

WALKING THE VOCATIONAL TIGHTROPE: narratives of  
aspiration, creativity and precarious labour

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### Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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Signed ... ..

Date 27 November 2014

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## List of Abbreviations

*	Indicates a pseudonym has been used
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AFC	Australian Film Council
AFTRS	Australian Film, Television and Radio School
AV	Audio-visual
BOSTES	Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards
CHASS	Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences
CIIC	Creative Industries Innovation Centre
CoP	Community of Practice
DA	Director's Assistant
EIS	Entertainment Industry Syllabus
JB	John Brown (pseudonym)
MEAA	Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance
NSW BOS	New South Wales Board of Studies
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SPWG	Semi-Permanent Work Group
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
DEC	Department of Education and Communities

## Abstract

The aim of this research is to explore the idea of the disembedded, creative, unencumbered neo-liberal subject. I explore this within the context of the creative industries and the creative career, firstly because creative workers exemplify a move away from traditional notions of career to more informal precarious and intermittent employment, secondly because they are said to be 'iconic' in terms of the new economy (Gill, 2002; Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999; Ross, 2007) and thirdly because the biographical patterns of creative workers and creative careers reflect the structural force of postmodern, reflexive modernity. This thesis investigates the degree to which the guiding ideas and institutional features of modernity and the industrial era (class, gender, family, community) continue to govern the lives of aspiring film and television workers. Beck (1992), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Giddens (1991) for example, argue that the features of traditional life no longer hold sway, and that people's identities are now reflexively constructed. However, this research finds that there are residual effects of class and gender that continue to shape the biographical narratives and identities of working-class creative aspirants. By conducting a series of semi-structured life history interviews and through participant observation and narrative analysis, this thesis argues that class and gender norms continue to operate at the heart of society and specifically creative work, and that these norms have the capacity to guide people's trajectories and sense of self.

# WALKING THE VOCATIONAL TIGHTROPE:

## NARRATIVES OF ASPIRATION, CREATIVITY AND PRECARIOUS LABOUR

### PREFACE

A democratic society seeks to unleash the creativity of all its citizens... The value of creativity is something that is increasingly recognised and valued. Creativity is an essential attribute in an increasing number of occupations... This policy aims to... build, produce and nurture world-class artists and creators... ensure the opportunities, training and skills development needed for careers in the arts and creative sectors are not limited by social circumstance [and] drive a culture of professional development that strengthens the capacity of artists and creative practitioners to be artistic leaders within the arts and culture sectors into the future (Creative Australia, 2013).

If we believe the official rhetoric, finding work in the ‘creative industries’ should not be difficult. However, when conducting research for the Australian Council for the Arts, Throsby and Zednik, economists who specialise in the study of arts and culture found that 56 per cent of an estimated 44,000 self-identified artists (‘craft practitioners, community cultural development workers, writers, visual artists, dancers and choreographers, composers, song writers and arrangers, musicians and singers, actors and directors’) (2010: 15–20) earned less than \$10,000 a year in creative income, and only 12 per cent earned more than \$50,000. Many of these artists reported taking up other work to supplement arts-based incomes (Throsby and Zednik, 2010: 8) and the vast majority, despite being tertiary trained, found it difficult to find work (Throsby and Zednik, 2010: 27). It is no wonder, then, that in the search for creative employment, the sense that one has fallen short, has ‘underachieved’, is endemic.

Most people form creative ambitions knowing that the work is competitive and scarce, and that careers are high risk, unpredictable and often short-lived. Yet many choose to follow a creative path. For aspiring film and television workers, as with many other creative industry/performing artist aspirants, the paradox is this: earning a living is difficult, but 'doing what you love' is a mantra. In many cases, those who have trained and worked or volunteered to work in film and television have held down other jobs, if only to make ends meet or in the hope of being discovered. Let me illustrate this autobiographically.

I moved to Sydney in 1995 with aspirations to be a dancer. This was the first step in a life plan that would see me retiring from professional dancing at age thirty to work as a choreographer for the rest of my days. This was a grand extension of my time at the Cowra Ballet School, where I trained and worked as a dance teacher, and working in my uncle's fish and chip shop. With my acceptance into a performing arts school, I thought I had finally broken free of takeaway food and menial incomes. I also thought I had transcended the vocational patterns of my parents: Mum worked at the local fruit cannery and Dad had a low-paid council job.

I trained in ballet from nine to six, five days a week, and I rented a flat; so, with my limited hours and no car, I took a bar job in the evenings and on weekends. Coming from a country town where I knew everybody and where the cannery, council and abattoir employed the majority of the population, I had never been asked 'What's your day job?'. Nor had my response of 'I'm a

dancer' often been met with 'oh, right, but what is your 'real' job?'. I had until that point assumed that what you did most of the day was a 'day job' and that being a dancer was a 'real' job.

At some point, I'm not quite sure when, I stopped having these conversations. I stopped being a dancer and started being everything else: bar attendant, waitress, slot-machine attendant, receptionist, personal assistant, office administrator, hairdresser, marketing assistant, music licensing officer, dancing teacher, Internet support worker, sales assistant, community care worker, café worker and, most recently, academic tutor, not to mention doctoral student. Most of these jobs were part-time or casual while I worked hard at being a dancer, others short-lived and mostly stemming from times when I had to earn a regular income.

After five or so years of treading water (borrowing money from my parents, working casually in bars and cafes, being paid social security), I found a job with a ballet organisation in Sydney's Darlinghurst. This job not only stabilised work patterns, it also exposed me to a world of other aspiring performing artists (and their arty friends) who freely gave me advice.

One Friday night at after-work drinks, my colleagues and friends were discussing our long-term ambitions. I had recently decided I would try my hand at acting and screenwriting and had enrolled in film school one night a week. When I mentioned this, an actor friend of a colleague became wide-eyed and said: 'Well, you really can't work for the ballet organisation any

longer, if that's the case. You really should get a waitressing job at Tropicana cafe, if it really means that much to you. It's the home of the Tropicana film festival (Tropfest) and loads of filmmakers go there. I go there. You need to work as a waitress and get to know people. Quit now and go down on Monday and tell them you want work.' I was being advised to leave a job that provided me with stability, a regular income and a limited amount of social and cultural capital in order to work as a waitress on a low income in the hope of being discovered. 'Love', he said, 'it's not gonna happen for you locked away in an office, at a desk. You don't know anyone. You need to do it for yourself. There ain't nothing else you can do.'

I was being told to work in one precarious job in order to realise another, and to dissimulate my ambitions in order to realise them. And I was to do this on a menial income as a casual employee in a cafe whilst hoping that one day I would serve some hotshot director/actor/producer her or his lunch. I began to question the authenticity of the creative career. If creativity is an essential attribute, why is it that so many who have it – or think they do, or are told they do – are underemployed, unemployed or working in jobs not related to their creative ambitions? How was working in a cafe conducive to filmmaking? And if working in a cafe was enabling my filmmaking career, was I a filmmaker or a waitress? These questions formed the basis of my research, and in my quest for answers I found that my experience was also the experience of other filmmaking aspirants, some of who became my research interviewees.

When working life is uncertain and does not allow for the unfolding of a life plan, when people are told to keep their options open and to fulfil vocational goals by committing to insecure, low-paid work, then the effects of precarity, a term that describes chronic occupational insecurity and impermanence, become visible in life itself. This is why many have argued that 'creative labour' is also 'affective labour' (Hardt, 1999), 'emotional labour' (Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2008), 'immaterial labour' (Gill and Pratt, 2008) and 'passionate labour' (McRobbie, 2011). This is also why some who are frustrated in their ambitions can experience exhaustion, insecurity and individualised shame (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011) and why others relinquish their creative ambitions by giving up and walking away. Many, however, persevere by becoming freelancers, permalancers and/or embedded creatives. In other words, they feel compelled to work in unorthodox situations of employment in order to rationalise the precarity. I explore these career forms empirically in the final chapter. However, the point I make now is that people with creative ambitions find precarity difficult to manage but creative ambitions as equally difficult to give up.

The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to explore how precarious labour and creative ambition is lived; how the experience, or prospect of it, shapes the lives and identities of those with ambitions to work in the creative industries and more specifically in film and television. It seeks to explore how people's lives are shaped by discourse, including their particular narratives of self, as well as how they embody the requirements of policy and official rhetoric. The introduction outlines aspects of Australia's latest cultural policy. It



problematizes the use of the term 'creativity' in political discourse and introduces the idea of precarious, creative labour.

## INTRODUCTION

### Creative Industries in Official Discourse

No longer content to be just the lucky country, Australia must become the clever country (Hawke, 1990).

In 1990, the Australian Labor government's vision was to increase productivity and strengthen the economy by investing in science, technology, education and research. In 1994, then Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating announced a cultural policy entitled Creative Nation. Its purpose was to strengthen Australia's cultural institutions with increased funding and to reinforce the role culture played in the lives of Australian people. Credited for their growth and generative capacity, it was argued that 'culture', 'ideas' and 'creativity' had economic value:

This cultural policy is also an economic policy. Culture creates wealth. Broadly defined, our cultural industries generate 13 billion dollars a year. Culture employs. Around 336,000 Australians are employed in culture-related industries. Culture adds value, it makes an essential contribution to innovation, marketing and design. It is a badge of our industry. The level of our creativity substantially determines our ability to adapt to new economic imperatives. It is a valuable export in itself and an essential accompaniment to the export of other commodities. It attracts tourists and students. It is essential to our economic success (Creative Nation, 1994).

According to this quote, cultural production has the capacity to increase national wealth and consequently become an exportable commodity. Why, then, is the labour that supports it informally structured? Why do the people that perform this labour continue to be precariously employed? McRobbie addresses this when she argues that creative labour is organised along 'free-market lines' by 'promoting talent as that which lies within us all, waiting to be tapped into' (2002a: 101). But the creative/cultural industries are not

meritocratic. If talent is all it takes, then why is paid work scarce? If creativity and culture 'employs' and generates 13 billion dollars a year, then why are there so few formally recognised on-the-job training schemes in place? Why is it, as Throsby and Zednick (2010) discovered, that the majority of self-identified artists and craftspeople working in Australia live below the poverty line? One way to disguise the full extent of un(der)employment in the creative industries is keep people in casualised jobs and formal study. Another way is to extend the definition of 'creative industry' to include a vast array of occupations and skills that may not necessarily be creative in a classical sense (see Florida's [2003] list of creative industries).

The UK's version of a similar policy refers to 'creative' rather than 'cultural' industries, and in turn brings forth a definition of the creative industries that has been widely recognised and cited. In 1998, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Creative Industries Task Force (CITF) defined the 'creative industries' as 'activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through generation and exploitation of intellectual property' (CITF, 2001). Advertising, architecture, arts and antique markets, crafts, design, fashion, film, software, music, television and radio, performing arts and publishing were all sectors identified as 'creative' by the CITF (CITF, 2001; CIIC, 2013). Similarly in Australia, government definitions include music and performing arts; film, television and radio; advertising and marketing; software development and interactive content; writing, publishing and print media; and architecture, design and visual arts (Building a Creative Innovation

Economy, 2008). Despite the extensiveness of creative industry definitions, Oakley (2006) argues that the real problem with cultural policy and thus subsequent definitions is exclusiveness and the failings of cultural policy to act as social policy. She argues that there are tensions between social and economic goals buried beneath the mantle of 'creativity', a term she argues that is used uncritically by governments, and that the economic developments and benefits credited to cultural/economic policy and generated by creative/cultural production are not evenly distributed amongst sectors or experienced by practitioners.

The idea of the creative industries has divided academic opinion. Advocates argue that the commercialisation of creativity leads to job creation and potential increase in economic wealth, as well as an increase in the economic and cultural value associated with products produced within the creative industries (O'Connor, 2000; Cunningham, 2002; Florida, 2003; Hartley, 2005; Garnham, 2005). Some critics accept part of this account, yet also argue that the 'economization' and strict management of creativity and its commodification undermines the integrity of cultural products (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2007: 524; Davis and Scase, 2000, Caves, 2000) and workers (Florida, 2003). Despite these differences, most commentators agree that the 'economization' of creativity has opened up labour markets and has strengthened the ability of industry, governments and individuals to increase their economic wealth. But such an assertion presupposes employment and the performance of genuinely creative work. It presupposes that all who aspire to work creatively, can and will, and that this plethora of workers will reap the

benefits of creative economisation and commodification by being innovative in creative jobs.

!

Such understandings of the term 'creativity' overstate the degree to which work in the so-called 'creative industries' is creative. Hesmondalgh and Baker (2011) argue that 'artistic' labour is only a subset of the creative industries, and Banks (2010) argues that although 'craftwork' makes up a large part of creative labour it is often glossed over in discussions about creative labour, artistic practice and economic and cultural policy. I chose to research the film and television industry because it comprises a mix of technical, administrative, craft and artistic work; in other words, a blend of genuinely creative and non-creative labour. This dichotomy is described by Christopherson (2009) in her discussion about 'above' and 'below' the line workers, and provides an explanation as to why an aspirant's ability to express themselves creatively and find creative fulfilment is, at times, negated by their need to earn a living and to take any job they can whether or not it has the capacity to enable creative expression. This division of labour is no more pronounced than when looking at the lives of naive hopefuls who have only a vague sense of what working 'creatively' within the apparent 'creative industries' means. As I argue in chapter three, the ambitions and expectations of creative aspirants are often shaped by creative industry training rhetoric and inflated by false promises.

As McRobbie argues, the jobs on offer for low-skilled people are far from rewarding or creative (2002a: 101) which means that creative industries

training and qualifications are important. However, many aspirants do not/cannot work at the level for which they are trained and so for the sake of employment, perform low-skilled jobs with the hope of working up. This means that the labour market suitable for aspirants and newcomers is competitive and monopolised by qualified and sometimes experienced creative workers.

McRobbie (2002a) argues that creative industry graduates, often highly skilled, enable their careers by working commercially for corporations but continue to be precariously employed and thus exploited in doing so. In turn, this affects their ability to produce independent creative work (many work long hours, are exhausted and underpaid). Consequently the independent and/or alternative sectors of the economy suffer. The 'space, time and rationale needed by graduates to produce independent, creative work' is 'eliminated' (McRobbie, 2002a: 98). In other words, creative workers sacrifice creative and occupational autonomy in order to earn a living. Yet it is the lure of commercial success, the fame and fortune associated with creative work that keeps them aspiring to creative careers. McRobbie (2002a: 109) calls this the 'Hollywoodization' of the creative industries.

Ironically cultural policy situates artistic practice squarely within the creative industries and economic policy. Yet the ability of aspirants to truly fulfil their creative impulses and practice artistic work is mediated (and sometimes determined) by both the need to earn a living and the economy and labour market overall. What McRobbie (2002a) argues is that despite the perceived economic importance of creative work, creative workers continue to be

precariously employed, individualised, de-politicised and engaged in contractual labour which keeps them financially poor and occupationally insecure, but which also keeps unemployment figures down and so holds neo-liberal governments in good stead.

The tales of commercial success prominent in Western society have led to an increasing number of people forming aspirations to work in creative jobs (Haukka, 2011; Florida, 2003; Brooks, 2007; Stokes and Wyn, 2007). Haukka claims that in Australia during 2007/2008 there were 316,600 people employed in the creative industries (Haukka, 2011), 20,000 less than the 336,000 accounted for in the 1994 policy document cited above. Yet, even with a scarcity of work, more and more Australian people are enrolling in creative industry courses. In 2012, there were 86,547 students taking creative arts courses at higher education institutions and another 51,958 at vocational training organisations (ABS, 2012). Yet only the year before, it was reported that out of 3,138,332 people employed in Australia, only 109,851 claimed to be employed in 'cultural' occupations, and of that only 66,117 in the creative industries (ABS, 2011). In the same year, 2,970,564 people reported working in 'non-cultural occupations', but only 68,974 in creative industry jobs (ABS, 2011). These figures represent a new class of creative people who bear little resemblance to Florida's (2003) venerated and powerful 'creative class'. Rather, they constitute people who set out on a path to realise their goals, and who after study, are compelled to work in non-creative jobs to make ends meet (McRobbie, 2002a).

## Educating and Training Aspiring Creatives

To meet the needs of aspiring creatives and hence capture a growing market, educational institutions have clamoured to introduce new creative courses. Capitalising on people's ambitions, they market their courses in ways that appeal to young people's imaginations and cultural sensibilities and promise to secure creative careers for the students (Bennett, 2009). Film schools,



Figure 1. RealTime Arts (2010) Oct/Nov, pg. 9



Figure 2. Inside Film (2010) Oct, 136 pg. 15



Figure 3. RealTime Arts (2010) Oct/Nov, pg. 5

in particular, market their courses mostly to a young cohort. Their campaigns connote 'freedom', 'success', 'autonomy' and 'self-expression'. Catchphrases like 'You can reach new heights', 'Make it happen', 'You're only limited by your imagination' suggest that a film and television career starts with study and that one's vocational future is determined by one's willingness



and capacity to strive for 'more', namely through study. These courses meet the needs of aspiring creatives and these marketing campaigns signify the degree to which creative industry discourse has shaped arts-based academic and vocational training.

Tertiary courses in film and television aim to teach students a wide variety of skills and new technologies that 'cross conventional union, professional and craft jurisdictions' (Christopherson 2008: 83). When students graduate they are 'multifunctional hybrids' – writer/directors or director/camera-operator/editors – and apparently better able to assimilate into the 'flexible, independent contractor workforce' (Christopherson, 2008) that currently characterises contemporary film and television labour markets. Bennett argues that arts-based and media workers have participated in 'portfolio careers' (Handy, 1994), but many have experienced the extreme end of these so-called 'protean careers' (Bennett, 2009). The protean career is named after the Greek god Proteus, who was able to change form at will to avoid danger, something Bennett argues creative workers must do in order to stay employable (Bennett, 2009: 311).

Despite such figures, and following the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education, the Australian government announced structural reform. It was proposed that from 2012, all universities would be funded on the basis of student demand, and it was estimated that an additional 80,000 places would be delivered over the four years from 2010 to 2013, including courses relating to creative industries (Creative Industries, a strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,

2011). For example, my own university has introduced a business-framed creative industry course that attracts student funding but also reflects the corporatisation of creativity. The Associate Degree in Creative Industries rides on the coat tails of creative industry rhetoric by promising to 'ignite your inner entrepreneur, ignite your innovative ideas and provide you with a higher education qualification in management of the creative industries' (<http://iamcreative/home>).

State technical colleges (Technical and Further Education – TAFE) are following suit. On the NSW Skills List for 2014 are 'advertising specialist', 'arts administrator or manager', 'multimedia designer', 'music professional', 'performing arts technician', 'photographer', 'public relations specialist', 'sound technician' and 'visual arts and crafts professional' (Smart and Skilled, 2014). Those who choose to study at TAFE and in fields on the NSW Skills List are eligible for pro-rata fees and subsidies as well as other forms of government support. This skills list is compiled yearly and is 'based on the skill needs of the NSW economy' (Smart and Skilled, 2014). Other courses include certificate-level creative industry courses that fall under the training package 'screen and media', which is in the program area of 'business, finance and culture' (Smart and Skilled, 2014). These courses prepare students to become a 'community radio production assistant and community television production assistant' (Smart and Skilled, 2014).

The promise of courses like these from institutions like TAFE is that they are helping:

... people develop the skills they need to get a job, undertake entry level qualifications or transition to a new job. The expectant outcomes of this training are that individuals enrol in full qualifications or gain employment (NSW DEC, 2014).

Even with an increase in qualified workers, creative courses and the promise of on-the-job training, the problems of unemployment and underemployment remain. Haukka claims that in 2007/08, the Australian creative industries contributed \$31.1 billion in industry gross product to the Australian economy; that is \$18.1 billion more than in 1994, yet there is still not enough work to go around. The 2011 census shows that Australia's creative employment has grown from 463,500 people in 2006 (5.1 per cent of the workforce) to 531,000 people in 2011 (5.3 per cent). However, as at June 2013, the Australian film industry employed as few as 15,760, and of these only 5639 were employed on a full-time basis (ABS, 2013). Furthermore, approximately half of Australia's creative workforce identified as 'embedded creative', or creative workers employed in non-creative fields (CIIC, 2013; Cunningham and Higgs, 2008), which according to Cunningham and Higgs (2008) suggests that there are opportunities for creative workers to work and that there is a growing need to recognise the role that creativity and creative workers play in 'non-creative' fields. However, it also indicates the degree to which creative workers have to find ways to support themselves and to stabilise their working lives.

In turn, aspiring creatives adopt 'coping strategies' (Haukka, 2011) to deal with the challenge of precarious labour, the need to be occupationally versatile and labour market exclusion. These strategies include diversifying expertise/skills by working in jobs that support creative identities, like teaching for example, and relying on financial support from family and friends, which

enables them to work for free or on short-term contracts and to study (Haukka, 2011: 43). What precarity means, though, for the majority of aspirants, is that there is increased pressure to break free of class backgrounds, conventional pathways and familial ties and to structure their working lives according to the 'creative industries paradigm of work' (Ross, 2009), a paradigm that bears 'all the breathless hallmarks of the new economy thinking: technological enthusiasm, the cult of youth, branding and monetisation fever, and ceaseless organisational change' (Ross, 2007: 17). Yet it does all this by normalising low pay and poverty, underemployment, short-termism and informal but exclusive networks and labour markets (Standing, 2011; Ross, 2009; Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011).

Neo-liberal advocates see the creative career as 'progressive', as 'flexible', as 'in tune' with the needs of contemporary labour markets and conducive to the onset of deindustrialisation (Florida, 2002; Leadbeater, 1999; Howkins, 2001; Cunningham, 2002). However, economists like Standing (2011) argue that deindustrialisation and the onset of flexible work conditions has given rise to the 'precariat' (Standing, 2011: 7), a group of individualised workers existing on the margins of creative labour markets in mostly casualised labour who are in a constant state of insecurity and therefore unable to plan ahead, mainly because they lack seven basic occupational securities: labour, employment, job, work, skill, income and representation, all of which Standing argues are intrinsically different (2011: 10). 'Labour market security', for example, refers to adequate income-earning opportunities, whereas 'employment security' means that workers are protected against arbitrary dismissal and unfair hiring

and firing regulations. 'Job security' means that workers can retain a niche in employment, barriers to skill dilution and opportunities for upward mobility in terms of status and income, whereas 'work security' protects against accidents and illness. 'Skill reproduction security' is the opportunity to gain skills through formal training schemes and to make use of these competencies at work, whereas 'income security' ensures that wage indexing, government policy and social security protect and ensure adequate, stable incomes. Finally, 'representation security' means access to a collective voice and/or institutionalised forms of representation (Standing, 2011: 10).

By specifying the different types of security that precariats lack, Standing (2011) firstly illustrates the degree to which precarity is pervasive, nuanced and multifarious and, secondly, how it manifests and goes beyond minimal pay for minimal hours (Masterman-Smith and Pocock, 2008). If Standing's typology is anything to go by, project-based labour in the Australian film and television industry is certainly insecure with many willing to work for free and thus undermining any residual collectively negotiated rights and the benefits that go with being an employee in the orthodox sense (Standing, 2011: 12). The problem with precarious labour and job insecurity, particularly in the creative industries, is that it is normalised.

The strategies conceived to overcome precarity that are often adopted by creative industry workers take various forms and require the embodiment of particular vocational patterns. The freelance career is precarious but promises autonomy in exchange for the insecurity; the permalance career offers limited

stability in that people work for one or two employers on fixed contracts, but it is no more secure than the freelance career and offers less autonomy. The embedded creative career utilises creative skills in non-creative occupations; it provides more stability than the freelance and permalance career but less creative independence.

Freelancers are people who are self-employed and hired to work for different companies on particular assignments (OED, 2005). Sometimes called independent contractors or sole traders, they are business owners who negotiate their own fees, hours and working arrangements and can work for a number of clients at once. They are responsible for supplying their own tools and equipment and may be liable if projects do not go according to plan. They bear risks and costs and are in charge of their own occupational safety and employment benefits (Fairwork Ombudsman, 2014: 2799).

Permalancers are long-term freelancers; part-time or temporary workers who are employed on a regular basis through agencies or directly by corporations/firms/hirers but who lack employee benefits or job security (OED, 2005). Like freelancers, they provide a service on short-term contracts. However, they work for companies alongside full-time employees who are performing similar tasks. Not considered 'official' employees, they can experience tenuous relations of production, low incomes and low opportunities. Often recruited through a third-party agent who claims to work on their behalf, they also work on behalf of the employer; this means that permalancers have a limited say in what they do and lack the autonomy some

freelancers appear to have (Standing, 2011: 15). Standing, an economist who also specialises in labour relations suggests that not all freelancers live precariously, whereas most permalancers do. Some freelancers are 'proficians', highly skilled technical personnel, who are able to command high incomes and work as consultants or independents while refusing to commit to a 'single enterprise' (Standing, 2011: 8).

Permalancers gain some stability, however, by working for and returning to one place of employment over an extended period of time, although this does not mean they are not precarious. Unlike the freelancer who is relatively free of employee obligations and able to move around, the permalancer's task is to fulfil permanent employee obligations without the benefits, status or security of being a permanent employee (Standing, 2011:8). Like the freelancer, the permalancer's craft/creative identity must be negotiable and, therefore, both must be prepared to conceal or adapt their identities to suit the needs and culture of the company and the job they are being contracted to perform.

Embedded creatives are employed in creative occupations but work outside the defined creative industries (Cunningham and Higgs, 2008). Embedded creatives attempt to stabilise work patterns with secure work but endeavour to retain and use their creative skills. They must then be willing to redefine their skills, depending on the requirements of the job, and like freelancers and permalancers, they must also be prepared to conceal or suppress their craft and/or artistic impulses in order to work within an institutionalised context. At any one time, creative workers and aspirants can experience all three

patterns of employment and associated insecurity whilst trying to carve out their creative careers.

## METHODOLOGY

There is a large gap in existing creative industries literature. Many of those who have researched creative/cultural production and labour have focussed on those who have made it, professionals employed in creative work (McRobbie, 1999; Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011; Bennett, 1999; Blair, 2003, 2009; Christopherson, 2008). By exploring and analysing the experiences of the aspirant creatives, I seek to fill a gap. Life history interviews and participant observation allow me to discover how people experience and embody the imperatives of the new economy and reflexive modernity, and live out the realities of precarious labour. My intention is to go beyond description and the limitations of surveys and statistics in order to provide an account of the complexities that aspiring creative workers face when trying to construct precarious careers as well as solid vocational identities and a strong sense of self amidst occupational instability. My aim is to capture and represent differences between people's capacity and performance, and to monitor how they illustrate discursively the ways in which their social and cultural backgrounds shape their working lives.

The life history interview is a valuable research technique for exploring how precarity is lived and how people construct and perform narratives of self amidst processes of 'individualization' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) and occupational fragmentation (Beck, 2000). The material I acquired through



participant observation supplemented the data that surfaced in the interview context. The life history interview illuminates the life story, while participant observation shows the performance of self in various contexts. This thesis draws on both methodologies, although with a sharper focus on life history, thus allowing for detailed accounts of the precarity my participants encountered.

### Life History Interviews

Life history method involves the systematic collection and interpretation of testimonies from semi-structured interviews. This approach elicits the telling and interpretation of life events (Mishler, 2004; Riessman, 2008; Taylor and Littleton, 2006). This telling (and the texts/transcripts that emerge as a result) can bring out the enigmatic features of people's lives and shed light on how they are situated socially, culturally and historically (Wengraf, 2001). Although life history interviews can often surprise – by not producing the 'type' of findings academic researchers are expecting – they are more useful than quantitative data in illuminating the intricacies, anxieties and uncertainties that living precariously produces in the lives of filmmaking aspirants. This is mainly because 'narratives are more than simple chronicles of events; they give shape to the forward movement of time, suggesting reasons why things happen, showing their consequences' (Sennett, 1999: 30). They also betray the operation of values in both the account of and evaluation of past actions, and in the shaping of narratives of aspiration.

I performed two levels of analysis on each interview transcript: an analysis of life events and the effects of social structure on people's working lives; and an analysis of the way the life story is told, the cultural devices, allegories, tropes that shape life stories, particularly those pertaining to work and career and the way they reflect people's social and cultural pasts (Cohen, 1999; Wengraf, 2001). They are, therefore, 'socio-historical documents' (Wengraf, 2001), 'texts' in other words, that exemplify the structural force of social and cultural life but also the internal process(es) of rationalisation, reckoning and resolution that come about when people piece together their own narratives of self amidst structural change and uncertainty.

### The Precariat

Over a three-year period, I conducted 25 life history interviews with people who aspired to work in film and television: 14 with men and 11 with women. I attempted to provide a cross-generational study by interviewing people from ages 18 to 55 years. Most of the interviewees were from the inner west and greater western suburbs of Sydney, areas of disadvantage (although the former is gentrifying). Some were from Sydney's more affluent eastern and northern suburbs, and a few were from the north and north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. All interviewees discussed feeling anxious about ongoing poverty, and because the interviewees were aspirants, they mostly lacked social capital. All had participated in some form of study and were aware of the need to network. All wanted to earn a living, but some were more prepared than others to suffer poverty and precarity, to supplement their creative ambitions

with day jobs. Those unable or not inclined to do this generally retrained in non-creative fields, but remained in pursuit of their creative ambitions.

The interviews (see appendix for interviewee profiles) were conducted in a variety of social spaces and were, on average, two hours in duration. The questions were composed so as to elicit life stories and narratives of self as well as information about the origins of creative ambitions, the shaping force of school, the degree of familial support received, and the process of networking. This information provided ideas about class backgrounds and social status, but also highlighted how cultural practices, particularly those historically embedded in family tradition, continue to shape the experiences and opportunities of people, albeit in ways pertinent to the new economy and reflexive modernity.

The interviewees are presented in a case study form, at different points in the thesis, to illustrate a variety of experiences/responses to precarious labour and the new economy and the unknowability of working life in such contexts. A number of case studies appear in chapters three through to six, which I outline below, but the findings and analysis of the participant observation appears specifically in chapter four. It provides a context for my research and a context within which to discuss networking, an occupational necessity of the creative industries.

I wanted to treat the idea of the creative industry and creative work as units of analysis, despite the fact that these concepts/generalisations hide the

complexity of the forms of labour associated with making film and television. This is because I wished to explore biographically the idea of transferable creative skills, recognising that the dominant discourses surrounding creative labour emphasise flexibility and mobility. So it was important for me, especially in looking at aspirants, to be open to the various trajectories of people within this vaguely defined field, which may have taken them from craft skills training/ambitions (eg editing) towards other forms of work associated with the film industry. Without casting the net widely, it is difficult to see how the idea of the flexible 'new worker' discourse plays out biographically.

### Participant Observation

To complement the interviews, I undertook participant observation to explore how aspirants who lack contexts within which to network and perform their vocational identities connect with those who have similar aspirations, and how they try to (re)produce such contexts and networks informally. I chose participant rather than non-participant observation because my intention was not only to observe but also to recruit interviewees. Participant observation allowed me to share my own narratives of aspiration and to develop a relationship of trust with members of the informal networking group and potential interviewees. I observed these members, taking detailed notes about the conversations I heard and the networking practices I observed, the descriptions of which appear in chapter four. Of particular interest was how participants performed their creative identities and constructed a public sense of self, how they networked and how they utilised the space to form relationships that were both supportive and instrumental to their careers.

This method provided the means with which to 'measure' how members of this group achieved a sense of vocational purpose, validation and legitimacy in a networking context, even if it was only for a limited time. My aim was not to find the general in the particular, as is often espoused by ethnographic investigation (Hammersley, 1992). Rather, I wanted to record the subjective experiences of people with similar ambitions but who came from diverse backgrounds; these experiences subsequently revealed different networking strategies, motivations and intentions as well as differing work ethics and morals. The informality and accessibility of the networking group provided me with such scope because it attracted a variety of people from various class backgrounds and with different motivations, apart from the intention to be part of the Australian film and television industry and to build their networks. My aim, then, was not to provide or formulate an overarching networking theory, but to observe and create numerous networking theories couched in subjective understandings of what networking entails (Stanley, 1990). In other words, I wanted to study how subjectivity is negotiated and maintained and thus how social structure as well as social process is produced (Stanley, 1990).

Hammersley argues that descriptions cannot be theories since they are representative of objects and events in time and space, yet he also argues that all descriptions are theories since they are structured by theoretical assumptions (Hammersley, 1992). He resolves this by stating that descriptions are in fact theoretical, but only in a teleological or ideal sense and not so much like those of the natural sciences (Hammersley, 1992). The

people experience these institutions and social categories shapes their understandings of aspiration, career and working life. Furthermore, the engrained patterns of people's pasts, their values and belief systems, their sense of communal identity, are shaped by class, gender and familial ties. So the question remains: Are our life options, future prospects and aspirations still shaped by traditional social bonds or are we now relatively free, as advocates (Florida, 2003; Leadbeater, 1999) of the creative industries argue, of their influence? Before I move on to discuss all of this in more detail, I will first briefly outline the structure of the thesis.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter one provides an overview of the new economy and the creative industries, including a discussion of the etymology of creativity. It also provides an overview of the individualisation thesis and structure/agency debates. I trace these arguments in terms that reflect the shaping force of 'reflexive modernity' as argued by Giddens (1991) and Lash and Urry (1994). I go on to explore how social and cultural change has affected and been embodied by people in Western society, and how this embodiment is then communicated through biographical narratives.

Chapter two provides a historical background to the Australian film and television industry and outlines a shift from Fordist to post-Fordist production organisation/processes. It introduces the idea of project-based labour and describes what this means for workers. It also explores the notion of education and training for, and within, the creative industries, and queries the

usefulness of such training without the additional support of social and cultural capital. Lastly, this chapter looks at the ways in which social life, social relationships and the concept of 'self' become instrumental in careers and networks, consequently arguing that social and cultural backgrounds continue to shape people's job prospects, careers and rationalisation processes, particularly when working life is defined by precarity, uncertainty, insecurity and unpredictability.

Chapter three outlines the formation of creative aspiration as it occurs in the context of school. It details how school curriculums have been affected by the rhetoric of the creative industries and touches on the effect that progressivist pedagogy has on self-identity as well as occupational ambitions.

Chapter four observes and describes the practice of networking informally. It makes the argument that the Australian film and television industry is composed of exclusionary networks and that aspiring film and television workers bear the brunt of this exclusion. This chapter presents the detail of my participant observation and describes the meaning and function of the 'Filmmaker's Network' (FN), an informal network that exists to connect amateurs/aspirants. It observes the ways that networking, as a cultural practice, is performed by people of a similar stature who come together informally to network. It explores the capacity that informal networking has to keep people occupationally marginal, unable to transcend their networks and thus existing in what Morgan and Ren (2012) have called 'the creative underclass'.

Chapter four also provides an account of some of the networking used by the interviewees to secure positions in networks and to access communities of practice after leaving school and/or whilst embarking on vocational training. It brings into focus the importance of social and cultural capital and aligns it with the creative career. However, it also illustrates how people feel compelled to engineer networking opportunities at work and film school, and within social life generally, in an attempt to acquire social and cultural capital. It supports the suggestion (Blair, 2009; Christopherson, 2009) that networking implicitly and explicitly instrumentalises friendships and social life.

Chapter five explores the conception of the creative career. It examines the narrative tropes assumed by the interviewees to communicate their value systems and understanding of career and working life, as well as their moral and ethical boundaries. These narratives indicate the various ways in which the concept of creativity is understood and used to construct a vocational sense of self. Are people's narratives of identity informed or shaped by 'art', 'craft' or 'career' narratives and/or discourse? How do these people interpret creativity and/or creative practice, and to what degree does this interpretation govern their working lives?

Chapter six sheds light on how people take stock of precarity. It outlines the various career tactics people use to organise and make sense of precarious working lives. Do they rationalise their experiences through the narrative of the artist, crafts worker, the freelancer, the permalancer or the embedded creative? Or do they forgo all possibilities and walk away?



## CHAPTER ONE

### The New Economy

The 'new economy' (Shorthose and Strange, 2004; Thrift, 2005) is a broad term that refers to recent social, cultural and economic change. It makes reference to technological change, as well as changes to the organisation of economic activity and to social and cultural (re)production (Flew, 2005).

Cognate terms like 'new capitalism' (Sennett, 1999), the 'cultural economy' (Gibson and Kong, 2005, du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Hesmondalgh, 2007), the 'creative economy' (Florida, 2003, Flew, 2005), the 'knowledge economy' (Leadbeater, 1999) and the 'information society' (Garnham, 2005) have all been used interchangeably to discuss contemporary life and the assimilation of economy and cultural practice (Shorthose and Strange, 2004).

