work.

> "I think you, you sort of need to prove that you're loyal, or not *prove* that you're loyal -I don't know if that's the right phrase, but if people can trust you, feel that they can trust you then they are more likely to ask you back next time because they know that you can be relied on, I suppose. So, I mean, while I wouldn't…it does, if you're working in the same team a level of expectation, I think does develop in that, you know, when the costume designer goes onto their next job…Are they going to ask me to do it? Do I want them to ask me to do it? If they did ask me, do I feel like I have to say yes or can I say no?"
>
> [Alice, Assistant Costume Designer - 15-18 years of experience]

For Alice, loyalty is more akin to a moral obligation to be paid when a supervisor has given one work. The fear of being perceived as disloyal seemed to be a strong incentive to maintain relations with others who had provided work in the past. It also seemed that for some there were repercussions for not behaving or acting in a way that was considered loyal.

> "And if you're loyal to people, they'll be loyal to you. So instead of saying to [costume supervisor], 'I'm off to do [film] for the next two weeks you can't have me anymore.' Checking with [costume supervisor] before I say yes to any other days and she says, 'no', she appreciates that and it's just spirit of goodwill. Basically because you do sometimes get crew that jump ship or that stay loyal to supervisors rather than designers and it doesn't always pay off in the way that you think it will,

> especially now that…we're getting into the nitty gritty now, but [costume supervisor] has gone on to do [film] and she's taken pretty much her whole team. She's taken [name], [name], [name] – all of these people that [costume designer] would have really liked to have kept. And people are following [costume supervisor] instead of [costume designer] and [costume designer] is a big player in the industry, I mean so is [costume supervisor], but you kind of have to think, who do I want to piss off the least? Or who do I want to remain in good favour?"
>
> [Claire, Costume Standby – 5-8 years of experience]

As Claire explains, loyalty is a key component in keeping networks together. Claire goes on to note how she does not want to be known as one of a certain supervisor's 'people' and would rather remain outside the various factional politics. Seemingly, loyalty carves out dividing lines between certain groups of workers and in turn creates rivalries. There was evidence that the principle of loyalty was also being instilled in new entrants. The participant below shares how she had received warnings from her colleagues about remaining loyal to their team.

> "…I do get calls quite a lot, and I don't know I, I feel like I can't take them because I also know that, you know, I've been told that people talk and, you know, if you leave something early or, you know, you're not loyal to them and you don't stick it out or stay on the job with them, that they probably won't want you, and they'll probably dissuade other people from wanting to work with you as well, and I don't feel like an intense pressure from that, but I do feel that that is, you know, kind of goes without saying."
>
> [Klara, Costume Trainee – 0-4 years of experience]

Despite the relative abundance of jobs at the time of interviewing (see Chapter 2.5 for industrial context), ideas of insecurity and competition were not uncommon to participants. Amongst participants there was the legitimate

understanding that jobs are temporary, and that in order to be 'asked back', be 'trusted' and contacted for work again, there is a need to gain favour with colleagues. Loyalty needed to be performed regardless of whether it was the morally 'right' course of action, because it ensured career survival. Given the 2021 industry context of crew poaching, loyalty served a very important factor in ensuring productions could continue (ScreenSkills, 2020a). At the time of interviewing there were a significant number of productions filming, and many were having difficulty finding enough qualified crew (ibid). Those who had left a production were very keen to stress that it was not something that they did often, that is, they did not want to be seen as someone who left a production early as it could jeopardise their reputation.

> "Uhm, I worked on the [TV series] briefly this year and I just didn't fit in. I thought: I can't work like this and I asked to leave. *I have never jumped ship off a show before ever*. And I just thought: I can't do this, I don't fit here. And I've heard from people since it finished like, 'oh God, most unhappiest shoot I've ever been on or at least the most disorganised. The least pleasurable.'"
>
> [Diane, Costume Supervisor – 37-40 years of experience, *emphasis mine*]

In a catch-up interview with another participant she told me that she had left a production before the end of her contract as she was enticed away by another production company who offered free childcare.

> "Uh, I've never been one to walk away from a job, but it's just, I weighed up the opportunity of doing a job that would allow me to take – I was pregnant at the time with this one, but take my [child] into work with me and work for slightly better hours and obviously reduce my child care costs by, you know, averaging between £600 and £800 a month. So yeah, but to nothing, essentially."
>
> [Tara, Costume Crowd Supervisor – 9-12 years of experience]

There was a wariness for Tara to admit she had left a job early, and she was keen to stress that this was the first time she had done so. Amongst participants many conflated being loyal because it appeared to be the morally 'right' course of action, and being loyal because it was a dictated norm that had disciplinary consequences if branded disloyal. Participants' normative understandings of how they should behave, i.e. remaining loyal to the person who had given them work, also had an emotional toll.

Loyalty seemed highly embedded in the market context, with participants keenly aware of loyalty's reciprocal importance and how they could use it to their advantage.

> "Um, this is something I'm working on. I am a very loyal person and I…If somebody is good to me, um, as far as like they've given me employment, they look after me, they make sure that, you know, that we get the right wages, that we're truly being looked after, and working in a nice environment – I'm absolutely loyal to the hilt."
>
> [Isabel, Assistant Costume Designer - 9-12 years of experience]

For Isabel, she had proved herself loyal, and in return her supervisor had not only provided her with work, but also a sense of 'being looked after'. She had paid her dues and 'proved' her loyalty and now felt a sense of support and permanency within her relationships to others. 'Being loyal' and being perceived as loyal had been important to her sustaining her career. When loyalty had been proven, trust followed. One participant felt that because she could be trusted and had 'proved' her loyalty, supervisors were more willing to be lenient with her childcare needs. 'Trust' appeared to stay with the participants as they became more embedded in their network and moved from job to job. Participants understood 'trust' as trusting in another's competence to do the job, trusting in their judgement if they recommended someone else for work, trusting that they would have the 'right' attitude to ensure team dynamics did not disintegrate (Chapter 6.6), and trusting that they would not leave the current production if tempted by a better job offer. In moral economy thinking, Sayer (2004) sees trust as a lubricator to the

functioning of all markets, and as an essential part of co-operation between individuals. Sayer argues that there is not necessarily a distinguishing line between the 'trust' that lubricates economic activity and the 'trust' that forms outside the contractual obligation, but that 'trust' is informed by far more than economic convention or the need for exchange. In the case of the data presented here, trust was not simply a form of quid pro quo, but a prosses that had an embedding effect, and had a marked impact on how workforce participation was structured.

When looking at the sample as a whole, using the participant career trajectory tables noted in Chapter 3.9, those with longer careers held positive outlooks on the nature of loyalty. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who had longer careers tended to work consistently with a supervisor or designer, and in turn had more of a benign understanding of the way that loyalty operates. Those with longer careers had 'proven' their loyalty and had been rewarded for it; loyalty simultaneously binds groups together whilst ensuring the supervisors or designers could find enough reliable crew for a production.

The reciprocal nature of loyalty provided the parameters that dictated how participants should interact within the group. There was a normative understanding of what was classed as loyal and disloyal; through remaining loyal participants gained the trust of their supervisor or designer which then opened up further benefits of more work, or in some cases leniency. Loyalty and trust functioned to create a feeling of embeddedness, and a sense of security in their place within the industry. Those who did not abide by or grasp these unspoken rules had a different experience of the workplace. Whereas the bonds of loyalty and trust ostensibly engender positive working practices, they also have their 'dark sides' as not everyone can perform this exacting understanding of loyalty (Borgatti and Foster, 2003) (See Chapter 6.6).

5.6. Towards a moral economy of the costume department

Interdependence is at the crux of relationships within the costume department. Relationships are built on a shared craft commitment, and the desire to enact care

for others in the face of an uncaring industry. Supervisors' and designers' sense of morality precipitates their decisions to take responsibility for others' careers, but they do so from a place of their own vulnerability and a need to ensure their own career survival. Relationships are further bound together by an unwritten code of loyalty that forms the parameters of how one should behave in close-knit networks.

How can we understand the relationships between women working in film and television costume departments? In this chapter, I have pulled apart the minutiae of participants' social relationships to make the case for viewing workers in conjunction with their moral principles *and* their economic context. The data presented here suggests a group of participants whose relationships take place within a framework of moral codes reinforced by a shared sense of occupational identity and experience of struggle. Those who succeed in maintaining a career often appear to be those most embedded within this framework of behaviour or as participants termed it – the costume 'world'.

Far from structural conditions erasing a sense of moral commitment to others, there was evidence of participants engaging with a sense of moral duty and their capacity to intervene in support of others. The presence of a moral code did not entail a form of 'pure' altruism untethered from economic rationale, but a negotiated form of care. Participants have the capacity to bring their own understandings of moral behaviour to the group; they drew on multiple understandings of morality that are not entirely formed within the ideologies of film and television work. These moral principles hold significant sway in buffering participants from feelings of individualisation, and for those on the 'inside', it appeared to offer the sense of social cohesion that aided in surviving in a challenging job market. To view interactions between participants as a simplistic form of exchange is to ignore the multiple factors that are influencing their relationships, as well as the emotional and psychosocial demands placed on them by working in a challenging workplace.

By centring the moral and economic dimensions of interactions, not only do I create a more nuanced picture of the film and television worker, I can expand the

debate around the collective and individual agency of the worker, and their capacity to structure workforce participation (Chapter 7.4). Interdependencies create an uncomfortable tension between structural conditions and workers that situates workers within an iterative, revolving relationship of mutual dependencies. As will be explored over the following chapters, these mutual dependencies, and the moral principles that underpin them, have significant bearing on structuring workforce participation.

Chapter 6: The role of gender

6.1. Introduction

The points discussed in the previous chapter: a devalued occupational identity, supervisors' and designers' sense of responsibility, and loyalty as a framework for building relationships, all intersect with participants' gender. This chapter brings together the various points at which gender featured within interviews with participants and their audio diaries, to explore participants' conceptualisation of the relationship between their gender, their relationships and their career.

I begin by revisiting ideas of value to explore how participants did, and did not, connect the lack of value afforded to their work to their gender. I turn to postfeminist literature to explore how participants engaged with ideas of gender in the context of 2021 and post-#MeToo. I outline how participants engaged with questions of inequality of access to work, to explore why participants saw themselves as somewhat detached from wider questions of diversity. Then, I examine which injustices and inequalities that the participants chose to engage with, and the reasons why that may be the case, namely, homophily and shared experience. Finally, I address how participants' emphases on shared experience, whilst engendering a sense of solidarity, can work to exclude those who do not possess the 'right personality'. I argue that participants' construction of the 'ideal' worker and their emphases placed on shared experiences enables participants to both facilitate and diminish the careers of others.

6.2. Gendered value

As discussed in Chapter 4.5, throughout the data collection there was the consensus amongst participants that costume work was seen as less valued than other craft roles in the production. 'Devaluing' was understood as the costume department being regarded as unimportant to the film or television text by the wider crew, or the work of the department not requiring a trained skill.

Experiences of feeling devalued or undermined were commonly experienced on-set, where the greatest amount of interaction with other departments takes place. Feeling devalued was most commonly experienced in the form of standbys being rushed, told to get off the set, not being able to attend when only 'minimal crew' are allowed on set, and being shouted at to leave a set.

> "…like minus the children, there was always the misogyny and the like, 'all ladies go deep,' on channel 1 on the radios, which means just leave the set basically. Or um, you know, being hurried or ridiculed or made to feel like checks aren't important on-set, like your job isn't important.
>
> …
>
> …well just the other night I was on a night shift and there's a, there's a chap who is in [the] locations [department] and he said some other misogynistic things. Um, but he went to me, 'Aww, you should be at home with your family.' And I was just like… I don't know, I was just like, 'add another layer of guilt, babe.' Do you know? Like, I know, but wouldn't everybody like to be at home with their loved ones or even dogs or cats or whatever? Like, I just felt it was so belittling that I was…there with everyone else, but just because I've got a child it was, 'you should be at home.'"
>
> [Isabel, Assistant Costume Designer – 9-12 years of experience]

> "So when costume and make-up get asked to do checks when you're on-set, I've always been rushed and told to hurry up and, 'what's taking so long?', and things like that, compared to other departments where you… when something happens to the camera then we all stand down. You know if there's something wrong with the lighting then it's fine. But yeah, if it's costume then they've got very little patience for us."
>
> [Louise, Costume Trainee – 0-4 years of experience]

> "…and it also shows with different things like crew show. Minimal crew only, which means that costume are not getting in there…there have been directors before who've said like, 'why are you here?'. And you're like, 'because I need to see what's going on, I need to know, because if that person is doing x, y or z, and I haven't seen it and I'm not prepared for it and then when something goes wrong, you then shout at me that I'm not prepared for it, but if you let me watch the crew show, and respected my role within this filming, then that would not now be a problem.'"
>
> [Harriet, Crowd Costume Supervisor – 5-8 years of experience]

Despite the general consensus of feeling devalued, there were differences of opinion amongst participants for why this was the case. When participants were asked why they thought their work was afforded lesser value, gender was the least frequently referenced answer. The devaluing of costume work was linked to (1) a lack of understanding on behalf of other crew members, (see Chapter 4.3 for organisation of costume spaces). (2) Costume work being classed as 'unskilled', (3) as clothing is an everyday item costume work is perceived as more akin to shopping. (4) Some argued that costume has been historically devalued in film and television production hierarchies based on the Hollywood production system. Finally, (5) costume work is devalued because it generally tends to be undertaken by women.[32]

There were two participants who linked their treatment on-set to their gender, but those who explicitly made this connection were in the minority. Participants most commonly tended to link their treatment to a 'lack of understanding' on the behalf of other crew members. A significant amount of costume work takes place off-set, in workrooms, in tents, and in fitting rooms dressing artists and SAs. Some participants reasoned that the amount of work that goes unseen by the rest of the crew leads to a misunderstanding of the sheer quantity and skill that costume roles entail. There was also the assertion that because clothes are a commonplace and

[32] Answers ranked in order of frequency.

a cheaply made part of everyday life that other members of the crew did not see costume work as requiring any significant skill. To an extent, it seemed that participants were making excuses for why others devalued their work.

> "But I think to *the untrained eye*, it's a bit like you've just got somebody there who hands out coats and slippers, but that's not…I mean, that's a small part of the job, making the actor feel comfortable is a small part of the job and actually the majority of our work happens off-set, which is what people don't see, so I think that leads to kind of, people thinking that we're just there to be fluffers, which is ridiculous because it's.. you know, how the actor looks is basically what you're looking at on the screen as a viewer. Like and it's so… the costume is so important in helping the actor to feel like the character they're playing…it's not a small thing at all, it's just not visible to a lot of the crew, I think and that kind of leads to this thing of… I don't think there's as much respect there as there should be…"

[Alice, Assistant Costume Designer, 15-18 years of experience, *emphasis mine]*

Alice seems to argue that it is not necessarily the active 'fault' of others for their lack of understanding or 'training'. Alice goes on to link this lack of understanding and respect to being historically embedded with women workers themselves not having fought against such attitudes.

> "You know, there's kind of like this slight lack of respect for what the seamstress is, I think. It used to be, like, you're the dressmaker and that's it, and it's kind of like a subservient position. And so it is not a role that's always been there, and it's one that's had to be kind of…It's been created later and kind of been… sorry, I'm not speaking very well…It's something that has been built on and built on…And yeah, and I think, I think a lot of it is to do with the way that women have been treated in the past, like the kind of lack of respect, but also the way that we as women have been conditioned to kind of accept that in the past, not necessarily now, has meant that, you know, we've kind of

allowed ourselves – I don't want use the phrase 'allowed ourselves', but you know, for lack of knowing better it's just been a bit…Am I making any sense here?"

[Alice, Assistant Costume Designer, 15-18 years of experience]

At the end of the response quoted above, Alice was finding it difficult to articulate why she thought these attitudes were still present given that she had attributed them to the historical context of the 1950s and 60s. She does not want to say, 'we've kind of allowed ourselves' to be treated in such a way, but she is unsure how to articulate the reason for the continuation of discriminatory attitudes. Her sense of self-blame accords with wider literature about women in film and television internalising problems to perceive themselves at fault, rather than the people who hold discriminatory attitudes (Gill, 2014; O'Brien, 2015). In a similar respect the participant quoted below placed blame on herself for her treatment by others.

"Um…where, you know you're spoken to in a really bad way, but I look back on that and I don't know whether that was the people and the environment or my lack of confidence – that I took things personally rather than just taking it on the chin, I don't know. It's hard to know."

[Tara, Costume Crowd Supervisor – 9-12 years of experience]

Other participants exhibited a similar sense of self-blame for the way in which they were treated. One participant stopped short at undermining the importance of costume, but still made excuses for those who treat costume workers poorly:

"I think they're quite willing to push us beyond hard sometimes. I mean, I, the thing is though, at the same time I'm not involved in production so I'm sure there's loads of things going on. I mean, that's the other thing we [the costume department] aren't the most important…I don't know. It's tricky, isn't it?"

[Georgia, Costume Standby – 9-12 years of experience]

Georgia seems to have internalised the production hierarchy culture, which becomes her rationale for being treated with less respect. She has understood either through interaction or tacit knowledge that the role of the costume department is of lesser importance, and therefore not considered of equal value. Like many other participants, she does not explicitly link this to the majority-gender of the costume department, instead there was a greater sense of passive discrimination. That is, aside from the overt occasions of being shouted at or rushed, there was the sense that discrimination felt by participants was not being actively enacted, instead attitudes were seen as historically embedded.

