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The Real Cost of Childcare: Motherhood and Flexible Creative Labour in the UK Film Industry

> 'I suppose I've nurtured my creativity rather than nurturing a baby'.(Skillset 2009, Industry Culture and Attitudes)

There is one clear factor that leads to women's inequality in the labour market: 'becoming mothers' (Commission for Equalities and Human Rights, 2007). It is difficult to talk about women and work without talking about childcare. The same would not be true about a discussion of men and work and this is still one of the most obvious difficulties to be managed by working women, even those who choose not to have children[1]. In this article, I will bring together existing literature from different academic fields, predominantly gender and work, creative industries, maternal studies and work and organisations, in order to reveal what is potentially overlooked by their separated concerns. Much of the existing literature that references motherhood in relation to work focuses on two key areas. The first explores the difficulties of balancing work and childcare, and rightly challenges the assumption that this is a female problem. Another major focus is on the very important task of recognising the work done by women around childcare and the home and how undervalued, under-rewarded and under-recognised it is as an essential support to the world of work and organisations outside of the home (see for example: Di Leonardo 1987; Franks 1999; Hartmann 1987; Hochschild 1983; Simic 2010). However, this means there is less of a focus on the cost of this labour to those who undertake it and how many mothers are actually unable to stay in the workforce or pursue a career of their choice. In the UK, policy makers and indeed mothers themselves often talk about the desirability of flexible labour to accommodate family responsibilities (Skillset 2009; Skillset 2008; Skillset 2010; Women Like Us 2012; GOV.UK; WorkingFamilies.org.uk; Rowlatt and Stewart 2010). By reviewing the academic writing on creative work, I will argue that flexible working can often be more difficult to reconcile with motherhood and provides additional barriers for mothers hoping to juggle work and families. Creative work is shown to offer an exemplary case study for flexible labour markets (e.g. Banks 2007; Davis and Scase 2000; Gill 2010; McRobbie, 2002a). However, although observing the continued absence of women[2] in

creative professions, there is little of this literature that critically examines the reasons for gendered outcomes of these informal employment and working conditions[3], particularly in relation to motherhood. One of the main reasons for this oversight is the lack of women with children who are actually working in the creative industries, which makes it difficult to capture the data about them. I am here to bring together academic thinking from different fields and break down some of the key characteristics of flexible creative work to examine why they might disadvantage those with childcare responsibilities. Whilst I do not wish to suggest that motherhood is the only, or even primary, reason for continued gender inequality in creative work[4], I hope to problematise the idea that flexible working offers a solution to the difficulties of balancing children and work. This argument has potential application outside the creative professions, and highlights the necessity of a wider recognition of society's need for a supply of people as well as products. What are needed are real-life solutions that are in line with feminist concerns about unrecognised maternal labour. Solutions which challenge the perception of the male life cycle as the norm in the world of work and bring into the work place a greater understanding and accommodation of the demands and responsibilities of parenting.

Skillset's (2010) report on the status of women in the creative industries in the UK found that representation is highest in sectors comprising larger employers in which more stable, permanent employment models are common, such as terrestrial television (48%), broadcast radio (47%), cinema exhibition (43%), and book publishing (61%) (Skillset 2010, p.5). In the UK film industry, only 14% of women have children compared to 40% of men (Skillset and UK Film Council 2008, Section 2.6). Work in the UK film industry exemplifies many traits of flexible working such as variable working hours, project-based employment, uncertainty, precariousness and irregular and often unreliable payment. This article considers the hidden inequalities in the apparent freedom of creative professions, such as the UK film industry. It pays particular attention to the role of the screenwriter, which is often perceived as more compatible with childcare than other creative roles, in order to illustrate how continued gendered assumptions about a women's role as the primary carer for children can impact on their career opportunities in creative project-based work. I will begin by reviewing academic research on gender and work and organisations, drawing on key thinkers to argue that women's potential to bear children can position them as less than the ideal worker, particularly in a culture of long-hours and total devotion to the job, and therefore can continue to uphold inequalities of opportunity and recognition along gender lines. In the next section, I will unpack how the very characteristics of

creative labour that appear to offer freedom to the individual can disadvantage mothers. This section will use screenwriting as a case study and draw on data and interviews with screenwriters and other film workers from trade organisations. Finally, I will attempt to draw some brief conclusions. The industry data is predominantly drawn from the UK and Hollywood and although there are clearly parallels in other film industries and countries, it has not been possible within the scope of this article to consider the limitations of applying this analysis in different contexts.