The new economy has been characterised as increasingly global; based on intangibles such as knowledge, information and innovation; increasingly decentralised; and based on networks, creativity and flexibility (Shorthose and Strange, 2004; Flew, 2005). It has come to represent 'permanently transitional' work requiring risk-taking activity, high degrees of mobility and highly 'individualized' and 'disembedded' personnel (McRobbie, 2002a: 97). This means that the virtues most prized in the discourse of the new economy are flexibility, versatility, mobility and individualism, mainly because they suit informal, decentralised, precarious labour markets (Morgan and Cohen, 2006; McRobbie, 2002a; Leadbeater, 1999).

New economy labour markets require workers to be willing to adapt to meet the needs of both capital and labour market change. Flexible work conditions mean that workers are only better off if they can parlay skills, knowledge and experience into diverse and multiple industries and jobs. Because of this, workers are expected to train and retrain regularly, but mostly at their own expense in terms of time and money, without the sponsorship of employers<sup>1</sup>. They must be open to resetting the co-ordinates of working life at the hint of a fleeting opportunity that might take them in a different direction. Researchers who have analysed the new economy (Cohen, 2006; Morgan and Wood, 2014, Morgan and Ren, 2012; du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Amin, 1994; Flew, 2005; Florida, 2003; Seltzer and Bentley, 1999) have suggested that this makes working life fragmented, risky and insecure (Beck, 2000; Morgan, 2012; Morgan et al., 2013, Gill, 2010; Ross, 2007, 2009; Sennett, 1999). Consequently, workers have become decentralised; they have been cut adrift (Sennett, 1999).

During the Fordist industrial era, which reached its high point in the mid-twentieth century, work was more fixed and tended to generate more solid occupational identities and career-based structures. Employment and workplaces tended to be stable, highly structured and hierarchically organised, and there was a clear divide between work and leisure time and space. Occupational communities of practice nurtured collective identities, upon which collective action could be based, as well as informal learning and durable, communal narratives of self and occupation. People had regular

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<sup>1</sup> Watson et al. (2003) chart the process whereby employers came to relinquish their training responsibilities in Australia over a period of time.

access to others who held similar social and cultural ideals and interests, and trade union representation was strong.

Critics of the new economy continue to argue that in the current context of social and cultural change, labour forces have become increasingly competitive. Workplace information and skills once initiated and reproduced within communities of practice are now circulated and shared through looser and more transient networks. There are no clear pathways, methods of logical or linear progression or frameworks in place to guide people trying to enter into networks. Network entry requires social contacts and a heady mix of tacit knowledge learnt on-the-job and explicit knowledge learnt through formal education and courses. Networks, ironically, are also a means of acquiring the very resources that one needs in order to penetrate them – tacit knowledge and access to a community of practice. Therefore, they are powerful predictors of vocational outcomes.

Leadbeater (1999) states that when building the creative career, explicit knowledge is more valuable although less rich than tacit knowledge. He explains that tacit knowledge – which is learnt by osmosis, over long periods, in particular contexts, by apprenticeships and at the ‘elbows of craftsman’ (1999: 28) – is valuable in a practical sense but not in a commercial sense. Rather, he states, those people who can turn their tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge that can be bought and sold and communicated to audiences are much more likely to prosper in the new economy and therefore are much more highly valued.

Whilst many of the aspirants interviewed for this research have undertaken study and so have an explicit knowledge of filmmaking, many lack tacit knowledge or the type of knowledge acquired in a community of practice and by working alongside professionals. This is because their access to the contexts that reproduce and/or transmit this knowledge such as the paid work arena and professionals networks is limited by their class backgrounds and amateur status.

So in an attempt to overcome this, they try to build their network(s), but in order to network effectively and be considered network worthy, they require the very knowledge to which they are aspiring and of which they are lacking: a combination of tacit and explicit knowledge. So the conundrum is that they require tacit knowledge in order to access it.

People who require both tacit and explicit forms of knowledge in order to work, such as those aspiring to work in creative labour markets like film and television, must also find ways to commodify and sell their knowledge and skills in networks. This means that as much as they operate as 'freelancers', they must also become 'entrepreneurs', which alters and governs network dynamics. How can people build relationships of 'trust' (Leadbeater, 1999) in competitive work environments when both tacit and explicit knowledge, as well as people themselves, become commodities able to be bought and sold? The longevity and reciprocity required to build trustful relationships, particularly those that enable network inclusion, is interrupted by the quick-

paced networking and project-based labour that underlies creative employment.

By undertaking courses and volunteering, people aspiring to work in the creative industries attempt to break the pattern of exclusion (McRobbie, 2002b; Holt and Lapenta, 2010; Daniel and Daniel, 2010). Consequently, they are locked into a cyclic pattern of entering and exiting networks (and labour markets). Many find themselves holding down day jobs in non-creative fields while they pursue creative interests after-hours or part-time. Moreover, some are employed on an informal, part-time subcontracted basis, earning their income from a variety of jobs or sources within a number of different sectors (Gibson and Kong, 2005; Gibson et al., 2002). The main point here is that the new economy has introduced new work-based patterns, that prize the enterprising individual who can exist in unstable, casualised employment and maintain fragmented network relations whilst remaining on-call (Gibson and Kong, 2005, Watson., et al, 2003). These people are new economy assimilates who internalise the values and disciplines associated with precarious labour.

The long-term employment and regular income that were once conditions of vertically integrated workplaces are now more elusive (Beck, 1992:142).

Currently, there seems to be no solid ground for workers to stand upon as they deal with complex and continual transitions between training work and between different jobs. This presents a challenge for vocational biographies: workers must now abstract from a number of different work experiences the

skills and knowledge required to move forward in their working lives. Those most likely to manage new economic structures are those with the ability to construct 'portfolio careers' (Handy, 1989) and use vocational skills and knowledge in any number of different settings. Furthermore, workers must now construct coherent biographical narratives out of fragmented working lives so as to make sense of aspirational and vocational constraint in discursive terms.

The new economy provides scope for people's apparent freedom from institutionalised regulation, and proponents argue that flexibility, creativity and technology have opened up myriad opportunities for people to get closer to the means of production and to live creative working lives. Within contemporary economic life, work and creativity have come together and changed the way that capitalism and creativity is embodied and performed.

#### 'Enculturalisation' of the Economy

The 'cultural turn', or the 'enculturalisation of the economy' thesis, offers a reversal of economic orthodoxy that states that economies and markets exist separate to the activities and practices of society and the people that constitute them. Commentators like Granovetter (1985) and du Gay and Pryke (2002), for example, argue that cultural practice is a constitutive feature of economic markets and activity and not simply the product of economic activity and management. Lash and Urry (1994), Leadbeater (1999) and Florida (2003) argue that economic transformation and activity needs to be

recognised for the cultural practice that it is and the cultural imperatives that it has come to represent.

Culture and work in the new economy have become intertwined; culture being 'self expressive and symbolic activities' and work, a space for the public performance of self and the production of culture (McRobbie, 2002a: 97).

Williams defines culture as a "“whole way of life” of a distinct people or other social group' (1981: 11), but extends this to mean a 'signifying system through which necessarily (though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored' (Williams, 1981: 13, author's emphasis).

Williams and McRobbie amongst others, refer in different ways to what has been called the 'cultural turn', where capitalism is seen to have become increasingly 'culturalised' (Leadbeater, 1999; Kelly, 1999; Rifkin, 2000; du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Shorthose and Strange, 2004; McRobbie, 2002a). This marks the displacement of Taylorised management, which suited systems of the mass production of commodities, by a more progressivist approach to work and workers, where the performance of 'natural' or 'innate' individual qualities such as creativity and occupational capacity is encouraged in workers, and where workplaces are tailored to meet the needs of individual workers. In such settings workers, by way of self-motivation and direction rather than bureaucratic governance or institutional control, are apparently better able to produce cultural products/commodities (Florida, 2003). But in the context of 'new capitalism', the speed in which workers are required to

produce cultural products along with the conditions of project-based labour challenges the notion that 'enculturalisation' has enabled occupational self-realisation and creative performance and autonomy. In fact, despite 'enculturalisation', creative workers continue to be alienated from the means of production and continue to struggle for occupational autonomy and recognition. However, as argued by Sennett (2008), Banks (2010) and Luckman (2013), craft-based models of work provide a context for bringing workers closer to the means of production, and should be noted for the integral role they play in the production of cultural/creative artefacts. This is why the creative industries have been recently implicated in producing social meaning (Hesmondalgh, 2007).

Despite the optimism of much of the celebratory literature on the 'creative economy' (new economy) (Florida, 2003), creative impulses, talent and enthusiasms are far from sufficient to guarantee membership of the 'creative class'. Most workers move chaotically from project to project, performing a number of 'jobs' or 'lumps of labour' over the course of a lifetime. Working lives are fragmented, and this challenges creative workers' sense of purpose and identity (Sennett, 1999). They multi-skill, multitask and network their way through life, often without the security of institutionalised and established workplace structures (Sennett, 1999; Ross, 2009; Standing, 2011), consequently accumulating 'portfolio careers' (Handy, 1998) or careers that are an accumulation of short-term, project-based labour performed for numerous employers and under variable but precarious conditions (McRobbie, 2002a: 111).



The cultural dimension of economic life has been recognised in the theory of post-Fordism. If Fordism is mass production and standardisation of commodities, post-Fordism is niche production, with greater flexibility and a recognition of the need to recalibrate production to meet shifts in taste and fashion (Amin, 1994). It is a much more agile form of capitalism and is often associated with smaller, leaner enterprises (Murray, 1987; Brusco, 1982; Sabel, 1982). If much of the Fordist production has moved to the developing world, the West, we are told by the theorists of post-Fordism, is moving towards flexible specialisation and small-scale batch production.

However, it is important to recognise that while post-Fordist production has grown significantly, including in the film industry, as we shall see in the next chapter, elements of Fordism remain in the West. Gibson and Kong (2005: 551) observe that proponents of the new economy often 'talk up' its scale to justify a specific political or economic agenda and overestimate the decline of Fordism, ignoring its endurance in some parts of the labour market (2005: 543). The very notion of precarity and ongoing occupational change keeps some creative workers yearning for the stability and predictability of Fordist workplaces and craft communities. Sennett (2008) claims that it is the repetitive bodily performance of skills and the mastering of tools that establishes meaningful workplace practices and craftsmanship, and Luckman (2013) believes that technology takes the form of 'simple tools' in the context of craft labour. Even Sennett (2008) recognises the emergence of a 'technological craftsmanship', but persists with defining craftsmanship as the subtle and practiced 'interplay between tacit knowledge and self-conscious

awareness', much of which he attributes to a bodily performance of skills closely associated with Fordism, but also craft labour. So as much as we have moved from the 'old' into the 'new', elements of Fordism still exist.

Post-Fordism has been accompanied by profound changes in the structure of work and working life. Firstly, the rapidity of structural economic change as a result of technological and stylistic innovation has produced the potential for a greater variety in working life: people will work in a range of careers and not just one. Leadbeater sees this as a virtue:

My father had a steady, predictable career which carried him through to a well earned, properly funded and enjoyable retirement... I am not yet forty, I have already had several mini-careers... I am one of Charles Handy's portfolio workers... I live on my wits (1999: 1).

Others have highlighted the inequalities, insecurities and uncertainties associated with living on one's wits, holding down various jobs, constructing ephemeral careers. New economy workers are forced to live with precarious work and intermittent incomes, with the prospect that their skills will rapidly become obsolete and they will be made redundant and forced to retrain (Hesmondalgh, 2007; Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2002a, 2002b; Gill, 2009, 2010; Ross, 2009; Sennett, 1999, Standing, 2011).

Secondly, it is argued that post-Fordism allows workers to be more creatively involved in the production process in a way that was not possible under mass production. According to those who advocate for the new economy, the post-Fordist developments in Western capitalism have corresponded with a generalised disillusion with hierarchically structured, bureaucratic, Taylorised workplaces, which are said to hinder the creativity that can be found in work

(Leadbeater, 1999; Florida, 2003; Lash and Urry, 1994). Such a view suggests that there are now more opportunities to find creative and fulfilling forms of work.

However, the economic colonisation of creativity has led to a blurring of the boundary between work and play. Since culture has become not only an economic good but also an economic practice, people have come to be consumed by 'work', particularly when 'work' is creative self-expression. Consequently, people are now searching for new ways to find meaning in work and to assert their vocational identities both at work and after-hours. The distinctions between leisure and work; unemployed and underemployed; inequality and flexibility; society and economy are becoming blurred in light of work coming to 'mean much more than just earning a living; it incorporates and overtakes everyday life...' (McRobbie, 2002a: 99). Furthermore,

... the couplet 'creativity/talent' has recently come to represent the most desired of human qualities, expressive of, indeed synonymous with, an 'inner self', and hence mark a uniqueness, and particularly resonant for young people poised to enter the labour market. Creativity is not unlike what 'soul' used to be, a mark of the inner, meaningful self. But these resources are not simply there, on tap. They have to be worked at. The various incitements to uncover these abilities can be understood as 'technologies of the self'. These are also strategies of self-governance and thus demonstrative of recent modalities of power (McRobbie, 2002a: 109).

According to utopian new economy rhetoric, employers and businesses can create workplaces that encourage and nurture people's cultural practices, creative inclinations, innovative ideas and individual differences (see Ross' [2004] account of 'no-collar', bohemian workplaces). Academic proponents of the new economy have embraced elements of this utopianism by suggesting that new economic organisation provides limitless prospects and opportunities

to people's creative freedom, flexibility, autonomy and self-governance (Leadbeater, 1999, Florida, 2003). Society and the economy, they argue, will be emancipated from the constraints of the old industrial order by simply embracing all the new economy has to offer, including risk-taking activity and the heightened chances of failure that come with it. It is risky, they promise, demanding, stressful, uncertain, but rewarding.

Leadbeater (1999) argues a prescriptive/normative position: through processes of individualisation and by a conscious rejection of traditional social order, people, businesses and the economy will prosper. This will occur when companies and people refocus and redirect their energies into the creation of information and culture, of 'know-how', of explicit rather than tacit knowledge, rather than investing in the manufacturing of industrial goods. By opening up the economy and by recognising the power of intangible assets and resources such as knowledge, innovation, information and education, people and companies will become productive and generate wealth. The economy, he says, must become modern and 'weightless' so as to unleash all of its benefits (Leadbeater, 1999: 27).

Leadbeater extends this argument to people. The institutions, laws and cultures of the industrial nineteenth century cannot continue to weigh down society. Shedding the shell of the old institutions, the shackles of routine, will ultimately lead to personal and economic success, which guarantees that:

Our children will not have to toil in dark factories, descend into pits or suffocate in mills, to hew raw materials and turn them into manufactured products. They will make their livings through their creativity, ingenuity and imagination... we must not retreat

into the illusory discomfort of a closed, nostalgic communitarian society. That dead end would kill off innovation (Leadbeater, 1999: ix–xi).

Leadbeater's argument suggests that creativity can only be performed exclusively within post-Fordist work environments, and only when workers are set free from sentiments that bind them to communal or class expectations and/or constraints. Yet Banks (2010) argues that craft models of work, those grounded in workshop communities of practice and master-apprentice relations, with close and communal circles operating their own moral codes of criteria and value, are absolutely necessary to cultural and creative industries. Leadbeater's argument also limits creative practice to the types of working environments to which Florida refers, working environments that are essential both to corporations if they are not to 'wither and die' (2003: 13) and to the elicitation of creativity – the 'no-collar workplace' (2003: 13; Ross, 2004), 'open office layouts, flexible schedules, new work rules and management methods' (Florida, 2003: 116) where people dress in:

... relaxed and casual clothes... never forced to work... never truly not at work... where motivation is intrinsic, where job security is traded for autonomy, and where people are fairly compensated for the work we do and the skills we bring, we want the ability to learn and grow, shape the content of our work, control our own schedules and express our identities through work (Florida, 2003: 12–13).

As stated previously, this also shows how the retraditionalisation of creativity has blurred the lines between public and private, and leisure and work life. In Florida's (2003) world, autonomy is achieved via creativity practice, yet as McRobbie (2002a, 2002b) reminds us, creative/cultural commodification, as well as post-Fordist labour organisation, means that at times creative workers/aspirants are forced to relinquish their creative autonomy and their

occupational independency to support themselves financially by working for corporations. How accessible (or achievable) is Florida's (2003) creative utopianism?

Where Taylorism sought to make workers into functionaries, appendages of the machines they watched, new capitalism now values those who can challenge boundaries. It rewards those who commodify aspirations, skills, creativity and identities and who can adjust to non-standardisation. As Florida (2003) argues, the creative individual is at the centre of contemporary working life and flourishes in a culture of 'creativity', commerce and autonomy. The creative individual 'is no longer viewed as an iconoclast. He – or she – is the new mainstream' (2003: 6). Yet Ross (who has a much more critical take on the effects of the creative economy) argues that:

Once marginal on the landscape of production, it is artists, designers, and other creatives who are becoming the new-model workers – self-directed, entrepreneurial, accustomed to precarious, nonstandard employment, and attuned to producing career hits. All of these are endemic to a jackpot economy, where intellectual property is the glittering prize for the lucky few (2009:10).

Ross, therefore, brings our attention to the limits of creative capacity. They may have become 'poster girls and boys' (Gill, 2010; McRobbie, 2002b) and, Ross argues, lionised where once they were derided, but few reap the rewards of their labour. Along with their aesthetic skills and ability to produce intellectual property, what new capitalism prizes is their ability to live on the edge, the sharpness that comes from living without a steady income. This plays out in a readiness to train and retrain, update skills and market one's self. As 'forerunners' for the 'future of work' (Ross, 2009; Gill, 2010), creative

workers exemplify a move away from traditional notions of career towards more informal, precarious and postmodern ways of working (Gill, 2010; McRobbie, 2002a).

To maintain a working life, aspirants must be flexible without making demands, adaptable, sociable, self-directing, able to work for days and nights without encumbrances or needs and be open to the possibility that every social interaction is a 'potential', an opportunity for work and life, thus a constant 'pitch' (Gill, 2010). The boundaries between work and life are thoroughly blurred. Creative industry aspirants must 'economise life'; that is, take the economic logic enacted at work and extend it into social and cultural life (Gill, 2010; McRobbie, 2002a; Morgan, 2006; Shorthose & Strange, 2004) in order to open up opportunity, even whilst employed or part of a network. This 'individual instrumentalism' (Haunschild and Eikhof, 2009) consequently seeps into everyday life and the inherent imperatives structure time and place, resources and friendships/relationships. In an effort to construct a life, to 'manage' themselves', people must be willing to instrumentalise their aspirations, resources and relationships (Wittel, 2001). When ambitions have yet to be achieved, aspirants must network, engineer opportunity and form relationships with others in positions of power and with similar aspirations (Blair, 2009).

Circumstances of precarity, romantically identified with a sort of freewheeling artistic existence, are becoming increasingly generalised and normalised (Standing, 2011; McRobbie 2002a; Ross, 2007). Some commentators, like

Florida, are uncritical of these developments, but as later chapters demonstrate, many of the film and television aspirants and professionals interviewed for this study experienced ongoing underemployment, poverty, insecurity and anxiety. Many experienced not 'fitting in', despite the rhetoric that claims the new economy valorises and rewards uniqueness and individuality, and some tempered their aspirations to suit economic needs. Most complained of inadequate financial return for their work, and that the intermittency of paid labour made them some of the lowest paid in society (Throsby and Zednik, 2010).

The creative industries are, and have always been, places of precarious employment, of intermittent livelihoods and of competitive labour markets (McRobbie, 1999, 2002a, 2002b; Hesmondalgh, 2007; Gill and Pratt, 2008). What distinguishes contemporary times is the number of people aspiring to work in them, in particular, those from working-class backgrounds. Working-class people, with the influence of the media and concept of celebrity, see creative occupations and employment in the creative industries as indicative of social mobility. However, the work is risky, there are no guarantees, and those who make it often do so because they know people in the industry or are born into it.

### Creativity: The Floating Signifier

It is worthwhile then tracing the etymology of creativity. Prior to the Renaissance, the term 'create' had cosmological connotations (Negus and Pickering, 2004). 'Creatures' (including humans) – a word derived from the



term 'creation', could not create (Morgan and Ren, 2012; Negus and Pickering, 2004). Rather it was God that was seen as the source of all that existed and/or was possible (Negus and Pickering, 2004). It was during the Renaissance that the term was redefined with humanist connotations (Negus and Pickering, 2004). The notion of the 'artist creator' gained legitimacy and with it, the idea that people could be originators of knowledge and culture (Morgan and Ren, 2012).

Governments have appropriated the idea of creativity to capture trends in Western economics, restructuring economic discourse to shift the meaning of creativity (Morgan and Ren, 2012). Today, creativity connotes qualities like 'entrepreneurialism and a practical problem-solving ingenuity', thus collapsing distinctions between artists and technical workers (Morgan and Ren, 2012: 128). In much the same way as culture and work are converged, creativity and industry have also moved closer in meaning. Because of this, the complexities that arise from working precariously, but creatively are concealed by the apparent rewards of self-expression and the promise of social mobility. The belief that 'more of us than ever are doing creative work for a living' (Florida, 2003: 8) is questionable, however, particularly when those with creative ambitions work so hard to experience the 'sovereign space' that the creative industries apparently provide for finding 'pleasure in work' (Donzelot, 1991 in McRobbie, 2002a).

Whilst initially the term creativity was linked to ideas of art and the 'artistic genius', as well as craftsmanship, the word creativity today connotes '... a

particular kind of inventiveness... innovative, rule-breaking/bending... non-linear even non 'rational' ways of thinking and working' (O'Connor et al., 2011), which by contrast with the rational-bureaucratic processes of Fordism and Taylorism provides a model of manufacturing and work for a number of industries to emulate. O'Connor et al. for the Australian Art Council (2011), for example, organises the Australian creative industries according to an 'art-media-design' system. This organisational system seeks to break down distinctions between art, craft, creativity, industry and economy by acknowledging the artistic/creative/technical aspects of cultural production, their practical functions and marketability. 'Art' identifies the aesthetic qualities of creative industry products/activities; 'media' includes distribution models, platforms, critics and marketing as well as social and cultural policy; 'design' refers to the aesthetic content but also to a 'larger functional brief', in that the product may appear aesthetically pleasing but must also be practical and utilitarian (O'Connor et al., 2011). The 'art-media-design' system, therefore, resists committing singularly to art-based notions of creativity by employing more craft, technological and market-based accounts of the term.

Hesmondalgh and Baker go as far as to suggest that the idea of creativity has more recently become political doctrine (2011: 3). This understanding of the term challenges arts-based notions of creativity, which are perpetuated by the term 'culture', and makes the creative industries appear more democratic and no longer subject to limited arts-based funding and less subject to high/low brow cultural judgements. The creative industries, therefore, are more able to secure government funding arts and cultural projects; in other words, their

'arts-based' counterparts. However, there are many arts - and culture-based institutions vying for a piece of the financial pie, and therefore aspirants and creative industry graduates waiting to experience the increase in opportunity on which the promotion of creative careers is based (Taylor and Littleton, 2008; Comunian et al., 2011; Haukka, 2011). To capture these opportunities, they must first embrace the requirements of postmodern careers and learn to embody the precarity and uncertainty that defines creative working life.

The lexical range of the term creative industries has been argued over extensively in academic circles (Hesmondalgh, 2007, O'Connor, 2000; Florida, 2003; Cunningham, 2002). What makes a job or enterprise creative may be nothing intrinsic but have more to do with the forms of discourse that elevate it to creative industries status. For example, Florida's definition of creative industry includes occupations in science and engineering, art, music and entertainment, business, finance and even law (2003, 8–9). Today there are occupations – cooking, home decorating, hairdressing – that can be spun either as creative professions or routine manual tasks, depending on the context and discourse in which they are framed (Lovink and Rossiter, 2007). There is a sense of vocational possibility associated with creative expression; even subcultures prepare people for future careers (see Bennett and Hodkinson, 2012). With the rising emphasis in the Western world on aesthetic skills (Warhurst and Nickson, 2001), the encouragement of creative self-expression that might not have gone anywhere except into bohemian counterculture or alienated subculture pursuits, today entices people to stay at school and furnish vocational aspirations. Further still, more and more

industries/fields are entering into the creative industries category, which is making the most mundane of jobs not only creative but also competitively structured and potentially exclusive.

### The Creative Career

Those with creative ambitions follow the vocational patterns set by postmodern life. Under the rubric 'postmodernity', there is the presumption that skills and personal attributes are malleable artefacts of discourse, shaped and guided by context and interchangeable (Lash and Urry, 1994). In such settings, people must be open to the uncertainty of how their futures might unfold. Where modern careers hinge on predictability and the ability to plan ahead, the postmodern career hinges on the compulsion to keep options open and to embrace the unknown. People who pursue postmodern careers view their identities and skills as transferable and fluid, which challenges the grounded and particular view of vocational identity central to the 'art', 'craft' and 'modern career' narratives (defined below) that have been used by my interviewees to organise, structure and find meaning in working life.

The unforeseeability of a postmodern/portfolio career requires workers to be tactical in an attempt to plan for a future that is unclear, which contrasts it with the orientation of the modern career and predominately institutionalised, communal life. Open to change, the postmodern subject is eager to experience serendipitous moments, which means that she/he must refashion themselves regularly and according to social context. They therefore are also forced to burn social relations, to move onwards and lose their conserved

identities, the narratives that once defined them. In an effort to become 'authors of their own lives', to break free of the 'certainties of their original milieu' (Beck, 2000: 53), people construct 'elective', 'reflexive', 'do-it-yourself' biographies (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) in an effort to replace the narratives of community and tradition that have apparently lost sway:

Individualization is a compulsion, albeit a paradoxical one, to create, to stage manage, not only one's own biography but the bonds and networks surrounding it and to do this amid changing preferences and at successive stages of life, while constantly adapting to the conditions of the labour market, the education system, the welfare system and so on (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 4).

The focus here is how individualism and collectivism intersect, particularly in the lives of aspiring film and television workers who aspire to both communities and but who are marginal to both. Networking is a tactic used to overcome occupational exclusiveness, and to meet the requirements of the postmodern career, but it requires people to resolve the competing demands the craft community and network industry, and to refashion themselves according to context. Therefore, the focus here is to examine not only how precarity and creative ambition is lived but also how well people can adapt to the requirements of the new economy and the creative industries as atomised individuals, and how this shapes their narratives of self and guides how they embody the notion of the 'self-made' individual.

Disembedded and Set Free? The Persistence of Class and Gender within the Context of the Reflexive Modernity

In their book, *Individualization*, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argue that there has been a breakdown in traditional social structures of industrial

society, such as Fordist labour organisation and institutional governance and regulation:

... individualization means the disintegration of previously existing social forms... the fragility of such categories as class and social status, gender roles, family, neighbourhood... it means the collapse of state-sanctioned normal biographies, frames of reference, role models... new modes of life are coming into being where the old ones ordained by religion, tradition or the state, are breaking down... new demands, controls and constraints are imposed... (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 2).

According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), traditional social structure no longer holds sway. People are 'disembedded' [sic] from traditional social groupings such as class, gender, family and the state (Beck, 2000; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), from the 'certainties of their original milieu' (Beck, 2000: 53) and from 'frames of reference' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) and so are free to choose from any number of potential trajectories and life narratives (Giddens, 1991; Lash, 1991). In contemporary society, it is necessary that people act reflexively (Giddens, 1991), make quick decisions about their lives and cease to rely on institutionalised structure or traditional forms of social organisation for guidance (Beck, 2000: 53).

Scholars such as White and Wyn (2008), Furlong and Cartmel (1997), Gill (2008, 2009, 2010), McRobbie (1991; 2002a, 2002b), Morgan and Nelligan (2012, 2014) and Morgan et al. (2013), however, argue that features of traditional society, family, social class, and so on continue to guide people's lives, so much so that they disrupt processes of 'individualization' and people's ability to be reflexive, self-constructing individuals. More specifically, researchers argue that class, gender, ethnicity and familial ties continue to

shape people's trajectories, identities (White and Wyn, 2008; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Gill, 2008, 2009, 2010; McRobbie, 1991, 2002a, 2002b) and biographical narratives (Cohen, 1999; Taylor, 2007; Morgan and Nelligan, 2012; Morgan et al., 2013) and, therefore, continue to govern life chances (Gill, 2010; White & Wyn, 2008; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; McRobbie, 2002a, 2002b, 1999).

'Individualization' compels social actors to take charge of their destinies (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). The argument may be that people are no longer tied to their pasts, their fate no longer governed by the life patterns of their forebears. Social change, however, has not dissolved old inequalities; rather, it has reshaped them, in addition to introducing new ones (Gill, 2008, 2009, 2010; McRobbie, 1991, 2002a, 2002b, Morgan and Nelligan, 2012; Morgan et al., 2013, Morgan and Idriss, 2012). People are now judged according to whether they can, as disembedded individuals, straddle postmodern requirements. This makes aspiring workers, particularly those seeking to work in creative fields, vulnerable to informal judgement, the discretion of gatekeepers and greater levels of risk. Beck (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) attempt to rationalise this by arguing that, in spite of individualism and reflexive modernity, people create their own protective barriers/buffers to risk, mainly by forming independent social collectives (occupational groupings and informal networks) (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: xxi). However, when work is scarce even ostensibly mutually supportive communities are couched in competition.

The creative career (which in many areas was always competitively organised) has come to represent a general paradigm for working life (Ross, 2009). Workers must be committed to lifelong learning, undergo constant renewal and view their skills as transferable. Sennett (1999) argues that this type of working life 'corrodes character' values and that identities associated with the predictability of routine and workplace community are lost while people are busy restructuring time, engineering fortune and negotiating change.

Without the security and guidance of institutions and traditional society, and without the familiarity and predictability of routine, it is difficult to ascertain what is required to secure work and construct careers. This is particularly so for those for whom the creative career is uncharted territory: where their communities, friendships and family members can supply them with few roadmaps. They consequently turn to familiar narratives, those mainly of family, class, education and gender, which then govern their vocational direction and limit/enable their network membership. Therefore, the inequalities associated with these social groupings are not lost; rather, these pre-existing inequalities are reinforced and contextualised by processes of individualisation, neo-liberalism and the new economy, and thus the need to script life according to discourse and postmodern requests.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), however, are careful to differentiate neo-liberalism from 'individualization'. Neo-liberal ideology suggests that people are compelled to action through self-motivation, self-preservation and self-interest, depriving them of a sense of 'mutual obligation' or social co-operation



(Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: xxi). 'Institutionalized individuals', despite being free of traditional social bonds, still operate in relation to others, 'the individual is not a monad but is self-insufficient and increasingly tied to others' [author's emphasis] (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:xxi). 'Institutionalized individuals' meet/address needs via relations formed in self-initiated and often informally governed social alliances as well as local and global networks. This presupposes that improvised collectivities, based on a shared willingness to help, support and protect each other in the face of constant change, can compensate for the lack of external institutional guidance or support on offer.

Theorists of individualisation suggest that the pressure to author one's own biography is sanctioned by the economy, and that what appear to be various options are inherently 'precarious freedoms' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). It seems that each decision, because it is coated in risk (traditional safety nets have ceased to operate) and negotiated on an individual level, is made at a moral and ethical cost and plagues people with feelings of uncertainty and fear:

Opportunities, dangers, biographical uncertainties that were earlier predefined within the family association, the village community, or be recourse to the rules of social estates or classes, must now be perceived, interpreted, decided and processed by individuals themselves... the human being becomes... a choice among possibilities... life, death, gender, corporeality, identity, religion, marriage, parenthood, social ties... are all becoming decidable down to the small print; once fragmented into options, everything must be decided... [people] are forced to take into their hands that which is in danger of breaking into pieces: their own lives (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:5).

The ongoing need to make life choices and decisions in the context of constant change means that people only ever fleetingly unite with others and are hardly ever integrated into 'society': 'Modern society's... functional

systems... rely on the fact that individuals are not integrated but only partly and temporarily involved as they wander between different functional worlds' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:23). Collective and group identities break up and notions of security that underpinned traditional society disintegrate. No longer afforded the level of protection by the welfare state as in the past, people are left with no option but to, at times, act individually and in ways that provide them with moral challenges. Only fleetingly (and often superficially) can they find refuge in networks and other informally organised social alliances (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). So, in summary, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim argue that people have become increasingly responsible for the successes and failings of their lives, and although they are increasingly reliant upon others, they are no longer morally and ethically bound to them. Instead their life chances depend on them being loyal to themselves.

Other theorists have depicted individualisation as a fluid, generative process. Lash and Urry (1994), for example, state that, individuals are mobile beings, able to function freely in a social economy characterised by fluidity, networks and flows of knowledge, culture and information. People can choose to build their lives and identities from an array of options, signs, symbols, texts and various other forms of communication and information that represent what Lash and Urry call 'information structures' (1994:111). It is within this context that people are said to reflexively construct their lives and identities (Lash and Urry, 1994:111). 'Information structures' are said to inject a renewable energy into both society and individuals, because it is within such contexts that people can socially and culturally invent and reinvent themselves in self-

expressive ways and according to [labour] market needs (Beck, 2000; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Lash and Urry, 1994).

In a free-flowing, generative society, people must constitute themselves, plan, understand and design themselves (Lash and Urry, 1994; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck, 1992). With less pervasive institutional guidance and frameworks in place, making life choices is a difficult and complex task. How do people accumulate the tools, knowledge and dispositions needed to negotiate the construction of what several commentators now term 'choice biographies' (du Bois-Reymond, 1998; Dwyer and Wyn 2000, 2001; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997)? Who do people turn to for support when networks are exclusive and people are unable/unwilling to help others, particularly when institutional guidance is dismantled and there is pressure to break with the patterns of the past? How are social insecurity, uncertainty and constant change embodied and rationalised, particularly when people are socially marginalised as individuals and not in touch with their collective identities?

### 'Reflexive Modernity' and the Discursive Construction of Self

#### Youth transitions and working life

The argument put forward by researchers like Beck (2002), Dwyer and Wyn (2000, 2001) and Furlong and Cartmel (1997) is that the period of life known as the 'youth transition' is no longer fleeting and branded by the age of youth; it is now an ongoing condition of life. This means that the insecurity and uncertainty associated with being young and starting out can endure well beyond youth. Some argue (Florida, 2003; Leadbeater, 1999) that there is

excitement to be had at the cost of security but in the name of innovation; however, most argue that there are both discursive and physical transitions to undergo and no solid ground for workers to tread upon or within which to formulate goals (Furlong and Cartmel, 1998; Wyn, 2004).

Beck (2000) argues that social and cultural change in the Western world has resulted in the 'Brazilianisation' of labour markets. Temporary and casual employment, discontinuity and loose informality, he claims, have aligned Western labour markets with the 'semi-industrialised' labour markets of third and developing world countries (2000:1). Waged or salaried employment is the privilege of the minority, while the majority work in precarious labour (Beck, 2000:1). Ross (2009) echoes this sentiment when he argues that creative industry paradigms of work are coming to structure labour markets generally. Both Beck (2000) and Ross (2009) point to the effects of precarity on vocational identity, occupational disembeddedness, low-level wages and 'bulimic' work patterns (Gill and Pratt, 2008), all of which feature regularly in the lives of many workers today despite age and/or experience (Stokes and Wyn, 2007; Furlong and Kelly, 2005). These features of working life, once the epitome of youth are now a feature of adulthood as well. Many people, despite age and aspiration, face the prospect of casualisation and short-term employment.

Furlong and Kelly (2005) take this argument further by suggesting that in Western society, youth transitions have also become 'Brazilianized' and that young people now have to negotiate the terms of flexibility up against the

terms of precarity. They characterise youth labour markets as similar to the labour markets outlined by Beck (2000) in that these markets maintain high levels of job mobility, lower than average incomes and a different occupational profile to many other commercial sectors of the economy. Casual and part-time work, periodic unemployment, complex education and employment pathways, and a concentration of workers in the retail and food service industries (ABS, 1998 cited in Furlong and Kelly, 2005) complicate youth transitions, along with the constraining effects of class, gender, ethnicity and community (2005: 209).

Precarious labour conditions as well as social and cultural inequalities hinder people's abilities to transition into creative labour. Firstly, the lack of employment opportunity and subsequent low income makes it hard for working-class people to be financially independent and socially mobile. Secondly, gender expectations make it difficult for women to be flexible enough to commit to the needs of family, friends and multiple employers simultaneously, particularly when there is a compulsion to refashion and reskill regularly so as to meet various demands. Furthermore, people's values guide their experiences of community (and family) and these values can, at times, conflict with the need to instrumentalise social life, an imperative of both postmodernity and the creative career.