> "I think we are seen as the female department and a lot of that comes from the historical fact that it wasn't until probably the 80s when people started getting the title, 'costume designer', and it no longer was wardrobe. Now we always say, and in America they definitely use the word 'wardrobe department', and it's not, we are not a wooden box, we are creating costumes for characters and that's a very different thing. Wardrobe implies maintenance like ironing and that is not how it should be, and it was only in, I think it was only in the 80s when people started getting my title of costume designer, up until that point it was usually a wardrobe supervisor known as a wardrobe mistress who would pull the costumes together, and maybe they would get a fashion designer in."

[Natalie, Costume Designer – 25-28 years of experience]

> "I think historically we are not as respected as other departments – at a minimum that shows in the amount of money each department is paid. And things like a make-up artist being classed as an artist and a costume person, you know, people have that, you know you don't really need…that costume isn't really a skill. And you're like, 'how does that even make sense? Can you see what people are wearing?"

[Harriet, Crowd Costume Supervisor – 5-8 years of experience]

Although most were keen to assert how integral costume is to the telling of a story, the devaluation of costume work was linked to historical ideas about gender, not the attitudes of those in the present. Discriminatory attitudes were seen as historically embedded but with no explanation for why such attitudes still persist today. In turn, devaluing takes on a passive and faceless nature that seems impervious to change as the 'active' discriminatory attitudes that are happening in the present are all too easily explained away as historical fact.

When asked to explore the domestic roots of costume work, participants were keen to distance themselves from such archaic associations. As outlined in Chapter 4.3, costume work involves various tasks that are by no means limited to sewing, and many participants, particularly those who worked on-set, saw sewing as only a small facet of their work, with some only possessing basic sewing skills.

> "I don't think of costume as something based on sewing. It's about planning. It's about research. It's about time management. It's about interpretation. It's about analysis. I think those are the things about our job that people don't see from the outside. The events in psychology, they don't see the historical interest, they don't see – if production companies think that costumes are about sewing, they're missing 90% of the job. It's about things like: once you get the actor in the right shoes and they're comfortable in the right shoes the rest will grow, uhm. I reckon 90% of television is modern day and things don't get made specially, the 10% of specialist makes and historical stuff. Uhm, and people go to [costume course] and they learn to make a corset, and just I think, yeah, you'll never need to make another one the rest of your life."

[Diane, Costume Supervisor – 37-40 years of experience]

The social skills of costume work were often emphasised as outweighing the importance of sewing skills. In a sense participants wanted to detach themselves

from the domestic, gendered roots of costume, perhaps to gain recognition and respect within the workplace. Similar to Taylor and Littleton's (2012) research with fashion workers, they noted that women were still required to 'resist' the domestic associations with their work in order to be taken seriously in the cultural workplace (Taylor and Littleton, 2012, p.140). Some participants seemed to want to 'resist' the links between costume and its domestic associations, and were keen to assert the level of skill required in their work. In an odd contradiction, as participants sought to distance themselves from connotations of domesticity, they would stress the implicitly gendered skills of 'putting actors at ease', and 'making sure actors were comfortable.' (See Chapter 6.3 for the discussion of postfeminism in the costume department).

Whereas discriminatory attitudes towards women elsewhere in film and television often relate to women as inherently less 'creative', in the case of costume, discriminatory attitudes related to ideas of skill, and costume work being unskilled (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015). There was not necessarily the suggestion that their creative competency was questioned, but the legitimacy of costume as an entire facet of film and television production seemed to be repeatedly undermined by the wider production.

Despite there being a strong case for the correlation between gender and value in the workplace, the role of gender tended to be skirted around and rarely explicitly named. Instead, the topic of gender seemed to be buried in references to history and the misunderstanding of costume skill. There was also the recurrent theme of participants internalising rhetoric of unimportance and turning to self-blame for 'allowing' discriminatory attitudes to continue. The next section turns to literature on postfeminism to unpick participants' aversion to explicitly naming 'gender' as a factor in their treatment.

6.3. Postfeminism and the costume department

Throughout research on women in cultural work there is an uneasy dissonance between how some women workers conceptualise the impact of gender on their careers, and how those who study cultural work believe its impact to be. Within

the wider body of literature, Rosalind Gill, amongst others, has developed ideas of a postfeminist sensibility to critique women's attitudes to their careers in the cultural industries, and to think through women's lack of resistance to inequality (Gill and Scharff, 2011; Gill, 2016; Dent, 2021; O'Brien, 2015). In Gill's (2014) article on 'unspeakable' inequalities she builds to the idea of a 'new' sexism that is 'mobile' and 'subtle', whereby both men and women use arguments of 'women's capabilities' in benign ways to rationale the obvious gendered patterns of work. Even though gendered patterns are acknowledged by both men and women, their existence is not attributed to sexism, which is seen as a problem of the past where 'all the battles have been won' (Gill, 2014, p.509). The concept of gender inequality becomes both erased and silenced from the popular lexicon, and is no longer a basis on which workers can challenge or recognise structural inequality.

For Gill, a postfeminist sensibility is underscored by cultural work ideologies that emphasise the importance of entrepreneurialism and individualism, and disavows the influence of structural conditions over workers' careers (ibid). The myth of egalitarianism silences challenges to the status quo as a worker's inability to maintain a career in cultural work is perceived as their own individualised fault, rather than as a product of the structural conditions that favour some over others.

Similarly, O'Brien's (2015) case study of women working in the Irish television industry draws on Gill's ideas to discuss how women workers adapt to gendered work processes and cultures. She suggests that gendered production routines become embedded over time and go unrecognised by workers due to a pervasive postfeminist sensibility, where the relevance of gender to their work is denied by both men and women working in the industry. She pairs ideas of a postfeminist sensibility with a neoliberal working context that refers responsibility for workplace survival onto the individual worker. Risk is individualised and reputation has a silencing effect (ibid). Even those who are aware of the constraints and inequalities in their working environment are prevented from speaking out because of a culture built on reputation and informal hiring practices. O'Brien draws the conclusion that three elements are working in conjunction to silence the debate on gender-based inequality in Irish television production. Firstly, the gendering of roles is being denied by many in a postfeminist fashion,

secondly, those who are aware of gender bias adapt to working conditions in a 'normative neoliberal expectation' rather than risking exclusion from networks, and thirdly neoliberal individualisation works to prevent collectivisation and in turn prevents feminist political action (O'Brien, 2015, p.272). O'Brien argues that such a working environment creates a situation where 'self-regulating practices mean that they [women] fail to recognize their own subordination.' (O'Brien, 2015, p.206). Within such a theorisation the possibility of women challenging discrimination on the basis of gender seems unlikely.

O'Brien was writing prior to the proliferation of the #MeToo movement where the treatment of women in film and television work came under close scrutiny. Whilst some have cautioned placing too greater emphasis on the likelihood of systematic change following the #MeToo moment (Cobb & Horeck, 2018), when beginning interviews in 2021, #MeToo still featured amongst some participants' answers.[33] When participants referenced sexual harassment, many talked about it in terms of happening to 'other people' - 'I've been lucky.' The extract below is taken from a participant's audio diary.

> "…but there's an actor, Noel Clarke, who's been accused by 20 women of sexual harassment over the last few years and that's obviously, you know, sexual harassment and bullying and that's obviously something that is an issue in our industry and the news of this, I've had several discussions this week with work friends and colleagues about, you know, what, what it's like to be a woman in the film industry, even in something in a female heavy department like costume and how we feel about it and how we cope with the things that happen and the things that we see and you know, we were kind of talking about, you know things happen that are *so* normalised in our industry that you don't even realise, you don't even realise that it's bullying or harassment or, or anything else and yeah, that's just, it's just something I've been thinking about the last few days."

[33] See also Bull (2023) for a recent report on the impact of #MeToo in film and television work.

[Alice, Assistant Costume Designer - 15-18 years of experience]

It was the difficulties faced by others that were referenced; often discrimination or gender-based struggles were seen as far more difficult for 'other' women, for example in the camera department, than for the participants themselves. These comparisons to women elsewhere in offscreen roles could be an indicator of the relative lack of discrimination and harassment faced by women of the costume department, a quirk of my particular sample, or as Alice herself notes, symptomatic of a working culture that normalises and erases everyday sexism and the devaluation of women's work so that only overt acts of discrimination are seen as noteworthy.

Within the cohort there was a broad spectrum from outright denial of gender being relevant in the modern workplace, to passionate engagement with unfair treatment due to gendered discrimination, but the majority of answers tended to sit somewhere in between. As noted in the previous section, some participants engaged with the question of gendered value with reference to the historic feminisation of costume work, whilst two articulated multiple examples of overt misogyny experienced at work. Importantly in the context of the postfeminist workplace, gender was simply not the topic that most elaborated on, or that gained the most traction with participants. Although many were willing to engage with questions of gender, their answers were equivocating, sometimes unsure, sometimes noting the number of male costume colleagues.

> "**TB:** And have you had any instances of where gender has played a role in how you're treated?
>
> **Diane:** No, I don't think so. Uhm, I feel experience has – they'll take on someone who's got more experience than me. Uhm, even though I would be very qualified for the job, and I feel like that does take a toll, but not gender wise, no – No, it's not…
>
> …

OK, so I've got to say that the men I've worked with in the business are fantastic and they are genuinely fantastic. They quite often are brilliant at working with women actors and men. And women really like having – it's not flattery or whatever, but there's a guy I used to work with [name], but he adored working with women and I absolutely adore working with men."

[Diane, Costume Supervisor – 37-40 years of experience]

"Uhm, that's an interesting question. I don't know actually. I think, it's very rare to come across guys in the costume… I think I probably only know 4 of whom I work with a lot, so you've got [name], umm and [name] I know very well, and you know, I've worked with them. And it is actually, it is lovely having a guy on-set doing stuff and working within the team. Uhm, but it is very rare actually, certainly in the productions that I've been on. I'm sure there's probably lots more in London, or in those sort of areas, but on the productions that I've been on, apart from [name], he's been like the token man [laughs], on most jobs. Umm … but yeah – I don't really know the answer to that, I'm not sure. I think with any job it's about the types of people that you work with, not necessarily the gender, you know that there's a big thing about having women in all roles, and making it more inclusive and then the whole, this whole BAME thing as well."

[Paula, Costume Standby and Maker – 13-16 years of experience]

There was a trend amongst participants when asked about gender to start by referencing the number of men they know in costume work. Perhaps the repeated references to the number of men in the department is symptomatic of the invisibility of 'being a woman' inside the costume department. The rarity of men's careers seemed more remarkable than the multitude of women's.

Some noted how it was beneficial to have men within the costume department to provide 'balance' to the number of women. One participant said that because she

easily became 'stressed out' with small matters, having a colleague who was a man, 'brought balance to me and kind of made me chill out about certain things.' Another noted that,

> "I think it's good to have a balance anyway – I think it's really good to have a balance in any department, you know costume isn't just a woman's department and I don't think that grips should just be a men's department and umm, it's just that whole stereotyping within our industry, isn't it?"
>
> [Harriet, Crowd Costume Supervisor – 5-8 years of experience]

Others noted the obvious gendered divide in the workplace, but noted how it 'shouldn't' be this way, costume work *should* not be seen as 'woman's work'. Although there was an awareness that costume workers were treated poorly on-set; there was the recurrent argument that we *should* not see such gendered divisions of work even though they persist. In contrast, participants tended to stress how both men and women were treated equally *inside* the department. There were only two occasions where participants denied that gender was relevant *at all* to working in the industry and that 'everyone was treated the same', but the majority of responses were equivocating or unsure. Most seemed keener to relate disparity of treatment to one's personality in an individualist fashion (see Chapter 6.5).

Tendrils of a postfeminist sensibility were apparent in participants' tendencies to present a progressive narrative of sexism as a thing of the past, and the desire to disavow the overtly gendered connections to costume work. There were elements of self-blame for discriminatory attitudes, or a sense of making excuses on the behalf of those who hold them, which accords with wider postfeminist ideas about the minimisation and erasure of sexism as grounds on which to complain. In this cohort, the higher proportion of women in the department did not mean that gendered disadvantage was more readily acknowledged, even in spite of the public recognition of the #MeToo movement. Instead, in a form of 'new' sexism, gendered discrimination was generally acknowledged but in a faceless and passive

sense, that is, it was something that happened to other women, or it was related to historical ideas that amorphously persisted (Tasker and Negra, 2007; Gill, 2014).

It is challenging to convey what participants left unsaid, but the ways in which participants approached questions of being a woman suggested that gender discrimination was 'in the background' – it was seen as one of many factors in the devaluing of costume work, but there seemed to be an invisible buffer that meant that participants stopped short at naming their treatment as 'sexism'. Although not completely disavowed, the devaluation and poor treatment of costume workers was normalised. Participants' experiences can be seen as another example of sexism 'mutating' to fit another context, discrimination is acknowledged but tempered into being a passive and faceless part of the everyday (Gill, 2014).

6.4. Gender and its intersections: race and Black Lives Matter in the film and television industries

The Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 and the increased emphasis it brought to racial disparity in film and television meant that diversity seemed to be entering the everyday discourse more prominently for participants. The movement appeared to have had some influence on how participants thought about their personal positioning – their gender and race – and its relationship to their work. Ideas of racial diversity seemed to filter into participants' understanding of their careers with parallels to how participants talked about gender. This section explores the cultural moment of 2021, and how participants understood their role in wider industry diversity debates.

As noted in Chapter 4, I attempted to reach a diverse sample of participants, but within the cohort only one participant self-identified as a person of colour. Race forms a significant component of a workers' experience of the workplace, but the data gathered for this thesis is limited in its capacity to understand the lived experience of costume workers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds (Hesmondhalgh and Saha, 2013; Nwonka, 2021; Nwonka and Malik, 2021). As a result, the data largely reflects the experiences of those who present as white,

arts-university educated women. The data gathered can be of use in understanding the historical moment of 2021 from the perspective of the majority white workforce, where significant emphasis was being placed on diversity in film and television work. There was growing awareness amongst participants that the homogeneity of the film and television workforce is problematic.

The only participant of colour regarded now as a good time to be a person of colour in the industry, but she was attuned to how various supervisors may have different motives for hiring her.

> "I feel that people diversifying crews, they always have good intention but it's just the way they set out about it, like if you are honestly just telling me – which a lot of supervisors and designers have said to me – there aren't enough people of colour in the workplace and we need to find people and then they'll say, can you message your group the Black Costume Network, and I'll message them and I just feel that that's genuine, and you know, it's a, it's like the kind of situation, you know that they're just speaking on it, you know, they want more people, so they'll find them and so kind of using me as an instrument for that I'm actually OK with reaching out to other people and saying, 'there's this job opportunity for you and that wouldn't otherwise be there.'
>
> …
>
> You know it's the way they phrase the message, it's the way, if you know any of their work or if you, if you know anyone who's worked with them and whether they're going to, maybe yes, accept you onto the team, but then how they're actually going to treat you once you're on the team as well – and they're not just filling a quota, then I wouldn't be okay with that, but I suppose there's no way of knowing."
>
> [Klara, Costume Trainee – 0-4 years of experience]

From my interviews with supervisors and designers it seemed that diversity had been placed firmly on the agenda. There was the example of a supervisor who had taken positive action to seek out more diverse crew members in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, albeit facilitated by women of colour to do so. Over the lockdown period a group of costume workers had set up the Black Costume Network on Facebook, and arranged 'speed dating' zooms for costume trainees of colour to meet established costume designers and supervisors. One of the participants, who is a costume supervisor, took part in the calls and subsequently hired a trainee through the scheme.

Yet, despite the increased emphasis on diversity and all of the work done by screen industry bodies and academic research to highlight the endemic lack of diversity in the film and television workforce, engagement with the topic of diversity remain mixed. Responses ranged from those ready to take positive action, to those who believed the industry was already diverse.

> "…because it's almost making it an issue when it isn't really an issue. The issue is that jobs are not being promoted enough as a career from the school side of things and also from the parents, or the families of those individuals - that's where the issue is, if you want to get more people in from that background. Umm, but you know, there was one production, and I'm not going to even say who it was, but there was a big production company who were looking to – my friend who was designing it – saying we need a BAME trainee and we need a BAME junior, and she says, 'well I just can't find anyone, there's nobody', you know. And [name] was like tearing her hair out, going, 'oh my god, well can I just give you someone who's ginger then, does she fit the bill?' And you know and just trying to think out the box, so she said, 'I can't find anyone, what do you expect? Just go and drag someone off the street because they tick all the boxes,' she said it just puts you in a really awkward situation and then anyone who is capable of doing a job is then ostracized because of those you know... and you think 'oh my god', certainly all the jobs that I have had and all the productions I have been on – there have been loads of different types of people working on them

> and I think, you know, it's, it's like I said before I think it's probably one of the most inclusive industries I've ever come across really, you know."
>
> [Paula, Costume Standby and Maker – 13-16 years of experience]

Throughout this portion of the interview, Paula maintained that the film and television industries were diverse, and asserted that parents of those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds did not want their children to work in film and television. Other participants remained ambivalent about the fairness of diversity schemes and 'affirmative action'.

> "On this job that I'm on now, we wanted a trainee at really quite short notice and you probably know, but everybody in England is working at the moment, everyone in Britain seems to be working at the moment – there's lots and lots of work on. And we wanted to do some affirmative action so we asked the woman who runs the Black Costume Network and, and I got a trainee from her – you know, which is great. And I'm really happy, but I also feel like there's other, there's other action you can take, you know that is affirmative as well, and that when, and that we're not really doing and, you know, I just, I worry about the fairness of it all if I'm honest. I don't really know how to go about it except to try and be as fair myself as I can be, but that's not really the answer."
>
> [Olivia, Costume worker – 33-36 years of experience]

Olivia went on to talk about how on another job she was required to only interview trainees with links to a specific region as the roles were funded by a regional body. As like the quote above, she reiterated that she remained conflicted about how to ensure fairness in the hiring process as there were so many qualified people who had sent her CVs, but did not come from the specific region and were therefore ineligible.