The Maternal Assumption and the Breadwinner Mentality

> The question of who brings up the kids has a material effect on all women's careers. (Kidon quoted in Cochrane, 2010)

In this section, I will review the literature on gender, work and organisations in order to draw attention to how women are positioned as less than ideal workers. I will highlight in particular the extent to which women as mothers or even potential mothers contribute to this perception of them in the work place. Despite feminist attempts to question the homogeny of the category of 'woman' (most notably, Butler 1990), it is still very difficult for anyone presenting themselves as female to avoid the assumption that they will at some point become a mother, and will subsequently devote a substantial part of their time to looking after that child or children. Janet Smithson and Elizabeth Stokoe (2005) argue that:

> It is in the on-going construction of social categories (such as "professional worker", "breadwinner", "woman") and the activities and characteristics people link to them (like "working all hours", "caring", "looking after children") that is central to the perpetuation of gendered assumptions and practices. (Smithson and Stokoe 2005, p. 152-153).

In addition, they explain, the more established a categorisation and link, the more natural it appears and therefore the more invisible the construction. The capacity for biological motherhood has become intrinsically linked with a corresponding predisposition to nurture and care for others, which is broadly accepted as an essential part of being female. It has a wide and complex effect on women's lives and how women are perceived by others. Janice Bell, Managing Director and Consultant, argues:

> Assumption is the biggest challenge to women. It's not about what you can do, it's about what people higher up think you're capable of doing. (Bell quoted in The Open University 2012, p. 28)

Jobs, and workers, are seen as gender-neutral concepts although in reality 'both the concept of "a job" and real workers are deeply gendered and "bodied"' (Acker 1990, p.150). Joan Acker (1990)

argues that the abstract worker has 'no sexuality, no emotions and does not procreate' (ibid, p.151), which helps to reproduce the idea that work is gender neutral. However, in reality:

> Women's bodies – female sexuality, their ability to procreate and their pregnancy, breast-feeding, and childcare, menstruation and mythic "emotionality" – are suspect, stigmatized and used as grounds for control and exclusion. (ibid, p.152) whilst men 'need not be involved in, or affected by, equality measures' (Liff and Cameron 1997, p.36).

As Bell, continues:

> I had to make sure I didn't let the family show in the working environment. You had to act the same way as men. Never saying no to anything, always willing to do extra work and extra hours. (Bell quoted in The Open University 2012, p.28)

In *Managing like a man: Women and men in corporate management,* Judy Wajcman (1998) convincingly demonstrates that managerial jobs 'position women as the problem and accept men's life experience as the norm' (Wajcman 1998, p.11), an argument that is equally applicable to creative work. Wajcman suggests that in order to succeed, women are required to become more like men, and that, although equal opportunities policies have been introduced to try to facilitate the possibility of working and having a family, they have largely been focused on women, as if only women have children: 'policies that increase support for women's mothering role help to perpetuate the domestic definition of women workers' (Wajcman 1998, p.26).

In most professions it is a challenge to balance the needs of the workplace with the needs of children and this burden still falls most frequently on the shoulders of women (Kelan 2008; McRobbie 2009; Smithson and Stokoe 2005). Much of the work done by any organisation's Equal Opportunities Policy is often to try to help women fit into jobs and professions constructed around a male life cycle (Liff and Cameron 1997; Smithson and Stokoe 2005; Wajcman 1998). Measures such as part-time, flexible hours and maternity pay attempt to accommodate the need for women to bear and raise children. However, according to Women Like Us, an award-winning organisation that helps women find work that fits with their new needs after having children, part-time work is overwhelmingly associated with low pay. Only 3 per cent of vacancies in London are for part-time roles paying over £20,000 FTE[5] (Stewart et al. 2012). Wajcman argues that when organisations write their Equal Opportunities Policy 'by leaving full-time work as the dominant option … [they] construct part-time work not merely as different but also as inferior.' (Wajcman 1998, p.27). Part-time jobs are often seen as a sign that the worker is not fully committed to the job. In a post-Fordist labour market, employers appear to have become even more paranoid about their ability to get their money's worth from employees:

> …new employment relations still require the performance of a breadwinner mentality. This mentality is characterized by an individualized worker who can focus on work full-time. (Kelan 2008, p.1172)

In fact, very few workers are able to get away with just 'full-time' hours - with work frequently bleeding into the evenings, the early mornings and the weekends, particularly with the nature of mobile technology and international relations across different time zones.