Some researchers have found that it is also difficult for men who identify strongly with community and working-class values to relinquish their commitment to craft and to their peers in order to engineer opportunities and

networks (Nixon, 2006, 2009; MacDowell, 2003, 2000). For them, the postmodern imperative of networking and the self-made individual complicates traditional, craft-based notions of work and working life. The ability to indulge creative ambitions is the financial luxury of those from upper-middle-class society, who have limited responsibility and extensive security nets in place as well as social and cultural resources. All of this makes occupational transitions difficult and at times compromising for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Beck (2000), Furlong and Kelly (2005) and Standing (2011) each suggest that the spread of temporary, casualised employment makes it hard for people to secure positions in today's labour markets. Beck (2000) and Furlong and Kelly (2005) point to the extension of the youth phase of life and, like other commentators, they have subjected the term 'youth transition' to critical scrutiny (Stokes and Wyn, 2007; White and Wyn, 2008; Furlong and Kelly, 2005; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Conventionally, youth transitions were seen to occur linearly, and in a life-stage development order, plotted against the presupposition that life unfolds incrementally, seamlessly and coherently. In the mid-twentieth century, for example, the completion of school was closely followed by post-school study but more often by work (perhaps through apprenticeship) (White and Wyn, 2008). It was also assumed that this process meant the relinquishing of childhood dependency and the assumption of adulthood independence and responsibility (Stokes and Wyn, 2007). Factors such as these make postmodern careers difficult for working-class men and women to achieve and to embody. Such careers conflict with the

traditional narrative of masculinity, of camaraderie, of provider and breadwinner. It destabilises these men's sense of self, which is engrained and shaped by gender discourse.

Vickerstaff (2003) and Goodwin and O'Connor (2007) note, however, that mid-twentieth century transitions were not as seamless as has often been espoused (White and Wyn, 2008; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). They take issue with the unproblematic assumption that working-class people, and more particularly working-class men, were reported to have transitioned from school into apprenticeships and then into full-time work with relative ease. Rather, they argue, transitions in this era were difficult at times, and were characterised by insecurity, complexity and uncertainty. There was little guidance, vocational preparation or support available to people who were aspiring to manual labour jobs and apprenticeships, which means that many people approached work with scant knowledge of their role and with few concrete ideas about what was expected of them and where the job might lead them (Vickerstaff, 2003: 4). But as Sennett (1999) has argued, during this time working life was structured, was subject to routine and characterised by community, and so people had a better understanding of who they were, the job they were meant to perform and the possibilities available to them. Vickerstaff (2003) and Goodwin and O'Connor (2007) do exemplify, however, the types of complexities that characterised people's working lives during the so-called 'golden age' (Vickerstaff, 2003). The arguments put forward by Vickerstaff (2003) and Goodwin and O'Connor (2007), therefore, mark a

greater degree of continuity between contemporary labour markets and those in which manufacturing predominated than has been previously assumed. Yet, contemporary youth transitions (and now by extension all occupational transitions generally) are still more complex and diverse than they were forty years ago (Stokes and Wyn, 2007; White and Wyn, 2008; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Wyn and Woodman, 2006). We need to consider these complexities and biographical uncertainties when we discuss employment precarity, because as Standing (2011) and Ross (2007, 2009) argue, precarity is increasingly becoming the norm. Transitional processes today reflect the instability of working lives, and so youth and adulthood become nebulous concepts. Where once the anxieties of youth were eventually alleviated when people grew up and got jobs, the anxiety associated with the unknown is now a regular and ongoing feature of working life.

Various commentators (Giddens, 1991; Lash and Urry, 1994) also point to the rapidity of social, cultural and institutional change, which has given birth to what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), Beck (1992, 2000) and Giddens (1991) commonly refer to as the 'reflexive project of the self'. As people endeavour to become 'reflexive' beings, they strive to change and reproduce their identities according to the social contexts within which they find themselves.

The 'reflexive project of the self' is a set of continual processes whereby individuals attempt to sustain coherent biographical narratives in the context of multiple choices and decisions, which come filtered through an abstraction



of systems (Giddens, 1991:5). In other words, the deregulating effect of individualisation makes way for the construction of new biographies, which are the result of the decisions made and the actions of the individual as they re-evaluate and examine themselves in light of the outcomes of previous decisions and actions made (and not so much community). In this sense, Giddens argues, reflexive modernity provides us with a sense of being in control of our destinies, a combination of apparent individual sovereignty and choice. The more people break free from traditional social order, the more options they have to create the life they want. Giddens also argues that reflexive biographies are inherently risk biographies and, because of this, people must be calculative and constantly open to an indefinite range of potentials and possibilities of action, positive or negative, that must be continually confronted and assumed (1991: 27–29). This means that social actors must always be sensitive to opportunities and hardwired to overcome what are now individualised hurdles/barriers to these opportunities.

Living with a number of potential courses of action and choosing from such alternatives is ‘always an ‘as if’ matter, a question of selecting between possible worlds’ where ‘routine contemplation of counterfactuals’ (Giddens, 1991: 29) takes precedent over the routine forces of the ‘zombie concepts’ (class, family, work, school, long-term relationships) attached to the past (Beck, 1992).

#### Narratives of identity and narrative tropes

The allegories of working life, ‘norms of action and moral commitments... arising from the analysis of the told story... and... not decisively derived from

the description of the lived life' (Wengraf, 2001: 83) become apparent when people attempt to construct a coherent narrative of identity from the pieces of a fractured working life. On occasion, these narratives are fuelled by a need for stability, validity and legitimacy; at other times, they are enabled by the performance of multiple identities and narrative forms. Sometimes the task of narrating a sense of self indicates a crisis of identity, particularly when aspirations conflict with social class and gender. In such instances, narratives do not stretch sufficiently to allow for the construction of multiple coherent, reflexive, public selves. Rather, such narratives communicate misgivings and yearnings, and at times stories of derision, and are therefore more attuned to a private sense of self, one that is shaped by class and gender rather than one's ability to be reflexive and assimilated individuals of the new economy.

In an effort to make sense of working life and to communicate a number of working ideals, the interviewees I spoke with drew on a number of narrative tropes and/or themes. These were not consciously deployed but conveyed through discursive processes of resolve and rationalisation. Narrative tropes are social forms (not just individualised productions) and are imbued with ideas about what makes for a good and admirable working life (Cohen, 1999). For example, some of my interviewees identified as part of a community and some were committed to individualised career advancement. Most of the women, for example, were invested in the latter, some of the working-class men, in the former (Morgan and Nelligan, 2014). Cohen argues that narrative tropes are like grids 'linking the acquisition of different kinds of narrative identity to dispositions and skills associated with particular paradigms of

learning and labour... connecting themes of learning and labour to more general paradigms of the life course... ' (1999: 116–117). So the social construction of these narrative tropes reveal as much about the interviewees as the subjective embodiment of them.

Historically situated in communal settings, these narrative tropes have their roots in family, small business, corporate enterprise, in artistic schools or bohemian communities, and in agencies of formal education, professional training and/or labour movements (Cohen, 2006: 117). In other words, they are perpetuated by and through communities. Moreover, they indicate people's moral and ethical standpoints, which are often called into question when people aspire to competitive, precarious work; consequently, often these narratives of self are put to the test. Narratives are not just representations or accounts of memory, they are also coping mechanisms that help people piece together a coherent sense of self and craft out a relatively meaningful existence for themselves, despite occupational impermanence, fragility and uncertainty. In the context of people aspiring to work in the creative industries, and more particularly film and television, the narrative forms used to anchor the identities of the people interviewed were those of 'art', 'craft' and 'career'.

#### 'Art' (Bohemianism)

The values of art narratives are autonomy, aesthetic originality and anti-commercialism. Bourdieu (1990) refers to an 'artistic logic of practice' to encapsulate such values and to mark out the desire to produce 'art pour l'

art. Art narratives promote the free exploration of ideas and the production of artefacts that are reflective of intrinsic motivation and meaning (O'Connor et al., 2011). These narratives resist the entrepreneurialism and problem-solving ingenuity ascribed to the term creativity by creative industries and new economy discourse. Art-based creativity should not be directed, for example, by a brief, and is performed in ways that differentiate it from the creativity that is aligned with mainstream, popular culture. Art narratives, therefore, are reflected in life stories of those who constitute themselves in opposition to convention, eschewing bourgeois materialism and rejecting subordination to institutional authority.

Becker's argument that 'if you do it, you must be an artist. Conversely, if you are an artist, what you do must be art' (1982:18) reinforces this, and highlights the link between art and bohemianism. He argues that artists are assumed to possess 'rare' powers and are therefore tolerated when they resist social convention and 'rules of decorum, propriety, and common sense (Becker, 1982: 14). Eikhof and Haunschild argue that the main aim of the bohemian is to integrate all aspects of life into an individual life that is itself a work of art (2007: 530). Taylor and Littleton point out that artists aim to produce work that reflects certain aesthetic ideals and assume an associated identity in order to portray this aestheticism (2008: 3–6). In other words, an artist's lifestyle must reflect their aesthetic ideals.

O'Connor et al. argue that the understanding of art we have today emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, along with shifts in the meaning of

the terms history and creativity. Like its relations 'artefact' and 'artisan', art was the performance of skills, handicrafts or techniques linked to science, magic, religion and the everyday (O'Connor et al., 2011: 34). Regulated by guilds and institutions, these 'artisans' had very little autonomy (O'Connor et al., 2011: 36). With the opening up of markets, however, and the separation of art practices from science and religion during the Renaissance, art took on a new set of aesthetic ideals and functions. This divorce from strict regulation meant that artists became autonomous and their work became secular and marketed to a wider audience. The labour of the artist was seen as more than mere 'mechanicals' and this led to an increase in prestige associated with 'the arts' and artists (O'Connor et al., 2011: 36).

European influence and the growth of a market-based economy meant that art grew in social, cultural and fiscal value. A growth in consumer demand meant artists could barter their work, slowly becoming autonomous from the state and religious organisations. Consequently, they set up studios and workshops and began to develop what we now know as the 'fine arts' (O'Connor et al., 2011). The increased marketability of creativity and art impelled a change in status – from 'artisan' to 'artist' – and, consequently, a separation of the 'artist' from the 'craftsperson'. Artists were therefore seen as having vision and trying to free themselves from the confines of authority and tradition. They claimed autonomy in their work but also aimed to distance themselves from the idea of craftsmanship and 'techne' (O'Connor et al., 2011: 36).

## ‘Craft’

The values of craftspeople are collectivism, learning-by-observation/apprenticeship and resistance to standardisation and mass production (Cohen, 1999; Wenger, 1998; Banks, 2010). Central to the craft narrative are circumstances in which the craft is learned, particularly those of apprenticeship, learning ‘at the elbow’ of a craftspeople through processes of ‘emulation/simulation’ or mimesis (Cohen, 1999; Wenger, 1998). The achievement of knowledge and skill is less the product of individual motivation, or competition with peers, than the acceptance of a corpus of knowledge handed down under the supervision of elders (Cohen, 1999). Mishler (2004) captures craft values when he describes the incentives of craft practice as being ‘variety, creativity and self-respect’. However, also central to the performance of craft narratives are loyalty, reciprocity, collaboration and respect for others, the very social relations that Mishler (2004) argues enable his three-fold value system. Indeed, craft narratives give rise to craft aesthetics and the cultural capital associated with having the skills to produce handmade goods (Luckman, 2013), so in some ways these narratives contextualise creative careers. However, they also depict a way of life that is not so suited to the needs of neo-liberalism and postmodernity nor to the creative industries career.

The craft narrative, like art, values originality, but it foregrounds the handcraft rather than aesthetics. Craft narratives are usually, though not always, less individualistic than those pertaining to art, but craftspeople also express themselves through their work. Historically, craftspeople resisted the Taylorist

and technological colonisation of their skills and stressed as a primary virtue the 'originality' of their work (Mishler, 2004: 6). Guilds were formed in direct response to Taylorism and Fordism and the alienated labour to which they gave rise, and these organisations mobilised craftspeople and traditional craft practices (Luckman, 2013). The guilds promised to show craftspeople a better life, and sought to protect members from the limitations of social class and gender (women could work from home) by empowering them financially and occupationally (Luckman, 2013). Guilds rather than external institutions (church/state) governed craftspeople, which limited a craftsperson's autonomy (they accounted to peers rather than external managers) but kept bureaucratic authority at bay. For craftspeople, the fraternity judges itself.

Craft workers are under-recognised in the creative industries literature. However, as Banks argues, the creative industries provide a haven for craftwork and the performance of skills in workshop situations, largely because of the centrality of producing original and authentic cultural commodities under the new economy (Banks, 2010). Today, craft narratives, although continuing to valorise originality and community, work in accordance with the imperatives of new capitalism. Technological change, digitalisation and the Internet have prompted a renaissance of craft practices (Luckman, 2013). The creative industries have reappropriated craft and have associated it with the expressive ability of alienated youth (Luckman, 2013). Craft has become an outlet, we might say, for troubled youth as well as people affected by crises, instability, anxiety and disempowerment (Luckman, 2013: 256). There is cultural capital associated with producing and consuming the

familiarity of the past and the traditions and practices associated with previous generations.

The association of craft with contemporary subcultures (Luckman, 2013) continues to preserve craft practices; and it separates them from mainstream culture but aligns them with the idea of career and creative education (Banks, 2010). As Mishler states, contemporary craftspeople are learning their skills and practices as graduates not apprentices (Mishler, 2004: 6). The fundamental value of the craft object was, and continues to be, located in its making, yet today contemporary craftspeople are torn between investing in the traditional ideology of creating one-off, handmade products or the compulsion to mass produce and make money (Mishler, 2004).

Both art and craft narratives are tied to the concept of 'vocation', a narrative device that Cohen (1999) defines as the unfolding of life as an eternal quest for an 'authentic inner self, a self that is the bearer of a calling'. The craft narrative, particularly, also reflects elements of Cohen's 'apprenticeship' narrative, which ties the mastery of skills to techniques of the body and the acquisition of manual rather than mental skills (Cohen, 1999). The 'inheritance' narrative to which Cohen also refers is closely linked to the narrative of apprenticeship. It provides a framework for life stories that connect an individual's body, behaviour and dispositions directly to familial and communal heritage. The life cycle unfolds as a 'congenital link between fixed origins and destinies'. Its underlying message is that 'you can only become what you always and already are...' (Cohen, 1999), which challenges



neo-liberal accounts of the self-made individual and conflicts with narratives of advancement and the modern career (Cohen, 1999).

### ‘Modern Career’

Narratives of career are rendered through a set of recognisable ‘competencies’, credentials and other markers of achievement. They unfold as a matter of steps, ‘up a ladder of progress’, where life achievements and/or the development and acquisition of skills, techniques and status are an index of personal achievement and success (Cohen, 1999: 97). CVs and references from people in powerful supervisory positions are familiar forms of capital/instruments operating within this narrative. Within the interview context, for example, those who adopt a modern career narrative will animate their CV/list of credentials in order to prove job worthiness. To be effective, to be recognised, this capital has to be transferable/expendable within a relatively stable institutional career framework – a set of hierarchical structures (intra and/or extra organisationally) that allows for measurement and comparison. The idea that there is competition, arbiters of performance (both vocational and through education), means that those who assume modern career narratives submit themselves to external scrutiny and judgement.

Modern career narratives provide a framework within which to communicate a much more individualistic version of life, one that captures the desire for formal external validation in a competitive setting. Cohen argues that the narrative of career conflicts with the ‘inward search’ of vocation and the

guided direction of inheritance (Cohen, 1999), because it presupposes strategy and biographies. However, in what follows we shall see that contemporary film aspirants whose life stories are moulded by art and craft narratives do not shun the idea of career altogether. Rather, they are forced to reckon with the idea of the creative career and so develop hybrid narratives in an attempt to reconcile the competing forces and values of these different (but often connected) narrative tropes.

Narratives of identity and the life history interview are not only artefacts of performance, they are profoundly shaped by social and cultural life as well as people's pasts (gender and class) (Clare and Johnson, 1986; Taylor and Littleton, 2006). When people narrate their life stories and construct an identity for themselves in narrative terms, they are, as Clare and Johnson (1986) argue, becoming publicly significant individuals. But what their narratives also do is indicate the degree to which people can marry larger, public narratives such as those generated by the imperatives of the new economy with inner stories such as those that are generated and shaped by people's backgrounds. The narratives that emerge (coherent or not) are used to 'plan activities, envisage outcomes, project possibilities, anticipate futures and orientate' people, and so represent 'chains of associated actions' (Clare and Johnson, 1986: 7). This means that narratives of identity are not just abstract concepts that are used to make sense of life worlds and organise biographies, but are also performances of self and the embodiment of discourse.

When people feel compelled to improvise their lives due to a lack of 'formal' institutional frameworks in place to guide them, the risks they face on an individual basis are even more difficult to negotiate and process. This is particularly true for working-class people who have limited reserves of social, cultural and economic capital. I use the term working-class loosely and broadly to mean not just those who live by selling their labour power, in classical Marxist terms, but also those who lack the economic, social and cultural resources, and whose families are socially disadvantaged, such that in structurally unequal societies they find it difficult to achieve social mobility whatever their talent and drive.

Furthermore, working-class people find it difficult to locate the informally constructed institutions and networks that have evolved in response to heightened risk and 'precarious freedoms' (Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) because knowledge of them and access to them require social and cultural capital. The working-class are often marginal to the social arrangements that enable this inclusion and this capital, and when this is further complicated by the blurring of divisions between work and leisure, public and private life and youth and adulthood, working-class people are less able to decipher that which enables them from that which protects them because both have their roots in upbringing and conditioning. Class is no longer determined by material wealth alone, the job people do (and not only the amount they earn) has the capacity to set them apart from others. This is no more visible than in creative industries where the work, despite its inability to provide people with a regular income, has the capacity to increase people's

social and cultural capital. Moreover, there is a hierarchy that operates at the heart of creative labour that favours artists or above-the-line workers over craftspeople or below-the-line technical workers.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A History of the Australian Film and Television Industry and the Shift from Fordism to Post-Fordism

As the title suggests, this chapter provides a brief economic history of the Australian film industry. It discusses a shift from Fordist to post-Fordist production processes focussing specifically on the vertical disintegration of the 'studio system' and the rise of contract-based labour, and considers the growth of social networks as key organisational devices and the role that social and cultural capital play in such settings. In this chapter I briefly outline Social Network Analysis (SNA) theory and then go on to define social and cultural capital but return to both in chapter four when I discuss the concept of networking on a subjective level. For now though, I aim to provide an outline of changes that have affected film and television production processes and how these changes have affected film and television labour forces.

The flowchart below illustrates basic film production by indicating organisational hierarchy as well as departmental and occupational relations. Most of these roles have support staff or craftspeople working under them (not listed here), often in the form of assistants and technical crew. For example, the location manager will have the assistance of a location scout and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> assistant director will have a runner. Therefore, in addition to the management roles listed here, there are numerous other roles that are no less crucial to the process but often under-recognised (Banks, 2010).

## Film Production Organisational Chart

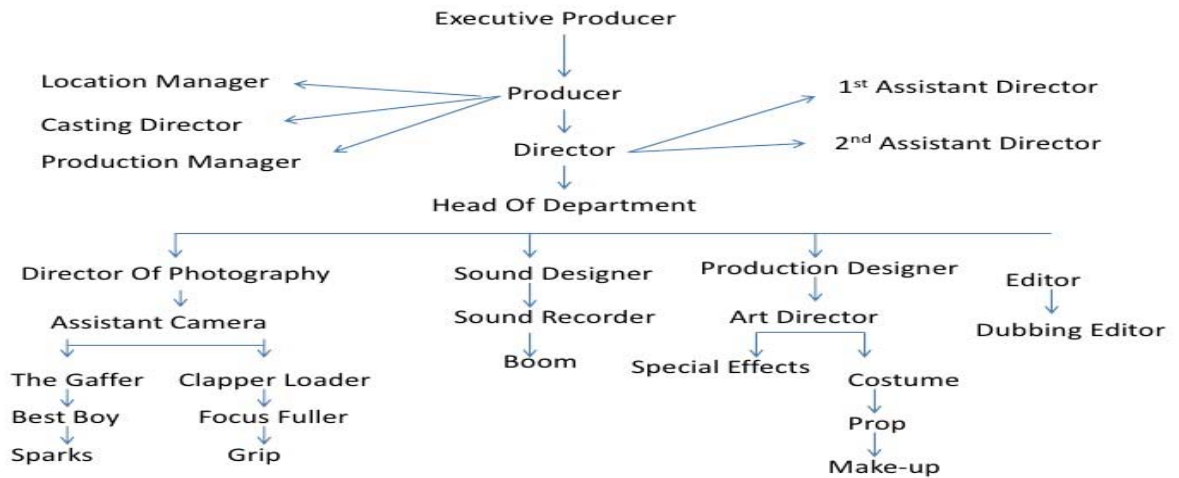


Figure 4. <http://www.slideshare.net/pdicaprio5/organisational-charts-of-film-production-organisational-chart-one> (May, 2012)

Years ago, these positions as well as those not listed here were filled by permanent staff, but today they are mostly freelancers working on contracts, fulfilling the requirements of film projects and securing work through networks (Christopherson and Storper, 1989). Project-based film production is the norm, as is outsourcing and subcontracting, so the stable employment once found in the ‘studio system’ (defined below) has become fragmented and largely insecure under post-Fordism (Christopherson and Storper, 1989). This occupational landscape is what film and television aspirants and workers face today, and what largely makes the work precarious. Therefore, in order to describe and substantiate the experiences of my interviewees, I must firstly describe the history and evolution of the industry.

## Historical Background

Most early films were made in the United States, although subject to European influence. They were mostly silent, relatively short by today's standards, filmed in theatres and made using craft-production techniques primarily developed for theatre. The 'wide shot', for example, was used extensively because it duplicated a live theatre perspective (National Film and Sound Archive, 2006). Australian filmmakers were making films that were silent but 'unstandardised'. They were not formulaic, had unique storylines that were individually conceived and crafted, and were representative of local culture, history and politics. The Story of the Kelly Gang, the first feature film ever made, is a good example (<http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/film-in-australia>).

The Story of the Kelly Gang, shot in 1906, reflected Australian history and national identity, but it also introduced new techniques and ways of production (<http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/film-in-australia>). On the one hand, it adhered to tradition – it was shot wide and was silent – but unlike films made in the US, it comprised an hour-long narrative and was shot on location rather than in a studio. To make these films, skilled craft workers formed small crews and worked exclusively for small-scale film production companies such as the Tait Brothers in Australia (<http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/film-in-australia>) and Lumiere in the US (Storper, 1989) on location. In the 1920s, however, the industry went into decline and the US and Britain took over Australian

distribution and exhibition chains, which greatly reduced the number of Australian films being made, and jobs were lost.

### Fordism and Film Production

Fordist modes of production organisation encouraged the emergence of new film production techniques and the rise of the 'studio system', which led to a rise in the number of films being made (Storper, 1989; Storper and Christopherson, 1985; Cunningham and Jacka, 1996). This saw artisanal filmmaking techniques disappear and large US corporations such as Universal, Paramount, Fox and MGM come to control film markets (Blair, 2001:151). These studios were the main providers of film capital at the time (Storper, 1989), so they came to regulate and standardise film production and exhibition practices. In Australia, independent film producers such as Chauvel and studios such as Cinesound, National Studios and Efftee Productions followed suit, and consequently controlled Australian film production by becoming major providers of film finance as well as major distributors (Screen Australia, 2005). They owned large studio spaces and had partnership deals with exhibition companies, which meant they oversaw the financing, development, production and distribution of Australian films (Blair, 2001:151).

The growth of real wages and the welfare state, and the social democratic settlement that followed World War II in Australia meant that people had disposable income (even when they were unemployed) for leisure pursuits like going to the cinema. This provided steady income streams for the Australian film industry and, as Graham (1991) argues, real wage increases



for those who worked as filmmakers during this time. Vertical integration meant that the workforce was bureaucratically and hierarchically structured but stable and collectively organised. Film production was characterised by a routinised labour, stable levels of production and consumption as well as technological progress (Cunningham and Jacka, 1996). In turn, domestic productivity increased, workers' rights were recognised and labour relations were institutionalised (Storper, 1989; Cunningham and Jacka, 1996). Unions and guilds became popular forms of worker protection, and production was initiated and supported by the government with the introduction of the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) and the Australian Film Commission (AFC) (Screen Australia, 2005).

Fordist film production meant that there was a clear division between creative and technical staff, and that most people were permanent, long-term employees of studios (Storper, 1989). Roles, hours and earnings were distributed according to seniority, and promotions were offered to those who worked hard and maintained the reputation of the studio and thus themselves (Christopherson and Storper, 1989). Eventually, though, because of the 'star system' (see Storper [1989]), the power and earning capacity of actors, or 'talent' as they are colloquially known, transcended that of the technical workers because they became important marketing tools and assured audience attendance. To keep up with demand, films were created within a factory context, one that resembled assembly line production techniques (Storper, 1989), and because studios were producing a large number of films

for regular and devoted audiences, work was constant and more secure but no less exclusive or competitive than it is today.

The workforce was stable and governed by centralised corporations. Jobs, even in the early days, were hard to come by (Cunningham and Jacka, 1996). Young people were recruited to formal apprenticeships, and once recruited were formally admitted into communities of practice (CoPs) (Storper, 1989: 307; Blair, 2001). The children and relatives of established workers were able to draw on their connections to have the inside running when jobs became available. In the US (Christopherson and Storper, 1986), the UK (Blair, 2001) and Australia skills were handed down from one generation to the next, and Fordist modes of production meant that workers were skilled in one craft/area and there was little room for diversification; this resulted in workers remaining employed in one job for the duration of their careers, which often spanned many years (Christopherson and Storper, 1986:307). Studios valued workers who learned to co-operate and establish durable bonds of co-operation with fellow workers. It ensured the speedy and on-budget conclusion of film projects and preserved the reputation of both the studio and the team. Although these CoPs secured people's employment, positions in them were no less earned and protected (Christopherson and Storper, 1986; Blair, 2001). Indeed, familial relations were mobilised in recruitment processes and people had to measure up or risked their jobs, highlighting the importance of skill and reputation in the context of internal social relations.

The 'studio system' prevailed until the late 1940s when production processes began to alter along with studios; in order to remain afloat, studios divested ownership in the wake of theatre chains and the advent of television (Storper, 1994; Christopherson and Storper, 1986; Cunningham and Jacka, 1996). On a consumption level, there was an incentive to recapture the audiences and profits that were being lost to the proliferation of television and consequential market fragmentation. For the film industry specifically, this meant discovering new and innovative ways to create films. It meant investing in technology and recruiting various small businesses to collaborate on a project by project basis (Cunningham and Jacka, 1996). These were the first signs that vertical disintegration, flexible specialisation and post-Fordism were beginning to shape the production processes and labour markets of Australian film and television production (Christopherson and Storper, 1986; Cunningham and Jacka, 1996). By the 1970s, generally Fordism had apparently met its 'social and technical limits' (Graham, 1991). The outcome was industry fragmentation, which required film and television workers to become disembedded from communities and 'Arbeitskraftunternehmer' or 'self-employed employees' (Smith and McKinlay, 2009), whose main ambitions were to secure contracts in what were quickly becoming unregulated, project-based job markets (Smith and McKinlay, 2009).

### Post-Fordism and Film Production

Post-Fordist changes to the production of film affected the film industry marketplace and labour force, as well as the production and consumption of films. Unlike Fordism, post-Fordism was characterised by flexible

specialisation or vertical disintegration, decentralised decision-making, product differentiation and outsourcing (Piore and Sabel, 1984; Askoy and Robins, 1992; Christopherson and Storper, 1986, 1989; Christopherson, 1989). Vertical disintegration meant that films were produced and distributed by specialised firms rather than by or within a single large firm such as a major studio. These specialised production firms then minimised their risks by marketing their services horizontally to other entertainment industries (video, television) and hiring people on short-term contracts (Christopherson and Storper, 1986).

The shift to post-Fordism was perpetuated by two major events: the 'Paramount Decision' of 1948, which forced film studios to divest their cinema chains, and the advent of television. This created competition for United States film studios and weakened the hold they had over film production and release and distribution. The Paramount Decision meant that film studios no longer had an assured local market or audience, which forced them to reduce the number of films they made. Consequently, American film distribution companies looked to expanding distribution markets and decided to distribute US films internationally.

US film distributors increased market share by occupying film screens and theatres globally. This had an impact on Australian film producers and studios, because fewer Australian films were being made and less local work was available, which meant that Australian filmmakers had to be prepared to travel for work. Furthermore, Australia was used by large US film studios to

decrease their production costs and became a cheap alternative location in which to shoot films (Cunningham and Jacka, 1996). And this meant that they brought US film crews to Australia, thus increasing local competition. This saw the emergence of a new array of supplier and purchaser relationships (Graham, 1991: 395). The upkeep of these new relationships eventually led to vertical disintegration of the studio system as a whole.

Post-war suburbanisation and the rise of the ideology of the nuclear family and domesticity encouraged the home as the principal site of family leisure. The introduction of television in Australia in 1953 posed a threat to cinema as a medium (Christopherson and Storper, 1986: 308; Storper, 1989). This move marked the beginning of flexible specialisation and product differentiation for filmed entertainment (Christopherson and Storper, 1986). It also marked the beginning of a flexible, freelance labour force as television corporations purchased products from independent producers and filmmakers (Christopherson, 2008:76).

For the film industry, flexible specialisation meant the inception of Cinerama, three-dimensional film technology, various widescreen formats, improved sound systems and technicolour productions (Cunningham and Jacka, 1996). It also led to the elimination of standardised genres such as newsreels and short subject films, which meant that permanent employees were manufacturing less film product exclusively in the studio and more was being outsourced to independent companies (Christopherson and Storper, 1986).

Television network owners aimed to produce products that suited the changing post World War II demographics (Storper, 1989). Television networks were, at the time, vertically integrated corporations much like film studios. However, in the 1980s these structures, dismantled as corporations, began to source content from successful and established independent production companies such as Grundys and Crawfords (Cunningham and Jacka, 1996). Even though both film and television studios continued to be stable employers, either by manufacturing their own content or renting out studio space plus staff (Blair 2001:151), independent producers were becoming powerful and influential people (Storper, 1989). They became the organisers, owners and even distributors of film and television content and thus reorganised the way in which film production took place and workforces were organised (Christopherson and Storper, 1986:307).

The growing need for independent producers and service providers, along with the normalisation of outsourcing work, provided the impetus for vertical disintegration and the disaggregation of the film industry. Television companies outsourced production to small, niche firms that were cost-competitive, flexible with the products and services they offered and not bound by union legislation, eliminating the need to pay casualised workers award wages and meet strict regulations (Storper, 1989). Because most independents did not own permanent studios or house equipment or post-production facilities, they paved the way for niche service providers. Currently, these providers and independent production companies continue to provide studio facilities, post-production suites and services, equipment hire,

production and costume design, hairdressing and make-up services, financial services, legal advice, insurance and research and script service (Cunningham and Jacka, 1996:36).

### Project-based Labour

As film and television industries vertically disintegrated, labour markets became segmented (Christopherson and Storper, 1989; Cunningham and Jacka, 1996; Blair, 2001, 2003). For film workers, mainly technical staff but also actors, directors and producers, it was the beginning of 'film to film contracts' and thus the beginning of individualised workforces (Christopherson and Storper, 1986). Skilled workers who had been employed exclusively by studios on a permanent and full-time basis found themselves being re-employed on a contract-to-contract basis for the period of time that it took to complete one film (Christopherson and Storper, 1989; Storper, 1989; Blair, 2001). Consequently, freelance employment and project-based labour became the norm, but so too did the insecurity that accompanies intermittent, short-term work (Blair, 2001:151).

One significant change to structural organisation identified by Christopherson (2008) is a growing divide between what she defines as 'core' and 'periphery' workers. While in the 1980s workers were divided into unionised or non-unionised groupings (Christopherson and Storper, 1989), today differences in working style and expectations and a 'cultivated amateurism' separate the 'periphery', or the entrepreneurial, flexible workforce, from the 'core', or the 'established professionals that populate traditional guilds and unions

(Christopherson, 2008:84). The core group comprises workers whose incomes are derived from a series of contracts that keeps them afloat, rather than from permanent employment as such (Christopherson, 2008:84). They are often long-time industry workers who were once (and are often still) governed by traditional film and television production guilds and unions and consequently experience very little unemployment (Christopherson 2008:84; Christopherson and Storper, 1989). Particularly in the US, but also in Australia, they are more likely to be white men, better connected, work on higher-budget productions, and be writers, producers and directors (Christopherson, 2008:85; <http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research/statistics/employment.asp>).

Christopherson also calls these people 'above the line' workers (2008:85) or 'talent' (1989).

Periphery or 'below the line' workers (Christopherson, 2008:85), such as editors, camera operators and gaffers (electricians), are a much more densely populated group than the core workers. They are just as likely to be employed on a casual basis, but more likely to spend time unemployed and/or between jobs, work outside union standards, be employed for fewer hours and be seen as more disposable than members of the core group (Blair, 2001:153). The latest recorded figures for the Australian market can be found on the Screen Australia website, which draws on data from the 2006 and 2011 census as well as various other surveys conducted between 2006 and 2011 and reports that the film and video production industry:



... particularly uses a high proportion of casual/temporary employees and freelancers (who may be providing their services as either an individual or a company). The number actually employed in the production industry at the time of any survey will vary according to the level of production activity at the time.

Furthermore, the website explicitly states that:

... employment figures in the production industry fluctuate depending on what productions are underway at the time of the survey as companies tend to employ more people while actively engaged in production, returning to a smaller 'core' staff once it is completed. For example, as at June 2007, 48 per cent of production employees were classed as casual or temporary, compared to 16 per cent of post-production employees (<http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research/statistics/oesummary.asp>).

The move from studio-based employment to freelance, project-based employment has changed the 'politics of production' (Christopherson, 2008). Firstly, the producer has become responsible for the financing, co-ordination and timely completion of the film (Christopherson, 2008:80). As a result, producers have become increasingly powerful in determining who gets work and when. They also play a role in determining the outcome of government funding applications put forward by independent, freelance filmmakers. Increasingly, more and more filmmakers are turning to freelance work in Australia in order to spread themselves across a variety of sectors and disciplines.

Furthermore, there has been a deepening of the core/periphery divide as unions lose power, as low-budget productions such as reality television and cable television expand, as more producers use crews that are not on standard union contracts, and as work becomes more highly paid but less reliable. This has added to the persistence of exclusionary networks that limit

employment prospects to the people who make up core networks. According to Christopherson's model, women and those from minority backgrounds are more likely to be excluded than are Anglo middle-class men. However, Blair (2001, 2003) notes that those who lack social capital are generally among the least likely to succeed in making a living. She claims (2001) that Christopherson and Storper's dual market analysis incorrectly posits a rigid core and periphery divide, but nevertheless accepts Christopherson and Storper's observation that inequalities and asymmetrical power relations exist between film industry workers. Blair finds the dualistic approach much too static to capture the mobility of individuals and work groups and the managerial relations that make up film and television labour forces. She claims that Christopherson and Storper present the film and television workforce as 'atomised' and 'highly individualised' when in fact it is 'an interdependent' and 'highly complex combination of individuals and semi-permanent work groups', who 'work together on a repeated basis' and who effect employment opportunities discretely via personal contacts and by moving between groups (2001:154). In order to secure employment, group members aim to become 'work units' or 'semi-permanent work groups' (SPWGs) that move from project to project as a team. Blair suggests that film industry workers can assert agency over their employment prospects and their vocational paths by forming their own informal institutions and collectives.

These SPWGs, however, are not void of hierarchy. Power is in the hands of both 'production company managers', who are responsible for setting general

timeframes for the film's completion, and 'heads of departments' who stipulate working hours, schedules, pace and recruitment (2001:150). Unequal balances of power become apparent as freelance filmmakers, specifically technical workers, become reliant upon managers for future employment and networking opportunities. The core-periphery divide, therefore, is revealed because power is in the hands of a core group of managers and the cultural elite.

The absence of strong union representation and regulation, as well as the implementation of informal recruitment procedures such as a preference for word-of-mouth recruitment over advertised positions, reinforces the value and necessity of social capital and the existence of interdependent relations (Blair, 2001:152). Where unions once negotiated the terms and conditions of work in the film and television industries, the formation of SPWGs does provide some sort of solidarity, although it leads to greater difficulty in negotiating wages and working conditions. A lack of institutional governance dispels collective identity and consciousness, social activism and workers' rights as well as the ethos of an ongoing community of practice and vocational guidance. After years of collective bargaining and cost-of-living adjustments, Graham argues that post-Fordist production organisation has paved the way for 'union busting' and 'take-backs' because the social safety net of regulated and institutionalised labour has gone (Graham 1991). Blair reiterates this point by illuminating the absence of 'any mediating institutions between labour and employees', which serves to further institutionalise informal processes of recruitment, networking and freelancing (2001:152). This highlights how

networking is both an individualised and interdependent process, a process that is becoming increasingly normalised in today's economic structure.