In some ways, diversity initiatives were seen as external intrusions into the status quo, requested by external forces who did not understand the costume

workforce. Only one participant outright disputed the lack of diversity in film and television work, and most wanted to engage with creating a more diverse workforce, but their intentions seemed to remain limited to the 'should' level, like Natalie quoted below.

> "Um, there has been, yeah, I think, I think these days people are much more aware of not being so presumptuous, and, and I, I tend I, we do try in our department to get a diversity on every level that we can. We definitely try not to all just be female and white.
>
> Um, because I think that that the dynamic of having diversity on every level brings with it a different communication within the department."
>
> [Natalie, Costume Designer – 25-28 years of experience]

Something 'should' be done; the wider causes for the lack of diversity, structural barriers and discriminatory attitudes seemed to exist in the ether. In the sense that, again, I was encountering these passive ideas of problems being removed from the individual, and not requiring any form of introspection on the behalf of the participant to understand how their own careers may have been furthered or disadvantaged by their own personal positionings. The majority of participants tended toward an undercurrent of ambivalence and a sense of passive 'trying'. Structural disadvantage and the struggles of others were something external to them, and it was only within their own close-knit networks that I encountered ideas of responsibility and accountability and the desire to intervene (see Chapter 5.4).

The majority of participants still saw their career success as a result of their own hard work, and secondary to that, their contacts. Although it would ostensibly seem that in-roads have been made in terms of public awareness of the lack of diversity in film and television, and by the significant body of literature that breaks down the fallacy of the cultural industries as a meritocracy, only one of my participants linked their personal positioning to their career longevity.

Although participants engaged more with gendered discrimination than racial discrimination, most likely due to gender discrimination resonating more with their own personal positionings, there was a sense of 'diversity' being an amorphous issue that was removed from them as individuals. Perhaps symptomatic of the freelance working culture, participants seemed to see the industry's diversity issues as someone else's problem to solve. It was only within their close-knit networks that participants engaged by taking responsibility for their role helping others (see Chapter 7 for discussion 'intervening').

6.5. Homophily and commonality: ideas of shared experience in the costume department

> "I'm always fascinated when I see women in male dominated departments because seeing like a female camera operator is such a rarity. I mean it fills me with joy on, you know, when I see that because I'm like: yes, finally, you know, someone's breaking through, but then I kind of think, like how are you managing to do that? Because they are just surrounded by men. They'll be like the one woman in this male environment, and it feels like, like *how are you surviving*? And how are you managing to progress? Because I feel like, *I've got the support of all of these women with a shared experience* and they're just kind of, I don't know, my perception of them is that they're just kind of like battling through this sort of realm of masculinity trying to get to where they are. I mean I've got no answers for that, but it's just something that I've noticed. I'm always like, 'God, good for you', when I see that."
>
> [Alice, Assistant Costume Designer - 15-18 years of experience, *emphasis mine*]

There was a high degree of commonality amongst participants, not only in their socio-economic, racial and gender background, but also in terms of their experiences of the costume workplace. As a result, it is important to make the distinction between shared identity and shared experience as despite the likelihood that participants' experiences will have in many cases flowed from their identity, throughout the testimonies shared experience and shared identity

become conflated. A neat line cannot be drawn between identity and experience, but the following section attempts to unpick how commonalities between participants often prefaced their decisions to enact care. Using the participants' career history logs (Appendix vi), I make a case for the importance of shared experience and commonalities of personal background, manifesting into ideas of solidarity and social cohesion in the individualised workplace.

Throughout studies of (the lack of) diversity in film and television work there are recurrent references to the industry being dominated by one particular group, namely, white, middle-class men (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Randle, Forson and Calveley, 2015; Wreyford, 2015a; Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020). Often ideas of 'homophily' – the preference for interaction with others who are similar to oneself in terms of gender, race and education – are used to explain the abundance of people from one particular social group (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Wreyford, 2015a). The amassing of people from similar backgrounds is not unique to middle-class, white men, and there has been some evidence to suggest that women also congregate in a similar homosocial fashion in film and television work (Follows, Kreager and Gomes, 2016; O'Brien, 2018; Cobb, 2019).

I would not be the first to make the connection between shared experience and an increase in a sense of support and social cohesion (Butler, 2012; Lorey, 2015; Worth, 2016). For example, Lorey (2015) argues that in the precarious neoliberal workplace 'processes of precaritization are also productive' in deepening social bonds. She argues that precarity paradoxically makes the worker more reliant on others even though they ostensibly operate within individualistic working contexts (Lorey, 2015, p.104). It follows that a shared experience of precarity has the potential benefit of creating a sense of cohesion as workers develop connections based on shared experience of adversity.

There were many commonalities amongst participants' experiences; many had shared experience of combining childcare responsibilities and costume work, feeling guilt, working long hours, and feeling devalued. These experiences seemed to form part of the participants' understandings of how they relate to other women in the costume department. Those with caring responsibilities would

theorise why some supervisors seemed to invest in their careers and allow leniency for caring responsibilities whilst others did not. Many drew on ideas of shared experiences of motherhood to discern which supervisors were sympathetic to last-minute needs. Frequently, many would conflate 'being a woman' with 'having children', which served to further obfuscate discussions of gendered discrimination and structural inequalities (Eikhof et al., 2019).

Ideas of shared experience and empathy pervaded a lot of the rationale participants gave for why some supervisors appeared to care about their careers and others did not. The participant quoted below wondered if her supervisor had had experience of motherhood, she would have allowed her to finish work earlier on her child's birthday.

> "With other supervisors that I've worked with before, I've, or with one certain supervisor I've worked with before, I knew that nothing would ever be a problem, like, she was super understanding when it came to things like that…umm, with my supervisor now, I… I think if I asked for anything or like for a favour or what have you, I don't think she would ever say no. I don't think she's necessarily as accommodating…I want to say, but I feel bad saying, having not been in that position."
>
> [Harriet, Crowd Costume Supervisor – 5-8 years of experience]

There were those who drew a direct line between experience of motherhood and offering leniency to other mothers:

> "**TB:** Is there a sense that it's gendered in that women [supervisors] are more understanding, or is it the case of women [supervisors] who have had kids themselves that are more understanding? Is there a pattern?
>
> **Bridget:** I think that women who don't have kids are probably the least understanding, because they've never been there. They don't get it. Even though they think they might, they don't. So they're the least understanding, and then of those that have got them there's two

> categories: there are those who are immensely sympathetic and helpful and we try and… we'd band together and try and find a way of making things work for whoever is having a difficulty or who needs to get off because their kid's ill or whatever it is. Or who says, 'I can't start that early because I've got to drop my child off at nursery, and we'd find a way of making it work. So, there's that gang, who we kind of remember when it was our turn and think actually, 'this is shit, I remember this, of course you want to get back before they go to sleep – I understand.' And then there's the other gang which are: 'Fuck you, I made it work.' And they feel like you're letting the side down by admitting that it's a problem."
>
> [Bridget, Costume Supervisor - 37-40 years of experience]

Many saw an experience of parenthood as being the deciding factor in a supervisor's attitude to making accommodations for returning parents. The quote below comes from Bridget again, talking about members of the department who were less tolerant of job-sharing practices for working parents.

> "So I think it was, it wasn't easy always, but I also very much believe that people who were finding it difficult or tutting and rolling their eyes - other members of the department – I would be going, 'this could be you in a year or two, if that's what you choose, and don't forget that, and also part of being a woman and part of being, I just think… part of you know socialist values is to try and make these things work."
>
> [Bridget, Costume Supervisor - 37-40 years of experience]

For Bridget, 'part of being a woman' and 'socialist values' is collapsed into having empathy for others trying to combine childcare and costume work. Following Bridget's logic, empathy stems from having a shared gender and shared values. Arguably, the ability to empathise with the struggles of others does not have to be based on shared experience. In many of the participants' answers there seems to be the danger of essentialising the lived experience of parenthood, and seeing

‘experience of parenthood’ as some sort of driver for progressive change. It is important to note that some participants had still faced discrimination from inside the department because of their caring responsibilities.

> “You know, I've had female people not employ me or mention me, ‘well you're a bit of a risk, because what happens if your child is ill one day, you're just gonna have to go home,’ and it's like, ‘yeah’, so I have had female discrimination as well.”
>
> [Zara, Crowd Costume Supervisor – 13-16 years of experience]

Nevertheless, the commonalities of experiences amongst the department seemed to enable a level of empathy and recognition that was absent when analysing the data about more abstract ideas of racial disadvantage. The struggles of childcare had directly affected many of the participants, thus unsurprisingly there was more emphasis placed on the difficulties of being a working mother. Shared experience was a more accessible route to action rather than reflection on wider structural issues, but it would be incorrect to assert that the participants were more inclined to support each other and enact care simply because they shared the same gender.

The association between ‘women’ and being caring opens up a whole series of theoretical cul-de-sacs that can quickly collapse into essentialising womanhood. The participants did not care simply because they were women, instead, the context of overwork, long hours and precarious employment appeared to invoke a heighted emotional state of ‘in the trenches’ whereby participants faced a common enemy. In a sense, they close ranks against the external pressures of production, and the basis for enacting care was a messy combination of shared experience of adversity, and doing the ‘right’ thing.

6.6. The ‘right’ personality: excelling in close-knit networks

Although a sense of belonging and cohesion within a network seemed to offer a form of buffer against feelings of alienation, it is important to consider the far-

reaching effects and limitations of networks built on common understandings and shared experiences. As Verhoeven et al. note,

> 'As film industry work is increasingly organized in peripatetic, with team-based projects, equality is generated by those *with* whom an individual works rather than by those *for* whom an individual works.' (Verhoeven et al., 2020, p.3, *emphasis in original*)

Not everyone qualifies for offers of support and care; whilst forming the basis for a sense of social cohesion and empathy, shared experience also has the potential to exclude those who do not share it. By looking at the factors that lead to a workers' exclusion, in this section I consider how the spectre of the 'right' personality is constructed to describe the individual who excels, which implicitly creates undesirable ways to behave in the workplace.

The structural barriers faced by a woman producer or director with caring responsibilities are ostensibly very similar to the structural barriers faced by a woman in a similar position in the costume department. Yet, in terms of attitudinal working cultures, *inside* the costume department women were not seen as risky hires because of doubts of their creative competencies. Instead, attitudes of competency in the costume department tended to be based on ideas of the 'right' personality.

The majority of participants were at mid-career level, had established relationships and were relatively confident in their ability to find work. Very few participants engaged explicitly with experiences of personal exclusion, most likely because the majority of them had been *included* as they were currently working in the industry. As a result, the data for this section comes from three sources: (1) the minority of those who felt that they were on the 'outside' of the various groups or networks, (2) trainees who had yet to establish their careers, and (3) the opinions of those on the 'inside'.

It was commonly understood amongst participants that there were certain groups of workers that frequently worked together within the industry. I asked participants about how to build a successful career, and how one excelled within these various groups. Questions such as: 'what makes for a good member of the

department?', 'what do you attribute your career success to?', and 'what makes for a good costume team?'. With the questions participants were asked to construct their own ideas of 'good' and 'success'. Even though the questions could have elicited highly subjective understandings, the majority understood career success as 'being asked back', i.e. being asked to return to a following production which the supervisor or designer was moving on to, or being recommended by a colleague for another job.

There were interesting commonalities in how participants understood which characteristics led to someone being 'asked back'. Frequently amongst answers were: 'working hard', being a 'team player', 'having a good personality', and 'being a people-pleaser.' The way these terms were employed by participants was very much in the benign sense - these were seen as the traits that are conducive to the department thriving, to people 'getting along'. There was a high degree of emphasis placed on the social nature of work and time spent within one another's company. The ideal worker had to be likeable, and social skills were often seen as taking equal or more importance than sewing skills. The trainee below commented that she felt she had to work on being more outgoing in order to make headway in her career.

> "I'm quite a quiet person, everyone always says, 'Ohh, [Louise] is nice…once you get to know her!' Well in this industry everyone kind of, everyone's so like, quite loud and bubbly and like you remember them and you kind of have to be someone people remember because if someone is looking for a trainee or an assistant then you want yourself to pop into their mind… So yeah, that's something I feel like I personally need to work on being a bit more like, chatty and sociable with everyone. [Laughs]."
>
> [Louise, Costume Trainee – 0-4 years of experience]

There was a sense that individual personality and crafting the 'right' personality was a key component of success. As Ursell (2004) terms it, workers self-commodify their 'vendible identities', affecting the correct personality in order to

succeed (Ursell, 2004, p.168). As Martha suggests in the quote below,

> "I think there is, within costume, there is a very, very sort of common type of person, in that we're all very kind of open and outgoing and just easy to get along, you know, people pleasers, basically, you know, we don't say, 'no', to anything, we'll say, 'yes', to everything even if it kills us to get it done. I think we are just a breed of people pleasers, and I think that is unfortunately, rightly or wrongly, a really important part of the job."
>
> [Martha, Costume Standby – 5-8 years of experience]

Being able to please through portraying the 'correct' demeanour is an example of individualised traits being determinants of career success. Martha's assessment of costume workers as 'people pleasers' seems symptomatic of a precarious workplace where workers are left having to constantly prove their worth, particularly in the context of costume as a devalued craft. Here, Martha implicitly invokes the stereotype of women being 'people pleasers' in turn gendering the ideal worker as a woman. As noted in Chapter 4.4, costume skill is socially constructed through gender; even though participants sought to distance themselves from 'traditional' links between domesticity and sewing, they still draw on implicitly gendered stereotypes to explain costume skill (Banks, 2009). In the case of the cohort of this thesis, the ideal worker was implicitly gendered as a woman with multiple references to gendered facets of behaviour such as, 'cliques', 'looking after actors', 'being bitchy' and 'people pleasing'.

In Warner's (2018) research on the Costume Designers' Guild magazine, she found evidence of solidarity and support amongst members, but flagged how these ideas were often highly positional. She found that often members would invoke a motherhood metaphor to describe their relationship to their work and those whom they work with:

> '…it should also be noted that this activation of motherhood as a narrative device serves as a regulatory discourse excluding those for whom white, middle-class, heteronormative motherhood is neither available nor desirable.' (Warner, 2018, p.45)

Whilst allusions to a collective identity may function to establish a sense of community, it is a sense of community built within certain parameters. Those who did not affect the 'right' personality had a very different experience of the costume workplace compared to those on the 'inside'. The quote below comes from a participant who had been told she had been excluded by a supervisor for her 'bad attitude'.

> "Yeah, I mean, I think it comes from gatekeeping, from the idea of scarcity, from the thought that there isn't enough work for all of us, and so if you want to be in the industry, and stay in the industry, you have to be really good and *really personable, and you have to get on with everybody, and you have to be able to please everyone all of the time* because, you know, [costume supervisor], if you're on her bad side she'll never hire you again.
>
> Again, and I've ended up on that side of the line, which is fine because there's just as many people who I've come across who go: I do not want to work for her. I do not want to be known as one of [costume supervisor's] people. I do not want to be associated with her name. And then you get other people who fall over themselves to be in her clan and some of that feels irredeemable, like OK, what did I say? What did I do?"
>
> [Claire, Costume Standby – 5-8 years of experience, *emphasis mine*]

Whilst previous sections of this thesis have argued that close-knit networks have multiple benefits to facilitating workers to enact care, here Claire's experience illustrates its pitfalls. When relations between workers are so close-knit and built on excessive hours in each others' companies, affecting the 'wrong' personality can result in a participant not being given work. Below are two contrasting experiences of costume teams: firstly, recruitment of someone to fit into a pre-existing close-knit team. Secondly, a participant who had an experience of not fitting into a team and was ultimately not asked to return to the production for more work.

> "I've heard people say, 'Oh what about this person?' and another person will say, 'well, are they like one of us?' And I know that sounds a little bit culty or a bit cliquey, but it's, it's more down to the fact that I guess: will they fit into the family, the fold? Will they, will we be able to get along for the next six months, living in each other's pockets at all times of the day."
>
> [Isabel, Assistant Costume Designer - 9-12 years of experience]

The word 'cliquey' here seems more reminiscent of teen girl friendship groups instead of a professional network. Exclusion based on 'being one of us' is openly admitted and made to appear a rational basis on which to exclude because of the amount on time spent in one another's company. The experience quoted below offers a point of comparison, it comes from a participant who had tried to enter into an established team.

> "…there was just the general, original team there and they would have a few extra people like myself who were coming in to help out, but there was like…a sort of I don't know, it was just very cliquey but also arms-length at the same time and they kind of…I couldn't read…when I was asking for help for example, it was very hot and cold their responses and I would always try to time it when they were not so busy doing something…"
>
> [Ellie, Costume Trainee – 0-4 years of experience]

The significant emphasis placed on 'getting along' with the group and having the right 'mix' of personalities seemed to be driven by the rationale that participants were spending excessive amounts of time in the company of their colleagues, and therefore they needed to 'be the right fit'.