> I thought I'd be able to go back … and I'd kind of do a nine to five day. And then they weren't able to keep the job within those hours. (Production Manager, Skillset 2008, p.11)

However, Suzanne Franks (1999) argues that:

> The structures of work and especially "careers", the unbroken span of years, the assumption that real jobs require far more than a minimum of full-time hours, were invented by and for men – preferably with a supportive wife at home. (Franks 1999, p.194)

> It is an argument Wajcman develops further as she observes the benefit that men receive in the workplace when they get married, and especially when they have children. The assumption that their wives will stay at home with the children means that these men are perceived as being freed from other domestic responsibilities that might burden the single man – such as shopping for groceries, keeping the house clean and waiting in for deliveries and repairs. With someone else to take responsibility for these chores and more, men can be perceived as being freed up to focus on work. Career women with children, however, can face the opposite assumption that they are bringing less to their jobs once they are married or have children – even when they remain full-time. The belief (and in many cases, the reality[6]) that women will be doing a 'second shift' (Hochschild 1983) of work and domestic responsibilities means that they are often perceived as not fully committed to their career, and more likely to be running out of the door at six on the dot to pick up children from childcare and to stay at home when children are ill.

> Career women, especially in managerial ranks, do not have the advantage of being seen as bringing two people to their jobs. On the contrary, women are seen as bringing less than one full worker…The social construction of "jobs" already has within it the assumption that workers will be men and that these men will have wives to take care of their daily needs. (Wajcman 1998, p.39)

These assumptions also fail to acknowledge that not all mothers, or women, are in heterosexual relationships and so do not necessarily have a man to look after or are the ones doing the childcare. However, the reality for many women is that in order to succeed in many professions, they may find that they need to forgo having children (Skillset 2009; Skillset and UK Film Council 2008; Wajcman 1998). It may also be true for men that they must sacrifice aspects of

their personal life, and time spent with their children and families, in order to rise up the career ladder. However, whilst this might be deeply felt by individual men,

> There is no trade union campaign about men's right to parental leave. There are no waves of sexism tribunals brought by dads whose employers are preventing them – but not their female colleagues – from balancing work with childcare. (Burrows, 2013)

In fact, 'our children's grandmothers are twice as likely to look after them during the day than their own fathers' (ibid).

While these gendered assumptions prevail, it is difficult for women to overcome 'the stigma of motherhood' (Wajcman 1998, p.46). One female film producer who is yet to have children of her own is quoted in the Skillset and UK Film Council Report (2008), *Balancing Children and Work in the Audio Visual Industries,* and freely admits:

> I'd rather use a guy who has got no responsibilities and is available all the time…Completely no tolerance policy for me I'm afraid because it directly impacts on my business. (Skillset and UK Film Council 2008, p.8)

The view that women are perceived as different, and therefore treated differently, simply because of their potential ability to have children is supported by the comments of one salesman in Boris Groysberg's (2008) article on 'star' women who work on Wall Street:

> Say there are two analysts, John and Joanne – equally smart, equally good analysts, both in their late twenties/early thirties, both spend 14 hours a day at work. The day is only 24 hours long, so I have to allocate my time intelligently….Who is most likely to stay at the firm? Based on my experience, I have to say John. Joanne is going to get married…she might decide to have children…Is this not rational? It's just the way the business is. (Groysberg 2008, p.78)

It is also echoed by one of the young men interviewed in Margaret Wetherell et al's (1987) ground-breaking investigation of discourses of final year university students around gender and employment opportunities:

> I suppose you can always see how an employer's mind will work, if he has a choice between two identically qualified and identically, identical personalities, and one is male and one is female, you can sympathize with him for perhaps wondering if the female is not going to get married and have children and then there's always the risk that she may not come back after, she may well do, a lot of women do, but uh I don't know he may well decide that the risk is not worth taking. (Male Four quoted in Wetherell et al. 1987, p.62)

In the study, eight of the ten female students think that juggling a career and children would be a problem for them, while all of the male students do not consider it a problem for them. Although this particular study is now 25 years old, evidence suggests that women are still positioned as being more responsible than men for the care of children. For example, current

government legislation allows men only two weeks off work after the birth of their baby, whilst women are allowed up to 52 weeks maternity leave. The situation looks likely to change from 2015 (BBC News 2012). However, with women still being socially constructed as more natural carers of children (Franks 1999; Skillset 2008; Smithson and Stokoe 2005), and paid less than men (Cohen and Huffman 2003; Stewart et al. 2012), it remains to be seen whether this has any substantial effect in real terms. In Sweden, where mothers and fathers can share parental leave equally, it is still the norm for women to take most of the leave and then to return to work part time (BBC Radio 4 2012). Whilst it may be a feminist ideal to break down gendered assumptions and trouble the idea of difference based on biological and essentialist notions, the reality for most women is that becoming mothers will have a significant effect on their career and earning potential, in a way that is not the same for men who become fathers. Creative work, however, is exemplified by characteristics that potentially offer an opportunity to work around other commitments, for example working without direct supervision, outside of an office, choosing your own hours and having gaps between projects. In the next section I will attempt to demonstrate how this ideal not only falls short of reality, but, indeed, it is these very traits of flexibility and informality that make it particularly difficult for those with childcare responsibilities.