### Social Network Analysis (SNA)

Given changes in the labour market of the film industry aspirants/workers rely on networking for employment. Social Network Analysis (SNA) is used to map the effectiveness of networks and the degree to which they expand when people, businesses and institutions connect. Commonly, the 'nodes' or 'points' that represent network members and the connections that occur between them are mapped by 'lines'<sup>2</sup>, which measure the density and apparent productivity of networks (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). The more lines (or 'relational ties') that connect a business, person or institution to another, the more powerful, productive and sought after those entities, networks and relationships become (Marin and Wellman, 2011; Scott and Carrington, 2011).

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<sup>2</sup> 'Node' is the scientific term for the individuals or organisations that constitute the network being mapped (Marin and Wellman, 2011). Networks can be 'one-mode', which represents connections that occur between nodes that are similar, or 'two-mode', which represents connections that occur between nodes that are dissimilar such as between person and organisation (Carrington and Scott, 2011). See Scott (1987) for a detailed account of the mathematical characteristics of graph theory and social network analysis.

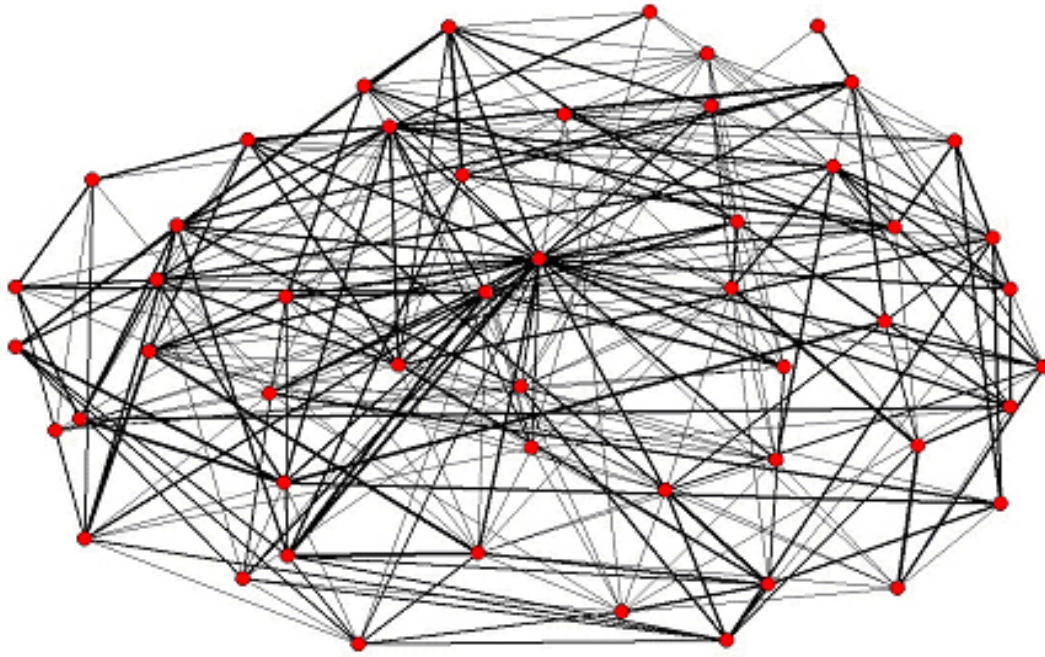


Figure 5. SNA map (EastWestCenter, 2014)

These maps, therefore, are used to gauge the extent, growth and reproductive capacity of social connection. They highlight not only the strength of those who comprise them, but the expanse, strength and usefulness of the network overall.

SNA can identify the volume of connections/communications, barriers to communications, the formation of subgroups and how effectively information moves through a network. In other words, it quantifies the number of connections that people make and the effectiveness, extent and frequency of network reproduction. It cannot, however, determine why a connection occurs, the impetus behind the connection or the subjective aspects of the connection; nor can it explain why network exclusion occurs. It overlooks the social dynamics that constitute networks and networking practice; that is, the limitations and constraints as well as the shaping force of people's social and

cultural resources. It is one thing to deduce how effective networks are from a series of social connections represented by a web of lines, it is another altogether to discuss the meaning of networks, the various ways in which networking occurs, particularly in a variety of contexts, and how networking relies on people and their ability to socially interact and construct relationships in fast-moving, unstable environments (Wittel, 2001; Lash and Urry, 1994; Giddens, 1991; Beck, 2000).

### Network Inclusion

To be considered 'network worthy', people must generate or produce network resources. This is because, in order to be effective, both networks and their members must produce opportunity (for themselves and others) or risk becoming network redundant. To avoid becoming redundant, network members must do more than reproduce their current networks, they must transcend them. They must find ways to penetrate smaller, powerful networks and accumulate social and cultural capital along the way. This makes networks not only conduits for information and social practice (Wittel, 2001), but also mechanisms for social mobility. Consequently, this also makes them privy to social and cultural judgements and therefore breeding grounds for inequality (Christopherson, 2008).

Christopherson (2008), Gill (2010) and McRobbie (1999, 2002b) have looked at the inequalities that women and ethnic minorities face in relation to creative work, and many theorists have explored the lives of creative professionals (Banks et al., 2000; Banks, 2007; Potts et al., 2008; du Gay and Pryke, 2002;

McRobbie, 2002a, 2002b; Hesmondalgh, 2007; Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011; Gill, 2010; Christopherson, 2008: 89; Blair, 2003, 2009). However, with the exception of Grugulis and Stoyanova (2009) and Haukka (2011), few have explored the experiences of aspirants who, despite credentials and a willingness to work (even when agreeing to exploitative conditions such as being long-term unpaid interns), find it difficult to penetrate labour markets and networks and to secure work. Entry requires people to be 'entrepreneurial, self-responsible individuals' (Larner, 2003), but not all people are predisposed to this. Many aspirants lack the confidence and experience, as well as the upbringing, to pitch for work; they may not have the faith required to face perpetual uncertainty, and they might lack the necessary social and cultural capital that enables self-responsibility in the new economy. In other words, networks characterise working life in the new economy and the creative industries, but in order to become part of a network, people either need to know someone or possess the type of knowledge and embody the sort of tastes that bring kudos to those with creative aspirations.

### Cultural Capital

From Bourdieu's perspective, cultural capital exists in three states: the objectified state in the form of cultural goods such as books, instruments, pictures; the institutionalised state in the form of education; and the embodied state in the form of dispositions of the mind or body (Bourdieu, 1986: 243). In terms of filmmaking, the objectified state transpires when people own the types of cultural goods that suggest the ability to make films, such as editing software, digital cameras and computers. People who own cultural artefacts,

such as a collection of classic, reputable films, also empower themselves culturally by using these objects to denote knowledge, taste and their aesthetic sensibilities (Bourdieu, 1984). Formal credentials or education empower people as well, because they denote competence and formal recognition. So film school not only teaches people how to make films, it institutionalises skills and filmmaking knowledge thus making it easier to transmit and apply. The practice of networking and the practice of making films are types of embodied cultural capital. The more one engages in the practice (networking or filmmaking), the more habituated or cultivated the practice becomes (Bourdieu, 1986: 244). When the embodied practice is 'hereditary' – not in a genetic sense but by exposure to a particular habit or practice and acquired over time – it holds more weight, because it is seen to be cultivated by extended and intense periods of socialisation. This period of socialisation occurs from childhood via family bonds and inherent familial cultural inclinations, which means that it also provides a context for the transpiration of objective and institutionalised forms of cultural capital.

The key to accumulating embodied, objectified and institutionalised cultural capital is through socialisation (1986: 246). This is why people who have family members already working in the film and television industry are better equipped to deal with the structures of a networked labour market; they get by on the merits of their family, their connections and the perceived proximity they have to the social contexts/processes that enable network penetration and participation. And so the best network contenders are not only rich in cultural capital, but social capital as well.



## Social Capital

Social capital is the:

... aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group... The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of capital (economic, cultural, symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected (Bourdieu, 1986: 248–249).

Here Bourdieu refers to the resources and benefits accrued by people when, by virtue of socialisation and familial bonds (institutionalised relationships), they access or become accepted into a group, a network in other words, by people who, by virtue of their own social and cultural backgrounds, possess social, cultural and economic capital. In this way, networks are believed to be 'mutually beneficial' to network members. This makes social relations instrumental to careers and the network a utilitarian device, albeit one that can only function as such when shaped by obligation and reciprocity (Bourdieu, 1986: 249). Networks are, therefore, not 'natural' but rather a:

... product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term, i.e., at transforming contingent relationships... into relationships that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt... (Bourdieu, 1986: 249).

If people do not have family contacts or mix in the 'right' social circles, or do not hold positions of power or status from an occupational and/or network perspective, then networking becomes a paradigm for life because life becomes about becoming empowered, 'getting to know people' and acquiring resources. It becomes about securing the 'next opportunity' and about 'being discovered', no longer being a 'wallflower'. It becomes about structuring life so

as to both engineer life chances and take advantage of serendipitous opportunity. Despite the claims of those who argue that networks are inclusive and open-ended (Lash and Urry, 1994; Wittel, 2001, Florida, 2003; Leadbeater, 1999; Davis and Scase, 2000), Bourdieu's work suggests that some might encounter social barriers to their participation in networks. Social contacts and networks are constructed, acted upon and invested in for the returns they provide. As Pratt argues, the most economically important thing for creative workers is their address book, their network of contacts (2000: 14). Blair (2009) argues that to network effectively, a person must have the capacity to utilise social situations and circumstances to their advantage. This capacity, however, comes down to one's relational position within a network, which is determined by social capital, their address books and their family and friends (Blair, 2009: 158). She says:

Having a contact with an individual necessitates the existence of a relationship and it is the form of these relationships which provide [sic] different contact types. The range of contact types used in gaining access to the industry is narrower than those subsequently used to find ongoing work, and is confined to primarily family members and friends (Blair, 2001:158).

Family and friends are more likely to represent and generate the types of contacts that trigger the obligation and reciprocity needed for a network to function. Family relationships are more durable and less likely to be shaped by competition and the looming threat of poverty than those strictly formed within competitive labour markets. The paid work arena, however, is not so forgiving of people who are deficient in social and cultural capital. This is mainly because the networks that exist in these arenas are often informally produced, and not just to circulate and reproduce information, opportunity and

resources but to protect members and stave off competition. Networks, therefore, are nested in larger social relations, and the act of networking cannot be detached from these relations.

In precarious labour markets aspirants can provide a threat to network members because work is scarce, and there is a limit to the amount of additional capital, resources or opportunities that networks can supply. New network members who are aspirants are unlikely to have much work experience to draw on and will likely not have a strong reputation or professional acknowledgement.

Networks are formed because people want to connect with others who can develop or enhance their levels of social capital. Networking is about stimulating social mobility, which means associating with those who are higher on the ladder or on the same level at least; that is, networks are hierarchical. In this way, networks are protected and resources are discriminately distributed but able to be multiplied (Bourdieu, 1986: 249).

What this means for groups (or networks) is that:

Each member of the group is thus instituted as a custodian of the limits of the group: because the definition of the criteria of entry is at stake in each new entry, he [sic] can modify the group by modifying the limits of legitimate exchange through some form of misalliance... Through the introduction of new members into a family, clan, or a club, the whole definition of the group, i.e., its fines, its boundaries, and its identity, is put at stake, exposed to redefinition, alteration, adulteration (Bourdieu, 1986: 250).

It is the supposed responsibility of network members to protect the borders of a network and thus its contents (members, capital, information, knowledge and opportunity) and to ensure that its function, status and reproductive ability

is maintained. This can have the effect of excluding people who are low on these resources such that they will struggle to access paid work. Networks and thus social and cultural capital are integral to working in film and television, because they provide a bridge between the periphery and the core and access to on-the-job training and labour markets generally.

Networks and the practice of networking are embodied and performed, particularly by aspirants who lack resources, access to paid work opportunities and professional contacts and networks. If people's networks are meant to generate opportunity, open up possibility, transfer knowledge and information by extending people's contact bases, then what happens when people only ever network on the fringes, with others like themselves? Is networking capacity limited? Do aspirants reproduce their own marginalisation by networking with other marginalised workers? What types of structural compulsions (individualism, opportunism and competition) characterise networks? In order to answer these questions, I will define a network and describe the practice of networking, before moving on to describe and discuss some of the networking practices and strategies I observed during my time in the Filmmaker's Network.

Effective networking requires people to be self-reflexive and open to adaption and change. Some people can adapt, organise, improvise and plan their lives better than others, and recast their narratives of self accordingly. The resources required to construct convincing narratives of self can be found in people's social and cultural backgrounds, which either support

occupational/networking freewheeling – and therefore the subsequent narratives – or problematise it.

What distinguishes one person from another, what makes them 'network worthy' in other words, is the capital they possess. For aspirants from middle-class, bohemian backgrounds with access to the film industry through family and friends, the networking process is much more transparent and easier to enact than it is for those not connected. It is informed by their habitus.

Bohemian, middle-class aspirants may call in favours or get jobs based on who they know. For those not connected, the process is much more opaque and working out who to network with is not so easily achieved. For these aspirants, networking requires a bold sense of confidence and the ability to initiate relations/contact with people working in the industry without the luxury of knowing them. This is why every social interaction is a possible networking opportunity. For those without social and cultural capital relevant to the film industry, networking opportunities need to be actively sought out, for those with film industry social and cultural capital, networking is enabled by their backgrounds.

Aspirants that are poor in social, cultural and financial capital are more susceptible to the competitive structures that characterise creative labour than their connected counterparts. They are not only more distant or removed from opportunities that help them attain both paid work and work experience but are unable to mix socially with those that would strengthen their networks.

They are limited because they cannot provide others with the bridging capital

or the type of capital and resources that aid careers trajectories. In this way they are deemed unworthy.

Aspirants who are rich in capital by way of their habitus, friendship groups and family ties are always one step ahead of those who lack similar forms of capital. By virtue of their familial ties they are seen as network worthy, rich in capital and worth getting to know. This means that their networks expand more easily and are strengthened more quickly than those without connections. The conundrum is that aspirants need to know people in order to get to know people. This is why networks and CoPs vary in meaning and practice.

## Networks

A network is a group of 'socially relevant' (Marin and Wellman, 2011) people and/or businesses connected via one or more social relations (Marin and Wellman, 2010; Wasserman and Faust, 1994). These relations are formed through collaboration, friendships, trade ties, the web, flows of information and resources as well as the exchange of social support and/or citations and personal references (Marin and Wellman, 2011:12). They are defined by 'word of mouth tastes, cultures, and popularity' (Potts et al., 2008: 172), which makes them subjective and characteristic of the people who constitute them. They are also seen to be 'open structures, able to expand almost without limits' and 'highly dynamic' (Wittel, 2001: 52), mainly because 'network sociality' and the expansion of networks utilises people's contacts as well as their social and cultural resources (Marin and Wellman, 2010). Networks are,

therefore, apparently democratic, and they not only create market opportunity, but represent individual needs as well.

Network theorists posit that cultural production is an outcome of 'social connection' rather than 'human capital' alone, which makes the constitution of networks important (Marin and Wellman, 2010; Potts et al., 2008; Blair, 2001, 2003; Christopherson, 2008; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005). Some network analysts presuppose that all people maximise their prospects through the networks to which they belong (Potts et al., 2008; Cunningham, 2008; O'Connor, 2009), mainly because, as Marin and Wellman point out (2010), effective networks are made up of 'socially relevant' people. This supports a functionalist definition of a network – that all members of a network work together to make a cohesive, solid and stable whole – but also points to an inherent inequality of networks. Social relevancy implies either a type of 'network homophily' in which to be socially relevant people who make up a network should be of similar status, reputation and/or from similar social and cultural backgrounds, or a type of 'network utilitarianism' where the network must be of use to others and the people who constitute it and be able to help others transcend or expand their networks. Social relevancy, along with network sociality, is, therefore, important because when people network they do so to penetrate new and powerful networks, particularly those that create opportunity and provide people with new prospects and social contacts.

However, the hierarchical power relations that govern networks become more visible when relevance and sociality come together. What makes people

socially relevant? Can people become socially relevant? If so, how? Are filmmaking aspirants socially relevant to other filmmakers when they are not formally recognised as filmmakers and do not have experience? Are people deemed socially relevant by their status, reputation, aspiration, work experience and resources, or do family background and cultural life matter? Networks are formed with the purposes in mind to generate opportunity. However, opportunity is generated by powerful people, and so networks and networking have the capacity to exclude people who do not add value to the network by bringing resources, reputation and critical know-how.

### The Practice of Forming Networks

Network sociality, or the social practice of forming networks, is a paradigmatic social form of late capitalism (Wittel, 2001). Wittel defines it as individualised, technologically embedded, informational, ephemeral but intense and characterised by an assimilation of work and play (Wittel, 2001: 71). It is framed by events, parties, mailing lists, digital discussions and social relations, and it has the capacity to turn social relations into social capital or people into currency (2001: 72; Bourdieu, 1986):

... [network sociality is not] 'narrational' but informational ... not based on mutual experience or common history, but primarily on an exchange of data and on 'catching up'... network sociality consists of fleeting and transient, yet iterative social relations; of ephemerality and intense encounters ... network sociality is created on a project-by-project basis, by the movement of ideas, the establishment of only ever temporary standards and protocols, and the creation and protection of proprietary information (Wittel, 2001: 51).

Wittel has explored the social dynamics of networking ethnographically and has found that 'working practices' have become 'networking practices' and



that the network is crucial to the conduct of successful businesses (2001: 53–54). He argues that, in this sense, human relationships are commodities and network sociality is a capitalist activity, one that stands in contrast to community, embeddedness and belonging (Wittel, 2001: 51; Sennett, 1999).

McRobbie extends this line of argument, but also problematises it by likening the practice of networking, particularly in the creative industries, to a ‘dance-party-rave’, where the question ‘Are you on the guest list?’ (2002b: 523) determines acceptance and inclusion:

In this case the club culture question of ‘are you on the guest list?’ is extended to recruitment and personnel, so that getting an interview for contract creative work depends on informal knowledge and contacts, often friendships. Once in the know about who to approach (the equivalent of finding where the party is being held), it is then a matter of whether the recruitment advisor ‘likes you’ (the equivalent of the bouncer ‘letting you in’), and all ideas of fairness and equal representation... fly out the window (McRobbie, 2002b: 523).

So, in as much as networks have destabilised the traditional features of working life such as the career ladder and communities of practice, networks are nevertheless structured in a hierarchical manner and convened to keep people in their place.

#### Networks in the Film and Television Industry

Christopherson (2008), Hesmondalgh and Baker (2011), Blair (2001, 2003), Gill (2010), McRobbie 2002a, 2002b and Ursell (2003, 2006) all consider in their work the division of labour and labour market segmentation in creative industry labour markets, as well as the forms of inequality that discriminate between groups. As explained earlier, despite the existence of unequal power

relations and its constraining effects on disadvantaged or marginalised groups, Christopherson (2008) argues that film and television labour markets continue to be divided into a core and periphery: the former constituted by a small group of highly skilled workers, the latter a large group of disposable, semi-skilled/unskilled workers. The core is constituted by 'above the line' workers or 'A-list talent and crew', namely (predominantly Anglo male) managers and production heads – producers, writers, directors as well as powerful reputable actors – who derive a good living from film production alone (Christopherson, 2008: 85). Core workers are responsible for organising labour and projects and do so according to their networks (2008: 84–5; Blair, 2001). In other words, they are gatekeepers who mediate competition and job markets by controlling the livelihoods of those who exist on the periphery (Christopherson, 2008: 74, 83; Blair, 2001).

The periphery is comprised of craft workers and technicians, including women, who although they appear in the core, do so to a lesser extent than men and those from ethnic minorities who are contractors and freelancers, many of whom work in jobs outside the industry in order to top up the meagre income from film work (Christopherson, 2008). Periphery workers are usually multi-skilled, flexibly employed and occupationally diverse, the belief being that this will increase their chances of expanding their social networks and gaining work experience. Many feel compelled to take up any job that comes along, and as a result become part of what Christopherson calls the 'new, hybrid, crossover workforce' (2008: 85) or what are more colloquially known as 'slashies' (eg film editor 'slash' publicist 'slash' stylist... ).

Slashies are people who hold down multiple jobs and work towards constructing portfolio careers (Handy, 1989). They aim to diversify their skills and work across a number of sectors, often within the creative industries but sometime outside as well. They include professional core workers, freelancers and 'permalancers' or part-time/temporary routine workers and have recently been identified as a:

wave of young people who straddle industries and disciplines, defining themselves by several professions. Their identity (and income) is built around the fact they lead multidimensional lives. First there was the actor/model/singer. Now, a graphic designer will also own a small bar. A businessman will play in a band on weekends. A maths teacher will blog at night. Television presenters have their own fashion lines. Lawyers are now filmmakers too (Olding, 2011: 3).

Blair (2001, 2003) argues that the core labour is divided along hierarchical lines: production managers set the general work context – pay, hours, contracts, targets – whilst heads of departments recruit people and set routines (2001: 150). Peripheral workers, particularly those who work in the same department, choose and aspire to coalesce into SPWGs and move from project to project as specialised units (Blair, 2003: 684, 2001). This is an attempt by workers to insulate themselves from occupational uncertainty by forming networks and social relations with their peers and bosses; however, what it essentially means is that workers move between the core and the periphery when projects are completed and groups disband, depending on whether or not they choose to accept a contract and supply their labour (Blair, 2003: 684).

Blair argues that creative workers have agency. However, she overlooks the fact that many are desperate and poor, and the movement between the core and periphery that she describes may not be the result of one's agentic ability but rather externally imposed. SPWGs are constructed around relations of interdependence (Blair, 2003: 687) and unequal balances of power.

Department heads and managers, therefore, govern whether or not a freelancer acquires work or whether an aspirant gets a 'break'. Their reputations are at risk and so they recruit people they know. This means that the same people get work because they are less of a risk to employ. They ensure that deadlines are met, quality is maintained and budgets are well spent (Blair, 2003: 691). In other words, they preserve the reputation of the group, the project and their networks.

Blair (2003) mentions, but does not explore, the plight of aspirants who not only experience occupational marginalisation based on their lack of professional credence, but whose inability to break into networks threatens their ability to learn how to do the job. Even recent graduates of creative training courses require on-the-job training. Very few researchers have described how the communities that enable such training have become fractured because of post-Fordism and the pervasiveness of project-based labour, and that as a result, people's learning experiences are fractured and their industry recognition is undermined.

## Communities of Practice and Networks: the accessibility conundrum – learning to work

In the introduction to Lave and Wenger's seminal book, *Situated Learning*, Hanks (1991) states that 'learning... takes place in a participation framework, not in an individual mind'. This is a comment about 'situated learning' or learning on the job and under the guidance of a mentor, a process that enables 'legitimate peripheral participation' or the limited but legitimate participation of unskilled workers in work. By assisting and observing experts in the field or 'old hands', newcomers learn occupational norms, values and ways of working and eventually become fully fledged workers (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2009: 139; Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Grugulis and Stoyanova (2009, 2011) have considered this phenomenon in the context of the British television industry. They point out that despite the labour market fragmentation, CoPs still exist but are transitory and thus provide less scope for on-the-job training and the facilitation of 'legitimate peripheral participation'. This complicates learning and networking processes and disables the potential of Wenger's community, which he says is a 'living curriculum that is visible when no formal apprenticeship exists (Wenger, 2005). So, in the absence of formal apprenticeships, and where communities constantly fragment or disband (Blair, 2001, 2003; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2009), people rely on their networks to provide them with meaningful experiences as well as the means to learn and to work. But these arrangements do not provide the stability and permanence required to learn on the job or to move into regular, stable employment. For some, the only way

of obtaining on-the-job training is through unpaid internships. However, this is an intrinsically exploitative relationship to the production process.

Banks (2010), Sennett (2008) and Luckman (2013) argue that cultural production is rooted to communities of craft and artistic workers. These communities reproduce and sustain cultural capital, and workers in these communities produce and share codified and tacit knowledge (Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991). They then interact with other communities (often creating clusters because these communities are contextualised by place) to produce goods and supply services as well as execute projects. To access these resources and become involved in these social interactions, people migrate to communities. Consequently, these communities become networked, which makes the personal networks of those within a community valuable economic resources. The conundrum for many creative workers is that networks require communities to function and to grow. Yet networks are formed once one enters a community.

Networking is an integral part of gaining entry into a CoP but it is also a characteristic of CoPs, particularly within the creative industries where CoPs form but where the risk of severing social relations is high due to the regular disbanding of these groups (Blair, 2009; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2009, 2011). CoPs and networks do not work in opposition but rather are counterparts. To experience occupational opportunity and security creative industry workers are required to participate in CoPs and to be members of extensive and powerful networks. Ideally the social capital that an aspiring

creative worker possesses enables access to both. However, many aspirants lack capital so their access to both CoPs and industry networks is limited.

Aspirants wish to be part of CoPs because doing so usually means they will be paid, and be able to perform skills and techniques in industry-recognised settings and alongside industry professionals. Participation has the potential to expand and strengthen personal networks and creates a sense of industry and communal belonging. Yet to access a CoP one must already be in contact with people that are industry-connected. In other words, their networks must provide them with access to CoPs where networks can be further formed and strengthened. It is this conundrum that many film industry aspirants face. They lack both the social and cultural capital required to enter into a CoP, to expand their networks and thus generate or acquire social and cultural capital.

Many of my interviewees lacked the resources needed to enter into a community. Their networks were often amateur/student in scale and, like their social contacts, not strong enough to generate work. These people became marginalised as a result, because without access to communities, they could not access the more powerful networks needed to expand first their current amateur/student-based networks and later their contact base. This means that many of the interviewees yearned to be part of a CoP but were governed by the compulsion to network. For those who were able to access communities, once there, they displayed patterns of behaviour that indicated loyalty either to

the community and their fellow workers or to themselves as individualised neo-liberal workers. This point is examined empirically later.

A CoP is a collection of people who engage with each other on an ongoing basis to practise a craft or participate in a profession and, by doing so, collectively learn and master skills and techniques (Wenger, 1998). They are constituted by a 'domain' or 'shared interest', and it is a commitment to this 'shared interest' that coheres people and distinguishes their groups/communities from others. When people 'mutually engage' (Wenger, 1998), they participate in a practice and do not exist as abstract members. In this way, they contribute to a 'joint enterprise', or the unifying goal and common purpose of the group that holds the group together. This type of model works against the logic of Taylorism and external 'scientific management' control, and sets the conditions under which members work (Wenger, 1998).

CoPs produce a 'shared repertoire' – or 'routines, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions [and] concepts' (Wenger, 1998: 73) – of work or the culture they perform. In a work context, the shared repertoire is seen as durable and able to break down the separation between production forces, outcomes and labour, and between worker and product. It is because CoPs produce durable resources and embedded knowledge that CoP members can be deemed 'mutually accountable' for the practice that they perform, the execution of projects and the oversights or errors that sometimes occur at work. CoPs represent more than a group of people performing tasks; they generate occupational culture and set the boundaries



of production and performance. They cultivate a sense of belonging because they value the contribution each member makes, despite the hierarchy that governs it. CoPs may be bureaucratically organised, but they also organise and legitimate members and their skills.

Networks differ from CoPs because they do not represent 'belonging' but integration and disintegration; they are ephemeral and propel the exchange of information rather than durable narratives or stories of mutual experience (Wittel, 2001). They blur boundaries between work and play and have come to supplant the community-based sociality that Sennett (1999) and others discuss (Wittel, 2001). In other words, there has been a loss of enduring values – trust, loyalty, self-sacrifice, solidarity and mutual commitment (Sennett, 1999: 24–25). Despite differences, networks and CoPs operate, in some respects, in similar ways, and at times are motivated by similar intents. They provide a buffer against risk and help to alleviate market-based insecurity and uncertainty. Under contemporary flexible capitalism, they both disband regularly because project-based labour and flexible, decentralised workforces make them both fragile and constitutive of unstable, unstructured work practices (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2009; Blair, 2001, 2003). Both are hierarchically structured and both prize (but utilise differently) social and cultural capital. Both can exist in SPWG and more stable settings, but both are formed out of a resistance to Taylorism.

The major difference is that networks are constantly redefined and shaped by context. They circulate (already possessed) information and knowledge,

capital, labour and clients and products (Wittel, 2001: 57) – in other words, the products of social life – whereas CoPs actively seek to collectively produce work practice resources in more structured settings, namely through collective bargaining, communal negotiation and master-apprentice relations (Wenger, 1998; 2007). However, the regular disbanding that occurs complicates this process. It breaks the routine, momentum and occupational relationships needed to learn on the job, to gain experience and to attain regular work. Moreover, networks are fleeting, open, fluid and changeable, making them less able to provide people with the types of community support needed to assert/construct/reinforce identities.

CoPs value age and accumulated wisdom; networks value youth and self-sacrifice. A CoP is much more durable, evolving processes for dealing with conflict, whereas network connections are much more provisional and the network is vulnerable to dissolution in the face of conflict. Networks provide a context for fleeting but numerous connections/interactions, the establishment of fast-paced informational exchange and the speedy circulation of contacts, technical knowledge and industry reputation (Wittel, 2001). CoPs, on the other hand, provide a context for sustained, slow learning ‘at the elbow of a craftsman’ and the fostering of strong occupational identities, culture and meaningful experiences. Because CoPs are less ephemeral, less transient and more structured than networks, they are more reliable when it comes to developing a sense of camaraderie amongst members. Their rootedness means that members are responsible for each other, accountable to each

other and willing to share information and ideas if it means making the job easier to do and the product better.

### Industry Democratisation?

Leadbeater (1999), Florida (2003), and Davis and Scase (2000) have argued that the new economy has produced creative, flexible, democratic workplaces, where hierarchy is less pervasive and autonomy guaranteed and where employees can transcend the restrictions of the old industrial order by being creative, thinking innovatively and actively networking. This rhetoric is reproduced to the point where the new economy is conjured as meritocratic, and the processes of cultural production and creative practice democratised. I have already mentioned how the media contribute to this image by promoting and circulating rags to riches stories and narratives of fame, fortune and celebrity, which inform and inflate the narratives and ambitions of aspirants. I have also mentioned the way that film school and creative industry courses contribute to this image by suggesting that people can realise an inherent creative talent and disposition through study. The message is that formal education not only supports and encourages creative expression, it also provides a means to production, networks and resources. Further contributing to this image of democratisation is the Internet, social media, digitalisation and an access to cheaper materials and tools. Digital cameras are now cheap to buy, and today mobile phones come with in-built cameras. Applications that enable the making of stop-motion films are available to download, and editing programs are a standard feature of some computers (otherwise programs are easy to buy).

There are Youtube 'sensations' and online bloggers who build an identity for themselves whilst uploading videos to Youtube and other social media sites, consequently producing user-generated content and contributing to Australia's cultural landscape. Another term for this is 'prosumer' (Toffler, 1980), a portmanteau of producer and consumer and an indication of how the roles of producer and consumer have blurred in the digital age. There are film festivals introducing categories that require short films to be made on mobile phones only. For example, Australia's Tropfest film festival recently introduced such a category. The labour that makes this happen is performed behind closed doors, for free and in the privacy of the home, and the accessibility of these distribution platforms/channels gives the impression that these labourers are part of a filmmaking industry. Likewise, the informal networks that are formed and the internships that people undertake. All of this occurs with a common aim, which is to provide producers (aspirants/workers) with not only an audience but also access to a community of practice and thus a creative, occupational identity that is legitimated publicly.

Leadbeater (1999) specifically points out that contemporary workplaces and creative labour materialise only when workers depend on one another, or, as he puts it, on networks that they can 'trust'. But when networks and communities are ephemeral, characterised by movement/mobility and shaped by competition and limited opportunity, trust is elusive and the processes of inclusion should come under scrutiny. The next chapter explores how the context of school and being young provided some interviewees with a similar sense of creative democratisation and meritocracy, as well as access to what

should be an institutionalised network of trust – the student/teacher relationship and the school experience. Some interviewees expressed experiencing this trust and feeling fulfilled, motivated and satisfied by it; others did not have such experiences, but they nonetheless continued on at school and sought them out.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Youth, School and the Creative Remedy

#### Being Forever Young

Youth connotes abundant energy, fearlessness, mobility, impermanence, enthusiasm, imagination, self-(re)invention and resilience, qualities that equip people for the uncertainty of contemporary working life. In the new economy, the ability to be technologically savvy, to keep up with trends and to be occupationally versatile are often celebrated and rewarded. This means that older workers are compelled by the cultures of work and the structures of the labour market to sustain youthful dispositions, even after they are well beyond the age of youth:

Never before have generational differences and the factor of age played such decisive roles in shaping career trajectories, so much so that... young people now find themselves on the side of a new divide between old work (and older workers) and new work with its more youthful workforce (McRobbie, 2002a: 97–98).

Ironically, while older workers are forced to adhere to the lifestyle and occupational disciplines mandated by the new economy, younger workers find it difficult to break through and develop skills, experience and networks on which the creative career is based. This is why some interviewees looked back on school fondly. It provided them with access to an array of creative disciplines and resources in an institutional context that recognised their contribution and participation. Because of this, they believed that they were creatively talented. For other interviewees, the ability to partake in self-expressive practice kept them enrolled at school. The solitude of creative

practice validated their retreat from school social life, and provided a rescue function to those who were struggling academically as well as socially. It legitimated difference, helped them make sense of the isolation they were experiencing and gave them the opportunity to do well in particular subjects. The encouragement of teachers to participate in programs outside the school system granted them the confidence needed to pursue these interests post-school, particularly when their ambitions were further legitimised by youth program co-ordinators who publicly recognised their work.

### Pathway to Creative Ambition

In recent history, there has been a substantial increase in youth unemployment right across the Western world. In Australia, as of January 2014, it stood at 12.4 per cent and represented 40 per cent of Australia's overall unemployment rate (ABS, 2014). In an effort to curb this problem, the New South Wales government has, for example, encouraged young people to stay in formal education for longer (NSW Department of Education and Communities [DEC], 2013). Whereas in the past students in New South Wales could leave school at fifteen, now they legally must remain at school until seventeen years of age (Schools NSW, 2009). The State government also encourages young people to proceed to post-school education:

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The NSW Government is committed to preparing young people to take their place in the workforce or go on to further studies. It is a key priority of the NSW Government's State Plan 'A new direction for NSW', to increase the proportion of students completing Year 12 or recognised vocational training to 90% by 2016!(NSW!DEC,! 2013:12).!

!

In turn, New South Wales schools have been required to design strategies to improve retention rates and engage resistant students. According to Dwyer and Wyn (2001), 'dropping out' is no longer an option. Schools have turned to innovative, non-traditional curricula in order to accommodate the increasing numbers of students who are not academically inclined. In New South Wales, a broad range of creative arts subjects is available to students. Indicative of Australian trends 'The Arts' – being 'dance, drama, media arts, music, visual arts' (ACARA, 2012) – have been introduced into schools and have come to feature prominently in the National Curriculum. Such subjects are taught to students in two strands: 'making' – or 'using processes, techniques, knowledge and skills to make art works' and 'responding' – 'exploring, responding to, analysing and interpreting art works' (ACARA, 2012). Consequently, cultural products become objects to be actively engaged with and produced rather than passively consumed.

In 2013, one in three students in NSW schools was undertaking a VET (Vocational Education and Training) course (NSW DEC, 2013). In 2013, there were quite a large number of new VET courses introduced to the curriculum, and many of those prepared young people for employment in the creative industries. These include: Community Dance, Theatre and Events, Dance – live performance, Fashion Design and Technology, Music Industry Certificate II and III, Music Industry Business and Music Industry Technical Production, Screen and Media (which forms part of Certificate II in Creative Industries (Media) and Certificate III in Media), Theatre and Screen Performance and Visual Arts, Craft and Design. One of my interviewees cited the



‘Entertainment Industry Specialisation’ (EIS) course as having influenced her decision to work in film and television. EIS was introduced by the NSW Board of Studies in 2009; it promises to provide students with ‘opportunities for experiences in the entertainment industry’ (NSW Board of Studies, 2012: 9) and caters well to students with ‘special educational needs’ (2012: 9). This course is said to provide:

... opportunities for students to develop relevant technical, vocational and interpersonal competencies suitable for employment and further training in the entertainment industry, as well as skills, knowledge and experiences such as teamwork, creativity and innovation that are transferable across other industry areas (NSW BOS, 2012).