> "You know if somebody recommends somebody, I'm going to trust what [costume supervisor] says because I love her dearly and have known her

for years. And we know that we all work with the same kind of…we all like working with the same kind of people…"

[Paula, Costume Maker – 13-16 years of experience]

Participants did not see that hiring the 'same kind of people' could be exclusionary to those who were outside of what they deemed to be the 'right' personality. The 'kind of people' that Paula is referring to can be generally understood as someone like herself, a white, arts-educated woman. As has been argued elsewhere, the idea of the 'type of person' or 'same kind of people' can quickly become shorthand for excluding those who do not fit the pre-designated mould (see Brook et al., 2020 on the somatic norm).

Those participants who had understood the particular 'vibe' of the team did not seem to even notice that they had been included, that is, the behaviour required of them was in some senses pre-attuned or pre-learnt, so much so, that they did not comment on instances of 'fitting in' because it was unremarkable that they did. Those on the periphery of the 'team' such as trainees or mid-career standbys, who did not have previous contacts on the team, had a very different experience of the 'team'. The participants who noted experiences of not 'fitting in' rarely related their experiences to their personal positioning in terms of their class, race, disability or gender, with the exception of one participant who identified as neurodiverse, who noted how the 'etiquette' that was required of her was difficult to learn and she felt that impacted her not 'fitting in'. Workers have to manage their personality in a form of self-regulation, described below by Klara who felt responsible for preserving the vibe of the group.

"I feel that you're kind of responsible for everybody's behaviour like, everybody is responsible. So, if you bring like really horrible energy into the room, then it's just going to sit there and fester all day."

[Klara, Costume Trainee – 0-4 years of experience]

Those with ‘insecurities’ or a desire for power were often seen as contra to the flourishing of the group. It was also seen as a group responsibility to, in a sense, police what was considered ‘funny’ behaviour.

> “Any funny behaviour seems to be squashed quite quickly, if anyone is sort of being a bit out of turn, they'll get taken down a peg or two at some point...”
>
> [Zara, Crowd Costume Supervisor – 13-16 years of experience]

Similar to how Chapter 5.5 explores how loyalty works to delineate the parameters of how a relationship should function, here Zara suggests a sense of shared understanding on the correct way to behave. The ideal worker that participants often described seemed to be a worker who did not challenge the status quo. Those who ‘push[ed] their luck’ especially in relation to pay, or those who wanted more ‘power’ were often seen as outliers and would be ‘taken down a peg.’ The participant below explains the general attitude of ‘not rocking the boat’.

> “I think generally when I work I'm a bit more…I don't try and push my luck or anything, you know, I'm just very, like, just happy to be there. But I know like, there are the other people who may question money a lot, and that can cause a bit of friction. So because I know it causes friction I'd be less likely to bring up money.”
>
> [Lucy, Costume Maker – 5-8 years of experience]

Where such valorisation of ‘getting along’ and ‘people pleasing’ becomes insidious is the intersection between privileging a certain set of traits that are opposed to asking for a better quality of working conditions. The idea of being a ‘team’ which inherently seemed to foster ideas of solidarity and collectivity, is not an entirely benign facet of the costume department. The shared principles of camaraderie and hard work also seemed to come hand in hand with ideas of conforming to the status quo and pleasing the wider production by accepting difficult demands.

These normative ideas can also serve to alienate anyone who steps outside of them, as was the case for a participant who asked for a pay rise.

The participant below discovered that a colleague at the same seniority level was being paid more. She managed to negotiate a pay rise with her supervisor and believed the matter to be settled. In a follow-up interview with the participant, she went on to discuss how asking for a pay rise had seemed to affect her colleague's opinion of her. As the production continued and seemingly the cohesion of the department disintegrated, in a private chat her supervisor intimated the following,

> "And then it came back on my head and apparently I was, I wasn't passionate and I was 'only in it for the money'. And I was like: [confused face]. [Crowd costume supervisor] pulled me aside and was like, 'you just don't have that fire.'"
>
> [Claire, Costume Standby – 5-8 years of experience]

Suffice to say the supervisor refused to give the participant a reference for her next job, whether connected to this incident or not, it certainly seems that in some cases acting in one's own individual interest is seen as unfavourable behaviour. The primacy of group flourishing, in other words - group productivity, is an integral backbone by which costume workers seem to abide. Stepping out of line, or not presenting a united front to the wider production was seen as entirely negative.

Those who pass through the initial barriers of personality-filtering by making the social connections, by proving their work ethic and by not complaining, seem to be offered a greater level of leniency when it came to childcare, and seem to be those who are able to maintain careers. An emphasis on the department flourishing, 'doing a good job', and 'being asked back' to a production, legitimates ideas of the hard worker, the 'right personality', and the 'people pleaser' as benign facets that are conducive to 'good' work. For some these ideas justify the filtering out of those who do not possess the desired characteristics. The intensive

social nature of work seems to reproduce an environment where self-monitoring is required in order to succeed and affect the 'right' behaviours. In turn, ideas of the 'right' personality are enforced by informal hiring practices and a reliance on networking culture. Those who benefit from the system fail to recognise its attendant insidious nature (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005).

6.7. Navigating a career: ways of existing

Governmentality inflected accounts persuasively explain how ideologies become imposed on, legitimised and reinforced by workers themselves. As noted throughout the previous section, ideas of the 'right personality' for costume work, and ideas about the benign nature of self-filtering networks, iteratively reinforce and embed ways of thinking and existing in the industry.

Those who favour a governmentality approach argue for its ability to explain how these ideologies go unnoticed by workers, or if they are noted, workers are disempowered to challenge them. As Amin and Thrift (2004) argue, workers are formed as ''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, p.xxi). In turn, workers are seen to be unaware of how these ideologies ensure a willing, flexible and mobile workforce that does not challenge exploitation and ultimately benefits capital by maximising profits and minimising risk to the employer.

In such a theory, the formation of workers as 'economic subjects' is done through discursive power of pervasive ideologies which form workers' identities, so that workers begin to take on the dominant beliefs in the industry as their own (Heelas, 2002; Elliott and du Gay, 2009). Cultural work as a system of power legitimises certain ways of being, rewards certain characteristics and disavows challenge. Relations of power produce a mould of a certain type of individual and this mould is reinforced by structural conditions that favour such individuals, and by workers themselves in their retelling of their discursive constructions of the 'ideal worker'. As Gill (2014) notes, power operates 'not by top-down managerial imposition but

through the internalisation of a felt knowledge of workplace culture that makes it quite literally laughable to choose something different.' (Gill, 2014, p.516).

Implicit within participants' construction of the 'right' personality was someone like themselves i.e. also a woman. By reiterating this common understanding of the 'right' personality and the 'right' way to behave, workers legitimise the methods that they partake in to filter out those who do not fit their pre-ordained ideas of 'who' should work in the cultural industries. Thus, the ideologies that surround cultural work play a very tangible role in producing an individual whose values and understandings are aligned to the needs of capital and have no real way of challenging conditions because of the deep-seated nature of how these ideas operate.

Within such a theorisation the worker's capacity for agentic action is severely limited (Banks, 2006; Lee, 2012). But there are those who dispute such ideas of all-consuming and pervasive structural power. For instance, Taylor and Littleton (2012) have sought to find a theory that reconciles a cultural worker as 'subject', produced through the workings of power, but also as an individual with experience of themselves as self-aware and agentic. They posit a cultural worker who is,

> '…constrained but not wholly dominated, negotiating 'who I am' out of the various possibilities and limitations, given by multiple meanings and positionings.' (Taylor and Littleton, 2012, p.40)

They move away from a theorisation of the formation of the economic subject as complete and uncontested, to a more negotiated way of existing within the cultural industries. Whilst governmentality inflected accounts capture the pervasive power of cultural work ideologies, here I argue that ideas of agency are left underdeveloped.

The formation of the cultural worker as an economic subject is generally understood at the individual level: how the individual is produced through the workings of power in a one-way exercise of domination. Less attention has been paid to how the formation of subjects takes place within relationship with others, that is, how ideas are legitimated through interaction with others. As this chapter

has highlighted, ‘group’ understandings play a significant role in legitimising ideas about how to navigate costume work, but this intense form of working also attunes workers to the struggle of others in similar positions.

Cultural workers’ lack of agency is often prefaced on a lack of awareness of how structural conditions are dictating both careers and workers’ attitudes. Within my cohort there was some reflection, particularly shown in the audio diaries, about how participants discussed the various norms of the industry.

> “I think it, like I say, probably the majority of the… unseen pressure is put on myself by myself as opposed to by anybody else, but I suppose just the nature of what we are- not conditioned to be like - but I think you know, we sort of convinced ourselves that's what you need to be considered a good employee or a good freelancer.”
>
> [Martha, Costume Standby – 5-8 years of experience]

Amongst some participants there was a reflexive awareness of how ideologies of cultural work had influenced their attitudes toward their careers. Throughout the data there is a sense of workers critically examining their careers, and those who found them wanting had decided to leave, or were looking for ways out. Although there were certain ideologies that went unacknowledged such as the exclusionary nature of the ‘right’ personality, the allures of film and television work were not so enticing as to entirely obfuscate the struggles that persisted, particularly after the COVID-19 lockdowns. A dissatisfaction with a lack of change on participants’ return to work was evident.[34]

> “Well, I wouldn't have taken on that job with a child if that's what it was…and you're thinking, ‘God, did nobody learn anything from what

[34] I analyse participants’ attitudes to work in relation to the COVID-19 shutdown in a separate article as this topic was beyond the scope of the thesis (Bale, 2022). The article uses these two quotes.

we've been through [COVID-19 lockdown] about how important it is to do both?'"

[Tara, Crowd Costume Supervisor - 12-15 years of experience]

"I think people are starting to recognise like, I don't know if you followed the IATSE [International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees] stories page on Instagram but everybody messaging in going: 'This is a fucking job and I'm killing myself to do it. What for? Why? The passion? I stopped being passionate about this a long time ago, it's just something that pays the fucking bills. So, I think yeah, it is the shift where people recognise it is a job. We're not…It's not a fucking hobby."

[Claire, Costume Standby – 5-8 years of experience]

Especially given the industry context of this research, awareness of how structural conditions were negatively determining and impacting participants' lives became a key theme. Since the 2020 partial shutdown of the film and television industries, there has been an increased emphasis in industry and public discourse on the need for work-life balance (see BECTU's 'Work to Live' campaign BECTU, n.d.). Within the industry structural barriers faced by women, especially those with children, have become more publicly recognised through the work of pressure groups such as Raising Films and Share My Telly Job (Raising Films, 2022; Share My Telly Job, 2022). Anecdotally amongst participants there was a sense of 'change' in the air, especially given the timing of the interview data collection when there were crew shortages.

Yet, participants' reactions to their conditions varied greatly; some felt helpless within the face of such entrenched, systemic problems of hours and working conditions, some chose to leave, and some chose to intervene to improve the constraints within their close-knit networks (Chapter 7.3). Ursell's (2004) work on the 'micro-politics of resistance' proves insightful here: she refers to the significance of Women in Film and Television (WFTV), an organisation built on collective identity, as demonstrating the ability for common experiences to form

the basis for collectivisation. She problematises the concept of 'resistance' when tied to the individual level of identity formation, but notes the productive repercussions of an individualised workforce that creates categories of different experience (Ursell, 2004, p.172).

The conditions that form individuals as economic subjects also create a commonality of experience. For my participants that commonality and shared recognition of struggle often proved to be the basis for exercising agency and enacting care. As will be explored in Chapter 7, I make the case that cultural work theory needs to develop a more nuanced understanding of how workers have agency to impact their conditions not simply for their own benefit.

Chapter 7: How and why women stay

7.1. Introduction

This chapter answers RQ2: 'Which perceptions and practices facilitate women's workforce participation in costume work?'. I explore (1) perceptions held by participants surrounding the feasibility of maintaining a career given the acknowledged difficulties of doing so. Next, (2) I detail the practices that costume supervisors and designers have attempted to implement in order to facilitate the retention of women in the workforce. Having detailed these perceptions and practices, I build on ideas discussed at the end of Chapter 6, to explore awareness of structural disadvantage and ideas of agency and power.

7.2 Perceptions of careers and returning to work

There are two sides to thinking about women remaining in the costume workforce – the 'why' and the 'how'. Given all of the barriers and struggles highlighted throughout this thesis – why do women stay in costume work? Most commonly, research has suggested that the alluring nature of 'creative' work offsets poor conditions and offers the potential of fulfilment and self-actualisation which far outstrips the humdrum jobs seen in other industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2008; Dean, 2012; McRobbie, 2016). In this chapter, I argue that the 'allure of creativity' is an oversimplification of why women remain in costume work, and that there are far more practical reasons as to why women stay, namely money.

I advocate for viewing cultural work as 'work' as opposed to a vocation or passion. For that reason, before I explore notions of the 'how', that is, the practical measures that aid women's careers, it is equally important to explore the 'why'.

7.2.1 Money, pragmatism and leaving

It has been well established that freelance cultural work often involves long hours, financial insecurity and in some cases exploitation (Blair, 2001; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010; Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020, etc.). When questioned why they comply to such conditions, cultural workers' answers commonly allude to notions

of ‘love’ and ‘passion’ (Dean, 2012; Freidman, 1990; McRobbie, 2002; Menger, 1999; Ursell, 2000). Particularly amongst artists or ‘symbol creators’, there is a sense of cultural work being more akin to a vocation than a job (Antcliff, Saundry and Stuart, 2007; Dean, 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). Most notably, McRobbie (2002) develops ideas of attachment to cultural work to suggest that non-monetary rewards, such as the possibility of autonomy, and the potential of social recognition and self-actualisation, are highly incentivising and conducive to workers justifying poor pay and withstanding harsh conditions.

However, as Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) point out, research that seeks to understand the appeal of cultural work often portrays it at its extremes. The intense satisfaction and pleasure that comes from creative pursuits is contrasted to continual anxiety, stress and insecurity, to create a rather binary division between pleasure and pain. Yet, dependent upon one’s role and sector of the industry, the lived experience of cultural work and workers’ attitudes to work can be somewhat ‘ambivalent’ (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010, p.17). Far from explaining *why* people withstand such working conditions, the pleasure/pain dichotomy oversimplifies a very complex relationship between the individual and their work and does not capture the everyday in-between.

When I began analysing participants’ attitudes to careers it became clear that the more well-known understandings of cultural workers as hedonistic, self-actualising thrill seekers, did not fit with this sample. Of course, there are significant similarities between costume work and other cultural work in the way in which work is structured, but attitudinally there were comparative differences. Namely, that experiences of work tended to remain at an even keel; there were far fewer examples of participants moving between extreme financial insecurity to sudden self-actualising artistic fulfilment. The mundane nature of work contrasted significantly to the pleasure-pain dichotomy often associated with the lone-male-artist-creator who suffers for his art and displays an attendant ‘artistic’ temperament (Grabner, 2010). Although there was pride and care for the costume craft as noted in Chapter 5.3, it could not be described as ‘passionate attachment’ that blinded workers from the flaws in their working conditions (McRobbie, 2007, p.3).

Whilst at work, the everyday experience of participants often seemed to exist somewhere between general enjoyment and appreciation for their work, mixed with a constant background tiredness (see also Munro, 2020). The audio diaries highlighted how social relations at work often deteriorated as productions progressed and participants became increasingly tired, but generally participants seemed to function at a relatively steady pace. Throughout the data collection in both interviewing and audio diaries, there was not necessarily the suggestion of extreme pleasure or pain, but rather an attitude of pragmatism in participants' approach to the structural realities of film and television work, and their potential of maintaining a career within them.

When participants referenced being without work, there seemed to be more suggestion of feelings of anxiety and a questioning of their career, but at the time of interviewing there was an abundance of work and participants were perhaps more lassiez-faire about their job and financial security.[35] Similar to Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2010) participants, my participants 'bemoan[ed] the mental and emotional states produced, but [were] also resigned to insecurity' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010, p.13). Inevitably working under a freelance model led participants to experience periods out of work, but there seemed to be a form of acceptance and pragmatism to how the flow of work altered throughout the year. Participants placed emphasis on pragmatism and the notion of film and television work as *work*. Very few of the participants expressed an uncritical devotion to costume work; whilst they derived satisfaction from the job, their main reason for staying in the industry was that they could not earn similar money elsewhere.

Money played an important role in participants' careers; once a participant had established themselves within a network they began to earn a decent and semi-regular wage, 'leaving' became a question of rejecting that wage. When I asked

[35] Here, industry context plays a significant role in participants' thoughts of leaving. 'Leaving' was talked about on the basis that it was a choice to reject work, but when compared to the industry context of 2023, where there has been a production slowdown, the 'choice' to remain the industry has been removed as there has been a reduction in the amount of work available.

Bridget how she had stayed in the industry so long, she was very candid with her response.

> “But, Tiff, if I was going to be horrifically brutal about it, I feel now it's what I do, it's what I know best, and I can't think of a side living and living. It's a harsh fact.”
>
> [Bridget, Costume Supervisor - 37-40 years of experience]

Staying in the industry is a practical decision for Bridget, rather than a straightforward pursuit of a creative passion. As mentioned in Chapter 4.5, when in work costume workers are earning a decent wage, and for many participants money was a significant factor as to why they stayed in the industry.

> “There were a few moments where I was like: why do I do this? If you think like the other day, make-up came in for a four-hour fitting and then left again and costume had been there since 6.30 in the morning and didn’t leave till 7 o'clock that night. You go: Why did I choose this department? This seems like a common theme amongst costume: Why are we doing this? But frankly, I don't know what else I would do that can afford me the lifestyle that I've just starting to get a grasp of now. Like what, what else would I do where I can earn pre-tax £1200 a week? Not a lot.
>
> [Claire, Costume Standby - 5-8 years of experience]

A general attitude of pragmatism - ‘what else would I do’, as opposed to uncritical devotion characterised participants’ outlooks on leaving the industry. The majority of the participants had spent multiple years training and made significant sacrifices to reach their current position, and therefore leaving was not always perceived as an option.