The Costs of Creative Labour

> They don't actually want you to have a life. (Screenwriter, Skillset 2008, p.8)

In this next section I will start to unpack some of the characteristics of apparently 'flexible' creative work to examine how they might disadvantage women, and mothers in particular. Many academic accounts examine the growing importance of creative industries in 'post-industrial' societies (e.g. Banks 2007; Bilton 2007; Florida 2004; Gill and Pratt 2008; Hesmondhalgh 2007; McRobbie 2002a) and argue that independent creative workers embody the traits most valued in advanced, neo-liberal economies, such as being entrepreneurial, flexible, networked and self-motivated (Banks 2007; Christopherson 2008; Conor 2010; Gill 2010; McRobbie 2002a). Evangelists of the 'new economy' insist that cultural workers are free from dull corporate environments and that it is the future for all workers to be able to seek employment that is more flexible, more self-fulfilling and self-sufficient (Banks 2007; Davis and Scase 2000; Florida 2004). However, critical sociological accounts of creative labour (e.g. Blair 2001; Gill 2002; Gill and Pratt 2008; McRobbie 2002b; Ross 2004; Ursell 2000) provide analysis and understanding of the

realities of life in the creative industries by offering critiques of neo-liberal claims to increased freedom and creativity at work. In addition, they cut across the more celebratory and hopeful accounts promoted by governments, such as Tony Blair's New Labour (Department for Culture Media and Sport 1998; Department for Culture Media and Sport 2001), for whom the cultural industries offer 'a solution to systemic crises of deindustrialization' (Banks 2007, p.1). Rosalind Gill (2002) persuasively argues that the celebrated features of working in the new cultural industries, such as informality and flexibility, 'are the very mechanisms through which inequality is reproduced' (Gill 2002, p.86). Alan McKinley and Chris Smith (2009) argue that a labour process approach reveals the truth about working in real situations and challenges the claims and hype. The realities include experiences of cultural work as alienating, exploitative and precarious with often little or no pay and stress and anxiety caused by the need to be constantly juggling more than one project or job at the same time as looking for future work through informal networking and self-promotion. The creative labour research highlights the general preponderance of certain characteristics, e.g. long hours and 'bulimic' (Pratt 2000) patterns of working, poor pay, leisure and socialising as work, profound experiences of insecurity and anxiety about finding work, and notes the continuance of inequalities along the lines of age, gender, ethnicity and class. However, the literature does not always look deeper or provide empirical evidence for the reasons for these inequalities of outcome, with notable exceptions (e.g. Gill 2000 on radio DJs, Gill 2002 on new media workers and Kelan 2009 on ICT workers.) Consideration of motherhood as a cause of gender inequalities is given even less attention in the academic literature. In UK industry accounts, there is some awareness of the difficulties of juggling work and childcare responsibilities (Sinclair et al. 2006; Skillset 2008; Skillset 2009; Skillset 2010) but these are not subject to any critical examination of the gendered assumptions behind these struggles, nor do they offer any new or radically different solutions to the problem. Drawing on the available literature and surveys by trade organisations, I hope to demonstrate how the characteristics of creative labour, as exemplified by the film industry, cause inequality of opportunity for mothers in particular.