A national report recently suggested that ‘an increased focus on arts and culture in education and training’ is ‘resulting in a new generation of artists and creators’ who are ‘able to develop networks of supporters who help develop their work’, and that this is ‘a growing trend in contemporary music, film, games and other areas of creative endeavour’ (Creative Australia, 2013: 60). These developments have served to legitimate unorthodox, creative learning as well as the career paths that draw on those skills. This means that the creative knowledge, skills and ambitions encouraged and learned in the safety of the school environment give prominence to entrepreneurialism and the need to network, which consequently makes them key aspects of workplace preparation and training.

At school, creative skills are generally taught in settings that contrast with the traditional classroom: less formal, less structured (Kalantzis and Cope, 1993;

Kalantzis and Cope, 2005; Walkerdine 1986). These contexts steer students toward forms of symbolic expression – dance, drama, music, photography and digital media, visual arts and visual design (DEC, 2014; Craft, 1999, Craft, 2001; Wilson, 2005). Students learn to ‘express themselves through creative activity and engage with the artistic, cultural and intellectual work of others’ (NSW BOS, 2012). Creative curricula provide more space for particular self-revelatory expression by contrast with traditional academic teaching and learning. Such expression tends to be difficult to evaluate, and so assessment tends to be more nebulous and child-centred, making creative subjects suitable for students who resist convention.

It has been argued that ‘creative education’ and ‘critical and creative thinking’ (ACARA, 2012; Shaheen, 2010) facilitates students’ abilities to ‘think broadly and deeply using skills, behaviours and dispositions such as reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation in all learning areas at school and in their lives beyond school’ (ACARA, 2012). In this sense, as Wilson (2005) argues, ‘creativity’ and ‘creative thinking’ have become the focus of curriculum and pedagogy, which implies that the meaning of ‘creativity’ has been broadened to include more than just symbolic skills. It has come to assume the larger ambit of creative industries and to reflect Florida’s (2003) characterisation of the ‘creative class’.

Peter Garrett, as Australian Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth in 2009, proclaimed that ‘creativity, interpretation, innovation and cultural understanding are all sought-after skills for new and emerging

industries' and that 'arts education provides students with the tools to develop these skills' (CHASS, 2009). Young people are therefore encouraged to aim towards working in a 'creative workforce' where 'creative skills' are central to economic prosperity and national productivity (Creative Australia, 2013). The incarnation of this rhetoric can be found in the number of young people developing aspirations to work in the creative industries. Polesel and Helme et al. (2003), in their Young Visions study, surveyed 20,671 Australian students and found that 10.9 per cent nominated 'artist', being an artist, dancer, writer, filmmaker as their aspiration of choice, which made it the most popular aspiration formed, closely followed by 'media', which was cited by 8.1 per cent of students and included journalist, photographer, TV or radio production and graphic design. These occupations have been made popular by media representations, the Internet and reality television.

Educational pathways have changed dramatically in recent history. John Dewey, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, said that 'at school children should learn to be cooks, seamstresses, or carpenters' (Dewey [1900] cited in Cope and Kalantzis, 1993). Interestingly, these days renovating a house, designing a dress or cooking a meal can set you on a career path and make you famous! The media play a significant role in propagating the myths of creative fame and fortune. Reality television and talent shows encourage young people to be self-expressive, creative and strategic (see *The Apprentice*, Nine Network Australia; NBC, USA; *Talkback Thames*, UK). The media corporations that produce these shows make money off the backs of aspirants who think it is the norm to be pitted against others and ranked

according to viewer votes whilst competing for a place in the finals. These people do this without any real sense of security or idea of how this exposure and experience will shape their careers. This combination of popular culture and creative education is nurturing the ambitions of filmmakers, photographers, musicians, dancers and digital media workers. Not only do these occupations represent the ambitions of everyday people competing with each other for prize money, fame and industry recognition, they also valorise everyday cultural practices, making them a means to a potential career and journey through school.

The aim of this chapter, then, is to explore the degree to which creative education has been informed by creative industries rhetoric, including the advice of teachers. The narratives presented below bring into focus the words and encouragement of teachers and/or mentors, who are credited for propelling these ambitions. This chapter focuses on nine interviewees, who as a group indicate the various ways that occupational value systems become apparent when reflecting on the school experiences, and how these value systems shape stories about school and friends. They also illustrate the various ways that creative ambitions are embodied at school because of the curriculum to which students are exposed, and the effect of teachers on people's formative years. Tony, David and Jack, for example, provide evidence that suggests creativity – in the context of alienation – takes the form of remedy or therapy. Frank and Amanda indicate how the school context legitimates creative ambitions, while Tom exemplifies how it is resisted. Melanie and Peter exemplify the coming together of subculture and

creative inclinations with the help and encouragement of teachers, and Jessica indicates how quickly creative ambitions become secondary pursuits when people take a pragmatic approach to the not-so-pragmatic creative career.

### Creativity as a Remedy and Therapy

Tony (33) has ambitions to be film editor and still lives at home with his Italian migrant parents in Sydney's inner west. His mother and father have worked in factories and as commercial cleaners, and Tony went to the local state boys' high school where his experiences were less than satisfactory. The school valued sporting prowess and academic pursuits above creative ability, so Tony felt like a misfit and socially isolated. Having dyslexia, he struggled with marks, and although he graduated from year twelve, his final grades were poor. He took as many visual arts subjects that he could and spent lunchtimes working on his projects in the art room:

Yeah, school was a bit... wasn't the greatest years of my life. I wasn't that much of a student really, always struggling through English, maths, could never spell properly, grammar was terrible, handwriting was terrible and throughout the years of school, that kind of brings you down a bit, and you kind of undervalue yourself... and I wouldn't say I was the most popular kid in school [and] anything arty wasn't exactly a priority for really anyone... Throughout all of high school I did every visual arts subject you could do... you know, like ceramics, photography, printmaking... I guess I've always had the ambition of wanting to be a filmmaker, but I just didn't know how to get there, my only absolute attribute was visual art... the majority of the world are verbal thinkers and a dyslexic person is a visual thinker, so therefore it made sense. I've always been a visual thinker...

Tony found refuge from school isolation in creative subjects. He lacked confidence, 'you kind of undervalue yourself', was not suited to the dominant school culture, 'anything arty wasn't exactly a priority for really anyone', and did not perform well academically, 'always struggling through English, maths,

could never spell properly, grammar was terrible'. And so he stayed on and formed creative ambitions whilst living a solitary existence in the art room. His dedication to craft is illuminated here by the singularity within which he chooses to practise his art. His working-class background is betrayed when he says, 'I've always had the ambition of wanting to be a filmmaker, but I just didn't know how to get there', which suggests that his working-class background could not guide him.

Like Tony, David (27) experienced social isolation at school and comes from a working-class family. Unlike Tony, though, he invested in finding friends and appears to value the collaboration of a CoP more than solitary performance. David grew up in Sydney's western suburbs. He went to school in his local area and managed, with difficulty, to complete year twelve. He also suffers from dyslexia and whilst at school, in addition to struggling academically, found it difficult to make friends and trust teachers: 'I had teachers going, "Oh, you're stupid" and "just work it out"' and putting me on a pedestal in front of the class and basically going, "Look at the town freak". I was always in the background, walking around trying to say, "Hey, do you wanna be my mate?">' To put someone on a pedestal suggests idolisation, but in fact David did not feel idolised; he felt alienated and vilified by teachers and his peers.

David's intention was to leave school in year ten and work with his father as a plasterer, but his father suffered an injury that ended both his building career and David's prospects. At the same time, his only friend changed schools and this led him to become depressed. However, he chose to stay on at school

and to study design and technology, woodwork, music, drama and English (a mandatory subject). With this subject selection, he managed to complete his Higher School Certificate:

... but once year eleven came, and then one of my best mates was moving, I kind of went into panic state, really bad anxiety, depression... so in year eleven ended up choosing drama, even though I was a bit of a loner in the class, I didn't do drama beforehand, always tradie type subjects [like] metalwork, woodwork and so forth... [so] found out that I could make a short film for my HSC and they said, 'But you have to do everything yourself, behind the scenes and all', so I ended up getting help, mentoring, at this youth thing and ended up writing a script and filming it and thought, ahhh, this is kinda cool... then this one-day workshop came up, they were trialling a new film course, and the teachers asked us if we wanted to go and I was the first person to go, 'Yes, yes, I'll do it', so I ended up testing it out and it was cool because once I got in there I was just mesmerised by how you could do lighting, remix music and the guy running it, he was looking and going, 'You're having way too much fun' and I was 'Yeah, don't wanna go anywhere'. So that was kinda cool and I got to meet some other dudes who were a year below me and we tried to get together to do some filming but it never worked out. I'm not sure whether I was over-enthusiastic or they were just wanting to keep to themselves...

David was given permission to produce a film, but he had to do so without the support of teachers and in the absence of school facilities. Drama provided refuge from social isolation, although he continued to be a 'loner', so it also provided him with an opportunity to conceive a project that he could do alone, even though he did not possess the skills to execute it and despite searching for friends who could help him. Not only did the youth group provide him with the tools, '... mentoring kind of, through a youth thing, they were helping out with young kids making films or doing different art; graffiti and so forth... ', it also validated him, 'and I had some good feedback saying that the film turned out pretty well... ', which in turn reinforced and legitimated his filmmaking ambitions.

He travelled a considerable distance to trial the filmmaking course, which on the one hand encouraged his ambitions but on the other managed to reinforce his social isolation: 'I'm not sure whether I was over-enthusiastic or they were just wanting to keep to themselves'. The school provided him with the opportunity to explore filmmaking as a potential vocation, but it ended up being gestural recognition of his creative ambition at best; it did not connect David with other like-minded students. As it was for Tony, creative education was a refuge and an outlet but was not a real way to experience a sense of belonging or to be part of a group. Drama provides a potential possibility for friendship, and the self-expressive component proved therapeutic (it appeared to help him overcome his depression and anxiety), but it did not deliver much beyond this. Likewise, the film course lured him in but failed to extend his networks. Those with whom he had fleeting contact resisted his attempts at friendship.

David's narrative exposes the inability of his school to fulfil his expectations, despite offering creative subjects and appealing to his cultural inclinations. The rescue function it performed helped David on some level, but did not help him assimilate at school. Rather, he continued to be a lonely young man immersed in a creative curriculum that, on the one hand, provided an outlet for his creative expression and fuelled creative ambition, but, on the other, did not provide him with the appropriate facilities or a context within which to develop these ambitions. As David discovered, creative education can be a refuge for the withdrawn and dysfunctional, even though the school encourages it as a remedy and therapy for both.



Jack (33) is a young man who lives in Sydney's inner city but grew up in the western suburbs. He was raised poor, the youngest of eight, and his mother did not work ('single mother on a pension'). He partook in very few extra-curricular activities, 'we had [the theme park] Australia's Wonderland right next to us so just went there, spent time with my friends, but everything they did I just sat there and watched, wasn't interested in playing video games or sport'. Much like David and Tony, he was a school misfit. Although he had friends ('geeks'), they did not attend his school, so high school was hard, 'have three high schools on my history, had my nose broken, called gay every day', so he found a refuge in film: '[I] didn't pass [school] because I spent all my time going to the cinema'. His enthusiasm grew, and at fourteen he started to 'study' filmmaking by reading magazines.

In his senior years, he chose art and drama and for his final major work, he made a short film. His drama teacher suggested that he contact a local youth centre that was running a film course one night a week:

... a project that Bryan Brown and Peter Weir thought of and they're funding it. So they bought editing stuff and the camera... and on the first day Peter Weir came out and he was very encouraging, probably the only guy that was encouraging the whole time. He spoke for about 45 minutes just to please everyone because he did Dead Poet's Society, so that was probably the most encouraging thing, and oh, one of my sisters bought me a director's chair once...

The workshop taught Jack basic skills, but it was not intensive enough to teach him how to make films, particularly in the relatively short timeframe that he had to complete his major work. The informal training he received encouraged him and provided a context in which to activate his creative

dispositions and sense of self. When he refers to the 'whole time', he is actually talking about his life up to that point; so, despite the numerous other film courses he has completed since then, this youth group was recalled as being the most useful and productive.

Jack attended a school that did little to encourage or discourage his creative ambitions. Rather, they went unnoticed until he crossed paths with a famous Australian film director who, despite knowing the disadvantage of the young people he was encouraging, nevertheless sparked Jack's filmmaking ambitions. His underprivileged, working-class background, however, meant that he lacked the resources – social, cultural and economic – needed to make informed vocational choices. Thus he was vulnerable to the difficulties that a creative career might pose. Like Tony, to a limited degree, and David more extensively, Jack was seeking out a community within which to learn. However, his alienation from the industry made him vulnerable to less than legitimate teachers and courses. So despite trying to transcend the limitations of school and his disadvantaged background, and in spite of his taking it upon himself to gain the skills required to make a short film, he was not fulfilled:

... So at the end of year eleven, I did a 16mm workshop, we got to use the old flatbed system<sup>3</sup> and learnt about lighting, but the teacher was dodgy because we got to the end of the four weeks and the teacher said 'We haven't covered everything in the course and I'm going to need another four hundred [dollars] off you guys', so I walked away from that course... .

Young people like David and Jack are seeking out people with whom they can collaborate and from whom they can learn. Their lack of friendship groups

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<sup>3</sup> A machine traditionally used to edit motion picture film before the introduction of digital technology.

means that they look to teachers and mentors for support. All three interviewees discussed so far were encouraged to make short films as school projects, and were advised by teachers to contact youth groups as a means of making them because their schools were unable to provide them with the necessary resources or tuition. The irony is that the short films they were encouraged to make required teamwork, yet the very reason they were inspired to make films and to identify strongly with the creative curriculum was because they lacked friends.

Jack completed year twelve and went on to train as a hairdresser, but he never completed his apprenticeship because he hankered after filmmaking. He would take a hairdressing job only to leave it a short time later to study filmmaking; then he would find another hairdressing job. David, too, was steered by the creative curriculum offered by his school, but on leaving he entered into retail work. The exposure to creative curriculum did little to prevent Jack or David from experiencing conventional vocational lives. It did, however, generate an ambition to work in film and television, which remained with them despite their commitment to their day jobs.

In their attempts to experience a sense of belonging, all three entered into social arrangements such as informal courses or youth groups with only a vague notion of what the course entailed and what they were being trained to do. They did, however, receive creative encouragement and validation, which reinforced their creative inclinations and identities and helped them get through school. All three expressed feeling lonely at school, but David

particularly attempted to strike up friendships with others, a gesture that extended out of school and into vocational life:

Some [film courses] were night ones and they lasted a few weeks and that was really cool, others were one-day courses... once I got on really well with the tutor and she ended up devising a one-on-one course for me for screenwriting... she charged me, so I'd finish up work one afternoon and we'd go over to the pub and meet in the beer garden and do a bit of tutoring...

The informal nature of the tutoring suggests that David was seeking tuition as well as a friend and colleague. Creative training happened informally when young people lacked creative outlets or were unemployed. For Tony, David and Jack, the creative dispositions that developed at school carried over into post-school life. It seems here that creative practice and modes of symbolic expression are being used to re-engage young people who suffer socially, whether it is within the school context or beyond. They become valid members of a group, which is further reinforced when their work is publicly and externally recognised. As Tony says:

Back in '97 I was like, had no direction. I was unemployed and didn't know what to do with myself, and someone suggested to me that I go to this place for disadvantaged kids who were unemployed or homeless or had personal or drug problems, and there was like a visual arts program there and I was there for a couple of years just doing visual arts. The good thing about that was at the end of every year, whatever art the youths made and submitted, you had a chance to sell it... and I sold some and it was great, like you know it was the first time I'd made some real money other than working for it... then they managed to get this course through a private film school where you could do this introduction to video production for six months... they knew I was interested, so I got in and made my first short film there.

Two years is a long time to be part of a youth organisation, yet Tony illustrates what for many of my interviewees were key moments in the formation of their creative ambitions, moments of acknowledgement and recognition. Many of

my interviewees cited positive feedback from teachers as being crucial to their creative ambitions; Tony pinpointed the moment where somebody is moved to buy his work. Either way, the encouragement and recognition that is initially found in the school context, and later in other communities of practice, can potentially shape young people's vocational trajectories.

The encouragement of aspirants by governments and schools to participate in youth groups and to partake in creative practice and to learn creative skills is problematic for both participants and organisations when it occurs with a view to social inclusion and the means to a career. It inflates the ambitions and hopes of people who are, by virtue of their class backgrounds, the most vulnerable in society. On completion of their residencies, they attempt to transfer their ambitions and skills into the workforce only to be let down by the reality of exclusionary networks and an undersupply of work experience opportunities and paid work. The apparent aims of youth groups are to support young people and strengthen their self-esteem and image yet preparing them for precarious work is hardly long-term support. This is not to say that youth groups do not serve a purpose or have a positive impact in the lives of troubled youth, however, there is little support available to youth group participants when they try to move on. The problem that needs to be addressed by governments and policy is that participation is a short-term solution to a long-term problem.

## The Legitimation of Creative Ambition

Frank (28) is a Sri Lankan man who emigrated with his family to Australia when he was twelve. His parents expected him to do well, so they sent him to an all-boys high school in Sydney's inner west that was, 'where people of my culture or heritage went [and it was] more competitive'. His mother is a childcare worker and his father trained on the job in telecommunications and now fixes hospital equipment. Although he performed well academically, scoring a high university admission mark, Frank found English a challenge at times:

I actually failed English at high school, second language... had a horrible teacher who just said my spelling and grammar was terrible, no cultural sensitivity... [but I moved schools and briefly had] Ms White, and [when I finished school] I remember she wrote the most amazing thing on my shirt, something about don't ever stop writing so beautifully... all of a sudden English wasn't about grammar and spelling [but rather] about my ability to express things... [and] that's when I gained the confidence and I felt my creative aspirations could be fulfilled...

In Frank's case, it was not so much the English curriculum that fostered his creative ambitions, but the shaping force of his teacher's words. His filmmaking ambition was to become a scriptwriter and director, so when Frank recalls these words, he implies that they proved formative in terms of his creative ambitions. Underpinning his narrative is his sense of a marginal ethnic position and his failure to adapt to the rigour of traditional curriculum. The first teacher he refers to is remembered as being 'horrible' because she/he implemented strict language conventions; the second teacher, however, is characterised as being more empathetic and encouraging, a practitioner of progressivist pedagogy in the sense that she encouraged Frank to work according to his own benchmarks. In this way, Frank's teacher valorised his ability to express himself, which he says contributed to the

forming of creative aspirations. The messages of encouragement and support were enunciated at a crucial moment – on the last day of school – which also suggests that they were taken into his post-school life.

Amanda (38) is different to Frank in that she says both home and school provided her with a generative context for her creative aspirations. Her mother, a visual artist, raised Amanda on a meagre income. They 'lived in squats, moved every six months and lived in houses with other people, all commune-like... and when we faced disaster, my mother let me paint murals on the walls'. Her father, who was a musician but died when she was young, was also credited with shaping her ambitions. Despite her mother's early bohemianism, she yearned for some sort of material stability; she trained as a school teacher because 'all my mother wanted was a proper job and a house in the suburbs'. But Amanda says, 'neither are terribly appealing to me'. She grew up in Newcastle, which is an industrial city known for its steelworks and its working-class population. The dominant youth subcultures revolve around surfing, skating and music. Those interested in film and other visual arts form a small, stigmatised, 'geeky' minority. For these reasons, Amanda 'stuck it out for as long as I could and then got the hell out of there'.

Amanda went to her local high school, which she says was well resourced in that it had a 'huge amount of teachers, there was a lot of opportunity to find what I needed, in terms of finding people to support your dreams'. She was an average student who chose humanities-based subjects and achieved high enough marks to pass and enrol in an arts degree at university. As much as

she says that high school provided her with ample opportunity to form creative ambitions, she recalls it was primary school that provided the context for this discussion:

... my 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher told me when he read my writing that I could make a living out of this. [He] didn't tell me I was a good writer, [he] told me I could make a living out of it and I don't know, [that] ticked a box in my brain... and I dedicated my first book to him... 30 years later I rang him up and he was shocked and remembered me... that one comment from that one man on that one day to this little girl who just liked putting words together just changed my whole existence.

Amanda recalls these general words of encouragement as helping to concretise her creative sense of self and also provide her with a prospective vocation or career pathway. Like Frank, she wanted to be a feature film director and scriptwriter, and like Frank, a teacher encouraged her ambitions by telling her she was good enough to make money from writing. This gives her narrative a fairytale ending in that she says of her youth, 'I knew I had a creative destiny', but she did not want to live in poverty, so she 'was kind of at war with that'. The teacher's words, therefore, became a causal link between her upbringing, her aspirations and potential paid employment. In the end, this provided her with an alternative narrative to that of 'struggling artist', and a narrative that allows her to discuss her bohemian upbringing. Like Frank, Amanda's narrative situates pedagogical encouragement as pivotal to who she is today. The teacher's words 'changed her whole existence'.

Tom (29) also says he found the words and encouragement of teachers significant to the formation of creative ambitions. He was born in Australia to Macedonian immigrant parents and grew up in Sydney's southern suburbs.



Both parents worked in manual jobs; his father was an electrician, qualified in Australia, and his mother was a seamstress and cleaner. Both are now retired. Tom was an average student at school, popular, good at sport, and did well in art, photography and filmmaking:

Like, my year ten art teacher was amazing and always encouraging and really supported my art, you know, really supported it and that was big for me because that was the one lesson where I thought I love this, I love this creative output and this moment... but at the time I didn't know I wanted to be a filmmaker, I just knew I loved the visual and I loved images, you know, loved film but really loved images, [but] yeah, had that passion for art, which I didn't pursue in year twelve because I didn't like the teacher [because he/she] didn't really care about the students' work. I did it for about a month before I dropped it, but long enough for me to know that it wasn't inspiring for me to be in that classroom, wasn't my environment, you know... so continued to draw on the outside and sneak my parents' VHS moviemaker and film my cats or forcibly film my sister, making her perform... my sister said 'You're going to get into trouble', but I did it continuously anyway... .

Tom provides another example of how teacher encouragement can validate the ambitions and talents of students, and how, even when they fall short of student expectations, teachers continue to feature in the vocational narratives of those who aspire to precarious, creative work. The words of encouragement from one teacher validated Tom's creative inclinations, whilst the indifference of another prompted him to drop the subject altogether. Consequently, he practised filmmaking at home. The contrast in levels of teacher encouragement suggests that he does not need to rely on school or teachers to provide a platform for his aspiration; rather, they are the result of an intrinsic disposition, an acknowledgement that gives rise to his narrative about being a self-made creative and artist who realises his artistic talents by being a maverick and bending the rules at home. Tom believes that he is inherently creative, a disposition and talent that is realised by his own hand, through regular and solitary practice.

Talking about stealing his parents' camera and continuing to create 'on the outside' suggests that, although Tom seeks validation, he relies less on it than some of the other interviewees discussed below, partly because his school experiences were largely positive and partly because he did not need to use creative subjects to escape social isolation or to get through school. He was good at sport, so he suited the suburban high school environment, had plenty of friends and did well academically. Therefore, he is more inclined to convey his narrative in terms that foreground his single-mindedness and determination, rather than the vocational pull of creative education and progressivist teaching. This is because his creative practice is the result of intrinsic motivation. Because he is more confident than Frank, Tony and David, and because he does not attempt to resolve negative school experiences through creative practice and school curriculum, he is able to remove himself from the environment – that is, the negative classroom setting and unsatisfactory teacher/student relationship – despite it compromising his enjoyment of school. His narrative, therefore, is one of individual self-determination and achievement and not so much of the creative saviour.

Like Tom, Melanie sets out to prove that she is not a product of her upbringing, and so chooses to follow a vocational path that is different to her parents. School certainly helped to shape her ambitions, but this was in combination with her determination to transcend her class background. She uses her subcultural interests as justification for following a precarious path.

## Being Subculturally Skilled

Melanie (22) grew up and went to school in Sydney's western suburbs. She attended an all-girls denominational high school, and her subjects included Business Studies, Legal Studies, Society and Culture and English. Like the others, she had trouble making friends; but unlike them, she preferred the conversation of teachers, so, despite performing well academically, she found school difficult. At about the age of sixteen she developed subcultural interests, 'the punk thing for a while then the whole anime, Japanese community thing'. She often would go to Japanese restaurants, dress in anime costume and visit the Chinese gardens in Sydney's Darling Harbour. She would also attend pop culture conventions and house parties where she would watch anime films and play video games.

During her final years of school, Melanie experienced something that steered her down the creative vocational path. A film producer/freelancer attended her school to guide the class in film production and analysis:

... that's how I got seriously interested in making films, because it was the end of year eleven and it was English and we had a lady come in who had her own production company with her husband, she came in and did a discussion on film and basically it was to teach us how to analyse film and whatever for our exams. And it was really interesting, because she was showing us segments of different films and talking about what she did and she actually showed this animated film that I really like from Japan, and I was oh... I really liked that film and she showed a bit of it and I got really excited about it and I was like yeah, this is really interesting, I'd like to do what she does...

This quote shows how standard education has been broadened to include popular texts including films, and how it seeks to reflect subcultural influences in its endeavour to appeal to contemporary youth. For Melanie, it indicates a moment of convergence where the cultural enthusiasms of her youth

converge with the imperatives and narrative of adulthood. In turn, her identity and ambition for self-expression was validated by the school's attempt to capture and represent counterculture, as well as by the inclusion of digital methods in the suite modes of self-expression accessible and utilised by students.

Feeling dissatisfied by vocational options suggested by her parents and family – ‘most people in my family wanted me to do law or politics or journalism’ – Melanie's vocational goals took shape when she was exposed to the life of a film producer who owned her own business and who made films with subcultural influence. The freelance filmmaker, who was brought in at the school's discretion to teach film production and analysis, helps to concretise Melanie's vocational ambitions. Melanie is disparaging of her mother's work life, ‘mum is a secretary, done that her whole, entire life’, ‘the only time she left was like, when I got sick’ because ‘she's done the same job all of her life’. She is excited by the prospect of working in creative labour, and it provides her with an opportunity to break free from the vocational pattern set by her mother (the conventionality and safety of a permanent job). She sees filmmaking as a potential career option that does not require her to relinquish her self-expression and subcultural identity, although it does require her to take risks and subvert the conventionality of her upbringing. And so she credits school for igniting her creative ambitions, and not so much her family life, apart from the example set by her mother of what she does not want her future to be.

Peter (27) was born in Wollongong, an industrial town an hour's drive south of Sydney. His father worked as a steelworker, a bus driver and a tour boat operator, and his mother was a primary school teacher. When Peter turned seven, his parents decided on a lifestyle change, so they moved to the countercultural town of Bellingen in northern New South Wales. He went to his local high school, 'did English, maths, music, visual arts and D and T [design and technology]' and became subculturally active, 'skating, playing guitar and missing school'. He completed year twelve by scoring well in artistic subjects but generally underperformed academically. Bellingen's countercultural environment provided a generative context for his creative ambitions, mainly because it was a magnet for people with creative inclinations:

... Mr Smith, wish that I could talk to him now about stuff. When I was younger there was stuff that I didn't notice that I would like to ask him about. There was a design and technology teacher who was an awesome woodworker and metalworker and he was an awesome sax player, there was all these kinds of people that would pop up... that were pretty funny and entertaining... [and] That D and T department, I think it's one of the biggest ones in Australia, it's a crazy set up, it's got more equipment than any workshop that I've worked in since. You could make anything there, massive productions, pretty crazy... more equipment... and the workshops I work in now have not as many physical machines, and [there is] stuff that we don't have now [and that] I know they had then...

Peter reflects on the school and the role it played in enabling his creative ambitions. He recalls the shaping force of teachers and sets them up as mentors and people who, much like Peter, strongly identified with symbolic forms of expression. His reference to them being 'funny' and 'entertaining' suggests that he valued their personal contribution to the process of learning, and that their personal style made them accessible to students, which consequently constructed a positive and productive teacher/student relationship. Such experiences stand in stark contrast to the schooling

experiences of people like David and Tony, who failed to identify with teachers and students, and who sought refuge in creative curriculum but managed to remain socially isolated. Peter was popular, had subcultural interests and got on well with teachers who valued his creative capacity and identified with him.

Peter turns the focus of the school narrative to the facilities available at the school. He alludes to the possible learning experiences that such facilities bring about, but he pays more attention to the projects and production methods that such well-equipped facilities can unleash for people like him who work in design and filmmaking. The school, it seems, was technologically equipped to be a major site for cultural production, but this is something he recognises in retrospect, mainly after he had worked professionally in a number of settings with less sophisticated resources. This is telling because Peter later worked with some of the industry's most renowned film production companies, yet still the school equipment stands out as more technically advanced. In turn, Peter looks back at school longingly, as it is only later that he can see the possibilities it offered for creative ambitions and acquiring technical knowledge, and it is only with hindsight that he realises how fundamental teacher mentorship and access to resources can be. His school narrative is, therefore, shaped by his post-school work experiences in that he views them through the craft values that underpin his working life – an appreciation for master-apprentice relations and the sharing (or passing down) of knowledge and information, as well as an appreciation for the tools that enable his trade.

A youthful interest in radio-controlled cars led to Peter to obtain work experience, under a school-organised scheme, with a Sydney-based animatronic puppet-maker who was building a house in Bellingen at the time. Here Peter learnt how to use model latex puppets, the type often used in special effects films. During his time there, he was encouraged to leave school, although his parents opposed the idea:

... and this guy who's probably the biggest model-maker in Australia, [performed] the most work [and was the] highest regarded... and had a workshop set up, and I just went there and he taught me how to mould things and cast things in latex. I was fascinated by that... and that guy said to me then, 'You could leave school now, I could get you a job, you could be earning like six or seven hundred a week; you should quit school now and come straight to Sydney', and I said it to my mum and dad and they were like, nah, nah... but he also said, 'Don't just disregard any of this, school – but you don't need it, you have a good portfolio and you take it to anyone who works in the industry and you'll get the job over anyone else', so I just took photos and documented everything I did...

The standard year-ten work experience program set Peter up with crucial knowledge and advice about how to compose a portfolio, which eventually held him in good stead. In this way, the creative curriculum on offer at school paved the way for a creative career. It may not have contributed directly to his desire to work as an animatronics technician, but it certainly provided the context for him to develop it. His parents, who possess working-class values, perceived this proposition as too risky and discouraged Peter from leaving school, despite the promise of paid work. Yet what they discouraged in Peter are the dispositions required to survive in the new economy; namely, a willingness to take risks, to be flexible, mobile and individualistic, and to seize opportunities as they arise despite not knowing what the outcome will be:

I didn't do any courses, but people did explain things... would show me things and show me, like, stuff... Mr Jones, he was awesome. He was the first person to show me stuff, like we end up talking about gear, signal flow and... I used to read heaps, but I didn't have any physical lessons. I've read a lot about it, that's mainly how I suppose I learnt.

The major difference between David and Tony, and Peter, is that Peter's school experience was much more positive. He lived in a countercultural town and went to a school that supported cultural difference and valorised subcultural activity. He had the privilege of learning from teachers who imparted their knowledge and expertise freely. They 'showed him stuff', which in the context of exclusive networks and elusive on the job training becomes an invaluable resource. Peter's craft-based community values hailed the school context suitable for his ambitions; it provided the workshop and the tools needed to make films, and teachers that represented mentors who both supported and reflected his creative interests.

And a newly found pragmatism paves the way...

Jessica (20) is from Sydney's western suburbs, but from a middle-class family. She attended a denominational private high school, had a variety of friendship groups and felt part of the school community. Her mother is a bank manager and her father is a high-ranking army officer; both encouraged her to take a variety of creative subjects during her high school years. Although in conventional jobs themselves, her parents were wealthy enough to indulge Jessica's creative ambitions. Her recollections focus more on high school than on primary school and illustrate how the curriculum is becoming increasingly



aligned with the creative industries; how creative education appeals to young people and is also attractive for parents:

Mum heard through word-of-mouth first through family friends and then she started researching, because you know, obviously every mum wants the best for their kids... [she] wanted us to change schools... she kept telling me, 'It's got Rock Eisteddfod, and you get to do drama' and obviously that took over and we couldn't have gone to a better place, best move we've done... and I found [the school] to be a real benefit as well because there were so many different outlets in the subjects you were taught, so many opportunities... music, drama, dance, IT, society and culture, community and family studies... and ever since I got the opportunity to act in school, I never, ever stopped; I could be someone else, explore different characters and... you've got your boring subjects like math and science and then you can just scream in the classroom and everyone thinks that you're normal...

In order to convince her to change schools, Jessica's mother highlighted the creative, less academically formal specialisations of the new school. Jessica was resistant because she did not want to leave her friendship groups, but her mother wanted her to attend a school with a better reputation and with what she perceived as a school that offered greater opportunities and was more reflective of a middle-class upbringing. In turn, traditional subjects like maths and science seemed less appealing than what were perceived to be more vibrant and unconventional subjects ('you can just scream in the classroom'), and the promise of public performance ('Rock Eisteddfod and drama') was used to entice and persuade her. By encouraging a change of schools, Jessica's mother was activating and supporting her daughter's creative sensibilities. Creative education is seen to be worthy of both discussion and research, according to Jessica's mother, although to have heard of such curriculum via word-of-mouth implies a connectedness to a network of people 'in-the-know', and also suggests that creative education and the potential of

schools to provide alternatives to traditional curriculum was, in this case, both a worthy topic of conversation and of consideration by middle-class parents.

Jessica's creative aspirations become vocational towards the end of her schooling, so instead of doing the types of subjects that prepare young people for tertiary education, she chose to follow the VET pathway and enrolled in a course that she thought would prepare her for work. Board of Studies Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses are a common and popular feature of the high school curriculum, particularly in low socio-economic schools, but they are a relatively recent development and many of them were not available when many of my interviewees were at school. Creative industry VET courses are an even more recent phenomenon and are affected (along with arts-based subjects) by the scaling system used in NSW high schools to rank students according to the subjects they take and the level at which they take them. This ranking informs tertiary admission. Some interviewees expressed feeling threatened by this and so deliberately chose subjects that prepared them for university. Others, like Joe, who I introduce later, chose subjects that they thought would prepare them for work, and so at school chose not to indulge their creative interests.

Alternatively, Jessica explains:

... and I did VET 'Entertainment Industry'... my major work involved research interviews based on the pressures to succeed in the acting industry and it gave me insight because I interviewed people who'd been acting for 15 years and what deterred me was that some of the actors that had attended NIDA said that once you've done NIDA, that's it. You'll get a few gigs and NIDA is not the be all and end all, it's what you make of it. So it gave me a wake-up call and I realised how hard it is to maintain a career in the industry, and it was then that I realised that it was always going to be a second-hand outlet, a side dish to my main meal, to keep me sane after working full-time in marketing.

Jessica approached the Entertainment Industry Specialisation (EIS) VET course pragmatically. She used it to explore potential employment opportunities and used the outcome of her own research to determine her vocational fate. She directly links the course to the 'industry' and at a later point describes the 'contacts' that she accrued whilst conducting her research and completing course requirements. The EIS course requires students to fulfil 60 hours of study and 15 hours of industry/work placement and to learn to 'manage and compile audio replay material, record and operate standing lighting cues, use hand tools, install and operate follow-spots, assist with sound recordings' (NSW BOS, 2012). In essence, it is training young people to be technical workers and prepares people for the Entertainment Industry Training Package (CUE03), which is a listed training scheme on the Australian government training website.

Jessica is the only one of my interviewees to have taken this course and she found that its practical component, rather than preparing her for work in the entertainment industry, exposed her to people that had experienced lifelong financial hardship and ongoing unemployment. So it seems that Jessica concludes that after 60 hours of training for a creative career, a creative career in the Australian entertainment industry is far too risky to pursue and so the idea of working in film and television quickly loses its gloss; this, of course, runs counter to the aims of the course. However, she is a member of the Filmmaker's Network (discussed in chapter four), which suggests that she continues to harbour an aspiration to work in film and television, and seeks to remain connected to other filmmakers and some sort of filmmaking institution.

The VET course exposed her to two sides of creative labour – the theoretical aspect of gaining creative industry qualifications as well as the practical aspect, which reveals lifelong precarity. This meant she abandoned her ambition for a career in film and television in favour of advertising and marketing, a more viable but less creatively fulfilling pathway. So she is not a filmmaker in the sense that she is prepared to commit to the craft at all cost, but she continues to aspire to it. Despite becoming a marketing manager, she says she would like to have a ‘side dish to her main meal’, which means that her film and television interests, although not a primary form of income, continue to shape her identity and vocational narrative. In this sense, she becomes the obedient ‘modernised worker-subject’ (Gill, 2010), able to detach from the forces of her genuinely creative ambition (she wanted to be an actress and a director) and commit to alternative career. She is convinced that she is performing creative work, despite working to a marketing brief and not so much a script or film idea. So her narrative is not informed by art discourse or craft values. She is much more individualistic in her pursuits and is able to dissimulate her ambitions in order to become financially secure. She trades creative autonomy for financial and occupational security but remains wedded to the filmmaker’s network; so, although she embodies what appears to be a modern career motive, she is also willing to adapt to the needs of the postmodern career by upholding a breezy detachment to the occupation, task or network to which she is committed.