> “I do have the odd wobble, umm over the last… when my [child] was really little, because of like the hours and stuff. My partner can be a bit

> grumpy about the whole situation…umm… so I thought maybe I would do teaching. So, I looked into going back to uni and doing my teaching qualification. But I really just can't be arsed, I really don't want to go back to uni again, and I don't know, I get really torn because I'm like, 'the hours might be better, it's more reliable being like a teacher or something.'"
>
> [Lucy, Costume Maker – 5-8 years of experience]

The criteria on which participants decided to take work also differed from traditional ideas of the cultural-worker-artist. The artistic content of the job may hold more significance for those in 'creative' roles and for those with job security, but my majority 'craft' cohort made decisions on a more pragmatic basis.

Participants rarely took jobs based on the artistic merit of the project, and if that did factor into their decision there were a multitude of other factors that took precedence. Overwhelmingly, money was the most significant factor in their decision to take a job, second to the location and hours of the job. There were some in the fortunate position of having multiple job offers, and they noted they would often choose to work with certain individuals and for certain production companies whom they trusted.

> "And then, workwise, some of the choices I've made have not been necessarily because it's a job I want, it's because it pays or because it fits in with what we're doing because it would be a job that was at least in the UK. It's not that often that I necessarily get to make choices because it's something I fancy doing, it's often a more practical reason than that, like the dates work, and it's, you know, not that far from home."
>
> [Bridget, Costume Supervisor - 37-40 years of experience]

Bridget noted how she had tried to quit the industry and take more 'normal' jobs such as cleaning or working in a supermarket, but could not earn enough money to afford the lifestyle she had built during her career in costume. Bridget's account

highlights how it is important not to assume that every woman is financially capable of leaving, and that once she has left, she will not return.

Often women's choices to leave the film and television industries are pathologized into separate categories of childcare issues, poor treatment, or financial insecurity (Percival, 2019). Here, I argue that pointing to clear cut reasons oversimplifies a very messy web of influencing factors. In the case of the data presented here, there were a multitude of factors that often overlapped and were more cumulative than one single factor that held greater significance. Those with young families engaged most with questions of leaving, often noting how the spectre of leaving periodically occurred to them when they had had a difficult experience at work, or their family life was struggling. Two participants without caring responsibilities had chosen to leave the industry because they had decided that costume work would not be compatible when they chose to have children in the future. Those with longer careers or older children tended to talk more passively about leaving, in so much as they had already made the sacrifices to maintain a career and were resigned to the lifestyle that costume work dictates. When more experienced participants talked of leaving their reasons centred on work no longer being enjoyable.

To understand why women leave film and television work attention needs to be paid to how women's 'choice' to leave the industry is experienced. For instance, Dent's (2016) research on the careers of women media workers, noted how women's decisions to leave work are often framed by women themselves as an individual 'choice' which distracts from the underlying conditions that have made work untenable. Using Stone (2007), Dent argues that women experience their exit from the industry as a 'forced choice' with no other options available 'mask[ing] the unequal and sexist mechanism that produce[d] this choice' (Dent, 2016, p. 167; Stone, 2007; Gill 2014).

In interviews with participants who had left, everyone framed their decision as a 'choice'. Two had left because they wished to have children in the future and were leaving pre-emptively, and a more experienced participant was 'choosing' to leave because she felt the industry 'wasn't fun anymore' due to the content of the

costume work on offer. Whilst similar to Dent's research, participants framed their decision as a choice, but there were also an equal number of participants who framed their decision to stay as 'forced'. One participant who left the industry and then returned experienced her 'choice' to leave as a 'choice' in order to spend more time with her child, she perceived her return to costume work as 'forced' because she could not earn enough money in another industry. Others framed it in the following way:

> "I don't know if you've got the gist of this, but I don't want to be doing costume because the hours are too long. I don't want to be in this position, I want to be able to do something completely different. Or I want to be a costume illustrator working from home, I want to be someone pulling in a costume house 9 till 5 and then going home. But you know, bills need to be paid so, I don't know how it gets any better…It's your own personal circumstance that means you have to do it."
>
> [Zara, Crowd Costume Supervisor – 13-16 years of experience]

> "Yeah, I know I made it [a sacrifice] when I was off on tour with [theatre company] and I hadn't realised that my son was having a really tough time because I just wasn't around. So yeah, I have made that sacrifice, and I do feel terribly guilty. I do know people whose babies are in childcare, mine was in a [creche] from 8 o'clock to the minute they shut at 6, and that's when I could work on like children's programmes and now I, I look back and regret it and think I wish I could have just taken time out and been at home as a mum but you know, I opted because I had a mortgage to pay on my own, I opted to work because I didn't want to go into debt."
>
> [Diane, Costume Supervisor – 37-40 years of experience]

Diane's 'choice' to return featured a similar sense of 'responsibilitised' guilt for both leaving her children and making compromises on her availability to work (Gill,

2014). Her 'choice' to stay was experienced as a choice, that is, she 'opted to work', but it was her financial situation that forced her choice (Stone, 2007).

There were also contextual factors to participants' attitudes: during the COVID-19 partial shutdown of industry some participants noted that they had grown more aware of how the insecurity of freelance work and long hours cultures were impacting their personal and mental health. Some had explored the possibility of careers in other industries during lockdown and when they returned to work those thoughts resurfaced.

> "But I think if you'd asked me pre-COVID whether I thought I would be in this industry for the rest of my life, I probably would have said yes, and now I would definitely say there is a chance that I wouldn't be."
>
> [Martha, Costume Standby – 5-8 years of experience]

Participants' attachments to their careers were not all-consuming. Costume work was seen as 'work', and with that came attendant expectations and limits to what participants would 'choose' to withstand. But, perhaps symptomatic of the time of interviewing and the abundance of work on offer, those in mid-career and established positions understood their staying in the industry as a pragmatic financial 'choice'.

7.2.2. The 'do-ability' of a costume career and childcare

Participants' discussions of leaving the industry often centred around the industry's incompatibility with childcare. Ten out of the twenty participants had caring responsibilities, and all cited the hours as the main reason for making working in film and television and having children a consistently difficult juggling act. Across the board there was the perception that working whilst having young children was either not possible or extremely difficult, but once the child was old enough to go to nursery, the participant could have more flexibility to take ad hoc daily work or short-term contracts. Once the child had reached primary education

there seemed to be general understanding that women could return to costume full time.

> "…there is a big gap. You know, you've got the young, care/children-free folk and then you've got like the ones with adult children, or like teenagers, there's a big gap in the middle where people feel like they can't work because they've got small children."

[Lucy, Costume Maker – 5-8 years of experience]

Unlike mothers' experiences elsewhere in the industry, the ability to return to work once childcare issues could be sorted seemed axiomatic. Although there was an underlying idea that one needs to take time away from the industry initially, for the newer mothers there was very little suggestion that they would not be 'allowed' back into the industry because of perceptions about their commitment to work, only that they would face great difficulty in doing so.

Upon reflecting on the participants' testimonies, I was struck by how their experiences contrasted to those of women elsewhere in film and television work. Although it was not necessarily notable to the participants, it seemed that on their return to work many had encountered a non-hostile environment to mothers. There was not so much a question of whether they would be judged unfavourably on their return, instead their worries centred on the practicalities of combining childcare and costume work. Guilt featured heavily in many returning mothers' decisions, with the most common rationale for returning to costume being their family's inability to survive only on the income of their partner.

Discriminatory attitudes about working mothers were not entirely absent from within the department. It was largely those who had experienced the early years of motherhood over a decade ago who noted overt experiences of discrimination from within the department.

> “And, um.. this old shit of a costume supervisor - who is in her late 60s by this point, said to me one day, ‘Well, I mean, I could train you up to my level, but you know you are over 40 and you've got a child.’”
>
> [Bridget, Costume Supervisor – 37-40 years of experience]

> “…and it's often from other women that you get that thing like: how could you have a nanny? I mean, don't you feel like you should spend more time with your child? I'm like: wow, I've never had that from a man, actually.”
>
> [Natalie, Costume Designer – 25-28 years of experience]

These two quotes come from the two participants who had some of the longest careers of the sample. For the remainder of the sample there were far fewer references to openly discriminatory comments such as the above. Perhaps a sign that the progressive discourse surrounding working mothers has altered attitudes, or simply made the discriminatory attitudes held by some within the department more private. That is not to present a linear narrative of progression, but to note how participants who had recently become mothers (in the last 5 years), did not seem to encounter the same levels of discrimination faced by their predecessors. Amongst some there was the cautious optimism that attitudes towards those with childcare responsibilities were changing.

As the sample grew to encompass mothers of different aged children, some nascent trends began to emerge across the generations of mothers. Although the sheer number of hours required to work had not changed across the generations, attitudes amongst newer mothers were by far the most optimistic. Newer mothers felt that they were seeing the beginnings of a change to attitudes, especially for those with pre-nursery age children who had experiences of part-time work or job-sharing.

> “I think, before I had [child], I think people with kids tend to just kind of be like, ‘Well, I've got a kid now I can't really do anything.’ And, you

know, people didn't seem to be, what's the word? Compromising on hours and that. But since I've had [child], you know, I've been really lucky in that the two big companies I've worked for, they've actually allowed me to job-share with another mum. So, it means we can still earn a good wage and still see our children, so that's, that's really nice. And I was very surprised that that was allowed. I honestly thought when I had [child], I'm going to be out of it until he's at school, I'm not going to be able to work. But it's been a really nice surprise that, you know, there have been people who've been like, 'No, actually, we can set that up, you know, why not?' Which is really, really nice."

[Lucy, Costume Maker – 5-8 years of experience]

Given the contextual factors of the increased public discourse surrounding women with children's participation in film and television work (e.g. initiatives like Share My Telly Job), the shortage of crew, along with the post-COVID optimism returning to work, it is not surprising that participants were looking to a better future. Further to this, newer mothers did not seem to experience the feeling of individualisation when trying to combine childcare and work. Many were surrounded by examples of other women who had maintained careers whilst having children.

Research conducted on women's careers elsewhere in men-dominated parts of film and television work has stressed the importance of a lack of women role-models as a factor in women leaving careers in film and television (Wing-Fai, Gill and Randle, 2015; Percival, 2019). Half of the sample here had children and the majority of those had a point of reference to a senior figure with children.[36] Those with positive role model experiences referenced particularly well-known and highly acclaimed costume supervisors or designers who were now excelling in their careers whilst also having children.

"I worked for, [costume designer], who's got children who is an Oscar

[36] 6 out of the 10 participants had children 5 and under.

> winning designer who is killing it. I've worked for [costume supervisor] who is like my freaking hero. I worked for [costume designer], who's an amazing designer who actually had, she had a little talk to me about children…Um [name] and [name] - amazing supervisor, amazing costumer, both with families who employ people with families. Yeah, like [name], [name], [name], like, so many people, oh, [name] around me, like so many people around me who have children, who are amazing parents who also look after you like you're their children. So many people that I've been very, very lucky to work with and for. I've, I felt like, you know what? It will be fine, if they can do it, I can definitely do it…"
>
> [Isabel, Assistant Costume Designer – 9-12 years of experience]

It is worth noting that the designers and supervisors whom the participant referenced all have grown-up children. Isabel was one of only a few who expressed with such fervour how many people around her had shown her that childcare and costume work was 'doable'. When other participants were asked a similar question on role models, the response was more muted. There were women who the participants admired, but they were keen to express that entering into motherhood they were aware it was going to be difficult, as they had witnessed it being difficult for others. Some participants had experienced warnings of how challenging returning to work would be, and with that warning also came a sense of shared recognition of the issues that are faced by mothers in the industry. The amount and type of support that participants experienced from within the department varied; some participants had vocal forms of support from colleagues, such as sharing baby pictures, making miniature versions of costumes for a new mother's baby, or simply measures like the department signing a well wishes card for someone who had left the department to begin (unpaid) maternity leave.

Whilst the presence of role models may not have played a deciding factor in their outlook of becoming a mother, for many recognition of shared struggles had an impact on their decision to return to work after having children. Those who had

returned to work, in hindsight often recounted how they had ‘somehow’ made it work.

> “I was talking to some of the women in my department who had children and they were like: ‘you know it's not made for mothers.’ It's not. It's not an industry made for mothers and so, for instance, I had, I had to take my 2-year-old to work with me on this job for a day. The designer played nursery rhymes on her phone and gave him some colouring pencils and people were like really understanding. And our supervisor had to pick her 12-year-old up and bring her into work because there was no one else to watch her.”
>
> [Isabel, Assistant Costume Designer – 9-12 years of experience]

Isabel frames acceptance of children within the department as a positive, progressive step, but this framing bypasses discussion of the long hours cultures that created the incompatibility with childcare in the first place. Although attitudes seemed to be generally supportive of mothers returning to work, even within the department there was still a certain stigma attached to the women who did return to work whilst their children were very young. Although they were admired for their tenacity and sacrifice, many did not want such a lifestyle for themselves.

> “…I’ve admired women who have managed to do both [work and childcare], but I, in my experience I've just met women that are either…they finally got to be supervisors or designers on massive films or massive shows, but then they're all like bitter, angry, old women because they've missed out on doing that [having children]. Or they have had kids and still managed to get there, but then either they don't have a great relationship with their kids or they feel guilty when they’re at work, so they’re bitter. And well, from my experience, one designer in particular, she was coming to work complaining that she was in work and she wanted to be at home with the family and she’d always be miserable in work, but then if she ever went home early or spent time

with them then she'd come back and be like, 'oh, I've, you know – feel like I'm missing out on certain work conversations.' … I was just like, there didn't seem like a happy medium and I was like, oh God…I just don't see...I know people can do it, but I just didn't… I, personally was like, no I kind of want to be really hands on."

[Shannon, Costume Standby – 5-8 years of experience]

Although Shannon had colleagues with children visible to her, she felt so strongly about being 'hands on' that it informed her decision to leave the industry to seek a more stable and less time-demanding job. Other participants noted a similar outlook, believing that costume and working with young children was physically doable, but they did not want to be a mother 'in that way' i.e. a mother who spends a significant amount of time away from her children.

Role models are a shallow lens through which to view inclusion – although the few who make it to positions of power despite their struggles play an important role, it remains important to highlight that the path that brought them to their success may still seem opaque, and their struggles to achieve success are often overlooked in hindsight. Throughout the interviews the examples of other mothers seem to provide participants with the knowledge that 'people can do it', but there was no suggestion that motherhood and working, especially for those with young children, could be done so without some form of compromise. The majority of participants were in relationships with partners who also worked, and many noted how difficult it was to survive on one income when they took time away for maternity leave which was often unpaid or at the statutory rate. Knowing that others had experienced a similar situation had not necessarily made the practical reality any easier.

"I can't think of one mum, costume mum, that I spoke to that wasn't worried about money, because unless you're married to someone incredibly rich, everyone's got bills to pay and as soon as you work part time you're taking home less money, so and then childcare bills are, now, I realise incredibly expensive and a mortgage is incredibly

expensive, so I did know of a few costume mums, but it wasn't like I was thinking: woo this is going to be easy. I knew it was going to be really, really hard."

[Zara, Crowd Costume Supervisor – 13-16 years of experience]

For some, like Zara, there was a cyclical sense to the repetition of problems faced by mothers, without many viable solutions.

"…Then you start going back into the industry again [after having a child] and that, you know at this point you're like: I'm going to really fight, and really fight for these mothers, we need to change the way the system is and blah blah blah and then by the time you get back into the industry, once you're juggling your career again plus your child, you lose all energy for fighting this maternity fight. So then, then you see more new mothers come up and your supportive as you can be, but at the same time now I'm like saying the same things that women said to me, which is that, 'you know it's so hard, you've just got to get through.' Like you're just basically saying, I know, I know it's hard but just deal - like essentially that's what we're saying - you just have to deal with it and move on because you've lost all momentum and all energy..."

[Zara, Crowd Costume Supervisor – 13-16 years of experience]

Industry discourse seemed to give the impression that attitudes were changing, but the long hours cultures that make participants' lives difficult remained fixed. There was a fatalism attached to the shared recognition. Zara went on to say,

"…I mean it's all hugs, and then you know, basically you have a cry every so often someone gives you a hug and then a second later you're doing the exact same thing you were crying about but you're not crying about it anymore because you've just got to get on with it."

[Zara, Crowd Costume Supervisor – 13-16 years of experience]

Simply having examples of other mothers within the department did not appear to be the great panacea for helping women with children in the workforce. Even though structural barriers that are commonly encountered by women, such as childcare needs, were experienced by the many and not the few, simply having more women in the department was not the great panacea to inclusion of women in the workforce. Role models provide shallow explanatory power, and operated more as a source of information than as a model which to emulate. Money, pragmatism and an attitude of 'do-ability' toward childcare and costume work, appeared to be the three main factors that influenced participants' perceptions about careers. Without the power to alter structural barriers such as hours, decisions to stay were very much based on a form of 'forced' pragmatism.

7.3. Practices: The relative power of the supervisor and designer

In Chapter 5, I detailed the normative framework that provides the unspoken rules for how participants interact with one another. In this section, I use ideas such as responsibility, loyalty and shared experience to examine how they underpin participants' decisions to intervene to support the careers of others and enact care. By 'practices' I refer to the practical interventions often taken by supervisors or designers on the behalf of their team to mitigate against struggles caused by structural conditions.