The film industry is not a new creative industry, but many argue (Christopherson 2008; Christopherson and Storper 1988; Florida 2004; Storper and Christopherson 1987) that it offers an exemplary case study for how in post-Fordist societies, industrial production has been replaced with the 'socialized worker' (Gill and Pratt 2008; p.6) and the 'factory' 'disseminated out into society as a whole' (ibid, p.6). Susan Christopherson and Michael Storper (1988) do

extensive work that looks at the changing context of creative careers in a post-Fordist society, where there has been a shift from vertically integrated firms to networks of small, specialised firms and freelancers. It is not hard to find data to indicate that there is substantial and continued underemployment of women and non-whites in the film industry, particularly in key creative roles. Martha Lauzen (2002; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013) takes on the responsibility for looking at the presence of women behind the 250 highest grossing films every year and in doing so builds a much needed body of evidence that shows that not only are women underrepresented in most key professions in the film industry, but that the situation is not changing (Lauzen 2002; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013). Slight increases in the percentages of writers, directors, producers and other key roles in any year are all too often followed by slight decreases the following year, and largely there is a sense that one or two successful women in any given year can alter the results. Overall, the industry is not ready to make changes to the level of women's involvement in the key roles of feature film production. Table 1 highlights some of the results. Between 8 and 15 per cent of the screenwriters are women. Perhaps the most recent upturn represents some cause for hope, but it is difficult to be optimistic whilst the numbers of main decision-makers employing writers and selecting which scripts to pursue to production remain equally stuck: 22-25 per cent of producers are women, 14-18 per cent of executive producers and 5-9 per cent of directors.

Table 1

Historical Comparison of Percentages of Women Employed in Key Behind-the-scene Roles taken from Martha M Lauzen's Celluloid Ceiling reports on the Top 250 Films of 2007-2012

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
% Female Writers	15	14	10	8	12	10
% Producers	25	25	24	23	23	22
% Female Executive Producers	17	18	15	17	16	14
% Female Directors	9	5	7	7	9	6
Overall % of Women employed as either directors, executive producers, producers, writers, editors or cinematographers	18	18	16	16	16	15

Most film workers fit a 'flexible specialization' model (Christopherson and Storper 1988; Storper and Christopherson 1987). That is, they are employed on a freelance, project-by-project basis, applying their own particular specialisation across a range of projects and often across different media. This is the epitome of flexible work as individuals and small or micro businesses come together for short periods of time on temporary projects (Deuze 2010) and are seemingly free to work when and where they choose. However, Lisa Adkins (1999) convincingly argues that it is only because women continue to assume responsibility for childcare and the home that men are able to take up these new flexible positions in the creative economy (Adkins 1999). I will now examine in more detail three key aspects of creative work that apparently offer choice and control to the individual: freelance project work, informality and creative freedom. By drawing on the existing academic literature and bringing it into dialogue with film industry accounts, I hope to highlight the way that these characteristics actually create obstacles for mothers.

The Costs of Freelance Project-Based Work

A recently published report commissioned by the Sundance Institute and Women In Film LA interviewed 51 female filmmakers and executives and 19.6% spontaneously mentioned families and childcare as hampering women's careers (Smith et al. 2012, p.11). The fact that this percentage is not higher most likely reflects that many of these women will have had to forgo or postpone having children in order to succeed and therefore childcare is not an issue. The Skillset (2009) report *Why her?* aims to obtain from successful women some insight into why there are gender disparities in some film occupations, and contains qualitative research conducted with directors and writers, as well as women working in camera and sound departments. The report highlights the difficulty of working in the film industry and having children, and how this is perceived as being a particularly female problem. It is presented as a simple choice for women and it is seen as very difficult to do both at the same time. Over half the women interviewed did not have children and all wanted more understanding and practical solutions in the production industry (Skillset 2009).

Screenwriters are employed on a project by project basis, carry out the majority of the work on their own and are reasonably free, outside of financial considerations, as to where they do that work and when. Surely this is a profession that is more compatible with looking after children? As Denise Bielby (2009) asks:

> Writing for film and television does not require long-term commitment to a single corporate employer. The work can be done in any setting during hours of the writers own choosing. Shouldn't Hollywood prove the exception to the glass ceiling faced by women in most professions? (Bielby 2009, p.247)

Certainly there is some evidence of this in Skillset's report. However, it is also possible to find evidence of difficulties in combining a screenwriting career with looking after children. Screenwriters interviewed for the UK Film Council's scoping study on women screenwriters consider the potential problems:

> For a woman who has to earn a living and has kids or dependents, I can imagine that working in film would be incredibly difficult because it's unreliable. (Screenwriter quoted in Sinclair et al. 2006, p.59)

> The difference between your personal choices and your career is a really key one. Women who have kids have time out and time out can be quite fatal. You don't have a guaranteed slot waiting for you to come back into like people in employment do. There is a constant fear of "if I drop out for a while, will I ever get back in? (ibid)

Leading UK screenwriter, Abi Morgan[7], interviewed for *The Telegraph* in 2011, describes herself as 'a relatively independent woman who has been able to combine a career with raising a family' but whilst 'the children are around' she also says 'I have a wonderfully supportive husband [Jacob Krichesfsta]. He's an actor so is often at home.' (Farndale 2011). This is something not many female screenwriters might be able to rely on, as evidenced again from the UK Film Council's survey:

> You can't suddenly say to the producer, "From now on I just want to work two days a week. (Screenwriter quoted in Skillset and UK Film Council, 2008)

> You need to be in that world. You can't just do it for one hour. So maybe that would be hard for a woman with kids. You need to be able to have at least four hours a day. (ibid)

> It's fine if your wife's at home putting the kids to bed, but what are you supposed to do if you are the wife? (ibid)

Not all the screenwriters felt the same way:

> I think the work environment's wonderful because it's entirely at my own choosing. I get up in the morning and I go to work and then my children come home and I'm here. (ibid)

Although clearly this solution only becomes viable once all children are of school age, which could be over six years for a woman who has two children, two years apart. Up until that point, other forms of childcare are needed.

In *Having None of It*, Franks (1999) examines the conflicts between working and childcare responsibilities for women, arguing that flexible, freelance work like that of screenwriting can be difficult to combine with family life. She gives the example of home workers in the clothing

manufacture trade who 'are subject to sudden deadlines where they must drop everything and work', just like screenwriters. 'Reconciling this with regular childcare and children's routines can be difficult'. (Franks 1999, p.90). Most formal childcare such as nurseries, nannies and child minders are not available on a supply and demand basis.

> That was the big freelance thing in particular about the possibility of the ad hoc, and also long-term childcare about not knowing the hours and not knowing when, or wanting half a day sometimes, and how do you do that, unless you reach the point of having a full-time nanny but not necessarily having the full-time income to support it. (Freelance worker, Skillset 2008, p.7)

Waiting lists can be long, often up to a year, and places must be paid for every week, whether the parents are working or not. Clearly this is difficult if your work is project-based and temporary. Mark Banks and Katie Milestone (2011) point out that 'for employers, flexibility means that workers must give preference only to business priorities and duly contort themselves' (Banks and Milestone 2011: p.82) leaving little control for the individual worker 'over when and where they choose to execute their roles' (ibid). Skillset's (2010) report on *Women in the Creative Media Industries* finds that:

> […] representation is highest in sectors comprising larger employers in which more stable, permanent employment models are common, such as terrestrial television (48%), broadcast radio (47%), cinema exhibition (43%) and book publishing (61%). (Skillset 2010, p.5)

In fact, a comparison of the data from the Creative Media Workforce Survey (2010) shows that in cinema exhibition, all the workers are permanent employees and 43% of them are women. In the facilities sector, where 7,750 of the 18,600 jobs are freelance, only 26% of the workers are women (Skillset 2010, p.9). Of course these figures do not tell us the nature of these jobs, or what level of seniority or responsibility the women are at, but it is interesting to compare these figures with the fact that all film directors are freelance and only around 7% of them are women (Lauzen 2007; Lauzen 2008; Lauzen 2009; Lauzen 2010; Lauzen 2012; Lauzen 2011).

The Costs of Informality

Pierre Bourdieu (1984) noted in his celebrated work *Distinction* that recruitment in the 'new professions' associated with cultural production 'is generally done by co-option, that is, on the basis of 'connections' and affinities of habitus, rather than formal qualifications' (Bourdieu 1984, p.151). Most individuals working in the film industry are in a continuous process of searching for work, and that process is mainly an informal one done through socialising and making contacts 'on the job'. Helen Blair (2009) coins the phrase 'active networking' to describe how

professionals in the film industry do not just happen upon job opportunities whilst going about the daily work and social lives, but actively seek out contacts who can inform them of future projects they might work on, and hopefully act as an advocate for them too (Blair 2009). Increasingly there is empirical evidence that relying on personal networks and informal employment practices give men and women different outcomes in the job market (Bielby and Bielby 1993; Bielby and Bielby 2002; Christopherson 2008; Gill 2002; Grugulis and Stoyanova 2012). The reasons for this inequality are not the focus of this article, but it is worth mentioning that motherhood plays a considerable part in the differences of outcome. Clearly, in networking, opportunity is significant and workers who are the primary carer for young children may not be available for networking events, which often take place outside work hours in the evening (Croft 2001; Nixon 2003).