Jessica’s narrative reveals the ways that creative curriculum can inform and shape the vocational ambitions of young people by appealing to their cultural

interests. Unlike Melanie, whose subcultural activity informed both her ambitions and her vocational identity, and where curriculum was the causal link, Jessica separated the two and found work that would financially support her whilst keeping her cultural interests as secondary objectives. For Jessica, life's economic imperatives took over, particularly when she learnt that working in film and television meant low pay and high periods of unemployment. For Melanie, it took a freelance filmmaker to guest lecture at her school to evoke her creative vocational ambitions. Unlike Tony and David, Jessica did not form or chase her ambitions blindly. She became pragmatic early on. Her parents may have played a pivotal role in encouraging her creative ambitions, but Jessica's pragmatism enabled her to see through the rhetoric that they so uncritically employed.

## CONCLUSION

The interviewees discussed above recalled that their ambitions were formed not out of any desire for great prosperity, nor because they were swayed by stories of fame and success, but because they developed a sense that they were creatively talented and that they could make a 'life' out of this talent. This was discussed in the context of school and the encouragement of teachers. However, for some the memories are communicated fondly, for others they are contextualised by resentment, discomfort and alienation. In some cases it was the parents who offered words of encouragement, but more often than not teachers fuelled the interviewees' aspirations. It seems that creative education and the context of school nurtured and valorised the ambitions of

the aspirants discussed here, but the memory of school is framed by current-day experiences and career context.

People like Tony, David and Jack, in light of low marks and academic struggle, would have left school at sixteen but instead chose to stay on. Tony divulged a commitment to art and invested in what he perceived was an artistic talent in order to manage the school system and school social life. David tried to use an interest in filmmaking to make friends, although he also chose subjects like metalwork and woodwork, which require solitary commitment akin to that of a craftsperson. Both Tony and David's narrative suggests pathways of diffidence, retreat and singularity. Peter's narrative was also reflective of craft values. However, by being more popular and experiencing positive relationships with teachers, his narrative did not feature stories of isolation or singularity, but rather of community and the power of shared knowledge and resources. Jack was seeking the very thing that Peter experienced and possessed: guidance and tuition from like-minded mentors and access to resources and tools. Yet he lacked Peter's subcultural skills and popularity as well as the context of a countercultural town, so he was easily swayed by creative industries rhetoric. He paid for the experience that Peter had at school for free. Similarly, Melanie's ambitions were formed when her subcultural interests were legitimated.

Frank is different to the other men in that his narrative illustrates how narratives of ethnicity and constraint can be overcome by ignoring convention and by embracing the creative ethos communicated at school – that creativity

and self-expression are inherent dispositions not always realised through convention and regulation. Alternatively, Tom's single-mindedness and self-confidence allowed him to fledge newly formed filmmaking ambitions, despite being disgruntled with the art teacher and the school system. He managed to find ways to perform his creativity outside the confines of school and words of discouragement as well as parental regulation.

Amanda's narrative reflects one of fame and success and implies a successful transition from school into work. She embeds her narrative of school within a narrative of being a successful author who then dedicates her first creative work (the book she wrote) to a teacher who had fortified her ambitions and thus her whole life and career. Jessica, on the other hand, was less concerned with producing the rags to riches story and more concerned with pursuing ambitions that would not necessarily make her famous but were more financially viable. She did, however, continue to hold a glimmer of hope because she refused to completely relinquish her filmmaking ambitions. Despite this, her school experiences and the creative education to which she was exposed illustrate a seminal point, that formal education and training do not secure creative careers.

These are some of the implications of creative education, and despite its inclusivity and democratic appeal, it serves to pique the aspirations of young people, which find resonance in the television shows they watch. It leaves young people with the impression that creativity is inherent and that creative disciplines and fields are meritocratic. It also sets them up to pursue pathways

that are unstructured and unclear. Creative curriculum reinforces the idea that creativity resides in all of us, and that the performance of it is rewarded, and thus it perpetuates creativity discourse. But as I have argued, the meaning of creativity relies on context, and the embodiment and performance of it, on people's value systems as well as their social and cultural backgrounds. This means that it can also be a source of distinction and an indication of the limitations and extensions of people's class and gender.

This chapter also highlighted how the social and cultural make-up of both location/setting and school helps to cultivate young people's creative ambitions. Peter's subversive creativity was valued and rewarded in the countercultural context of Bellingham and at the high school he subsequently attended, which means that he felt comfortable pursuing creative vocational ambitions despite his parents' initial wariness. Tony and David's creativity, on the other hand, was discouraged and consequently the cause of their social isolation, even though it was also posited as the remedy. This, however, was due to the fact that they were working-class boys attending local state schools that lacked filmmaking resources and valued sporting prowess. To put it simply, they did not fit in. They did not perform in bands or bond with friends or teachers who reflected their own aspirations, as Peter did. Unlike both Melanie and Peter, they struggled to identify both socially and culturally with teachers and students alike, and as a result retreated into the art room. They were not 'cool' enough, nor did they adhere to or embody the dominant school culture. Therefore, creative curriculum performed a rescue function by



encouraging their creativity and providing a space for them to practise it in a solitary way.

External youth groups provided some sort of support and respite from the awkwardness of school, for those who participated; however, transitions from school into work were hindered by a lack of social and cultural capital.

Furthermore, the networks and labour force to which they aspired did not offer the same safety and acceptance of the youth group context. The next chapter explores how both transitions into work and the acquisition and use of social and cultural capital enable the practice of networking. This is a crucial aspect of the creative career and one that requires confidence, chutzpah and the ability to sell yourself to others, and not just an education or qualification.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### To Schmooze or Not to Schmooze...

#### A Filmmaker's Network

##### The Network

The Filmmaker's Network is a group of marginal workers/aspirants who get together to share information, knowledge, ideas and resources at regular meetings and online in Facebook forums and/or projects and events. The network grows quickly because members do not have to be financial nor do they need to be professionals in order to join. So, unlike guilds or professional networks (Blair, 2001; 2003; Christopherson, 2008), members do not need to be employed, be accredited filmmakers, have credentials or a portfolio or pay expensive joining fees. The Filmmaker's Network, therefore, is a network that ostensibly aims to be egalitarian in that it is inclusive and informal, technologically driven thus accessible, and organised to circulate information and ideas (Wittel, 2001). The Filmmaker's is a typically contemporary phenomenon in that, while it is an essentially professional network – its function for its members is vocational advancement – it is also a social/leisure time grouping. This blurring of work and play is a recurring theme for the precariat in this thesis.

##### The Meetings

Once a month, in a fashionable inner-city Sydney pub, members of the Filmmaker's Network come together to informally network. I attended these monthly network meetings for a period of two years, from 6:00pm until 10:00pm at a pub in Sydney's Surry Hills. There were usually about twenty-

five attendees at each meeting, ten of whom were regulars, but the numbers varied monthly and were largely determined by how renowned the speaker was and the topic for the week. I talked to many network members and discussed their ambitions and career strategies/experiences. Speaking with them helped me to avoid misinterpreting their behaviour, a risk that non-participant observation may have engendered (Hammersley, 1990).

The meetings are comprised of industry announcements, casting and crew calls and members' projects in progress, including script developments. Calls are often put out for volunteers to work on short films. Those who have acquired paid work will publicise their achievements and urge other group members to attend shows, film screenings and performances. The meetings, although structured, are not particularly formal: people order drinks and dinner, can leave when they like or arrive late if necessary and can bring friends along.

After announcements, a guest speaker – someone experienced and reputable from the industry – speaks for around an hour. Questions are then invited from the floor and this allows the most ambitious and confident to show their knowledge and expertise. But this can also reveal the limitations of Filmmaker's Network members. For example, on one occasion the guest speaker related an incident that had occurred while he was working on a film. He then invited group members to tell similar stories but received little response. Most Filmmaker's Network members are amateurs or aspirants, not professional filmmakers, so they did not have the work experience examples

upon which to draw. After question time, the meeting wraps up with people breaking off and starting their own conversations while others line up for the chance to talk with the guest speaker.

The facilitator seeks to include people of status in the Filmmaker's Network. He seeks to strengthen his own networks (he too is an aspirant) by strengthening the reputation of the Filmmaker's Network as a whole. Whilst he works part-time as a specialist paediatrician, a job that guarantees him a good income and reflects (in socio-economic terms) an upper-middle-class status, his professional career does not further his filmmaking ambitions. He does, however, try to transform his medical connections into film industry networks, creating both networking and paid work opportunities for himself and other members. He writes medical scripts and casts members of the Filmmaker's Network as patients seeking medical advice from medical interns, a project he took on after speaking to medical colleagues about a lack of effective training resources for interns. He also produces videos of a similar nature that are professionally produced and paid for so provide the facilitator and the crew with an income as well as professional experience.

He has also written a feature film by drawing upon his medical background and colleagues (he describes it as a 'modern-day version of MASH') and is currently seeking financial backers to produce it (the \$2 million cost would nevertheless make it a low-budget production). He uses some Filmmaker's Network members in both technical and creative roles, and he is using fellow medical colleagues to endorse the film in an attempt to secure funding and to

prove the film's worth. Both of these activities can be read as attempts to strengthen his networks and reputation, as well as the reputation and status of the Filmmaker's Network as a whole; however, they can also be read as an attempt by the facilitator to capitalise on cheap labour. Still, there is the implication of a symbiotic relationship, in that the facilitator recruits people to work on his film, which then grants the members on-the-job work experience.

### The Members

The Filmmaker's Network is a broad industry network (and thus was useful for me given my research plan to interview people with diverse film industry aspirations). It attracts a range of people, from aspiring actors and scriptwriters to directors and technical workers, so I used my contacts within the Filmmaker's Network to recruit interviewees. As the facilitator says, 'It's an educational and networking forum, so the more diversity the better'. Of the 2440 members (increasing daily) listed on the network's Facebook page, less than 20 per cent are active or financial. Financial members attend meetings and have access to or feature in the Red Folder, which lists available cast and crew and includes biographies and headshots of actors. These members can attend or organise scriptwriting workshops and receive discounts at affiliated service providers such as film schools and consultancy and production firms. Some financial members hold down day jobs and do 'filmmaking on the side' (Jessica, 20) or as a 'second career' (John, 50); others are entrepreneurial in that they have started up their own small production companies and earn a living doing part-time or casual labour in other types of work (bars, coffee shops, retail).

Non-financial members, the facilitator explains, 'want to remain "in the loop", or keep an eye on our activities but do not want all the benefits'. Like financial members, they can choose to attend the meetings, but do so for a fee of ten dollars. They can drop in this way on particular talks that interest them without having to fulfil any other social or cultural obligation to the group. Unlike financial members, they are not privy to information about upcoming paid work opportunities and other special events, nor are they included in (or have access to) the Red Folder. They can, however, attend events or respond to castings and crew calls made public on Facebook, although often this is lowly paid or volunteer work only. Some non-financial members live interstate and overseas, and those who live locally come and go depending on the state of their careers and the requirements of their day jobs or family life. The goal of most members, however, is to broaden their contact base and to collaborate with others, although it does seem that the non-financial members fall into the category of the former and the financial members into the latter.

I was perceived by some to be a potential contact and was quizzed by them in ways that were designed to reveal whether or not I had the capacity to broaden their networks and to provide them with a stepping stone to the industry as well as further networking opportunities. Consequently, my role as a researcher was revealed because I, too, was pressed for information about why I was at the meetings and about my own ambitions and plans for the future. This proved to be beneficial because some continued to network with me, thus revealing networking tactics, while others told me stories that they felt were worthy of representation.

## The Venue

The pub lighting is low. The space is wide and open, and funky, deep-house music plays in the background. The floorboards are polished and the retro lounges are decorated with old, boldly coloured cushions. The candles burn dim, illuminating the vintage décor. The trendy, inner-city crowd – Fedora hats and long woollen scarves abound – are hunched together, chatting quietly and sipping mid-week wine and boutique beer. The bar staff wear the latest haircuts, tattoos and designer jeans, and are young and effortlessly cool. They spin drinking glasses on their hands and pour long shots into short glasses from expensive spirit bottles. They epitomise groovy, creative bohemian Surry Hills, an area known for its night-time economy: restaurants, bars, art galleries and pubs. The pub is situated on a street that is lined with similar pubs, restaurants, artisan coffee shops, art galleries and record stores, organic grocers and op-shops, vintage furniture stores and independent designer boutiques. It typifies the urbane, cultural space that Florida suggests contributes to the experience of 'place' and provides a platform for the 'experiential life' (Florida, 2003):

... a creative life packed full of intense, high-quality multidimensional experiences. And the kinds of experiences they [creative people] crave [and that] reflect and reinforce their identities as creative people (Florida, 2003: 166).

Most Filmmaker's Network members do not live in Surry Hills (it is gentrified and rents are high), but they socialise, work and network there. By coming together to discuss the craft of filmmaking with other aspiring filmmakers, they feel themselves part of the Surry Hills scene, typical of spaces considered by researchers of gentrification (Silver et al., 2010; Zukin, 1995; Florida, 2003).

By doing so, they experience a sense of belonging and collective identity, but also fulfil aspects of their creative identities. At one meeting, a member expressed approval at the fact that the 'script development workshops' (a subgroup of the larger meetings) had been moved from their erstwhile venue, in a beachside suburb housing a very different subcultural scene ('the home of surfers', he pointed out) to Surry Hills ('the home of filmmakers').

The satisfaction expressed at changing venues suggests that place is important to these aspirants. They rarely (if ever) have the opportunity to attend industry-based events or mix with established filmmakers, producers and administrators; and if they work day jobs, they only express their filmmaking identities intermittently. Most have never worked in professional filmmaking settings and so have not had contact with professional filmmakers. Surry Hills, the pub and the network are, therefore, substitutes for these aspects of social and cultural life.

Both the network and its location provide aspirants with a sense of belonging and validation. They legitimise members' filmmaking aspirations and provide them with a sense of agency; with the sense that they are working towards constructing their creative careers by being/becoming members. The network, with its regular meetings, provides members with an institutional housing for their vocational identities, reifying their filmmaking ambitions. Members who create their own industry events reinforce this institutionalisation. An annual film festival, according to the facilitator, not only brings 'all members out of the



woodwork', it brings other more established filmmakers (if only momentarily) into the orbit of the network and therefore into the company of members.

The annual festival is held at an art-deco cinema in Sydney's eastern suburbs, a cinema held in high esteem by the local filmmaking community because of its heritage and location, and because it commonly hosts special event film screenings and question and answer forums with high-profile filmmakers. Such a venue has the cachet needed by the Filmmaker's Network to attract new members, other filmmakers and a wider, general audience. The year I attended, the festival sold out, attracting a large audience and a few acclaimed Australian filmmakers and actors, many of whom featured in the finalist films, indicating the diversity and calibre of films entered.

#### The Film Festival

This event begins with drinks in the lounge bar where people, in mid-conversation, survey the room and keep one eye on the door, taking note of new arrivals. When it is time for the festival to commence, we are ushered to our seats and welcomed by the MC. The organisers and judges are introduced, as are the seven finalist films and filmmakers. In the year I attended, none of the finalist films were made by members of the Filmmaker's Network, which meant that the festival had attracted entries from people outside the network, thus increasing both competition and the reach of the network. The festival concludes with an after-party where the winner is announced and the drinks keep flowing, and where people get the chance to mingle and talk to other filmmakers.

Although it was a low-key event, the festival received some media coverage, which impressed some of the Filmmaker's Network members. A recognised Australian television personality was engaged to ask people to comment on the festival while a cameraman filmed both the responses and the event as a whole. This format reflected the red carpet events that are often televised or featured in the social pages of newspapers and magazines, which gave the festival an atmosphere of professionalism and the members a sense of importance.

During the after-party I noticed some network members keeping to themselves, standing around the edges of the room observing rather than initiating conversations with other guests. They seemed to lack the confidence required to network effectively and the brashness needed to sell themselves. I got the sense that many felt out of place or intimidated by some of the better-known filmmakers. Lacking the experience and expertise of the established filmmakers, they perhaps felt inadequate and unworthy of the company. So they stood, nursing their drinks, like filmmaker wallflowers waiting to be discovered, but struggling to work the room and take advantage of any fleeting opportunity that might present itself.

Those who had helped to organise the event fared somewhat better, but even they appeared diffident. It became quite clear that without the familiar surrounds of the Filmmaker's Network (the equal status of the regular attendees, the structure of the meetings and the environment of the pub), the members no longer felt like industry players nor part of a real industry

network, which meant that the sense of self-assurance needed to network effectively eluded them. At the festival, amongst professionals and people they perceived as stars, they were not equals but aspirants with stars in their eyes; they were just one of many who make up the reserve army of people waiting for the big break and in the meantime existing on the fringes of an exclusive industry, all the while rationalising the risk of kidding themselves.

From the members' perspective, the Filmmaker's Network is effective. It connects people, has an extensive reach, circulates information and resources, is informally structured and therefore open to all, and is growing at a fast rate. It is also innovative and supports entrepreneurs in that recently a couple of network members organised a special event film screening followed by a question and answer forum for a semi-established filmmaker. The network members were invited to attend and constituted a ready-made audience/crowd. This activity sought to empower and expand both the personal networks of people who attended as well as the Filmmaker's Network as a whole. It also sought to expose the filmmakers to new audiences, elicit discussion about filmmaking practices and provide a space for networking to occur. It is now a monthly event, which encourages reconnection and the formation of durable social relations as long as the same people attend regularly, much like the monthly meetings.

Similarly, on a monthly basis at a bar in Kings Cross (a district not far from Surry Hills), another networking event takes place. It, too, is a short film screening night where canapés are served, artwork displayed, photos taken,

prizes given, live music performed and cheap drinks provided. It is a project of some of the Filmmaker's Network members, and it, too, generates an audience for new films and promotes the importance of networking/socialising with other filmmakers. Events such as these encourage network members to collaborate and to identify with other filmmakers who are experiencing similar hurdles or who have similar aspirations. These events are important to aspirants because they represent not only amateur and accessible versions of official industry-based events, but also provide access to CoPs (Lave and Wenger, 1991), or a group of people who share a common interest in a particular practice or field of knowledge and collaborate to perform that practice in order to extend the field of knowledge. Within these groups, people share information and resources, learn from each other and develop social identities.

'Active networking' or 'knowingly and purposefully performed' networking, is the 'conscious, ongoing, and active process [of]... instrumentally engage[ing]' with others (Marin and Wellman, 2009: 116). It is conducted in order to influence people and to affect circumstances to one's advantage (Marin and Wellman, 2009). Both Wittel (2001) and Ferrazzi (2005) seem to echo this sentiment, albeit to varying degrees. I also found evidence of this in my participant observation research. Cindy (25), a member of the Filmmaker's Network, handed out her business card to anyone who would take one (twice to me). Even though I explained to her that I could not help her find work, she insisted I take it in case one day I could. Cindy identifies as an actress but has no professional experience. Most recently, she has written a screenplay in

which she would like to play the lead role. However, she works full-time as a receptionist and therefore lacks both the finances and the time to produce the play. She attends Filmmaker's Network meetings regularly and volunteers to act on all productions/films advertised or promoted, and to work at the film festival. She also performs some administrative work for the network without payment. Cindy is committed to, and deeply invested in, the Filmmaker's Network, is active, enthusiastic and polite, and she works closely with facilitators in the hope that one day she will be discovered.

Other people, however, struggle or refuse to be as proactive as Cindy. Most arrive alone and tap into conversations with people they know. Newcomers appear slightly awkward and hover on the edges of conversations or groups, not sure who to approach and how to go about it. Some appear self-conscious and others slink around in the background and keep to themselves. While some old hands slip in just before the formal proceedings begin, the more enthusiastic members of the group are more like Cindy: they volunteer for all projects, are prepared to take on a variety of roles, thus making themselves occupationally versatile, and are willing, flexible and ambitious. Some ingratiate themselves with others, whilst others appear humble and grounded. Some are quite sober in their ambitions and goals, whilst others are resigned to be amateurs. There is, however, some general cheer about the social aspects of the network, and most embrace the opportunity to be filmmakers amongst other filmmakers. The Filmmaker's Network validates them and makes them feel worthy; it provides them with a sense of belonging and a place to go.

Some members behave as if they are in a competitive environment. They work the room, seeking to charm other members and the guest speakers. They befriend newcomers, and the more ostentatious interrupt conversations, speak and laugh loudly and constantly peer around the room watching other people's moves. They appear to be summing people up and calculating their usefulness, but also trying to make friends. Krystal (26), an actress from New Zealand temporarily visiting Australia, quizzes other members, particularly new members, about their skills, work experience and future plans. I was present at the first meeting she attended. She knew no-one but introduced herself and asked others about themselves; although after she discovered I was a researcher, she paid little attention to me. What could I possibly do for her career? At the following meeting, a month later, she was on a first-name basis with most of the attendees and had secured some paid acting work.

In film and television, where work is project-based and performed by freelancers, networks are crucial to future employment and industry inclusion (Blair, 2001, 2003; Christopherson, 2008). They represent employment opportunity but also validation and acceptance. However, the purpose of networking is to transcend networks. The aspirants I observed seemed to want to connect with people of status. The problem is that members of the Filmmaker's Network hardly (if at all) network with people like this, nor do many represent the more professional status quo. Members mostly network with other amateur/aspiring filmmakers. This is why the guest speaker is popular at the meetings. The guest speaker is usually someone of status and credibility, but their presence is fleeting and the opportunity to connect with

them short-lived. This leads members to aspire to 'position-based' networks by attending events and by forming durable social relations (Laumann et al., 1983).

It is more useful to be a member of a sparser network with well-positioned individuals who offer diverse information than it is to be part of a large network of redundant contacts connected to the same people and who offer the same information (Blair, 2009). As Blair (2003, 2009) affirms, it is not so much the density (or size) of the network that is important but the status of the people within it.

The pressures of an oversupplied labour market, the existence of small and exclusive professional networks and limited employment opportunity make networking competitive. Even the Filmmaker's Network, despite its informal and inclusive structure, contains people who are inclined to be competitive, individualistic and opportunistic. When friends, colleagues and/or co-workers are also competitors, there is a compulsion for people to protect or preserve their resources, information and occupational opportunity. Bob, one of the network members, mentioned to me that at a time when he was experiencing financial hardship, he chose not to share information about upcoming jobs with friends, colleagues or network members. Although this challenged his ethical beliefs, he justified it by saying, 'you do what you gotta do'.

The need to survive, or 'do what you gotta do', can destabilise networks because it can interfere with the circulation and reproduction of network

resources. In postmodern society, where change is pervasive and work relationships can be ephemeral, survival means being individualistic, protective, assertive and opportunistic. It means impressing gatekeepers as well as tolerating and indulging others for the sake of networking. It means ingratiating yourself with industry gatekeepers and sometimes suspending ethical standards and/or utilising social and cultural resources.

The monthly meetings and small projects that members of the Filmmaker's Network invest in might provide them with a sense of purpose and belonging, but they do little to help their careers. This is because they network with the same people and reproduce the same resources and information. The non-financial members share only what they are prepared to share online, and willingly accept only what helps them. They are only partially committed and so not obliged to produce for the network community as a whole. The functionality of the network therefore comes into question. Is it enough that it provides a context for the public performance of identities, where aspirants can express themselves without the fear of rejection and judgement? Or should it provide aspirants with paid work opportunities and professional experience? They may be fee-paying members of a network that meets regularly and shares information and resources, but this is the type of network that Blair (2009) would classify as redundant and therefore incapable of helping people construct/formulate their careers. Therefore networks can exist in various forms and operate to serve various needs but the way they function, the opportunities they provide and reproduce as well as the calibre of the network itself comes down to the reputation and social class of those who



comprise them. In competitive work environments it is highly advantageous to belong to a network that is comprised of people rich in social and cultural capital. If networks and networking are seen as the means to lucrative and successful careers then amateur networks that reproduce amateur, unpaid opportunities do not help those aspiring to creative careers and economic security.

The quick-paced networking that is requisite in the largely ephemeral but potentially generative settings (of the events the network holds) challenges the aspirants. Even though they seek to move beyond the Filmmaker's Network into more powerful, reputable and status-driven networks, the nous and chutzpah required are difficult to summon up, as are the skills and/or attributes needed to do so – confidence, self-marketing, self-esteem and reputation. Overall, the Filmmaker's Network represents a type of pretend network, in that it exists as a community but does not represent the industry. It is, therefore, both a symptom of, and a response to, neo-liberalism and the need to be reflexive. Surviving, even in an amateur context, is an individualised endeavour.

The Filmmaker's Network is representative of what people do when they are marginal aspirants; they congregate with others and try to create possibilities/opportunities. It is, therefore, clear that there is a reserve army of film and television aspirants desperate to find work, and desperate enough to do it for free in the hope that they increase their chances of being discovered. As Beck (2000) and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) explain, people manage life

hurdles and constraints, shared risks in other words, as individuals, but they do so within self-produced collectives. In such cases, processes of individualism supersede collectivism, self-preservation comes before community and the narratives that help people make sense of their lives become driven by individualism rather than collectivism.

Numerous social researchers have investigated social networks (Crewe, 1996; O'Connor, 2004; Potts et al., 2008; Rossiter, 2006; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005; Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009; Kelly, 1999; Christopherson, 2008, 2009; Blair, 2003, 2009). An argument central to this scholarship has been that personal networks and social contacts are integral to creative careers. Without them, people are alienated from the (re)production of knowledge, information and social and cultural resources (Wittel, 2001; Christopherson, 2008: 89; Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011: 225; Blair, 2003). Networks and social contacts, therefore, become a type of currency even when there is a lack of face-to-face/co-presence between members. However, the self-affirming narratives that are both a prerequisite for and an outcome of networks are lost when people are absent/do not actively respond or reciprocate networking advances. Various books, blogs, websites and lectures inform people about how to network, and most of them present this advice in the vernacular. The general message is that people should socially interact with people who can help their careers.

Ferazzi (2005) suggests that in order to network effectively, we need to become 'members of a club', to build our networks before we need them, to

be audacious but to not be 'networking jerks' by 'schmoozing', to manage the 'gatekeeper artfully', get close to 'power' (or the decision makers), find mentors and mentees (which means being subordinate to some but having power over others), become a 'brand' (which makes us subject to 'rebranding') and maintain an ability to 'connect with connectors' (or people with contacts). He also informs us that reciprocity is not a given (networking is not about 'tit-for-tat', he says), and that to network without goals or plans, or by giving in to hubris and not 'following up', we are failing our networking selves (Ferrazzi, 2005). Ultimately, what people like Ferrazzi (2005) are saying is that we need to operate as individuals as we conduct what is essentially a communal activity.

Various forms of capital are required in order for aspirants to access networks. Economic capital can be used to produce films and pay workers. Also useful, however, and not independent of economic capital, is social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), or in this context the type of capital that generates social connections, vocational opportunities and social mobility. These kinds of capital help people to penetrate networks, to access network resources and to find out about employment opportunities. The catch, though, is that the mere possession of social and cultural capital is not enough. In order to reap the benefits, people must be prepared to instrumentalise their networks, to objectify friendship and family ties in order to address the needs of competitive labour markets. In other words, people must capitalise on social and family ties.

Wittel (2001), Blair (2001, 2003), Christopherson (2008), Gill (2010), Hesmondalgh (2007) and Hesmondalgh and Baker (2011) have undertaken qualitative studies of networks and creative labour, and all agree that networks have a utilitarian role to play in the lives of creative workers/aspirants. However, Hesmondalgh and Baker (2011) and Saundry, et al. (2006) also claim that the instrumentalisation argument is sometimes overstated (see their critique of Wittel, 2001, in Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011). Hesmondalgh and Baker (2011) and Saundry, et al. (2006) argue that although instrumentalisation underlies networks, they also represent worker mobilisation and solidarity and can provide assistance and support to workers who negotiate freelance labour markets (Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011: 225). We saw the degree to which this rang true for the aspirants of the Filmmaker's Network who, as discussed earlier, came together monthly to connect with others, to perform a creative identity and to experience vocational validation and legitimacy.

While there are unions to protect Australian film and television workers (Actor's Equity and the Media and Arts Alliance [MEAA]) precarious labour, competition and high membership fees means that union participation rates are quite low, particularly amongst aspirants in the UK (Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011), the US (Zukin, 1995) and in Australia where they continue to decrease (MEAA, 2013). In June 2011, the MEAA had 17,235 members. In June 2012, the number had decreased to 16,739, and by June 2013, it had gone down to 16,109 (MEAA, 2013: 6). The MEAA plans to increase its numbers by 'organising the unorganised', the challenge being 'contingent

work'. 'Film and television crew' has been identified as category underrepresented because these workers have become 'unorganised' and mostly reliant upon contingent work (MEAA, 2013: 6).

Resistance to organised representation occurs for a variety of reasons. Firstly, some workers are reluctant to identify with unions for fear this will lead to a loss of work (Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011: 223). Many casuals, freelancers or aspirants are so desperate they will happily work below union rates (Saundry et al., 2006; Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011). Indeed, there is a whole youthful aspiring workforce that is willing to work for free (Haukka, 2011). Secondly, many see union and alliance membership as complicating recruitment processes, particularly when work is contingent (Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011). Thirdly, the individualised condition of their work has become so normalised that calls for workers to participate in collective action and seek collective representation often falls on deaf ears. For those who are independent of traditional social ties, collective association appears less important (Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011: 225).

The aim of this chapter, then, is to explore the extent to which people are excluded from certain occupational networks and groups because they lack the necessary social and cultural capital, work experience and reputation. I consider how well people overcome the exclusivity (often by trying to engineer or capture networking opportunities) that is masked by the utopianism of neo-liberal ideology. I explore how precarious labour and new economy commitments guide people towards a type of CoP collectivism and/or network

individualism, and how they rationalise this in narrative terms. Some networks are more powerful than others, which often helps the rationalisation process. They possess greater reserves of social and cultural capital, which therefore enable more positive network experiences. Some social networks are insular, exclusive, elitist, protective and the product of social class, despite neo-liberal rhetoric that describes them as open, innovative, progressive, generative, fluid and inclusive. Social network analysis (SNA) is one way to study network production, but it is a framework that tends towards functionalism, and as such it does not capture the complexities and subjectivities of networking. I, therefore, endeavour to uncover these complexities and subjectivities by analysing the networking narratives of Bob, Joe, David, Bill, Peter, Stuart, Tom, Jack, Leonie, Tanya, and Kate.

## Building Occupational Networks

### Protecting network resources

Bob (52) developed an ambition to work in film from a cultural enthusiasm he had for cult movies when he was young. He studied biology but found the chemicals made him ill, so he applied to work for City Rail as a stationmaster. He also works as a part-time actor and, as a means to increasing his creative work, has started up his own production company; he, therefore, considers filmmaking a second career. Bob writes, produces and distributes feature films, short films and documentaries, and assesses scripts and produces corporate videos. As well as publishing a number of books and producing theatre productions, Bob sells comic artwork via the company website.

His narrative below brings into question the notion of trust. His behaviour illustrates how network exclusion inclines people to protect themselves, their knowledge and their prospects. His story exemplifies Blair's (2001, 2003) and Christopherson's (2008) point that people in positions of network power are willing and able to disseminate information or knowledge according to their needs:

... it's a competitive industry; say, for example, I hear about a job that would suit me, I've got a choice to share that with other people or I can keep it for myself. I've been guilty of that a few times, so, yes, that does happen and quite often heads of departments will work with people they know – that's more the case with technical crew because they're reliable and doing a feature; well, there's a lot of money involved...

### Bringing More to the Table

Joe (27) is on the receiving end of something similar. He aspires to the modern career and a stable and foreseeable pattern of working life. However, having completed various courses, he continues to experience long-term unemployment so is pressured to work, to network and to accumulate social and cultural capital. He lives with his parents in Sydney's western suburbs. His mother works in retail and his father is a storeman, and Joe accepts their marginal ability to support him while he pursues filmmaking. He went to his local high school, and after leaving school he spent some time unemployed. This compelled him to study film, a course chosen firstly to placate his parents who wanted him just to do something, and secondly, to satisfy an interest he had in films. Joe tries to combat network exclusiveness and build up a professional portfolio by volunteering to work:

... and even volunteering, a real struggle, a dead end, they're not interested, you know, and it got to the stage where I was just ringin' up production houses and seeing if I could hang around or do odd jobs for a week or a couple of days or something like that. And I think they're sort of trying to keep, what's the word, someone [from] comin' in to undermine their opportunities or something like that, or if they were going to let me in, they'd want me to bring more to the table, I guess, more experience and other contacts, just more to the table. It was never said explicitly, but that's sort of what I think and if I'd had more to offer I think more would've come from it...

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Joe did not possess the types of resources that would have enabled his network inclusion, and it seems that the production may not have had the human or financial resources available to train and skill-up an entry level volunteer. Bourdieu (1986) suggests that, people like Joe need to possess, at a minimum, a reservoir of objective resources similar to those already belonging to established network members, yet in this case the network and subsequent projects must also have the resources to help aspirants like Joe. This is what guarantees both the growth and reproduction of capital, and therefore job opportunities and the successful execution of the film project. In Joe's words, he needed to 'bring more to the table', which means that he quickly became aware of the political make-up of networks. The fact that to become a member he needed a reputation highlights the urgency of cultural production to utilise resources wisely and to provide investors with economic return. This indicates the degree to which gatekeepers and those in positions of power are accountable to others for the decisions they make and the profitable execution of creative projects and provides insight into why professional networks remain exclusive.

His reference then, to 'comin' in to undermine their opportunities' points directly to industry competitiveness and suggests how even an inexperienced aspirant is seen as a threat to job and network security. Jobs are precious and



require protecting, and even a graduate looking for work experience can be a threat. Wittel argues that networks are created both to circulate and protect proprietary information, and to connect people to opportunities that materialise as a result of being exposed to this information, which suggests that the information and opportunities that circulate in networks are the property of the network and thus need to be protected (2001: 51). This frustrates Joe's ability to become part of a community of practice and to learn at the elbow a craftsman. He was prepared to relinquish specific on-the-job training in favour of 'hang[ing] around or do[ing] odd jobs', but even this sacrifice did not deem him as worthy in the eyes of those he tried to impress.

#### David and Bill's Networks of 'Trust'?

David, who we met in the previous chapter, also experienced a network disjunction. When trialling filmmaking facilities at a TAFE college that was introducing a filmmaking course, he struck up a friendship with the course coordinator, who recognised his enthusiasm and offered him an opportunity to get some work experience:

So we got down there to the course and it was a lot of fun, it was awesome, and in fact, I got to talk to Alan, the guy running it, and he was saying 'Yeah, man, come down some time, I'm happy to help you'. So anyway, I got down there and it was going well and then he was saying, 'If you're really interested we're hopefully going to be filming the Big Top concert' ... I thought, this is pretty cool, but unfortunately he rang me saying that it had been kind of cancelled and that even though they would be filming, they couldn't bring me along. I was a bit annoyed because I kinda thought, how come you couldn't, I'd be there in a flash. So from then on I didn't really have any more contact with him, but I still kept making my movie...

David's narrative exemplifies the instability and inequality of networks. In a traditional occupational CoP, Alan's ability to renege or withdraw his offer of help would have been constrained by hierarchy and institutional regulation, or

at least a responsibility he felt to his peers. In the context of an open network, breaking a promise was easy to do. As an apprentice, part of David's training would have included obligatory participation in workplace practices and production. As an unpaid intern operating within a network, there is no obligation for David to execute or participate in any type of workplace practice, or even be included or contacted to work at all.

Like Joe, David may have been perceived as a threat and a disruption to an already established network or SPWG (Blair, 2001, 2003). He may not have been viewed as a worthy constituent: more hindrance than help. The jobs of people like Alan can be threatened if they impart information and knowledge to newcomers like David. David's keenness might even have worked against him. In certain contexts, any suggestion of desperation can be counter-productive. However, he retained a sense of dignity by refusing to contact or reconnect with Alan after he withdrew his offer, because Alan had broken a communal code of conduct; he had not kept his word.

David trusted Alan in a way that Leadbeater (1999) would have approved of, by investing whole-heartedly in a network of trust. But Alan acted according to neo-liberal work structures, which according to McRobbie undermine ties of kinship and community (2002b: 518). Individualisation, she observes, 'is not about individuals per se, as about new, more fluid, less permanent social relations seemingly marked by option or choice' (McRobbie, 2002b: 518). This reinforces the fickleness of networks and the unreliability of word-of-mouth promises and knowledge dissemination; networks are essentially governed by

ephemerality and choice. The underlying factor here, however, is that David was an aspirational apprentice and Alan was not a willing mentor, so essentially David needed Alan more than Alan needed David. The trust was not equally needed or reciprocated. This illustrates Blair's point about the non-egalitarian nature of interdependent film and television networks (2003: 691).