Throughout data collection I have received multiple examples of ways in which individuals have intervened in the careers of others in order to help them to remain in the workforce. From being a shoulder to cry on (literally and figuratively), offering leniency to participants with childcare needs, to (in)formal mentorships and advice-giving. To a certain extent, these are relatively basic forms of care and career support that would be commonplace in many workplaces, but in freelancing these practices are not always common.

Those who intervened tended to be supervisors or designers, who acted to keep working mothers in the workplace, or to enable them to come back to work. The average time after having their child that participants returned to work was approximately 6 months, the earliest time was after 2 months and the latest was a

year (although the participant attributed this to the pandemic and not choice). One of the more common ways of returning to work was on a part time basis taking daily standby positions. Some participants who had established relationships with supervisors prior to having children were offered tailored solutions to returning for work. One participant was offered a position whereby she was the dedicated standby for a group of artists who were not on set full time, meaning that the participant could do odd days in the week (see Glossary for role description). This required ad hoc childcare arrangements and often required placing the child in childcare for a significant amount of time, but many participants believed this was a preferable way to keep one's 'hand in'.

At the time of interviewing participants, job-sharing was gaining legitimacy and recognition throughout film and television work thanks in part to the work of Share My Telly Job, an organisation set up to advocate for job sharing in television work. Yet, even before job-sharing became more widely publicised, a supervisor in the sample, had begun to instigate her own job-sharing practices.

> "So on [television series] we had six people doing job-shares at one point. We had [name] and [name] job-sharing on principals…And [name], [name], [name] and [name] were all mums who really wanted to work but just could not commit to full time and we made it work.
>
> …
>
> And the thing with [name] and [name] was they were world class principal standbys and if we hadn't made the job-share work, they'd be lost to the industry – they were just too good to lose."
>
> [Bridget, Costume Supervisor - 37-40 years of experience]

Bridget went beyond her contractual obligations to instigate these measures, and faced some difficulty in doing so, but she 'took on' the responsibility because she could identify with the difficulties of balancing costume work and childcare. Those who had been part of job-shares noted how they would not have been able

to return to work if it had not have been for certain supervisors or designers introducing the shared role. The power of supervisors and designers to bend the structural constraints in these aforementioned situations should not be underestimated; not only are they often in the position to choose who is hired, they have some control over working hours. Their attitude and approach to managing their costume team has significant impact on their teams' experience of the job.

> "Had some amazing people, amazing designers were so supportive, I was still breastfeeding, they'd let me finish work a little bit earlier or do half days. So that I could, um…you know, I could look after my little one. And this was a couple of years ago now so there wasn't the crew demand then, but they could have had other people who could have worked a full day – but they didn't, and I'll always be very grateful for that."
>
> [Tara, Crowd Costume Supervisor - 12-15 years of experience]

Yet, depending on the supervisor's or designer's disposition there was a significant degree of difference in participants' experiences. As mentioned in Chapter 6, ideas of shared experience played an important role in supervisors and designers' willingness to offer support. Often, those who had built a relationship with a certain supervisor or designer would gravitate toward working with them again, or would be keener to work with supervisors and designers who held more accommodating attitudes to childcare, although this was not always a choice.

Amongst the participants who had reached the supervisor or designer level, having struggled with childcare themselves, there was a recognition and attentiveness to the struggles of others, and wanting to utilise their limited power to make it easier for those who came after them (Tronto, 1993). The supervisors of the sample who talked about their power to enable others had a high degree of differentiation in what they saw as their role and their capacity to intervene. Some supervisors and designers, especially those with children, seemed to understand their role as a 'duty'.

> "But it's really important, I think, that we try and help women who have children still be able to do the job that they love to do. We have a *duty* to make that happen and I think the more we do it, the more people go: actually it does work, it can work, just because you can't work 12 hours, that's, that's wrong because you can't have kids and work 12 hours."
>
> [Natalie, Costume Designer – 25-28 years of experience, *emphasis mine*]

Throughout the interviews with designers and supervisors there was a sense that they had their own set of moral codes and opinions on what was acceptable for other women. For example, the participant quoted above notes, '…that's wrong because you can't have kids and work 12 hours.' The quote below illustrates this point further; the participant had emailed a designer asking for work on her upcoming project.

> "…and she [costume designer] was crewing for a job in [city] and she asked how old my baby was, and she said, 'I'm sorry, I just don't think I can take you,' like, um', she said, 'I'm not supposing that I know how you feel about being a parent or blah, blah, blah, but I am a mother and I do have children and I feel like you will regret it. You will regret it.' At the time I was like, a little bit incensed, and I was like, how dare you, really. But she passed me on to people who gave me work in [city] closer to home. So it wasn't like, 'I can't employ you, that's it.' It was a, 'I wouldn't feel good about employing you with a small baby. However, let me give you more employment close to your family'. Which is…which was really nice of her, like she doesn't know me, so she didn't have to actually do anything, but umm, she's actually right. I would have absolutely, absolutely regretted it without a doubt."
>
> [Isabel, Assistant Costume Designer - 9-12 years of experience]

The designer was not unwilling to help, but seemed to be adhering her own unwritten moral standards that she was in effect imposing on the participant. Similarly another supervisor commented that she did not offer work to pregnant

women, but was more than willing to accommodate working mothers once they returned to work.

> "You know there's been various people, and I made it really big point of 1) not giving them work when they're pregnant and 2) when they wanted to come back to work, find[ing] a way of making it work."
>
> [Bridget, Costume Supervisor – 37-40 years of experience]

Bridget believed that by not giving work to pregnant people she was protecting them from the physical demands of film and television work, in the absence of protection from production companies. Participants with children were still subject to others' opinions about the 'correct' way to combine costume work and childcare, and this was imposed on them both inside and outside the department. As care is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act of 2010, the possibility of workers seeking legal action is often very slim and reticence to seek legal recourse would still most likely be enforced by the disciplining power of reputation (Gill, 2014; Raising Films, 2019; Coles and Eikhof, 2021). In turn, the power, opinions and moral standpoint of supervisors and designers appeared to play a significant factor in who remains in work. Most of the supervisors and designers interviewed seemed to have some sort of moral commitment to better their workplace, but their interventions often seemed to be responses to ad hoc problems i.e. a shortage of qualified crew. There was the sense of a scrambling to try to alleviate structural barriers with very little consensus amongst supervisors and designers on how this could be successfully carried out. There was no suggestion they would try and implement these practices outside of their own departments or that they were communicating with other designers or supervisors to share knowledge or learning. It seems that in the case of this sample, intervention was based on the individuals' sense of responsibility and their highly subjective ideas of how to help and who should receive it.

It would be incorrect to conclude that the power of the supervisor or designer was an entirely benign phenomenon, or that simply hitching oneself to a powerful supervisor or designer was the fail-safe way for career success. Although it is a

novel and important finding that there are women in the costume department who are actively intervening in conditions to support others' careers, it is important to stress that their power goes largely unchecked. Informal hiring practices are as common within the costume department as they are throughout the rest of the industry, as a result the help on offer is not equitably distributed. The supervisors and designers of the cohort had significant power within their own 'fiefdoms', they could mitigate against certain structural conditions in their departments for those whom they perceived as worthy of their help.

Although this section highlights some positive practices that are not negligible, in the wider scale of the department these concessions were not on offer to every person with caring responsibilities, and were highly dependent on the disposition of the various supervisors or designers; these practices are far from ideal solutions to the systemic problems that women are facing.

7.4. Facilitating the careers of others: power and agency

Whilst previous chapters have examined the everyday minutiae of participants' interactions, this section is interested in exploring the implications for their perceptions and practices, and how they contribute to wider conversations about women's power and agency in film and television work.

7.4.1 Power

The supervisors and designers discussed thus far had multiple decades of experience and were well established in their careers. Yet even with such clout and experience, outside of the department their power was limited, especially when interventions required the co-operation of the production company. I began this thesis by using Tronto's (1993) four phases of care to understand the process through which supervisors and designers went through to enact care. Tronto's first phase of care - 'attentiveness', appears to be present; supervisors and designers were acutely aware of where care was lacking for their colleagues, most having experienced a lack of care themselves. The second phase of 'responsibility' also appeared present for some with supervisors and designers taking the responsibility

to implement their own solutions to long working hours. But importantly in terms of power, Tronto's third dimension of enacting care is 'competence', that is, the competence to provide care. Providing care entails having the power, resources and capacity to make effective interventions. The designer below talks of how she had tried to alter working hours within her department for those with school-age children.

> "…so, it must have been in 8-9 years ago we started, you know a lot of the cutters and sewers that we know could only do 9 till 3 because they needed to get their kids to school and they needed to pick them up. So we started putting to some of the studios that we were working with: we're not going to do this contract, we are going to try and take them on so that they can do an hourly rate so that we get the really good skilled people and they get to go to work and they can still look after their kids. And for a while we got away with that, but then they [production accounting] started - there's all these other rules about if you're on a job for so long you have to have a contract, and then it was like: Okay, so how do we still get this skill base of women who can't work because their kids go to school? And it seems silly that there isn't a way of working out and there still isn't really, but we just we muddle through it."
>
> [Natalie, Costume Designer – 25-28 years of experience]

The reasons why Natalie was not able to keep the changes in her department remained opaque to her. She had the power to initiate the shorter hours, but when production accounting became aware of the changes, she encountered difficulties. Her power was relative to the broader production hierarchy that she experienced outside of the department. None of the supervisors or designers seemed to see what they were doing as particularly revolutionary, it was more a case that they had attempted to intervene to the best of their ability, but their attempts were often hindered by intransient production companies who were unwilling to adjust the status quo, especially when it came to payment systems, schedules and hours.

It should also be noted that the interventions that supervisors or designers made were not without risk to their own careers. The participant below describes being black listed by a production company because she pushed for redundancy pay for her crew at the beginning of the coronavirus induced shutdown of the production.

> "And these two producers in particular - I hated them, they were absolute arse holes at the end, and they really let everyone down in it as well. Someone was talking about me to them more recently and they went, 'Oh God, she's just so mouthy.' And I'm thinking I was actually doing everything I needed to do on behalf of my crew. And of course, I was going to fight for what they needed because we're going into a pandemic and you're trying to short-change them about how much redundancy pay they got – a day's pay makes a hell of a fucking difference when you've got no work. And so, I know that they will not employ me. They hate me and I hate them, and they were going, 'Oh she's just so mouthy'..."
>
> [Bridget, Costume Supervisor – 37-40 years of experience]

The costume supervisor and designer are generally the representatives of the department to those within the production company. So, whilst some were willing to push boundaries and risk reputational damage, there was also the sense they were not able to be open about their struggles in crewing or with childcare to the rest of the production. There was the suggestion that struggles should remain internal to the department and not talked about outside of it. There was an implicit understanding of 'not letting the side down' or being perceived as weak to the men-dominated production environment. Although there has been a public 'turn to care', the reality seemed that the idea of 'needing care' was still seen as a source of weakness, and therefore something that should be avoided (Aust, 2020).

> "I think that we try almost to not even let producers or anyone know what the status is of any of our team, so if they're missing it's not even an issue. So, we don't even get into a conversation of, 'Oh of course,

she's got kids', because it's no one's fucking business, in that no one would talk about a male member of crew and say, 'oh, of course he's got kids.' So we just try to not even bring it up I would say, more often than not. And then we between ourselves make it work."

[Bridget, Costume Supervisor – 37-40 years of experience]

Not only was there a stigma around appearing to need care or concessions, supervisors and designers were ultimately limited by their position as precariously employed women in a production hierarchy that does not value their contribution.

Within their departments the supervisors and designers of the cohort exercised their power to help those in their immediate network, but they did not have the 'competence' as Tronto terms it, to enact care or implement interventions without the co-operation of the production company. As Tronto notes,

> 'Sometimes care will be inadequate because the resources available to provide for care are inadequate.' (Tronto, 1993, p.133)

For the supervisors and designers who took steps to introduce job-sharing or reduced hours, they themselves were lacking the support to implement more than localised changes to working practices.

Supervisors and designers are still part of a wider production hierarchy by which they are inevitably limited. Within their departments they can make or break careers, choose to enact care or not, but when they do decide to, their resources are subject to the structural conditions in which they work. McRobbie's thoughts from 2002 resonate here,

> 'What individualization means sociologically is that people increasingly have to become their own micro-structures, they have to do the work of the structures by themselves...' (McRobbie, 2002, p.518)

Care is absent in the film and television workplace and the responsibility to enact it falls to those who do not have the resources to do so. In turn, the supervisors and designers of the cohort can be seen to become their own 'micro-structures'.

As the masculinised production environment creates barriers to women's inclusion, the supervisors and designers turn inwards to where they do possess a negotiated sense of precarious power.

Following Eikhof (2017), the decisions made by individuals about the careers of others can be viewed as tantamount to 'the system'. That is, each individual-decision has a role to play in how the industry is structured, as a result the decisions of individuals hold importance (ibid). Workers' decisions translate the various attitudinal and ideological underpinnings of the industry and the department into workforce participation. The decisions of supervisors and designers structure their various 'fiefdoms'; their power as individuals, although not without its limits, includes the power to shape structural conditions for those immediately around them. They have the power to create barriers to inclusion through ideas of the 'right' personality, at the same time they have the power to mitigate against some externally enforced structural conditions.

When thinking about the implications of these decisions in broader terms, arguably, inclusivity based on the disposition of certain individuals is not a sustainable or scalable practice. Nor can it be seen as a sustainable practice whereby those who are marginalised are having to take on the extra 'work' of maintaining the careers of others. The extra 'work' taken on by designers and supervisors effectively favours production companies by ensuring that productions are crewed at no extra cost or stress to the production. A case could be made for demonstrating how capital is co-opting the notion of care and support to ultimately benefit itself to maintain an exclusionary status-quo (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005).

That is not to dismiss the tangibly felt benefits of these practices, but to recognise how they are limited by intransient structural barriers and the industrial ebbs and flows of work. I would argue that within the microcosm of the costume department these perceptions and practices are examples of small-scale structural fluctuation, but that change is by no means happening on a continuous positive trajectory. I stop short at labelling the phenomena described small-scale

structural *change*, which inherently implies a one-way progressive narrative that data do not support.

As long as supervisors and designers retain their limited power to intervene, I will most likely continue finding small-scale or local examples of help and support. Whether the general dissatisfaction and shared recognition of struggles can precipitate into a form of overt resistance remains unknown. At present, it seems change remains stuck at the small-scale levels as long as the wider structural conditions remain fixed.

7.4.2 Agency

Feminist theories of agency advocate for an understanding of agency as situated, embodied and relational (McNay, 2016). The embodied nature of agency centres attention on the question of how an individual's self-understanding can motivate or disincline her to act in a certain way (ibid). McNay's (2016) definition of 'agency' provides a useful account of the concept. She defines agency as,

> 'denot[ing] a cluster of actions considered to be categorically distinct from the types of unreflective, habitual, and instinctual behaviours which are held to be quasi-automatic responses to external structural forces.' (McNay, 2016, p.3)

McNay's reference to 'external structural forces' is fundamental to understanding the agency of women film and television workers. A woman's capacity to act with agency is connected to her awareness of the structural forces that enable or disincline her actions. In research on women's film and television work, a case has been made that a postfeminist sensibility obscures the relevance of gender to the workplace and in turn women do not always recognise how their careers might be constrained by masculinised structural conditions (Gill, 2014; O'Brien, 2015). The actions that they take and beliefs that they hold are seen as informed by a postfeminist sensibility that denies the relevance of gender to their treatment (ibid). In such accounts, agency is premised on the recognition of disadvantage and disentangling oneself from the internalised norms of a masculinised production culture. For example, O'Brien's 2014 study of women in Irish television production

posits a worker who would seemingly have a very limited agentic capacity to challenge such pervasive and deep-seated problems.

> '…women's adaptations to the constraints of gendered work processes and practices are founded on a neoliberal and postfeminist sensibility that denies the gendered nature of their work and refers responsibility for survival in the industry onto the individual worker, who in turn denies the relevance of gender to their careers.' (O'Brien, 2015, p.259)

Those who were aware of how gender impacted their careers were required to adapt to working conditions or risk exclusion. Postfeminism entails a new form of self-governance where internalised norms make resistance unlikely.

Throughout the data gathered for this thesis those who outright denied the relevance of gender to their work were in the minority. Instead, gender-based discrimination was relegated to the passive realm. In a muted form of postfeminism, although there was the acknowledgement that gender had historically played a role in the value of their work and treatment within the workplace, gender-based discrimination was seen as something in the ether that effected women in other departments. Participants' subdued sense of awareness had not led to resistance, instead the greatest motivator of action was commonality of experience.

Definitions of agency require the actor to act with awareness, untethered from the internalised norms that ultimately benefit capital. Film and television workers are intensively socialised into the norms of film and television production; detaching oneself from these ways of thinking and existing at work does not appear possible – the conditions are perceived as fixed therefore they become so. The only perceived way for workers to reject the structural conditions that dictate both their personal and working lives is to leave the industry. Participants' decisions to leave can be seen as the only option that can afford them a sense of agency, to say 'no' to poor treatment. Arguably this is a hollow sense of agency as their decision does not address the wider structural issues that caused them to leave, but their absence in the industry is creating a skills shortage that many industry bodies are struggling to solve (ScreenSkills, 2021; BFI, 2023). Their often silent decisions are

beginning to be keenly felt by the industry. The participants who stay are left to negotiate structural conditions carving out any space available to make their work survivable.