Karen Campbell (1988) demonstrates that women's networks are restricted when they have young children. There was no correlating disparity for men who start a family (Campbell 1988). Linda Renzulli et al. (2000) refers to a study by Jennifer Starr and Yudkin (1996), which shows that single women and all men, single or not, are able to devote more of their time to business activities and do not have to allocate as much time to domestic responsibilities as married women do. It is also noteworthy that research shows that women receive less instrumental help from their network members, regardless of the status of themselves or those in their network (McGuire 2002). Gail McGuire's (2002) suggestion is that women may be perceived as being less worthy of help as they are statistically less likely to be successful than men. It seems possible that the effects of motherhood on a woman's career may be contributing to this:

> …career women are well aware that taking up these [maternity] leave entitlements serves to confirm men's view that women as a sex are not suited to managerial work. (Wajcman 1998, p.26)

It is perhaps worth noting that McGuire finds that black men were only discriminated against due to structural disadvantage, i.e. if they held positions with less status then they received less informal help. In McGuire's research, where black men obtained positions with more status they received the same amount of help from their networks as white men[8]. However, it is very difficult for individuals to challenge these difficulties or structural inequalities in informal employment processes where there is often no recourse to equal opportunities policies and Human Resources departments, let alone complaints and tribunals. Indeed, individuals may err on the side of caution given that 'Informal working cultures play an important part in shaping

norms of what appears to be reasonable and fair behaviour, even when this departs from statutory obligations' (Thomson 2011: 16). Job seekers cannot afford to disadvantage themselves by appearing to require special treatment.

The Costs of Creative Freedom

In this final section I want to touch briefly on how working outside a formal nine-to-five corporate environment might differently affect men and women pursuing a creative career. Even those academic critics and commentators who see through the propaganda around creative industries often do not question the individualised, 'gifted' (Banks 2007, p.29) nature of creative work or critically examine the notion that the artist needs creative freedom and cannot work in a conventional way inside an organisation (for example Banks 2007; Bilton 2007; Christopherson 2008, Christopherson 2009; Davis 2010):

> [It is] a commonly held view that to be creative, it is necessary to be independent from the control of others. (Bilton 2007, p.1)

I draw extensively in this section on *Creativity, gender and the family: A study of creative writers* (1996), as it provides an incisive look at the issue and stands out in a very under-researched area. Livia Pohlman (1996) studies the effect that having children had on twenty contemporary novelists, noting any differences along gender lines. Of the nine male writers she interviewed, seven had families by the time they were thirty. Their wives' faith and belief in them 'provided a fundamental base of support' (ibid, p.8) and reinforced their identity as writers when there was little validation elsewhere. The wives also provided practical support in terms of childcare and household labour – these men were not required to see flexible, creative work as a means to juggle these responsibilities, despite the fact that eight of the nine men worked from home. A base of stability allowed them to focus on creative work and eight of the nine had a private den or office in which to work. Out of the eleven females interviewed, nine expressed concern that having a family would decrease their productivity and four did not have children, two of these having made the decision not to have children in order to focus on their career. The female writers with children complained of a loss of freedom, concentration and time to be creative. They suffered sleep deprivation and a feeling of isolation. In stark contrast to the male writers' experience, the female writers describe their partners' attitudes in terms of tolerance rather than outright support. Most tellingly, perhaps, with Virginia Wolf's voice ringing loudly in our ears, only one of the seven mothers had 'a room of their own' in which to work. Overall in Pohlman's

study it appears that for male writers, having a wife and children is a positive benefit to their careers, providing stability and freeing up time to think and work in a similar manner to the senior managers in Wacjman's study. Once again, however, the women in Pohlman's article find the demands of domesticity, particularly childcare to be at odds with their personal career ambitions, losing valuable time and space to their other 'responsibilities'.

Writer and mother, Rebecca Stonehill (2013), articulates the all-consuming nature of early family responsibilities:

> The novel I was writing, which had gathered so much steam in the months preceding my daughter's birth, juddered to a halt as life became a whirlwind of feeding, changing, cleaning and responding to the varied demands of a small baby. (Stonehill 2013)

It seems likely that female screenwriters will suffer from similar concerns to the female novelists in Pohlman's study. From my experience working in the UK film industry, I have been aware of countless examples of male writers still attempting to establish a career and therefore earning very little money, but being supported by a woman who held down a part-time job and also had primary responsibilities for childcare. One such writer joked that if he did not get this commission, his wife would have to take on a third job. The very serious consequence of such gendered approaches to creativity and family life is that for female writers 'the institution of marriage and family often conflicted with their career path as writers' (Pohlman 1996, p.21).