Bill (35) grew up in Marrickville with his Greek parents. His father was a labourer and his mother worked in a milk bar. He was sporty growing up, and tried his hand at professional tennis, but the call of a creative career was too strong. After discussions with his parents, who encouraged him to follow a conventional path before focussing on film, he became a teacher and then started writing screenplays. He works as casual teacher on-call, which financially supports him and provides enough downtime to write films. He lives with his parents and so is able to devote the money he makes teaching into filmmaking. He is deeply invested in developing his craft. When quizzed about networking he said:

I just hate it. I've always been a believer in that you'll get your networks through your work. Your work will do the talking. There are some people that go out there and 'Quick Draw McGraw', have business cards ready and boom, boom, boom and can do it, you know, at functions and what not. For me, my whole thought process for the last seven years was to get writing and further that, so my mentality has been just kinda stay away from those networking things. So, truthfully, that's probably my weakness.

Bill's commitment to perfecting his craft skills takes away from concentrating on his networks. Rather than avid networking, he focuses on a singular skill and thus a talent that he believes will construct his networks for him. He believes that he should be judged according to this talent and not his

networks, so after years of unsuccessfully applying for funding and trying to get his films publicly screened, he says:

I was like, everyone should be given a go and it shouldn't be this incest, just people looking after their mates and what not. It should just be based on merit, and one of the biggest flaws with this industry is this sense of entitlement and I think it's infiltrating people. I'm not sure whether you can escape the politics; you've just got to play the game better I guess.

Bill's lack of commitment to networking, however, also undermines his potential to be discovered. Although he believes that talent alone is enough, that his creative work will talk for him, without networks and networking, the writing he does and the creative work he produces will not generate the exposure he requires to build his career. He needs to be known in order to be judged, and he needs to be judged in order to be seen as a worthy filmmaker and network member

Clearly Bill has become a little disenchanted by the nepotism that operates within professional networks. But rather than become cynical, he says that he needs to get better at playing the game, to get on with building his own career. However, Bill's idea of network relationships are embedded in community:

So, I understand that you need to have an egalitarian approach for things to be fair, I know I can sleep easier when I know the person working with me is not going to do the runner, stab me in the back or desert me, or stir trouble or gossip.

Like David, Bill believes that people should be loyal to those with whom they work. However, the message he communicates is that, if they are to truly be of use to people, networks should be contingent on trust.

## A Master-Apprentice Disjuncture

Peter, the animatronics technician we met in the previous chapter, had markedly different experiences, in that he was able to utilise his social capital to secure his vocational future. This, however, was countered by the experience of initial exclusion and network hostility. After finishing school Peter tried to reconnect with the model-maker that he did work experience with in year ten. The model-maker did not return his calls and thus excluded Peter from his network.

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He identified the relationships and capital that underlie his ability to practise his craft and work as a craftsperson. Some people argue that networks have become institutionalised and the network model of work has become the norm (Blair, 2001, 2003; Christopherson, 2008; Wittel, 2001). As I have suggested, this means that social capital has become an occupational necessity. Peter's story illustrates both the opportunities and limits of social capital, and how without structures in place, the obligation and reciprocity that ensures durable relations and (re)production are the property of the individual and thus not a guarantee. The reluctance of the model-maker to respond to Peter's contact brings into question the moral and ethical boundaries of network sociality (Wittel, 2001) and therefore its effectiveness when conducted in ephemeral settings. He tried to reconnect with this mentor not long before he had been offered his first film job, as a menial runner on a film set: !

... actually, I tried to contact him before I went to [work on the film]. [I tried] to get in there, but he was a bit different; he wasn't that keen then, yeah, I don't know what happened there, but I rang him a few times and nothing ever happened...

When Peter first connected with the model-maker, it was under the conditions of a master-apprentice relationship, where Peter was a protégé and the model-maker was an established worker, a master and an expert in the field. When Peter was ready to reconnect, he was no longer an apprentice or protégé but a freelancer, an equal and a potential competitor armed with a portfolio, experience and talent. What Peter set out to do was reproduce or reinstate the master-apprentice relationship: he thought he could pick up where he left off. What he experienced, however, was the reality of a network disjuncture and the insecurity that characterises precarious labour markets. Peter was asking for a favour, help in getting 'in there', but the model-maker mentor did not respond because Peter was no longer the naïve sixteen-year-old school boy who wanted to learn things, a willing subordinate/ apprentice; rather, he was somebody who could come in and undermine the mentor's own opportunities.

Peter's desire to reconnect with the model-maker was shaped by a commitment to values of community and craft. Peter values loyalty and the passing down of skills and knowledge. He reminisced about the ways teachers 'showed him things' and about the mechanical skills and dispositions that he believes he learned from his father. He assumed the model-maker would remain a mentor; that the relationship was genuine, durable, unconditional and timeless. This was because the school-based work experience program encouraged the values of a CoP, but the context of the labour market presented something different.

Peter's ethical disposition towards co-workers is one of loyalty and trust, but his biographical narrative illustrates just how difficult it is to sustain relationships outside an institutional context, particularly when initial contact is ephemeral and not able to be regularly reproduced. This is because competition and a lack of opportunity governs networks, and network sociality is a reflection of neo-liberal work practice, so networks struggle to produce the obligation and ensure the reciprocity that is found in institutional settings and traditional labour markets.

Peter's friends, however, served him well. They, too, were creatively inclined, and one in particular was connected to the film industry and willing to help, so when the model-maker failed to respond to Peter, it was this friend who came through for him. He gave Peter the phone number of the production manager who was hiring people to work on the film:

... But anyway... [a friend's] younger brother was a runner for some sort of film and he heard from someone that the [animatronics] creature department needed a runner and he was like, you should ring them up. He somehow got the number – I still don't know how – and then I rang them and went in there and I had a pretty decent-sized portfolio then and took that in... and that boss, in particular, he looked at it for a second and was like, right, you've got the job... and then another job came up in the department which was more of a, you know, running the foam latex [used in making puppets]...

It is in situations like these, and the context of networked labour markets, that the benefits of social and cultural capital are fully realised and their existence deemed to be invaluable to those who possess it.

### The Limits of Social Capital

Stuart (50), another interviewee, experienced something quite different.

His narrative indicates that even when one has possession of social and cultural capital, and what appears to be a secure job and position in an established network, the transient nature of networks undermines any form of stability, security and trust. Stuart has two brothers; one is a film producer and university lecturer and the other is a graphic designer, and both work professionally and are embedded in strong professional networks. Stuart, however, has never been given the opportunity to work with either of them. His brother, the established film producer, despite having a number of professional film credits to his name, says that Stuart's involvement would lead to a 'conflict of interest'. This exemplifies the non-generative aspects of social capital, in that it reflects its limitations and how its effectiveness and accessibility are tied to subjective generosity.

Wittel captures the essence of this when he says that networks are: '... created on a project-by-project basis, by the movement of ideas, the establishment of only ever temporary standards and protocols, and the creation and protection of proprietary information' (2001: 51). In other words, those who possess resources can choose whether they share them and collaborate, to leave or stay, to enable or disable. When people decide to leave a network, they take their resources with them. Such covert power relations are hard to govern and manage.

This highlights the inherent fickleness and fragility of competitive labour markets, and brings to light the unreliability of social capital in such labour markets, despite the supposed reproductive capacity of family ties. Social



capital produced in family relationships can be withheld because of the unwillingness of one party to become part of a project and network that may be mutually beneficial to all parties involved (Bourdieu, 1986). It is apparent that the capacity of social capital is governed not only by shared or common interests, but also by people's willingness to help others, by nepotism and by generosity. In the face of competition and the threat of failure and precarity, even family connections do not hold strong. In this case, then, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) are right when they argue that familial ties are weakened by individualisation and neo-liberal politics.

Currently, Stuart works in the audio-visual department of a private school and has had a series of similar jobs. He has worked as a roadie (setting up the stage and being an audio engineer for live bands), in television as a cameraman and as an audio-visual technician with both the Education Department in Victoria and for private/corporate business making short educational videos. He also operated his own wedding video film production business for a number of years. Stuart refers to the fragility of networks and how friends are contacts but are only generative if they provide a direct link to work and to networks:

... I've also worked for Channel 7 as a cameraman and I got that because a friend of my wife's husband worked at Channel 7 and he rang me up and said, 'Do you want a bit of work?' I thought that might be a way to get into quality broadcast television, but that never sort of eventuated, which was okay because I still had the business and stuff... Yeah, the thing was that he left Channel 7 and as soon as he left, the channel stopped ringing me up, so it was only because of that common thread...

Stuart could call on friends when he needed work. He knew somebody that worked in television, and like Peter and other interviewees, got his first job

through a friend of a friend. Others, however, who do not have industry connections, will often try to make such friendships and connections with teachers. Stuart has run his own business filming people's weddings, but he yearns to do what he calls 'quality work', in other words, work that is industry recognised and commercial. So he continues to experience a tension between creative autonomy, financial stability and job satisfaction and thus is constantly seeking out ways to resolve this tension. We learn how he does this in the following chapters.

### Building Networks through Film School

When speaking of graduates and aspirants, McRobbie (2002b) argues that educational institutions become party sites and thus sites for developing networks:

The conventions associated with the traditional CV and the job application process are nothing short of overturned in the network culture, and yet patterns do re-emerge. Top or 'branded' universities promise graduates better access to big companies seeking to outsource creative work, and the same holds true for appointments with venture capitalists. Universities and colleges become key sites for developing the social skills for the network (once again often as party organizer), so, for [those] who at present do not enjoy three years of higher education, this is a further absence of opportunity. (It is also unlikely that mature students who are concentrated in poorer universities are in the position to immerse themselves in the hedonistic and expensive culture of networking.) (McRobbie, 2002b: 527).

When people lack the resources that enable them to access networks, and are put off by the impermanence, they will often turn to institutions and the structure of formal learning environments as a means of accumulating capital and stabilising their careers (McRobbie, 2002b). Film schools and other similar organisations like private colleges, university and informal CoPs like the Filmmaker's Network provide secure places for learning and networking

(McRobbie, 1998, 2002b), developing a creative identity, accumulating resources and validating creative achievement. Like networks, however, they can be complex and variegated spaces of solidarity and competition, of friendship and rivalry. Film schools provide resources and group activities to help initiate relationships. However, it is the informal socialisation that occurs between students that enables networks to flourish, and it is the potential mentorship provided by teachers that also contributes to network expansion and transcendence.

Most students are seeking skills, stability, network connections and affirmation of their professional creative identities. Drawn in by the promises described above, they sign up thinking that film school will provide them with all of these things. These institutions do provide aspirants with varying degrees of social and cultural capital, but the effectiveness of this capital comes down to whether it extends outside the classroom and into work settings. Some film schools are richer than others, but most lure people in by promoting their networking capacity and the reputation of their teachers and course curriculum.

Student/teacher relationships are guaranteed to produce and facilitate the flow of information and the sharing of ideas, and are often perceived by students as generative in that teachers are more likely than students to have affiliations to the industry. In other words, students perceive teachers as possessors of social and cultural capital, and able to reproduce, initiate and generate opportunity and links to the industry. In this way, teachers are

subject to social and cultural judgements; their worth is measured by the proximity that exists between them and the industry, and their reputation as filmmakers and not only teachers.

In the creative industries, networks are commodities (Potts et al., 2008) and the prospect of participating in them is used to entice aspirants to enrol. As

Peter explains:

I've contemplated going [to film school] 'cause I want to know more theory... and I think the main thing is that people at those places and other university students I know that do arts degrees, the main thing they overlook and they don't appreciate is the networking. I know [some] do, but the people I know don't. I'm not generalising at all, but I know a lot of people that don't appreciate that or work together with those people...

Peter has experienced network disjuncture. The project-to-project basis on which he works means that the face-to-face contact he has with his network is limited to the production of the film, probably three to six months. He therefore values the social relations that are formed when people are committed to long-term ventures, namely study. There was never the need for Peter to study, mainly because he came into work as an apprentice and through a friend, which meant that he formed his network in the context of paid work, but the nature of the film industry means that this apprenticeship was fractured along with network relations that had been formed. Durable relations are easier to form and maintain when in the structured setting of film school.

Most students aspire to network not just with fellow students, but also with professionals working in the industry who can generate opportunities. This is Peter's advantage. So the sheer existence of a network is not enough; it is

what they provide that counts. Do they help people transcend their current networks and occupational positions or are they bound by the limitations of the student/teacher relationship?

Tom, whom we met in the previous chapter, is a film production tutor and identifies a similar phenomenon in his classes:

... they're young and it's enough of a task for them to get into groups and make films at uni because a lot of them don't know about the dynamics of group work and they meet all these different personalities and think, fuck, how am I going to deal with this person... it's a learning curve, dealing with people...

Tom perceives the idiosyncrasies and individualism amongst his students as character flaws, when actually they are a symptom of competition, precarity and the pressing need to survive and to be noticed or discovered. This need to stand out – the resistance to disappearing into the crowd or becoming morally and ethically bound to the group – can work against student collaboration. Those who distance themselves from their peers are more likely to stand out and are able to behave opportunistically and network effectively, a largely individualised endeavour. Therefore, what people like Peter and Tom perceive as people resisting or rejecting the opportunity to collaborate with others may actually be students responding to the needs of neo-liberal job markets, precariousness and the networking imperative. Such responses are stimulated by the need for networks to transcend not reproduce their current states. In this way, those that constitute them can penetrate new ones, strengthen old ones and expand their social and cultural capital.

Jack, the aspiring film director/writer-cum-hairdresser, also has an attachment to film school(s). Although he has completed a number of courses, he is yet to work professionally. He earns a living by working in hospitality, which suits his study hours, but he is plagued by the cost of film school and has been removed from courses for non-payment of fees. He recently obtained a bank loan so that he could pay the \$8000:

... And when I applied and paid my money, the co-ordinator said, 'You know you can spend this money on making a really good short film, why would you do the course here?' And I said that I could do the short film and it may or may not be great, but if I do the course, the course itself is like a hub and the school is connected to so many people in the industry, and I can get so much more from doing the course than from [making] one short film, and then after the course I can make ten short films... and to meet contacts and learn more and the teachers are better straight away, all the teachers are industry-based... [whereas at] TAFE, the teachers are TAFE teachers who are former industry [but] who just work in TAFE...

Rather than face the uncertainty associated with being a freelancer, he would prefer to be a student and embrace the opportunity to work towards a solid, predictable outcome with a clear sense of vocational direction, even if it does cost him \$8000. Film school provides Jack with a sense of assurance, a solid structure and communal setting within which to perform his occupational identity, to network and to experience a sense of belonging. But what he presents when he says 'I can get so much more from doing the course than from [making] one short film, and then after the course I can make ten short films...' is the perception that film school leads to work. Whereas occupational CoPS are usually constituted in and through paid work, the education institution-based network is the precursor to paid work.

Neither the course nor the school provided Jack with access to on-the-job training or the cultural practices that materialise within the context of an occupational CoP that Peter experienced. Jack was not privy to the tacit and explicit knowledge reified and created within the context of a CoP and that is often learnt from working with 'old-timers' (Wenger, 1988) and/or craftspeople. But for Jack, it was not just about learning the craft. Rather, he learnt from teachers who could only ever be surrogates for craftspeople but whom he characterises as useful because they were industry connected and part of a hub, a place that facilitated the incubation, production and execution of ideas and networks. In this way, Jack evaluated teachers on the basis of their value in generating opportunity. To be valuable, they had to be current and attached to the industry or former industry and not just TAFE teachers. In other words, they needed to have an industry reputation.

He stands in contrast to Peter, who could draw on his capital, his friends and his portfolio in order to access a CoP and a professional working environment. As we saw earlier, Peter received help from people in his department. By contrast, Jack had to pay a fee to access similar opportunities and resources. This is why he invested in the networking capacity of the school and its teachers. He was unable to break free because his teachers and peers were his only connection to the film industry. Yet this limited him in that he retained and reproduced his student status; he remained 'forever young'. The occupational network barriers kept him rebounding back to film school. Consequently, he was an ongoing subordinate and had not, to that point, become a fully fledged member of an occupational CoP or a SPWG.

Therefore, teachers became an accessible form of social capital; but in order for this capital to be useful, Jack would have to transcend the student/teacher model and the power relations that sustain it. He would have to become an equal and somebody who could reciprocate the provision of capital, contacts and resources. The first step, though, according to Jack, was to befriend the teacher in a way that extended the relationship outside the film school context:

And at [film school] I actually made friends with Mark [teacher/owner], which is probably the only film guy that I've kept in contact with the whole time and I'm still friends with him and he's on my Facebook and I can write to him whenever I want... he's not a constant, but random things [happen] like I ran into him one night while I was out and we went drinking and went back to his place for a big party, and then another time he was going to sell our course down in Melbourne, so I went along to that and ended up hanging out with him until three in the morning drinking, which was great.

Jack says that his teacher is a Facebook friend, as if it adds more currency to the relationship, but this does not suggest that the relationship has been completely transformed or that he is perceived or treated as anything more than a student. This is supported when Jack admits that contact with his teacher outside the film school context is not 'a constant' – the very thing required of social capital and networks – but rather a random experience. His marginal network and labour market position is reaffirmed when Jack says that the teacher is the only 'film guy' he has kept in contact with, which further exemplifies the point made earlier about students/aspirants not prioritising or pursuing connections made with other students. If the aim of networking is to transcend existing networks rather than reproduce them, it appears futile to engage in this activity with other marginal students.



The function of the narrative of staying out late and drinking with his teacher allows Jack to communicate that he is more than a student; he is a friend, and he attended the teacher's party in order to reify this idea and to seek out additional networks and contacts. Jack embodies the sense that you just need to be there in order to be discovered, and when this division between work/non-work, student/teacher and master-apprentice potentially dissolves, the network imperative takes over. Each social interaction, event attended, friendship formed, job taken and bar visited becomes a potential networking opportunity and represents the chance to be discovered (McRobbie, 2002b). The relentless pursuit of networks, therefore, pervades every aspect of daily life. As Jack explains:

My addiction wasn't alcohol but meeting people and always staying out till at least 4am, but sometimes 10am, every time, and that starts messing with your life and I did it for a long time and that's the thing that I want to break. So that was an obstacle for me, for being focussed and for getting short films done, and a bit of a money drainer. I just wanted to constantly meet people and I've realised there are different ways you can do it, like you can go to a film festival and meet 20 people there...

The networking imperative and the desire to be discovered, it seems, is addictive. Jack was always out combing the party scene for potential contacts and the big break. This affected his daily life by leading to unstable hours and made him a hyped-up networker. Networking can become infectious, even though nothing seems to be authentic or reliable. Informal relations become instrumental and people are judged according to their power and influence more than on any other grounds.

To capture the potential of networking, Jack believes he must remain mobile; so he resists the notion of long-term study (Jack's study is limited to short

courses). Therefore, he must overlook the types of communal settings that enable the perpetuation of network relations. This highlights a neo-liberal conundrum, in that in order to be part of a network, people must develop durable and long-standing relations, but they must do this in ephemeral and transient settings whilst constantly working on themselves:

I'd never do uni because I don't want to spend three years in one spot. You don't make a movie in three years in one spot. You make a simple movie in a year or a year and a half and you always move to different locations; I just don't want to be stuck in one spot for three years.

Committing to a long-term project would limit Jack's ability to live diffusely, which would hinder his chances of being discovered, of meeting potential contacts and of always 'becoming'; in other words, of being a person who is always on the make. As Gill (2010) states, 'life's a pitch'. Commitment would jeopardise Jack's ability to be a new economy assimilate and a 'modernised worker-subject' whose entire existence is built around work and networking (Gill, 2010). Jack resists committing to a project, a place and even relationships because they hinder his ability to pitch extensively as part of his social life:

Yeah, I wouldn't mind getting married, having kids and having a mortgage, but I never saw myself getting there until I got my film career on track, which, you know, hasn't quite happened yet. I met a girl and we were together for nearly three years and I lived with her, and all she wanted was a child and I broke up with her because she was getting impatient with my film career.

Peter, however, explains how mobility and the prospect of being disembedded from social and kinship ties affects/compromises other aspects of his social life and other cultural practices and interests. At the time of interview, he was reluctant to commit his life to incessant networking and work, mainly because

the prospect of being constantly mobile had implications for other communal practices:

That's the thing, I could [work consistently] with that work if I wanted to do that every day, I could but I couldn't live here... like I'd have to move around all the time. Like I could easily be working every day [but] I'd have to move overseas and I'd have to go wherever it went...

In order for networking to be effective, it must be performed in a variety of social spaces and contexts and by a wide array of people who come together fleetingly only to move on once connections are made. Peter's narrative illustrates the consequences of transience. He resists this notion because it has the potential to compromise his friendships and other (sub)cultural activities. On the one hand, this resistance enables him to commit to and participate in communal activities, but on the other it places a strain on his ability to secure ongoing work. When networking and mobility govern people's lives, private lives take a back seat to public lives. What this means is that in order to follow the work, he must be prepared for a life of transience, to be prepared to dissimulate his ambitions and to 'pitch' his life (Gill, 2010).

Joe's description of his approach to study, 'you just need to pay a fee and show up and at the end you'll get your diploma or certificate or what have you' does not suggest he has the instincts of an avid networker. This pragmatism shaped the way he interacted with teachers and thus his networking experience. He was less inclined than Jack to dissimulate and play the networking game, and he was less likely to form friendships or engineer networking opportunities with mobility and networking in mind. He did not

ingratiate himself, nor did he attempt to subvert the student/teacher relationship by socialising outside the film school context:

... Nah, nothing like that. I mean some of the teachers were very nice and very personable and all of that, and you do sort of strike up a bit of friendship as the course is going along. I know that previous students have established relationships with some of the teachers that goes beyond the course, they become writing partners or what have you, but it never came about with me...

Joe did not see his teachers as providers of social capital. They were employed to teach him the practice of filmmaking in the classroom and their mentorship did not extend beyond institutional confines. Although he was connected to teachers, he saw himself as different from them (they were mentors and teachers but not friends or colleagues), and he did not endeavour to be equal to them, nor did he strive to penetrate or share the same worlds as them, mainly because that would have required him to dissimulate or pretend to be something that he was not.

Ironically, like Joe, teachers often occupy marginal positions in professional networks and labour markets; many make their livelihoods in occupations outside the industry, so to Joe, they supplied a service and were not generators of work, networks or potential opportunity. Therefore, he did not actively seek out their acceptance, recognition or friendship, mainly because he saw his own marginal position and class background reflected in theirs.

He lacks Jack's chutzpah and finds it difficult to summon up the inclination to network. His takes hold and is rendered visible when he asserts traditional or conventional views of work and learning. His class background becomes even

more apparent when he talks about the limitations it confers (an asterisk before a name indicates that a pseudonym has been used):

... \*Jill Diamond does modelling and went to the film school that I went to, but she's born into film and TV royalty, and [film director] \*Jimmy Jones' daughter is doing the same thing... they're born into it, so it's more conducive and they've got more pathways and they're in that environment, and I think when you're in the artistic environment, there's that community that you're connected with...

Unlike Jack, Joe realises that chance meetings or fleeting interactions rarely generate ongoing opportunity. Although he knew and studied with Jill Diamond and Jimmy Jones' daughter (the offspring of established and well-known Australian film directors), he will never enjoy the same career or life opportunities because they have social and cultural capital. They are 'somebodies' in an industry where Joe is one of many aspiring 'nobodies' vying for work and for access to networks. Even though Joe knows this, he is unprepared to become friends with them or maintain contact with them, in other words, to instrumentalise relationships for the sake of his career. He resists networking because it means that he has to be fake; he has to pretend that he occupies the same social standing, the same social circles, or prove his worthiness in other ways in order to make them social contacts. His story reveals the inherent inequality that operates at the heart of creative industries networks – social, cultural and economic capital all count as much as on-the-job experience. Unlike his well-connected contemporaries, Joe had little to offer in return for network inclusion, and he was not prepared to fake it to win his inclusion.

Joe's working-class status means that he must prioritise earning a living. He lacks the social, cultural and financial buffers against failure/poverty. The need to earn an income is immediate, just as it is for many of the other working-class aspirants discussed in this study. Working or aspiring to work in film and television and the creative industries overall requires a certain type of pragmatism. Those from creative, middle-class backgrounds make pragmatic calls toward the industry by networking with peers and friends/family or by focusing on their creative practice in an attempt to create their own occupational opportunity whereas those from working-class backgrounds make pragmatic calls to move away from the industry because they lack the resources to support their creative impulses. They quickly recognise their marginal status and realise that the income they need to survive is not guaranteed by creative industry work. This indicates the degree to which structural inequality continues to guide people's working lives despite neo-liberal rhetoric that highlights 'empowerment' and 'choice' as key organisational devices of contemporary life.

### Day Jobs and Networking

Those who lack social and cultural capital are forced to engineer their own networking opportunities. Many interviewees sought non-creative industry day jobs, usually in service roles, where they were likely to come across others, often customers, who have power in the creative fields and who they believed could help them. In other words, they took on jobs to pay the bills and to uncover networking opportunities, much like the advice I received if I wanted to pursue a career in film.

For Jack, it was a way to merge his creative ambitions with financial imperatives, particularly when there were no other viable filmmaking options available to him. In this way, the day job was sweetened and made palatable and his filmmaking aspirations were met. He engineered these networking opportunities by working at a cafe located in Sydney's arts and cultural precinct. By taking his film script to work, he anticipated there would be a chance to show it to someone who might give him a big break:

I ended up... working at Theatre Cafe and I met [\*John Brown] who was doing a play and I cracked and said, 'What's it like working with [famous Hollywood director]? – because he was in [cult classic film] – and he went on for about half an hour about how wonderful it was and he said, 'Oh, you're a filmmaker, are you?' And I said I was working on a short film. I showed him the script and he said, 'Can I be in it?' And I said, 'Yeah alright, you're in'. And the girl who instigated the whole thing [the film project] wanted a meeting with him and she was nervous about meeting him, you know he's just a guy and we walked away from the meeting ... it turns out that he texted me a week before shooting saying he couldn't do it and they wanted him a week early [for another project] so I was yeah, no worries, so we got a different actor and [the girl] got stressed and it was never made because she [abandoned] the film.

This narrative exemplifies Blair's (2001, 2003) interdependent but unequally balanced network relations. John Brown (JB), a professional Australian actor, accepted Jack's offer to appear in his film because he was looking to fill the gaps in his work schedule. Film and television careers require momentum, and it is important to be always seen as working and therefore desired and able to generate work, even on student projects. JB's incentive was to 'stack', or to overcommit, so that he would have a number of projects in the pipeline that would provide a fail-safe alternative to jobs that might fall through.

While JB might have been genuinely interested in the student film, agreeing to work on it served another purpose; it connected him and put him in front of new and potentially useful possibilities with emerging filmmakers, teachers and their networks. In these kinds of environments, he gets to maintain his

star status and thus his power because he does not have to audition and is guaranteed a lead role. Because he is a drawcard, there is very little chance he will lose the job to somebody else or risk his reputation if he underperforms.

Jack and his filmmaking partner, however, bore the brunt of the risks, and suffered the consequences when JB withdrew. The unpaid, amateur production will usually yield to the offer of professional, paid work, despite the existence of new potential networks or promises made. Reneging cost JB very little because these students had very little professional or industry sway. It did, however, cost the students greatly, because the disappointment and embarrassment felt by Jack's writing partner caused her to abandon the film, which affected the opportunities of all those committed to the film project.

To combat vocational insecurity, people like JB endeavour to extend their networks. The ability to do this is a supposed benefit of being a freelancer and 'free agent', yet JB is hardly in control of his working life. Being attached to the student film may have filled gaps in his schedule, and there is even kudos for those who practise their craft pro bono. It appears, at first, that JB can afford the luxury of working unpaid, particularly if it strengthens his reputation and exposes him to new networks and new forms of social and cultural capital. However, this only extends up to a point, because as soon as his professional networks called on him, he quit the student project so he could meet the obligations of precarious networked labour markets.



JB had the potential to set Jack up for future possibilities, because funding comes easier to those in the know; and because JB is an established actor, he could bring kudos to Jack's networks. Theoretically, this could also make Jack a powerful contact because he would appear to be connected to the industry. Realistically, however, Jack's only connection would be JB, who is fickle and unreliable but important because he has the potential to get Jack's project off the ground. Essentially, Jack would need JB because JB could help him transition from the fringes of the labour market and film school to possibly the core.

The need to 'network up' is crucial to the careers of those who lack social and cultural capital. Jack and Tom's students are marginal to the social circles that enable immediate industry acceptance and network entry. Aspirants with friends or family in the industry are already networked. Peter for example draws on his friendship groups to land himself a break as a runner. Tom's students lack the confidence and foresight needed to network with each other and Jack is compelled to network more so with teachers than students because he sees teachers as powerful industry contacts. This is indicative of not only the marginal position these aspirants hold but also illustrates the extent to which being deficient in social and cultural capital and other resources affects creative career outcomes and the behaviour of those aspiring to these careers.

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Hindering the career trajectory of Tom's students, Bill, Joe and Jack, is a reluctance to meet the demands of the job market and the requisites of the

creative career. There is a naivety associated with doing what you want and waiting for people to discover you. There is also an advantage to networking with peers in that one never knows where a peer will end up. One of the complexities of networking is deciding whether a peer is 'network worthy', and deeming somebody as not worthy of being employed or worthy of including in one's network is a risk because this person may become somebody powerful/helpful down the track or get to know someone like it.

Bill, Joe and Tom's students seem to be reluctant to 'do what it takes', to meet the demands of the film industry labour market [and new economy generally] and to network with peers. Peter found a niche [animatronics] and had friends in the industry so there was a less of a compulsion for him to network extensively beyond his friendship groups and the paid work arena. In the context of this study and also indicative of broader trends, however, Peter is an anomaly. He is one of the few that manage to secure regular work on high-end films. The others presented here continue to struggle and therefore maintain peripheral positions in the labour market and industry networks.

Bill, Jack and Joe all come from working-class backgrounds so the compulsion to 'network up' is necessary for forging a career. Their reluctance to network with peers and rather to network with people they deem as being in positions of power is indicative of their marginal status. They believe only people in positions of power can help them. In Jack's case it is his teachers, in Bill's case it is the person that notices his talent and skills, and in Joe's case, it is those working in a CoP and/or those born into 'film and

television royalty'. Not only are these aspirants lacking in social and cultural capital but they also exhibit typical working-class tendencies around overcoming poverty and achieving social mobility through the work they do. They do not have the financial luxury to indulge creative interests/impulses without the promise of economic return but their resistance to networking with peers undermines their ability to forge their careers. Therefore they remain long-term students, amateurs or struggling volunteers waiting to be discovered and/or handed a break.

This is why people who possess social capital are able to function better in networked labour markets (Bourdieu, 1986: 250). They are sought after for their social capital because they are well known and thus worthy of getting to know. They bring with them the capacity to expand networks because the people they know are, more often than not, also well known (Bourdieu, 1986: 250-51). Therefore, the power of social capital becomes apparent because it is more easily transmittable than cultural capital and because it produces both long-term and short-term benefits to others in a network. Cultural capital, by contrast, is not as easy to transmit and therefore not as easily appropriated; although it is no less powerful, because if and when a person decides to leave a network, they take their social and cultural capital with them thus making people like JB integral to networks.

Jack's narrative suggests that Jack and JB occupy the same world, whereas in fact this is a delusion on Jack's part. They may have discussed the intricacies of a cult classic film and talked as if they both were friends with a

legendary Hollywood director, and Jack tries to draw parallels between them when he refers to JB as 'just a guy', but they are not equals, nor do they occupy similar worlds. This becomes apparent when JB withdraws and Jack plays down his disappointment, 'I was yeah, no worries'. By playing down the disappointment, he tries to save face, but his powerlessness is confirmed when his partner disbands the film project as an implicit consequence of this withdrawal.

Social and cultural capital are valuable resources for people who operate in networked labour markets. Contacts, social relations and the ability to network empowers people and makes the 'games of society', in this instance the networking game, 'something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle' (Bourdieu, 1986: 241). In other words, social and cultural capital empower people and provide them with a sense of agency where, without them, life chances are governed by the vagaries of serendipity and luck.

The story of Leonie (45) exemplifies some of the ways that social and cultural backgrounds shape people's abilities to self-manage. She grew up in Cessnock, just north of Sydney. Leaving school after Year Ten, she went to TAFE to study accounting and then went straight into work. Her father, initially a boilermaker, eventually represented the Labor Party as a local councillor in the Hunter Valley. He was 'always involved in unions'. His income was low, however, so he taught at the local TAFE as well. Her mother was a casual English literature teacher, but she spent a lot of time unemployed and looking

for work. Leonie now lives in Sydney's western suburbs, and although she appreciates the region's low-density, open-space landscapes, and finds housing more affordable, she feels culturally and creatively isolated there. She is paying off her own house and works in office administration on temporary contracts whilst she works on short films. She is always seeking out networking opportunities and contexts in which to meet other filmmakers.

Rather than work in cafes like Jack, Leonie has also tried to engineer her networks by being in the right place at the right time. She does not do this by living and working in a 'creative' suburb, rather she tries to meet people by attending film-related events. One such event was the Sundance film festival, where she volunteered to work in the hope that by just being there, she would be discovered:

I went to the Sundance film festival and volunteered there to meet filmmakers and it was nah... they had me in some sort of a tunnel, so I didn't meet anyone... so I Googled and found someone in New York working on a feminist documentary and I helped them and started to get a few contacts, but it was time for me to go. I'd been there for six weeks and was running out of money...

Despite having mortgage repayments, Leonie chooses to live precariously and work on a temporary basis so that she can be open to opportunity and remain flexible and adaptable. Office temping means that she is free from the burden of long-term work commitment(s). She is able to convince herself that she is, in fact, a filmmaker, unattached and sufficiently mobile to pursue different avenues and engineer networking opportunities. She lacks autonomy, however, and so as a film festival volunteer is at the mercy of co-

ordinators, who give her work that makes her highly unlikely to find potential contacts.

Tanya (30) another aspirant who we are yet to meet in full, works in a cafe in Melbourne's northern suburbs, an area of the city renowned for its counterculture, vintage clothing shops, cafe culture and live, local music scene. Known as a haunt of hipsters, many creative workers and artists choose to reside there. There is, therefore, the scope to meet people working or aspiring to work artistically or creatively, but many people lack the confidence required to capitalise on opportunity. As much as Tanya seizes the opportunity by confidently putting herself forward for work, she also feels disempowered working as a waitress and is less inclined to approach potential network contacts:

... there's this guy [who comes into the cafe], he's trying to get into the music stuff [filming live bands/music videos], said I could borrow anything [equipment] and we've been talking about maybe that he'll get me to come with him and film when he's got gigs and needs an extra camera person, I'll do the same with him [invite him to film bands with her]... and this woman, she's a cinematographer and her husband's a director and every time she comes in I'm always thinking okay, I'm going to ask her – I never have the guts to do it.

This means that as much as the day job can provide a context for meeting people, it can also disempower the aspirant as well. Tanya is sufficiently open to chance and to meeting potential contacts, but only sometimes does she find the confidence needed to approach these people. She fears the professional couple will judge her, and so is more comfortable with approaching the amateur music video producer, with whom she can exchange

favours with and resources. As an amateur herself, she has few resources to offer the cinematographer and her husband and therefore feels inadequate or unworthy. Their professional status disables her ability to network.

### The Networking Intern

Beyond the realm of networking in professional work settings, educational settings and day jobs, is the world of internships. Young people and graduates specifically, are increasingly being advised to work for free in order to network and to acquire on-the-job work experience (Ball et al., 2010). A recent article in the careers section of the Sydney Morning Herald is typical. It suggests that aspirants contact employers who provide internships, and/or friends who work in the industry, arrange their own informal internship by joining a relevant professional association, contact employers that offer internships through a careers office, and get in touch with a volunteering association (Lockett, 2011). The author also advises young people to seek financial advice to 'ensure you have money to support yourself during placement' (Lockett, 2011).