Participants' agency can be thought of as layered; at the initial level it can be seen as the awareness of how conditions impact those in their immediate network. With a sense of agency followed their limited power to carve out a space for themselves and to facilitate the careers of others. Outside of this most immediate 'layer', they lacked the capacity and/or will to meaningfully engage with the structural disadvantage of others outwith their own experiences. On the small-scale of the costume department, the awareness of conditions and the desire to intervene demonstrates a form of negotiated agency that is missing from other accounts of cultural work.

Chapter 8: Summary and discussion

8.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I summarise the findings and outline the novelty of the thesis' contribution to the body of knowledge. I detail how the thesis answers its two research questions, and finish by exploring future research and the potential implications of the thesis' findings.

I began this thesis by highlighting the gaps in our knowledge about women's careers in film and television. Whilst valuable research had been conducted on women's careers in other offscreen roles, there was a stark lack of research on women-dominated departments. I questioned some of the dominant theories that have played a significant role in our understandings of cultural workers' careers throughout the last two decades, particularly a reliance on Foucauldian inflected analyses. I sought an alternative theoretical framework that prefaced relationality, care, and morality to aid in understanding the careers of women costume workers. Guided by a feminist methodology and using online interviewing and audio diaries, I explored the everyday minutiae of participants' interactions. Attention was paid to the close-knit nature of networks and the external factors that caused participants to turn inwards and create strong ties in the face of a devaluing and uncaring industry. Here, evidence was found of a culture of recognition and desire to intervene in the careers of others based on ideas of responsibility, accountability, and loyalty, but importantly, care was unevenly distributed.

Insecure freelance employment and unregulated hiring practices meant that workers created their own moral framework on which to distribute work. Participants had shared ideas of the 'right' personality which implicitly relied on feminised stereotypes, and were not always attuned to how the various ideologies that seemed to be guiding their decision-making benefitted the industry's capitalist system of production instead of them. Ideas of the 'right' personality favoured the individual who did not push the status quo or seek a pay rise. Nor could participants always see past their immediate realities; although many were

attuned to the struggles of caring responsibilities, when it came to those outside their specific remit of experience, responses were more muted. Shared experience seemed to be a positive motivator of action, but the struggles of those who were outside that shared experience seemed to elicit an ambivalent and distanced response. Participants' desire to stay in the industry was conceptualised as a pragmatic choice that was based more on financial reasons than a sense of vocation for cultural work.

Participants had a greater sense of agency and willingness to intervene in the conditions within their own close-knit networks. These interventions had tangibly felt impacts for the careers of those who had been facilitated to return to the workforce, or simply felt supported with their struggles recognised. The work of enacting care was conferred to individual workers in the face of an uncaring industry, but these individuals were often under-resourced and lacked wider support from production companies. The previous chapter finished by exploring the two factors that prefaced interventions - agency and power, and concluded by making the case for a negotiated and layered sense of agency for women to create small-scale structural fluctuation.

8.2. Novel contribution

The novel contribution of this thesis has two strands: (1) the theoretical framing, and (2) the empirical footprint and focus.

Firstly, (1) the theoretical framing of the thesis brings together moral economy theory and an ethic of care in the context of film and television work. Moral economy theory and an ethic of care have been applied in Alacovska and Bissonette's (2021) study of musicians, but I am yet to find any research that brings the two theoretical strands together in the context of film and television work. (See Banks, 2006; Umney, 2017; Lee, 2018 for use of moral economy theory in other areas of cultural work, and Aust (2020) for the use of an ethic of care in film and television work). Hitherto these two theoretical strands have not been combined and applied to the context of close-knit networks of women costume workers in film and television work.

The theoretical approach of the thesis adds to the body of knowledge by rethinking how film and television workers' network behaviour is understood. By exploring workers' values and principles that dictate everyday working dynamics, this thesis evidences alternate ways of existing in film and television work that are not limited to the ideas of the passive, self-serving cultural worker, and develops a more nuanced understanding of workers' capacities to act with agency. The combination of moral economy theory and an ethic of care has provided a valuable framework that has aided in producing an applied and grounded account of the ethics of everyday work in an under-researched area of the film and television industries.

Secondly, (2) throughout the review of the relevant literature there were only two examples of studies of costume workers themselves instead of the costumes they produce. Both were concerned with workers in the US context and neither with the same research focus as this thesis (see Banks, 2009; Warner, 2018). Miranda Banks' (2009) chapter uses the gendering of costume work to develop and define feminist production studies. Warner's (2018) research uses the trade magazines of the US Costume Designers' Guild to think about ideas of gendered solidarity in film and television work. Banks' and Warner's work has been enriching and informative for this thesis, but they do not look at the everyday ethics of costume work, nor do they explore how women maintain careers.

More broadly within the field of cultural worker research I am yet to find research that centres on a close-knit network of women with strong ties, as opposed to a large, open network of weak ties. There are examples of research into individual women and studies that draw conclusions from the similarities in their experiences, but none that focus on the interlinked, relational nature of a group of women cultural workers.

Finally, research on women's careers, particularly within the film and television industries, often tends to focus on *why* women leave the industry as opposed to how they might be facilitated to stay (Percival, 2019; Dent, 2020; Berridge, 2020 etc.). In response, this thesis centres questions of remaining in the workforce to produce new knowledge about how women sustain freelance careers in film and

television work. The thesis offers insight and evidence of practices used to keep women in the workforce, and the everyday ethics that underpin their actions.

8.3. RQ1: How can we understand the relationships between women working in film and television costume departments?

There are a number of points of difference for the women of the costume department when comparing them to their counterparts in other offscreen departments. Foremost the relationships seen throughout this thesis largely take place in an environment that is non-hostile to women – inside the department. The discrimination faced by women of the costume department is still present on-set, but within the department there were far fewer openly discriminatory attitudes experienced by participants. The divide functions to create an insular department, and for some, this offered a sense of buffering from negative, gendered attitudes. Although the insular nature of the department created a positive work environment for some, for others the prevailing norms and shared understandings excluded those who did not conform to the ideal of the 'right' personality. Emphasis on the moral frameworks that guided participants' decision making was an extremely insightful way of accessing these often messy and contradictory relationships.

These relationships were often built on a pragmatic form of solidarity, shared experience and a normative moral framework that provided the parameters of relationships. Relationships were the key to analysing this data set and in turn this thesis has made the case for understanding women working in costume through their relationships with others. By paying close attention to the localised small-scale nature of interactions we can build a nuanced understanding of the women of the costume department, and how they maintain their careers.

In turn, I advocate for a moral economy lens that emphasises the relationality of care. An emphasis on morality and care of the everyday inherently recognises that care and morality are lacking in film and television work. I analyse the decision-making of individuals who are made vulnerable by a precarious model of freelance work, and highlight how their actions distribute an under-resourced and

inequitable form of care. By centring the desire for care, the desire for support, the desire for a better workplace, the workers who are striving to carve out a space to exist within the film and television industries are spotlighted.

8.4. RQ2: Which perceptions and practices facilitate women's workforce participation in costume work?

At the beginning of this thesis, I questioned whether there were more women with long-term careers in the costume department simply because of the ways in which costume has been historically feminised as women's work. Wider societal influence has undoubtedly been a factor in the gender make-up of the costume department, but those who have survived have done so through more than simply staying put. That is, they have conformed where needed, pushed boundaries where possible, and devised strategies to stay within costume work. Participants with long-term careers were by no means passive agents in building their careers, each had to construct their career in an industry that makes doing so challenging. The costume department is not a benign haven from the endemic barriers that prevent so many women from pursuing and maintaining a career in film and television elsewhere. Nevertheless, there are comparative differences to women's experience of work in costume compared to their other offscreen counterparts.

The perceptions that facilitated women's workforce participation included a pragmatic outlook that views costume work as a decent source of income, the perception that managing costume work and childcare is 'doable' but not enviable, and that women are not automatically less committed simply because they have caring responsibilities. Although some participants noted certain individuals who were openly negative about their caring status, on the whole participants believed those around them to be 'supportive' and at a minimum, not openly discriminatory.

The practices that facilitate women's workforce participation are based on the building of close relationships founded on commonality and shared experience, and conforming to certain ideas of the 'right' personality and conducting oneself

within a normative moral framework of proving loyalty and gaining trust. Those who enter into the close-knit networks are then offered support through practices such as leniency with hours, flexibility with childcare needs, job-sharing and emotional support.

Staying, remaining and surviving have been the guiding points of interrogation throughout this thesis; the costume department provide empirical evidence of a negotiated way of existing in a masculinised production environment. These aforementioned perceptions and practices combine to facilitate the careers of the few. Theirs' is not necessarily an enviable, sustainable, or even imitable way of working, but these have been the methods through which they have carved out a space for themselves.

8.5. Thinking forward

Foremost, this thesis began with the aim of producing useful knowledge about women's careers in the UK's film and television industries. I hope that this research can both add to the academic body of knowledge, and contribute to a wider public conversation about the distribution of care, and women's treatment in the film and television workplace. I see the publicly available report that has come from the research as a starting point for seeking practical solutions devised in collaboration with women, to retain women in the workforce (see Appendix i).

In this thesis, I have advocated for reframing how we think about workers' relationships to emphasise their power to tangibly impact workforce participation. Data gathered for this thesis offers evidence of the ways in which workers can facilitate others to remain in the workforce. Whilst it should not be the entire responsibility of workers to facilitate the careers of others, I believe that workers are a component in creating an inclusive workplace. This research has demonstrated workers' capacities for innovation and will for change. Production companies need to engage with research to support heads of departments to implement measures to retain workers. Many of the heads of departments who had attempted to intervene in conditions, whether that was to create job-shares or to reduce the hourly day for women with children, faced a level of resistance

from production companies breaking with the norms of employment. I argue in favour of understanding the agency and experiential knowledge of workers in constructing workforce participation. Workers themselves have the lived experience and knowledge to aid interventions in the workforce and should be consulted on solutions. Workers are by no means human resource experts, but the data gathered here provides a strong case for a collaborative approach to intervention that extends further than a research survey or a suite of interviews. I advocate for sustained contact between industry bodies, production companies and workers to facilitate interventions that can achieve enduring and tangibly felt results.

Despite the current uncertainty of the future of film and television work, it is important to stress the positive advocacy and research that has come from both industry and academia. Throughout the course of my PhD, I have met and engaged with countless people trying to improve film and television work, from those in academia to those in under-funded grassroots organisations. Often their work goes unpraised and unrecognised, yet their work has proved invaluable to my research and demonstrates that in-roads are being made. The future of equitably distributed, diverse and inclusionary work in film and television has a long way to come, but I truly believe that continued research is laying the groundwork for a better film and television workplace.

Appendices

Appendix i: Report

Below is a live link to the short research report on this project's findings.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1w7dxdCQz2RMuY8wTa54_zuaR9w6rcRffCCEht50Uaq4/edit?usp=sharing

Appendix ii: Participant information sheet

Information for Interview Participants

Project title: Costume Communities: Researching costume careers in the film and television industries*

Project Researcher: Tiffany Bale, t.bale.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Project Supervisor: Prof. Mark Banks, mark.banks@glasgow.ac.uk

School of Culture and Creative Arts, University of Glasgow

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research interview, but before you decide it is important that you understand the purpose of the research and what it would involve for you. Please find detailed information below, and contact Tiffany if anything is unclear or you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

The research looks at the experiences of costume workers in the UK's film and television industry. The research is particularly interested in understanding how freelance costume workers are sustaining or supporting their careers in an uncertain and precarious industry.

We know from wider research that women and men often have different career experiences in the film and television industry. We also know that in many cases an individual's career experience is affected by their ethnicity, age and class. Yet at present, there have been no academic studies focused on UK costume workers, in comparison to more well-known roles such as directors or writers. This project seeks to research costume workers by paying attention to these aspects.

In order to gather data that can inform policy makers and academic understanding of UK film and television costume workers, interviews are being conducted over the course of 4 months (March - June 2021) and the project will be completed in April 2023.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been emailed this information sheet because you are a contact of the researcher, (Tiffany). There will be up to 30 participants involved in the research and no one except Tiffany will know that you have taken part in the research project.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen if I take part?

If you choose to participate, I will email you a consent/ agreement form to confirm that you have agreed to take part.

We can then arrange for a mutually convenient date and time for a Zoom interview to take place. The interview will last between 30 – 60 minutes and will be recorded using the University of Glasgow's Zoom recording facility. You will be free to withdraw from the interview at any time, without giving a reason. There will be **no impact** on you if you choose not to participate. We will talk about your career, your experiences in the workplace, and your thoughts about the industry.

The decision to take part remains yours, and no one but you and myself (Tiffany) will know that you have agreed to be interviewed.

After the interview, I will ask if you would like to keep a voice note diary for 4 weeks about your working week. At a minimum of once per week you would be asked to record a voice note on your phone about your week and then send that message via Whatsapp to me (Tiffany). This is entirely voluntary, and it is perfectly fine to only agree to the interview, furthermore, even if you do agree to the audio diaries you can withdraw.

We can discuss the audio diaries at the end of the interview if you are interested in taking part, and I can answer any further questions. At the bottom of this document, you will find more information about the audio diaries.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will have your name removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. You will not be named in any publications. If a verbatim quote from you is used in a publication any contextualising information will be removed so that the reader cannot trace the quote back to you.

Only Tiffany will have access to audio files from the interview and she will follow the ethical research codes and standards prescribed by the University of Glasgow and all information about you and any third parties you might mention in the interview will be handled in confidence.

Due to the small number of people taking part complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed, but please note that every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity. Also, note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless there is evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

What will happen to the project data and the results of the research study?

The results will form part of my (Tiffany's) PhD thesis which will be made publicly available upon submission. At later stages findings from the research might be published in academic project outputs (such as conference papers, books and peer-reviewed articles). Findings may also be referenced by public-facing bodies that also research the screen industries. Please note that again none of these publications would mention your participation or disclose information you have contributed as linked to your name.

Once the interviews and audio diaries (if taking part) have been completed, the audio will be transcribed, and the transcriptions redacted to remove identifying information. When the project is completed the audio recordings of both the interviews and the audio diaries will be destroyed.

The transcript of your interview and audio diaries (if taking part) will have participant numbers assigned to them (e.g. 'Participant 001'). These numbers will be kept on a separate document that links your participant number to your consent form. Once the project is completed this document will be destroyed. This will be done on: 31-06-23. You have up until the end of the project (31-06-23) to withdraw your contribution from the project. After this point, the transcripts will be deemed to have been anonymised and you will no longer be able to withdraw your contribution.

If you have concerns that that you still remain identifiable or that your contribution has been used for purposes other than those stated, you have the right to object to your data being used. The objection process can be found at the end of this information sheet (see *How can I access information relating to me*).

All data will be stored securely in a password-protected folder on an external hard drive to which only Tiffany will have access.

Your data will be processed in accordance with University of Glasgow's research mission and its legal responsibilities in relation to both information security and scrutiny of researcher conduct. As part of this, under UK legislation (UK General Data Protection Regulation [UK GDPR]), the 'lawful basis' for the processing of personal data is that the project constitutes 'a task in the public interest', and that any processing of special category data is 'necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research'.

The materials may be used in future research and be cited and discussed in future publications, both print and online. Anonymised data will be retained for 10 years on Enlighten: Research Data – the University of Glasgow's institutional data repository. Tiffany will publicise publication of any research material on Costume Networking Sites and will email copies of publications to those who request to receive it.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is organised by Tiffany and forms part of her PhD thesis. Tiffany is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to carry out this research.

About Tiffany (Project Researcher)

I am a full-time PhD student at the University of Glasgow. My research is about how costume workers maintain careers in the UK film and television industry.

This research stems from my personal background in costume. I graduated from the University of South Wales with BA(Hons) Costume Construction for Stage and Screen. Since then, I have worked on both high-end and low-budget productions throughout the South Wales area, in both the workroom and on-set. In 2019 I decided to take some time away from costume to pursue my interests in researching the film and television industry and the people who work within it. For examples of my costume work from my college days, please head to my website at: https://tiffanybale.wixsite.com/costume

Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed and approved by members of the University of Glasgow College of Arts Research Ethics committee on 8th February 2021.

How can I access information relating to me or complain if I suspect information has been misused/ used for purposes other than I agreed to?

You can contact the researcher or their supervisor in the first instance if you have any concerns. If you are not comfortable doing this, or if you have tried but don't get a response or if the person in question appears to have left the University, you can contact the College of Arts Ethics Officer (email: arts-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk).

Where there appear to have been problems, you can – and indeed may be advised to – submit an 'access request' or an objection to the use of data. As part of the University's obligations under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), participants retain the rights to access and objection with regard to the use of non-anonymised data for research purposes.

1. Access requests and objections can be submitted via the UofG online proforma accessible at: https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/dpfoioffice/gdpr/gdprrequests/#

2. Access requests and objection are formal procedures not because we mean to intimidate participants into not raising issues, but rather because the University

is legally required to respond and address concerns. The system provides a clear point of contact, appropriate support and a clear set of responsibilities.

3. Anyone who submits a request will need to provide proof of their identity. Again, this is not to deter inquiries, but rather reflects the University's duty to guard against fraudulent approaches that might result in data breaches.

Contact for further Information

For more information, please contact:

Tiffany Bale, t.bale.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Project supervisor: Prof. Mark Banks, mark.banks@glasgow.ac.uk

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the College of Arts Ethics Officer (email: arts-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk).