The significance of the curtailed opportunities for creative women is not the focus of this article but it might be worth pausing for a moment to consider some of the wider ramifications of the lack of female voices in creating culture. It is no secret that in films women are not the protagonist as often as men (Palmeri 2012; Shoard 2008) and when they are it is most likely to be in pursuit of romantic heterosexual love (Smith and Cook 2008). Female characters, where they do exist, rarely even speak to one another, at least about anything other than a man (bechdeltest.com). In animated films aimed at children, fewer than one in three characters are female, and less than 17 per cent of characters in crowd scenes are female (Smith and Cook 2008). Indeed from 2006 to 2009 over 80% of all characters in family films that held jobs were male and less than 20% were female even though in the real world women make up more than half of the workforce (GDIGM 2013). The media plays a powerful role in how we view the world and without a balance of female voices it appears that many portrayals of female experience might be missing from our screens and certain gender stereotypes may be upheld and indeed reinforced.

Conclusion

In 1938 Cyril Connolly wrote '…there is no more sombre enemy of good art than the pram in the hall.' (Connolly 1938, pp.109-110). More recently, novelist Maggie O'Farrell (2003) challenges this assumption and those anxious to convince her that 'Every baby costs you a book, you know!' (O'Farrell 2003). It is not inconceivable for a woman to have children and a lucrative creative career, but, just like women in senior management who have children, they are not the majority. How motherhood affects creative careers is a difficult problem to research, since first hand accounts of those working in creative professions like film and novel writing are limited to those who have ostensibly 'made it' and therefore do not allow a framework that can account for those women who are not present, and the reasons for this. Rachel Thomson (2011) argues that 'for many the "motherhood penalty" is a shock faced in relative isolation' (Thomson 2011) and so presents difficulties for those trying to recognise or resolve the issue. Motherhood therefore risks becoming a hidden, forgotten cause of inequalities in the creative industries, and indeed in the wider workforce. O'Farrell's (2003) ability to find successful mothers who manage to continue writing, and even flourish after having children calls to mind feminist questioning of the universal commonality within the category of 'woman' (Butler, 1990), but fail to take into account the ways that class, degree of previous success and indeed age may play a part in who succeeds in juggling these responsibilities and who is lost. The reality for most working women, as I have attempted to demonstrate, is that they continue to risk disadvantage in at least three distinct ways linked to motherhood. They will likely be perceived as potential mothers, whether they want children or not; they may very well need to make a choice between having children or having a career; and if they do have children, they will most certainly be expected to make personal and professional sacrifices than men are not required to make.

In the UK, motherhood and having children is still regarded as a personal choice (Smithson and Stokoe 2005) with little regard to the necessity of a continuing supply of taxpayers to support the needs of an – increasingly – aging population. Keeping work and family separate ignores this consideration and ensures anyone with childcare responsibilities will have difficulties maintaining the perception that they are the ideal worker for a job – committed and always available. Whilst this clearly has the most impact on women who still bear the burden of most of the childcare in the UK, let us not forget that it also impacts significantly on children and fathers, who are unlikely to see each other as much as they might like. By bringing together thinking

from different academic fields, such as gender and work, creative industries, maternal studies and work and organisations, I have argued that the real cost of motherhood risks becoming the forgotten or side-lined aspect of gender inequality in the work place. I have also demonstrated that policies and practise aimed at providing flexible working patterns for mothers risk reinforcing the idea that only women have children and continue to separate the domains of work and home, public and private, with potentially devastating consequences for women, especially mothers, and particularly those working in the creative industries.

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[1] As I hope to demonstrate, it is the potential of all women to have children and the associated disruption to their career that can lead to women being perceived as less worthy of investment – of time, of career advice, of promotion and even of pay (See Fitt and Newton 1981; Groysberg 2008; McGuire 2002; Waycman 1998)

[2] As well as minority ethnics and those of working class background.

[3] This is with notable exceptions, such as Gill, (2000, 2002) on radio DJs and Elisabeth Kelan (2009) on ICT workers.

[4] See Gill (forthcoming).

[5] Full Time Equivalent.

[6] In Wajcman's study 'of respondents with children, 94 per cent of women, compared to only 15 per cent of men, report that they have primary responsibility for their children' (Wajcman, 1998:139) and women did an average of 19 hours a week of household labour whereas men only did 4 (ibid).

[7] Writer of, amongst other films, *Shame* (2011), *The Iron Lady* (2011) and winner of several BAFTAs for her television work.

[8] It is perhaps interesting to consider in this context that there is currently a black male president of the United States, and yet there has been no female president, black or white, despite the fact that they make up a larger proportion of the population.

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