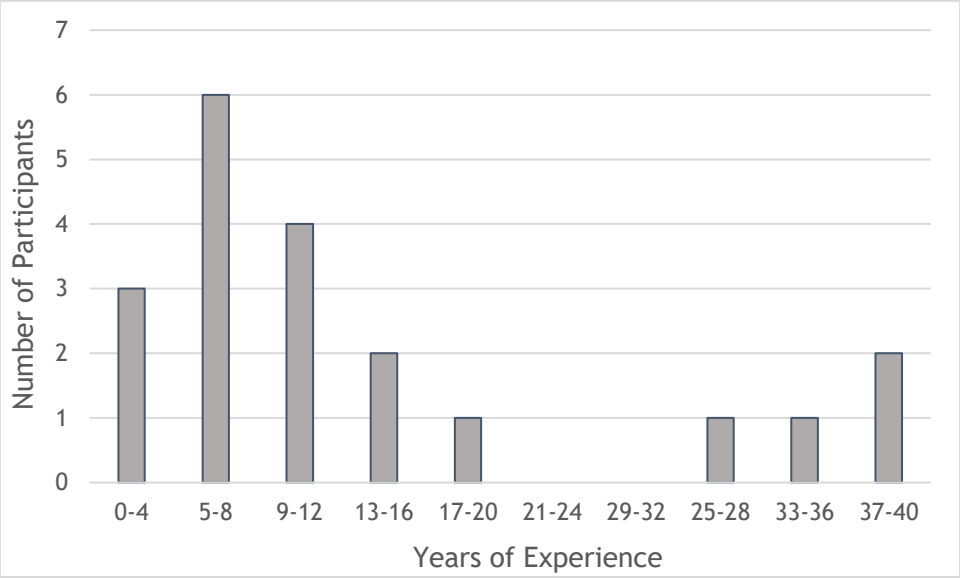
* 'Costume Communities' was the title of the research when participants were recruited.

Appendix iii: Participant careers

Early career ranges from 0-4 years of experience, mid-career ranges from 5-12 years of experience, and 'established' or long-term careers refers to 13+ years of experience. These categories are indicative only, and whilst levels of experience often correlated to career stage, in some cases a participants' years of experience did not correlate to their role. These ranges are based on common understandings amongst participants.

Table 1: Participant Pseudonym, experience and role

Pseudonym	Year bracket	Role
Louise	0-4 years	Costume Trainee
Klara	0-4 years	Costume Trainee
Ellie	0-4 years	Costume Trainee
Fern	5-8 years	Costume Maker
Martha	5-8 years	Costume Standby
Lucy	5-8 years	Costume Maker
Claire	5-8 years	Costume Standby
Shannon	5-8 years	Costume Standby
Harriet	5-8 years	Crowd Costume Supervisor
Isabel	9-12 years	Assistant Costume Designer
Rachel	9-12 years	Costume Maker
Georgia	9-12 years	Costume Standby
Tara	9-12 years	Crowd Costume Supervisor
Zara	13-16 years	Crowd Costume Supervisor
Paula	13-16 years	Costume Maker
Alice	17-20 years	Assistant Costume Designer
Natalie	25-28 years	Costume Designer
Olivia	33-36 years	Costume worker
Bridget	37-40 years	Costume Supervisor
Diane	37-40 years	Costume Supervisor



[Figure 3: Histogram of participants' years of experience]

Appendix iv: Interview framework

Opening

The research looks at the experiences of costume workers in the UK's film and television industry. The research is particularly interested in understanding how freelance costume workers are sustaining or supporting their careers in an uncertain and precarious industry.

The questions will be about your career experiences and your, relationships with costume colleagues.

Have you completed the consent form?

To reiterate – if anything you say today is quoted it is highly unlikely that anyone could trace back what you have said to you. In publications you will be given a pseudonym. All identifying information such, 'when I was working on xyz production' will be removed.

If there are any questions that you don't want to answer then that's perfectly fine, and if you need to leave the call at any time - that's also perfectly fine, just press the red leave button at the bottom right of the screen.

You have until I finish the project to remove what you have from the project, and the cut-off date for that is June 2023.

Are you we good to continue?

Warm-up questions:

How did you get your first costume job?

Can you give an overview of your career so far from then you got started?

Topic	Questions
Looking for work	• How do you find work? • How often do you have a formal costume job interview? • Why do you think some people struggle looking for work? • Has the way in which people get jobs changed over years? Are there more formal interviews for trainees? • Is there a certain type of person who excels in the costume department? • Does age play a factor in who excels and who doesn't?
Relationships with colleagues	• Do you work with the same people often? • Do you prefer working with certain costume teams and not others? • What is the basis for a good working relationship? • How important is loyalty? • Do people talk about the difficulties of the job, such as hours and insecurity? • Have you seen of been a part of any job-sharing schemes? <u>For those with 'close' relationships with colleagues:</u> • How would you characterise your relationship with [colleague]? • Are your closed contacts all based in the same region? • Working in regions compared to working in London – are people more tight-knit? <u>For those without close relationships with costume colleagues:</u>

	• Do you think it's important to have close relationships? Is it a better way to work alone? Are relationships essential?
Working life and personal responsibilities	• Do you have any caring responsibilities? (Not just children) • What's the relationship between work and home-life? • Have you ever reached a point of burn out or been close to it? <u>If participant has caring responsibilities:</u> • What reaction do you get from supervisors/other colleagues if you tell them about your caring responsibilities? Or you need to leave early etc? • How did you feel about having children and working, before you had the experience of it yourself? • Did you take maternity leave, or did you work until that last possible date? If so, how was that?
Value of costume work	• Do you feel that your skills are respected by other film and television departments? • Do you think gender plays a role in that? • Do you think the fact that the costume department is majority women impacts the way it operates?
Usage of Facebook/Whatsapp	• Are you part of any Facebook costume groups? • Do you have a private WhatsApp/Messenger group with the people you usually work with? • Do you tag friends about possible jobs? • Do you call on costume colleagues for other reasons than seeking work, for example, to check in on someone?

Coping/sustaining a career	• Have you felt supported/connected with costume colleagues over the last few months e.g. texting, calling for a chat, keeping each other up to date on jobs? • Written and unwritten rules of what you do for each other – what's ok to ask for and what not? <u>For those with longer careers:</u> • What do you think has been the main reasons for the length of your career?

Finally:

What do you classify as a successful career?

Do you see yourself staying in costume long term?

Have there been any particular people who have been instrumental in your career?

What do you think are the three main factors that have meant you've sustained a career for this long?

Interview close:

Thank you for answering my questions and thank you for your time. Is there anything else you would like to add about working in the costume department, or ask me any questions about the research?

Broaching the possibility of audio diary.

Do you know anyone else that might like to take part?

Appendix v: Audio diary information sheet

Information for audio diary participants

Project title: Costume Communities: Researching costume careers in the film and television industries

Project Researcher: Tiffany Bale, t.bale.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Project Supervisor: Prof. Mark Banks, mark.banks@glasgow.ac.uk

School of Culture and Creative Arts, University of Glasgow

What are audio diaries?

In order to fully convey what it is like to be a costume worker in the film and television industry, this research project is also using audio diaries for workers to record their thoughts and encounters during their working week. Over the course of 4 weeks you will be asked to record a voice note discussing how your week is going in relation to work, including weeks where you are working and weeks where you are seeking work.

The voice notes can be as short as a few minutes or as long ten minutes, but I ask that you do it a minimum of once per week over the 4-week period. Try to find a private space with few interruptions to record your diary entry. If this isn't possible, you can type of a few notes on your phone and send these instead.

I understand that remembering to do this during the week may become a task in itself, so on a Thursday evening I will send you a reminder WhatsApp message with some prompts to start you off.

What would you be asked to talk about?

You will be asked to discuss your week in relation to work. This can seem like quite a daunting task to begin with, so I've put together some prompt questions to get you going:

1) How's your work week been?

2) Have you been looking for work this week?

3) Have you been talking to any costume friends outside of work?

4) Did you have any notable interactions with costume colleagues or events that have stayed with you?

5) How has the work-life balance been this week?

6) Have you had any other thoughts about the interview questions that you were asked?

Confidentiality and Data Storage

The voice notes you provide will be treated with same level of confidentiality as the interview, and similarly, any identifying information will be removed when quoting your voice note in my PhD thesis or in future publications.

Once you have sent me the voice note it will be stored on an encrypted laptop and backed-up on a password-protected hard drive. Once the 4 weeks have passed, I will make a transcript of the voice note which you will be able to view and keep. All audio files will be deleted at the end of the project, and the anonymised

transcripts will be retained for 10 years on Enlighten: Research Data – the University of Glasgow's institutional data repository.

You have until the end of the project (31-06-23) if you want to withdraw your audio diaries from the project. After this date, the audio diaries will be considered to be anonymised and you will no longer be able to withdraw what you have said. However, if you have legitimate grounds for concern that you still remain identifiable or that your contribution has been used for purposes other than those stated you have the right to object to your data being used. The objection process can be found above (*see How can I access information relating to me.)*.

WhatsApp Privacy Policy

WhatsApp is encrypted end-to-end which ensures that only you and the person you're communicating with can read or listen to what is sent, and nobody in between, not even WhatsApp. Only those who have access to your WhatsApp and myself can have access to voice note.

For more information on WhatsApp end-to-end encryption head to: https://faq.whatsapp.com/general/security-and-privacy/end-to-end-encryption

Appendix vi: Example of career log

Years active	Years in ind.	Education	First job	Career jumping off point	Instrumental person/network	Position to choose work	Return to work after children (months)	Brought child to work?	Mentions guilt
*	*	Costume degree	Soap opera trainee	From first job - interview at BBC	University lecturer	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
*	*	Costume degree	HETV trainee	2nd HETV job. Costume supervisor subsequently took her onto following production	Costume supervisor enabling job sharing	Unsure	N/A	No, had job share plus child minder	Yes
*	*	Theatre costume degree	Theatre	No 'one' specific job - have moved between mediums but now remains in HETV and teaching	Costume house owner enabling participant to bring child to work. Also supervisor for offering part time arrangement	Yes	Few months	Worked with child in private workroom	Yes
*	*	Costume degree	Medium budget TV junior	Designer from first job	Designer on first job	No	12 (pandemic)	No	Yes
*	*	Fashion degree	Theatre then regional soap opera trainee	Career yet to launch - soap opera has been semi-launching point	Still in early stages but notes costume assistant on first TV job	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
*	*	Theatre design degree	Unpaid then trainee scheme	Trainee scheme	No one specific - mentor on trainee scheme - although has large network	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
*	*	Costume design degree	Theatre	Theatre through a contact, then costume house, then offered big HETV job	Designer - checking in/contact relationship	Yes	2	Yes, breast feeding at work	Yes
*	*	Fashion degree	Film trainee but left and came back as standby on HETV	Puts launch in career down to growth in regional TV industry production but notes she struggled and persisted	Mentions specific supervisor who gave 'big break'	Yes	9	Mentions expressing milk at work	No
*	*	O levels	Theatre company - 20 years in theatre and then switch to HETV in 2012	Switch to HETV	Costume supervisor known for 30 years, plus a craft 'mentor'	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
*	*	Costume degree	Few theatre jobs, then TV trainee scheme placement on kids TV show - spent a significant amount of time not getting paid	Trainee scheme where she met designer to take her onto next jobs	Not stayed with one supervisor due to them working only one job a year, but has developed a network of multiples by being flexible with role	Yes	6	No but worked part time, and did work around childcare on her days off	No

Years active	Years in ind.	Education	First job	Career jumping off point	Instrumental person/network	Position to choose work	Return to work after children (months)	Had to bring child to work	Mentions guilt
*	*	Costume degree	Active networking - sneaking into studios and hand out CV (contrasted to ease of FB now)	Multiple small jobs - first through university, then commercials	Multiple accruing of contacts and then just started getting calls - no single person but has large network	Yes	Few months	Yes	Yes
*	*	Fashion degree/ short course in costume	Theatre dressing and character costume work	Designer with relationship to costume course	Specific designer and then various people	Unsure	24	Took alternate career when children small	No
*	*	Degree in related course	Position in theatre	Theatre and contacts made	Supervisor at theatre	Yes	N/A	No	Yes, regrets going back to work
*	*	Uncompleted degree in costume	BBC TV	Training scheme	Informal mentor met on one of first jobs	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
*	*	Costume degree	HETV trainee	Permanent position at theatre	Teacher at university	No	N/A	N/A	N/A

caring responsibilities

no caring responsibilities

identifying information removed

Instrumental person/close network

Large network

*Not all participants are included due to identifiable career timelines, and some columns have been removed to protect participants' anonymity.

Appendix vii: NVivo coding scheme

(Parent nodes and sub-nodes in alphabetical order).

Nodes

Name	Files	References
CARE	5	7
CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER	7	11
LACK OF SELF CARE-BURN OUT	8	14
LOVE FOR THE JOB	16	29
CAREER	9	15
CHOICE	5	6
CHOOSING WORK	3	4
CONFIDENCE	7	11
TURNING POINT	6	7
CARING RESPONSIBILITIES	16	90
CHANGES TO CAREER	3	4
JOB SHARING	9	15
MATERNITY	4	6
PART-TIME	3	6
CLASS	1	2
COMPETITION-INSECURITIES	6	8
DISABILITY	1	2
FACEBOOK-WHATSAPP	13	24
GENDER	9	14
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION	9	13
GROUP	13	21
COMPETITION-INSECURITIES	6	8
GETTING ALONG	14	31
PERSONALITY	18	38
SUPPORT	16	33
WORKING ENVIRONMENT	12	22
HOURS	17	42
BURN OUT	3	4
PAY-MONEY	1	1
PRESSURE	1	6
WORK-LIFE BALANCE	5	8
LOYALTY-TRUST	5	9
RACE	3	15
RELATIONSHIPS	11	27
COLLEAGUES	5	5
FRIENDS	12	19
INSTRUMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS	9	19
SOCIALISING	8	9
RESPONSIBILITY-ACCOUNTABILITY	4	4
DESIGNER	10	15
MENTOR	12	22
SUPERVISORS	17	43

Nodes

Name	Files	References
STRUGGLE	9	17
ACTIVE NETWORKING	6	16
INTERVIEW EXPERIENCES	10	16
LEAVING	2	6
NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE	9	16
UNPAID	5	6
SUCCESS	4	4
FORTUNATE-LUCKY	10	16
PROFESSIONALISM	3	6
THE PRESENT- CHANGE	15	43
BECTU	3	3
COVID	15	44
FUTURE	4	8
VALUE OF COSTUME WORK	11	22

Glossary

Costume designer – The costume designer is in charge of building a cohesive sartorial world for the characters of a production. They work closely with the director to achieve their vision. Costume designers breakdown the scripts to ascertain which costumes may need to be made or hired. The costume designers will be in costume fittings and will consult with the maker and cutters to achieve their desired look.

Costume supervisor – The costume supervisor is in charge with the overall running of the department. Often the costume supervisor will work closely with the same designer. The costume supervisor role includes, but is not limited to: hiring personnel, budgeting, working closely with the designer to ensure the costumes are to the standard the production requires, organising the setting up of the department, e.g. hiring equipment, hiring of costumes, ensuring that department morale is upheld and the department functions smoothly.

Costume truck – A large portable cabin that is used **on location.**

Crew – A general term used to refer to staff working on a film or television production, mainly in reference to the technical staff. 'To crew' is often used as a verb to mean 'to staff' a production.

Crowd – The groups of **SAs** or background artists who populate a scene **on set**. In most cases **SAs** are provided with a costume. (Unless in modern day productions where SAs may be asked to wear their own clothes.)

Crowd costume supervisor – The role in charge of overseeing the running of the costumes for the crowd. The role also includes scheduling and organising the crowd team. The crowd supervisor role also includes breaking down the script to ascertain when SAs will be required and what costumes they need to be wearing.

Crowd tent – Normally a large temporary building or tent that can house the dressing space and costumes of the SAs. On productions with large budgets the

crowd tent can house hundreds of costumes. It is the main base of the crowd team.

Cutter – the person in charge of drafting the patterns and cutting the fabric in line with the designer's vision. The cutter is based in the workroom.

Daily/dailies - Somone who is not contracted for the entire length of the production but works on an ad hoc basis when needed. These roles tend to occur at short notice, which could range between a few weeks in advance to the day before. They can be contracted for a singular day or multiple weeks.

Junior – The position above the trainee. One can be a junior in the workroom, in crowd, or on the costume truck. This is an intermediary position between becoming a standby or a maker.

On location – A location that is outside the production studios.

On-set – the film or television production set where filming takes place.

Principals – Principal actors or the main cast of the production.

SAs - Supporting artists/ background artists (previously known as 'extras').

Standby – This is the most common of all roles and can either be a principal standby or a crowd standby. A standby typically helps groups of SAs or individual principals to put on their costume. The standby will then accompany their allotted group or individual artist to set. On-set a standby is tasked with ensuring that their actor or group of SAs are wearing their costume correctly and keeping track of any costume changes, for example, if an actor takes off a piece of their costume. They take continuity photographs and log how the actor is wearing the costume, for example wearing their tie in a certain knot. Standbys are also responsible for doing 'checks', which is checking if a costume has moved during a take and then resetting that costume to its original position. Most importantly, the task of the standby is to ensure that the designer's vision is being

communicated on set, some refer to standbys as being the designer's voice on set, ensuring that the costumes are worn in the way that the designer has chosen. Standbys are also tasked with ensuring actor(s) stay warm by providing them with blankets or warm coats.

On some productions crowd standbys are also required to select garments for SAs to wear in line the designer's overall 'look' for the production. The crowd standby would also be tasked with fitting the costume to the SA.

Trainee – the entry level role into the costume department. Trainee roles are typically either in the workroom, the crowd tent, or costume truck.

Workroom – the room(s) within a production studio dedicated to sewing and making the costumes. Those who work in the workroom tend to rarely enter the set.