In a similar vein, another report reminds aspirants that the internship is more important and valuable than the part-time work students do to support themselves whilst they are studying (ArtsHub, 2011). In other words, the message is to prioritise unpaid work over paid work. Specifically, it tells students/aspirants that 'whilst an internship probably won't help to pay for those expensive text books, it could provide a pathway to a brighter future by providing you with a priceless little gem known as experience'. The report also

argues that an internship provides people with background knowledge and a 'taste of what it's like to work in your chosen field', and that the experience, once on the job, will 'stop you from drowning when things get serious' (ArtsHub, 2011). The report goes on to explain that the internship is not something to be feared, and that those who undertake an internship have 'demonstrated a passion for their work' (ArtsHub, 2011). So qualifications do not prove worth, neither does a commitment to study, but a commitment to work for free does, which means that drowning in debt is better than drowning on the job (if and when one is acquired). The internship is often perceived as a way of getting established and being noticed (Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011). However, with so many people being advised to undertake internships, they are also competitively structured and do not guarantee people ongoing employment (Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011).

I met Kate (22) at one of the informal network meetings I attended. She introduced herself as an aspiring screenwriter and novelist, and a communications student on a university exchange program from Perth, but during the interview, she identified a number of other aspirations: film director, actor, singer, journalist, teacher and business owner. When I asked her to pinpoint an overall ambition, she said, 'The easiest thing is to become famous' in any one of her listed aspirations. She told me her 'dream' is to open a performing arts school, but that it is a '20 year plan' because this will make her a teacher like her mother, which she says will only ever happen when her 'career is set up'.



Kate has had little contact with her father, who is an IT consultant, so she shares a close bond with her mother, a music teacher. As a child, Kate was encouraged to learn music, drama and dance and applied unsuccessfully to study performing arts at a number of universities. She enrolled in a communications degree with a major in theatre studies and plans in future to complete a teacher training qualification. For now, she is in Sydney and is looking for a casual job as well as some work experience:

Perth... it's small, the [media/performing arts] industry is small and there is not enough work for everyone who's studying to get jobs, so just trying to find connections over here which would be better for me later on... If I get my foot in the industry over here [Sydney], I might have a better chance at getting a job when I finish my degree, because having experience over here will look better on my CV and also because there are better options over here... All the big companies are over here [Sydney], ACP and Pacific [Magazines] and that's where I was trying to get my internship, at one of those two companies, but they're terrible at emailing back...

With four times the population, Sydney produces more media content than Perth, and so it seemed logical for Kate to relocate. But in trying to secure an internship, she encountered the cliquy competitiveness and intense scrutiny that characterises creative industry labour markets everywhere. And these experiences were not limited to the paid work sphere. She says that ACP and Pacific Magazines were 'terrible at emailing back', but her major obstacle was in the form of other workers who were competing for a chance to intern for a major media organisation.

Consequently she lowered her sights and secured an internship with the Filmmaker's Network, which means that she is interning with other struggling actors and screenwriters who are disconnected and looking for a break. She

struggles to explain her role to me, but as part of her internship she attends the monthly meetings and performs general housekeeping tasks such as managing the door and collecting the cover charge from non-members. Other duties include helping to organise the annual film festival, which entails some administrative work, some promotional work and some acting. At one of the meetings she met a founding member of a film magazine, whom she later contacted to organise a second part-time internship:

... so I emailed \*John, \*Russel and \*Steven at the Informal Filmmakers Network and became friends with them on Facebook straight away as a way of going, 'Please remember me and keep me in your thoughts'. And John was asking for people to help with the film festival, but I'll be back in Perth by [the time the festival takes place], but I asked anyway if he was looking for an intern and he was yeah, cool, come chat to me to and we'll sort out something... so hopefully with the [film magazine] [the] experience that I'm getting over the next three weeks, I will hopefully go through that avenue and get a job through there and [I'll] make sure that they remember me in the three weeks that I'm there, so I'm getting my mum to send some good clothes from home... and I need a step in, it doesn't matter that I'm not getting paid, you need a step into the business to get into the business; you have to give up something so you can get in...

In Kate's terms, \*John, \*Russel and \*Steven appear to be better connected than her, but they are actually part-time workers volunteering their services in peripheral labour markets; Steven is a freelance graphic designer and John is a part-time paediatrician; both write scripts in their spare time and attend auditions when they can. They may be able to help Kate to some degree, in that they can provide her with an internship, but there is scant chance they can smooth her path into the primary labour market. This means that the pay packet she says is worth sacrificing for a 'step in' was never a material feature of the job, nor was the step in.

Kate is not learning how to make films or write scripts as an intern, nor is she socialising with people that can generate opportunity or teach her specific skills. She is not privy to close supervision, nor is she participating in an ongoing practice with regular community members. She is performing general administrative tasks in transient settings and is volunteering to work on corporate films with other volunteer actors, scriptwriters and quasi-technical staff. She is organising a film festival that will take place after she returns to Perth, and so she even misses out on the opportunity to socialise, to see the event transpire and to network at the public screening.

The outcome for Kate is an internship that provides very little in the form of credentials, skills or reputation. Rather, it is shaped by the needs of disconnected, aspiring filmmakers who operate as members of an informally organised network run by volunteers who occupy provisional positions in the film and television labour market while they try to carve out niche positions for themselves. This means that Kate's subsequent networks are shaped by similar structures and the whole purpose of coming to Sydney to become better connected is unfulfilled.

Furthermore, the magazine with which she interns is staffed by a group of freelancers working together but existing separately. The opportunity to conduct investigative journalism is relatively low. Instead, she writes film reviews with other people who write film reviews. This means that her prospects are limited to a small, select group who work invariably on other projects in a number of social contexts and work hard to maintain their own

social networks and work opportunities. Therefore, the capacity of the internship to extend Kate's networks is limited to a small group of people in the same boat as her.

## CONCLUSION

Neo-liberalism directs people to govern themselves and shape their own individual fate, but in order for people to do so effectively, they need access to resources and networks. As a result, there are more people working as atomised individuals, in constant competition with each other, negotiating terms of work as freelancers on short contracts (or unpaid interns) and feeling the pressure to be opportunistic. Ethical and moral responsibility, it seems, is certainly not, in Joe's words, brought to the table, but rather left at the door.

When aspirants try to penetrate networks and secure their position in complex, fluid and competitive labour markets, they often encounter exclusiveness and intense scrutiny. The real problem is that there is a reserve of labour willing to work for free and a labour market that is constantly in surplus. It seems that those who make up the core have at their mercy an abundance of choice, whilst those that occupy the periphery and further still, hang on desperately to the hope that they will be discovered and handed a break.

Networks have to some extent replaced CoPs, and because they are contingent, unstructured, open-ended and individually executed rather than collectively sustained, the outcome is more important than the process and they are suited to the needs of capitalism and the new economy. Networks,

therefore, have the ability to destabilise effective on-the-job learning processes, processes better executed by CoPs than through internships.

By contrast, networks generate (usually unpaid) internships with no guarantee that those who undertake them will acquire paid work or network resources.

Many aspirants pursue formal recognition, long-term training, ongoing social and technical support and to be paid to perform work. Many, like Joe, are focussed on developing stable careers rather than a series of peripheral ad-hoc skills, so they resist the temptation of becoming freelancing slashies.

People like Leonie, Joe and Stuart yearn for secure learning and working environments, and for the support of cultural practice and tradition. They want access to durable resources and narratives, and they want to be judged according to their abilities rather than their social and cultural merits. Yet even for those willing to play the game, Jack and Tanya, for example, there are no guarantees.

This means that even in the most appropriate settings, a good deal of serendipity and luck characterises people's narratives. Jack struck up a connection with a famous actor while working in a cafe, while Leonie's efforts to engineer her break at the Sundance Film Festival were comprehensively frustrated. Tanya was presented with regular opportunities; sometimes she had the confidence to act on them, but other times she did not. Joe sees through façade and accepts his marginal position. In other words, he resists the networking imperative and, unlike Kate, will not sell his soul for the chance to meet people who may (or may not) help him.

Networking is contingent, much like the work and careers for which it is integral. The networking narrative is reproduced to perpetuate ideas about community, individualism, competition, protection, peer groups and friendships, serendipity and chance, and even exploitation. As we saw, networking often occurs in an informal sense and can be pursued in various contexts, which makes the formation of an occupational identity symbolic of social and cultural life. The next chapter explores how the discourse of creativity is lived, and how this affects the embodiment of particular narrative tropes that shape people's perceptions of career, narratives of self and overall occupational goals. These narrative tropes shed light on the value systems by which some aspiring film and television workers attempt to structure their working lives, and how this aligns them with particular pursuits, namely that of art, craft and career. In the following chapter, we will meet two more interviewees, Luke and Hayley, and be reacquainted with the lives of Tony, Tanya, Stuart, Joe and Amanda. We will track the ways they develop notions of career amidst new economy imperatives and precarity.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A Creative Vocation (or is it a creative career?)

Being a filmmaker requires a narrative of identity, one that conveys the features and experiences of working life that represent being a filmmaker. For aspirants, this is difficult because, as we saw in the previous chapter, one's ability to network and to therefore commit to becoming a filmmaker is contingent upon social and cultural capital, as well as context and luck. The paradox for aspiring filmmakers is that in as much as a filmmaking career can provide them with job satisfaction, this comes at the cost of a stable working life. The narratives presented here, of filmmaking identity and aspiration, are guided by experiences of work, but also by the shaping force of class and gender. This chapter explores how the discourse of creativity is lived, how it shapes subjective understandings of the creative career and creative life, and how the residual effects of class and gender are reflected in or informed by subjective conceptions of career and working life.

### A Working Life

In contemporary times, work has come to mean:

... much more than just earning a living; it incorporates and overtakes everyday life. In exacting new resources of self-reliance on the part of the working population, work appears to supplant, indeed hijack, the realm of the social, readjusting the division between work and leisure, creating new modes of self-disciplining, producing new forms of identity (McRobbie, 2002a: 99).

The significance of work is now such that it overwhelms the ordinary and the personal, the everyday social and cultural life of 'new workers' (Shorthose and Strange, 2004). In other words 'new capitalism' has succeeded in colonising

or enveloping that which was once unstructured, mostly private life, leisure time, relationships and everyday responsibilities (Gregg, 2011). As McRobbie reminds us, 'where the individual is most free to be chasing his or her dreams of self-expression, so also is postmodern power at its most effective' (2002a: 109). Therefore, creative labour has become the leitmotif of new capitalism, liberating workers from bureaucratic control thus giving them greater sovereignty and encouragement to express themselves innovatively and find pleasure in the work they do. However, creative labour has also made workers more precarious in every aspect of their lives by dissolving the boundaries between work and life, poverty and enrichment, talent and ability, creativity and industry.

The idea of 'work as rewarding' has antecedents in pre-industrial working life. Craft labour is skilled labour that is 'quality driven', 'materially specific' and 'motivated' by intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Sennett, 2008; Banks, 2010). It provides workers with a means to perform 'humane and psychologically rewarding' work and a means to finding pleasure in work (Banks, 2010). Such work is often performed by a community of workers, and is organised around tradition and moral codes of conduct (Banks, 2010). Historically, craft labour and cultural production were as much about producing quality goods as they were about creating or preserving a quality of life and a sense of community, as well as the welfare of workers and the working class (Mishler, 2004; Sennett, 2008; Banks, 2010; Luckman, 2013).



The Industrial Revolution saw the inception of mass manufacturing, and marked a move from hand production to mechanised production methods. Arts and craft workers saw this as a threat to employment and the demise of quality and meaningful production methods, products and work environments. The Arts and Crafts Movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a protest against Industrialisation and the alienating effects of mass manufacturing and the deskilling of workers. Taylorism went on to further isolate workers from each other and from the means of production, and to deskill workers. Labour was divided into job specific tasks, further mechanising production processes and managing labour and production bureaucratically and scientifically (Banks, 2010; Luckman, 2013). The Arts and Crafts movement continued to protest against these dehumanising aspects of production, advocating the positive effects of guilds and communal aspects of living and working. As a result of deindustrialisation, the creative autonomy that was a virtue of craft labour was lost along with craft codes of practice such as pride in craftsmanship and the pleasure derived from innate, slow, rhythmical production techniques (Sennett, 2008).

In recent times there has been a renaissance of women's craft labour and a renewed interest in the credibility of craft skills. Digital technology, online markets and the Internet have provided a means to marketing craft goods, and have given amateur or independent producers an expansive consumer base, but also with a centralised marketplace. Spurred on largely by 'economies of amateur labour' and technological progression, the revival of craft practices has created business opportunities for those without formal

training, for women and for small-scale producers (Luckman, 2013). Luckman argues that this revival of craft has occurred, much like the Arts and Crafts Movement of the previous century, as a response to vast social, cultural and economic change. There is an interest in 'the material, the tactile, the analogue', as it exist vis-à-vis technological progression and post-Fordist change, which suggests that people are searching for a sense of the 'authentic' in an inauthentic world (Luckman, 2013: 254).

Banks (2010) argues that the craft model of work supports workers in their striving for authenticity, in that it shields both artists and crafts workers from the deskilling processes that apply in larger circuits of capitalism. He argues that the creative industries have always been a haven for craft workers, but that their contribution has always been under-recognised. Often considered supplemental to 'artists', or 'above the line' workers (Christopherson, 2008; Banks, 2010), crafts workers experience different material rewards, in that the artist can expect autonomy, financial success and public recognition whereas the crafts worker is less likely to enjoy those things (Banks, 2010:306). Yet, the craft workshop model, with its CoP values and master-apprentice relations, have always been 'absolutely necessary' [author's emphasis] to the creative industries and cultural production. The new economy and the creative industries should be characterised by the combined labour efforts of artists and crafts workers, and not artists alone. So in the context of film and television, it is not so much a renaissance of craft practices that is being advocated for, but rather the recognition of them.

Three narrative tropes emerged from interviewees' accounts of creativity and working life: art, craft and career, which I defined in the introduction. To recap, the values of art narratives are independence, autonomy, aesthetic originality and anti-commercialism; the values of craft narratives are community, learning by osmosis, master-apprentice relations and the passing down of knowledge and skills, as well as maintaining control over production processes; and the values of career narratives are the achievement of recognisable competencies by external assessors, formal credentials and other markers of achievement.

These narrative tropes were devices used to weave together the fragments of working life, and they were also an attempt by the interviewees to regain some autonomy. They represented working values, which created in the process, a montage of working life and subsequent occupational identities (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). These tropes conveyed understandings of art and culture generally, but are also shaped by class and gender. Those whose narratives embodied the ideals and values associated with classic art worlds were often middle-class aspirants, or those from non-conventional, bohemian backgrounds. Those whose narratives exemplified the values of craft and community tended to be working-class men, or men who came from a long line of traditional blue-collar work and twentieth-century masculine labour. Most of my women interviewees, particularly those interested in social mobility and financial independence, were less committed to the concept of craft and community and more committed to career achievement and industry recognition. These women sought acceptance and validity from external

managers and had little regard for the values of craft labour. Several of the aspirants discussed in this chapter wrestled with the competing and often incommensurable character of art, craft and career, often because their social class or gender inclined them toward, or ran counter to, the imperatives communicated by each. All interviewees aspired to some sort of autonomy. However, some prioritised creative autonomy above financial autonomy and so communicated their life in art and/or craft terms. Others were more concerned with financial security and so aligned themselves with career narratives/discourse. The case studies that make up the remainder of this chapter are generally representative of my sample overall, and they illustrate the (sometimes uneven and variegated) ways the narrative tropes of working life played out in the interview data.

#### The Postmodern Crafts Worker

Luke (43) is a professional filmmaker and has been relatively successful. Like Peter, the animatronics technician we met in an earlier chapter, he has survived, albeit precariously, and similarly embodies the dispositions of a crafts worker. He views what he does in craft terms and has worked mainly as an assistant director, which as discussed in chapter two is a 'below the line' job. It involves managing the production/workshop floor, other technical workers and crew, often by implementing and maintaining production schedules and budgets, and assisting the director. Therefore, the extent to which this job is artistic, in a classical sense of the term, is limited. No formal education is required to become an assistant director; employment is attained via experience, and assistant directors usually begin as 'runners' and work

their way up to such a role (<http://film.vic.gov.au>, 2012). So, like Peter, Luke adopts the code of apprenticeship to communicate how he was trained; however, unlike Peter, whose portfolio spoke for him, Luke was an apprentice who worked his way up into more coveted roles. This means that he values community and mentorship but recognises the need to operate according to the requirements of a postmodern labour market that prizes individualism and self-management and so, to some degree, is self-directing and opportunistic.

Luke grew up in an upper-middle class family on Sydney's North Shore. Like Stuart, the aspiring filmmaker who works as a school AV technician, whom we discussed earlier, he also trained and began working in film and television before the creative industries discourse took hold. He studied communications at university, moved straight into making commercials (his brother worked in advertising) and then on to Australian drama. He continues to work intermittently on short contracts for various broadcast stations and is constantly working on his own projects and those of others (his partner, sister and many of his friends are filmmakers). Frequently feeling that he has come to the end of the road, Luke is tired of living precariously but resists turning his back on film and television, because the prospect of reskilling and starting again in his mid-forties is not appealing. He therefore holds out hope, and continues to find ways to persevere.

He recounts his memories of university and the early years of his working life, and by doing so differentiates between processes of 'creativity' and

‘collaboration’, suggesting that both are better realised in a CoP rather than individually and within a formal institutional context:

I liked the creative side [of scriptwriting at university], but I suppose I felt more in the collaborative sense than particularly having great creative vision. I wanted to play more with cameras and special effects in Super 8. Filmmaking and film theory [was my major], but the theory side was generally ignored and I spent lots of time doing film projects and radio projects or whatever in the early years... A lot of time doing 16mm edits with a big bucket – trim bin – of 16mm, pretty messy and chaotic... I used to spend a little bit of time on film sets at school, and there were always a couple of older students who knew their way round a film set a bit better than others and that’s how you learn a bit, through tuition... I think you learn a lot by osmosis and from stuff-ups... I lost a 2<sup>nd</sup> assistant director’s negatives, probably should’ve told him earlier, he’s probably never forgiven me, he probably still remembers and you do realise that people have long memories if you stuff things up... [Learning is] pretty much on-the-job and you’re sort of apprenticed in a way to honour that casual basis.

Luke’s narrative reflects his embrace of craft values. He prefers ‘practice’ to ‘theory’, which he understands as airy abstraction, like ‘creative vision’.

Theory is a valuable resource in as much as it gets the job done or supports and produces technical know-how (cameras, special effects). Alternatively, it is participation in the practice, the ‘stuff-ups’ and messy and chaotic film editing, and the learning by observation that sustains his craft-based identity. He values the contribution of others, the knowledge they bring to the job and the ability they have to teach him things. So, he undertakes an informal apprenticeship, one that teaches him to do the job but also how to do it within a community characterised by short-termism and competition (‘to honour that casual basis’). He states that he learns better by ‘osmosis’ (or what Cohen [1999] would term ‘mimesis’ or learning by emulation/simulation), by physically performing the craft, by observing and by making mistakes. Luke values the organisational structure of a CoP but understands that creative labour is postmodern work, which makes work groups ephemeral and

knowledge not always able to be acquired by formal means. This makes him assume the role of an apprentice protégé as well:

... yeah, so in a workplace you do learn from people you like and admire, you learn a lot from being thrown in. Like I was driving around American producers on my first job and that's great working for people with a lot of experience or dealing with really big budgets, even sitting there listening to a couple of Americans talking about upcoming projects and actors, it's almost like you are a little servant or they can say what they like and you're not going to hear it... listening and remembering.

He started off in menial work but maintains the craft apprentice narrative, in that he absorbs their conversations, 'listening and remembering', and capitalises on his apparent 'invisibility' and subordinate status, 'it's almost like you are a little servant or they can say what they like and you're not going to hear'. He makes practical use of the unstructured, non-institutionalised environment within which he works and learns, and by which he must survive, by embodying craft values. This brings meaning to the task of driving directors around, and posits it as a necessary part of the learning and apprenticeship process.

This type of informality requires Luke to pursue his vocation by social and cultural means. Sometimes this occurs in the context of being 'thrown in', other times it means consciously networking and engaging strategically in 'masquerade' or 'dissemblance/dissimulation' (Cohen, 1999):

You try and make friends with the people that will hire you, that's something you still have to do every day. I got my first year's work by pretty much getting on well with not just one person but with the office people in general and then recommendations so I did a few commercials early on, pretty much straight out of uni, so yeah, sold out pretty quickly and that was it, any integrity was down the gurgler but that's what you had to do, essentially that was my break. You build confidence and you go from there...

Luke accepts the notion that to survive precarity, he must network; in other words, get friendly with the people who can help him. He may value community and collaboration, but he knows that CoPs in the film and television industry are not durable. Networks, however, are centrally important. He makes friends with people who source work and he takes on commercial work to gain experience, the type that leads him to question his vocational morality; he says it's, '... what he had to do'. In the end it meant landing a break that generated further breaks and more networking activity, 'you go from there'. Yet despite having formal credentials and a willingness to build networks, he still had to find other ways to prove his worth:

I guess the hard thing is that, in a way, because the industry is so competitive, unless you're either tailoring or learning enough skills and you're going to go into another area which is more sustaining or more suitable or producing something that is multi-award winning, then you'll end up back where you started from but only three years later and three years older, so I'm aware of that risk...

Luke's narrative here reflects tensions between his craft morality and the pervasiveness of the postmodern career; the strength it has to govern people, despite attempts to resist it. In order to be useful, Luke's skills and filmmaking practice must be externally validated (they must win him an award) or must support him in other areas of work. The cultural capital of industry recognition and the ability to hold down multiple jobs and contracts are virtues in the postmodern world. This is how people like Luke avoid reproducing the same trajectory, or ending back up 'where [they] started from but only three years later and three years older'. This need to reproduce a vocational identity, the vocational masquerade, is a symptom of the new economy and project-based labour. Luke is self-aware, and although he has a low regard for the



requirements of the postmodern career, he performs them albeit as minimally as he can get away with. He makes mention of the way doing so forces him to 'sell out', to undermine his integrity and authenticity, to network and be opportunistic, but he also knows that playing this game is how he gets the breaks, builds confidence and retains agency in his working life. He experiences a tension between craft values and the needs of postmodern working life, which means his occupational identity takes the form of a hybrid narrative, one that gives expression to a conflict between occupational ethics and needs:

So you always have to be constantly out working and building your reputation in a fairly small network... and it's hard because in Sydney at the moment you need commercial connections because there is not enough drama around, and drama is something that I prefer to do... and it's very much about getting on with people and that can be hard because there are some real dickheads in the industry and more so in ads, but, you know, maybe that's my bias and that's probably why I don't get enough ads work because it's hard not to show your dislike or disinterest sometimes.

The postmodern framework pressures Luke to network. It means tolerating people and accepting their whims, but only to a limited degree. His narrative also suggests that he is unwilling to go too far to compromise himself for the purposes of a career. Although pragmatic, his baseline craft values mean that he misses out on work, but also that he retains a sense of occupational integrity by not submitting totally to the networking imperative.

#### When Art Imperatives conflict with Craft Needs

More so than Luke, Tony finds it difficult to meet the expectations of a postmodern working life and a value system committed to craft ideals. His narrative reflects the dimensions of both a 'craft calling' and the realisation of what he feels are immanent artistic dispositions. As explained in chapter

three, Tony aspires to be a film editor, a job couched in craft ideals; however, his desire for social mobility and to transcend his working-class roots is expressed through his esteem for high art aesthetics and a sense of individualism. He resists commercial notions of work but struggles to rationalise this with a need to earn a living, as he does with his desire to work alone and his reliance upon networks and teachers.

Tony's migrant parents were dubious about his creative ambitions, often asking, 'Is this job going to pay the bills? Is it going to give you a pay packet?' He may have immersed himself in creative curriculum – photography, printmaking and ceramics – to get through school, but from his parents' perspective these interests were never viable career options. Tony discusses his ideas about career, situating them within arts-based discourse. For Tony, the embodiment and performance of creativity is the product of solitary practice, and not so much the product of collaboration, community or networking. According to Florida, then, Tony should do well, in that Florida (2002) claims that 'more workers than ever control the means of production because it is inside their heads; they are the means of production' [author's emphasis] (Florida, 2003: 37). But, as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argue, although individualised, people continue to seek out communities for social support and communal identification. Florida (2005) reinforces this when he discusses the shaping force of creative cities and clusters on creativity and cultural production. He argues that there are profound and distinct advantages of living within close proximity to cultural institutions and creative peers. All three scholars, however, albeit in various ways, highlight

the governing impact of neo-liberal structures when they argue that locating and belonging to a community requires self-motivation and is now a responsibility of the individual. Tony finds these communities at film school. Even though he claims that creativity is an inherent quality, he also relies on film school, the generosity, skills and support of teachers and co-students, as well as the facilities of the institution. In Tony's world, trade skills are a vehicle for creativity and not the substance of creativity yet he needs a community within which to learn the trade/craft skills that mechanize his creative ideas. Yet Tony continues to believe that creative impulses are intrinsic to the creative worker and surface only when inspiration strikes; they are not so much the outcome of craft labour and techniques:

... visual art in general, to me, I feel it's got a natural organic energy to it. You've got rules and techniques, but it doesn't start from there, it starts from pure creativity where you don't explain where it comes from, you just do it. There's no rules to it... the actual essence of creativity comes from yourself whereas other forms of trades or arts, it's all based on skills, you know mathematics, that sort of thing, which I find contriving... And I think deep down, although I didn't know it then, I always found that this came natural, it wasn't about learning how to do it; you tried, gave it a go, practised... [You can learn] on the job, but the sort of thing you can't learn has to come from yourself, having that emotion and intuition of telling stories, and that came natural to me. That's what it's really about... you do it on a subconscious level.

This reflects a Romantic idea of creativity (Boden, 2004). Tony believes that although artistic inclinations are realised through practice, 'you've got rules and techniques', they are not generated by practice, 'but it doesn't start from there, it starts from pure creativity'. By describing creativity as 'pure' and by saying that art has a 'natural organic energy', he is suggesting that it is neither institutionally bound nor easily reproduced. For Tony, creativity emerges most freely when unconstrained and spontaneous, 'you don't explain where it

comes from, you just do it'. He seeks to carve out a place for himself in a world that is a world away from his working-class roots. In this way, he distinguishes himself from other editors: '[You can learn] on the job, but the sort of thing you can't learn has to come from yourself, having that emotion and intuition of telling stories, and that came natural to me.' His aspirations are shaped by the figure of the 'ingenious creator' who thinks that she/he has something unique to offer (Mishler, 2004), but this is challenged by his yearning for a mentor who can pass down the benefits of her/his expertise and her/his craft knowledge and skills.

Yet Tony's 'creativity' is something more pure and revelatory/self-actualising than would be implied by the notion of a trade or modern ideas of craft.

However, he does not resist craft aspects of filmmaking altogether; rather, he respects the skills of the crafts worker, one who has completed an apprenticeship, knows the trade and has been privy to a community of practice:

I guess in as far as finding a mentor, one of our editing teachers, he'll come into our suites individually and give constructive feedback, and I think we admire him a lot because he's more old school, doing it for years, respected in the industry, you know, editors that are competent enough to use the computer they edit on but that's not where they learnt their craft from. I think that's the trend, people are under the impression that to be an editor, it's about learning to use the software very well, but they don't really know much about the craft of editing [and] maybe it's not necessarily their own fault because you have to go to a school that has teachers that are working editors or retired editors who can teach the old, traditional way, and it's more about technology now.

There is an ambiguity at the heart of this. On the one hand, Tony believes that the creative process is driven primarily by inner resources and is not solely the product of craft learning; on the other hand, the 'craft worker-cum-teacher'

commands his respect and becomes his mentor. Interestingly, this mentor works at an institution where structure must be adhered to but also reproduced alongside convention, course curricula and institutional ideology. In the first quote, creativity was the manifestation of the ingenious creator whose artistic ability is enabled by her/his creative capacity; in the quote above, however, skills are portrayed as the manifestation of communal learning and collaboration, and the product of a structured, hierarchical environment. This means that Tony distinguishes between skill and creativity, craft and art, and the practice of filmmaking and the practice of manifesting and expressing ideas. Yet, his narrative finds expression for all of these because the notion of the 'choice biography' constructed reflexively requires various forms of rationalisation when class and gender govern identities and opportunity.

Tony values his teacher's career longevity, industry reputation and the accumulation of both old and new skills. He sees the teacher as an 'old-timer' (Wenger, 1998) who is empowered because he has survived, but also because he has connections to tradition and to the past. In this way, Tony valorises 'the material, the tactile, the analogue' (Luckman, 2013). The teacher's skills and knowledge were developed in a community of practice, and in a similar way they have been taught to Tony, who then uses them to define and distinguish himself from others.

What Tony is resisting is the technological colonisation of craft labour, which is a contemporary conception. As Luckman (2013) notes, there is cultural

capital associated with performing craft labour, but also in knowing how to converge the 'old' with the 'new', which means that learning to use the software (a 'tool') is an essential craft skill. So, on the one hand, Tony stresses the importance of talent and the creative genius; on the other, he values craftsmanship and the idea of learning a trade and skills to match. Overall, however, he reproduces discourse that reinforces and/or gives power to those who exemplify traditionally artistic notions of creativity and craft, as well as pre-industrial, pre-digital craft ideals. This becomes more apparent in the next quote, where Tony distances himself from the figure of the technical worker in order to marry Romantic notions of creativity with film editing, a largely technical and computer-based task. He casts himself as a Kantian free-thinking, a self-expressive individual who can perform and bring creative work into being by unconsciously practising his art form:

... my only attribute was visual art. Yeah, I was good at it, but there was a lot more to learn and so I tried graphic design, didn't like that, tried animation, didn't like it... the disciplines of it, you know, didn't have that creative spontaneity. It was all based on technique, skill, certain ways of doing things, and I just realised, nah, it wasn't for me... When you're first working on a rough cut, you don't do too much conscious thinking, you just go away and play; it's like anything, it's like doodling or playing with clay or just doing free style...

Tony is invested in Romantic notions of creativity and so privileges the abstract over the concrete, or ideas above skills. In turn, animation and graphic design, which he says are contingent upon 'technique, skill, certain ways of doing things', are characterised as rigid and structured. The 'disciplines' do not lend themselves to Romantic notions of creativity, and their commercial aspects have the capacity to destabilise his vocational narrative. Tony's elitist perspective on creativity – the idea that creativity is something

that comes from within and is the attribute of superior, talented individuals who will not compromise their creative practice for commercial purposes – frustrates his aspirations to work in a commercialised industry. By providing a technical service as a highly skilled technician, he potentially becomes a valuable resource in the new economy. According to Australian cultural policy:

Australian screen production... has underpinned broader creative industry growth in media, marketing, entertainment and education. Creative Australia is committed to ensuring [that] talent and [my emphasis] entrepreneurial drive can be translated into further sustainable business and high skilled jobs (Creative Australia, 2013).

Tony may see himself as the quintessential artist, but this policy suggests that even if he is highly skilled, he will need to develop entrepreneurial savviness to succeed. This indicates the degree to which the rewards of craft and artistic labour, in contemporary times, are contingent upon networks, commodification and fast-paced cultural production, which aligns with notions of postmodernity, individualisation and career rather than vocation, community and the performance of slow, rhythmical techniques.

This is not all lost on him, because he volunteers to work at a production house with the aim of learning the ‘trade’, which he sees as different to working creatively. What he learns, however, is that there are mundane aspects to film production, there is pressure to be multi-skilled, that starting at the bottom is unavoidable and that commercial imperatives must override the need for creative expression if one seeks to earn a living:

I was just doing bits and pieces of stuff that other people weren't doing. And pretty much the owner, I worked as his camera assistant, you know did some other things here and there, learnt a couple of things but then I thought, how much more can you learn when all you do is the same thing over again? How do you exactly make the move from working in these small production houses doing corporate stuff, where all

you're doing is trans-coding or tape loader or something like that, or you're the guy who dabbles in everything – I'm the editor, I'm the photoshop guy, I'm the after-effects guy, the colourist, sound designer, whatever else. Make lunch, bring coffee – well, everyone's gotta do that in the beginning – um, how do you make the move to the real big stuff. Should I be taking the road where I start working in these small production houses, where all they seem to do is focus on cranking out cheap, corporate stuff that's boring, banal; and then you may learn to be more of a technical person, but creatively you're doomed, you just die in there. [It] just becomes another job, but you decide to stay because it gives a pay cheque every week...

Tony is encouraged to diversify his skills, but also to perform more repetitive aspects of the job. This challenges the idea of the 'genius creator' and the crafts worker in a traditional sense, as well as the 'creative process' to which he subscribes. When faced with the prospect of corporate work, Tony experiences a crisis of identity. How can he retain his creative integrity and earn a living at the same time? Can his ideas about creativity and commercial imperatives coexist? On the one hand, he pursues a 'vocation' and romanticises his ambitions; on the other, he wants to be a film editor, which is a post-production craft technique (Banks, 2010) and not part of the writing process where creative ideas are conceived, or part of the production process where they are initiated and executed. Tony creates montages of other people's creative ideas by piecing together a story that has already been thought of and told, usually by the director. In this case, he is not a creative artist, but rather a creative technician who is governed by the ideas of the director.

He is, however, primarily a student seeking work experience, contacts and a portfolio. He needs a step-in and professional experience, but his creative identity is threatened by that means to the end. Commercialism, he suggests, is a death trap, and occupational versatility makes people multi-skilled and employable but does not bridge the gap between the 'small stuff' and the 'big



stuff'. He finds corporate work monotonous, which he claims thwarts his ability to learn new things. He struggles to connect commercialism and creativity, and does not believe that people can behave as free agents amidst structure and convention. Reluctant to adhere to the demands of the new economy, Tony is unwilling to play a number of roles, to keep on remaking himself, to be occupationally versatile and flexible, to plough on through life without a clear goal in place. He bears little resemblance to Gill's (2010) 'modernised worker-subject', nor is he the independent crafts worker who has control over his production methods and creative ideas.

Tony understands the importance of capital – social, cultural and economic. His narrative may convey aspects of artistic elitism, but this is because these views allow him to capitalise on what he perceives are his talents, and to seek entry into an artistic world that is not originally part of his cultural make-up. He has already deviated from the family script; his brothers and sisters live conventional lives, so he sees himself as a maverick and justifies this by pursuing a creative vocation – something that satisfies him but not necessarily on a financial level. It does not sustain him:

I always seem to get 'ragged' on [teased] by my brother and sister 'cause they were just doing the typical, safe road, you know, and I wasn't. You're even considered a bludger or a failure of some sort, and there's always someone telling you to give up and find a job... it takes guts to have hardly any money, and what you are doing is pursuing your ambition... all creative people go through that...

He uses the figure of the struggling artist to justify his decision to persevere with his filmmaking ambitions despite the lack of tangible reward. He sets himself up as atypical and legitimises what he does by saying that it 'takes

guts' to swim against the tide. While he might obtain kudos for eschewing conventional materialism for the sake of his art form, Tony has, as a consequence, been unable to obtain the experience necessary to validate his vocational identity claims.

### Having Faith in Fate

In contrast to Tony, Tanya who was mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, and who works in a Melbourne cafe and is trying to get a break, is willing to recontextualise her skills, diversify her ambitions and mould her creative process to suit the requirements of the postmodern career. Although she now lives in Melbourne's trendy northern suburbs, Tanya grew up in northern New South Wales on a large rural commune. She completed high school and worked in a number of casual jobs – shoe shop, cafe and pub – until her mother encouraged her to 'get an education'. She enrolled in a sound engineering course at a private college in Brisbane, which she said was 'too technical' and 'difficult to complete', so she later completed a number of filmmaking courses. Tanya found work as a location scout<sup>4</sup> in Sydney and then moved to Melbourne, where she is now a freelance photographer and filmmaker, although she still works in cafes and pubs.

Tanya may embody the dispositions of the 'modernised worker-subject' (Gill, 2010) – flexible, adaptable, sociable, self-directing and willing to commodify his/herself – but, unlike Luke, she does not admit to feeling compromised.

She has met the challenge of reflexive modernity or postmodernity. To resolve

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<sup>4</sup> A location scout sources suitable scenery and set locations outside a studio for film producers and directors. The job entails locating sites, taking photographs and uploading photos and site information onto a database.

what it means to be fluid and perpetually open to change, and to live life on stand-by waiting to be discovered or for an opportunity or 'break', she appeals to a sixth sense, one that helps her rationalise discursively what it means to exist without a defined sense of purpose. Where Tony takes refuge in a Romantic version of creativity, Tanya's narrative is structured by a Zen-like fatalism:

I think I'm just a big believer in the way that energy works; you put energy out there and it comes back, like there's no way that it doesn't. I just don't believe that if you're out there doing things, whether you're getting paid or not, if you're just out there doing things, things will happen, they just have to. I've always just believed that.

Yet, coexisting with this larger fatalism is an openness and alertness in the way she operates tactically on daily basis: working in a trendy cafe, doing courses and seizing opportunities:

I heard this girl beside me going oh, my god, I've got this shoot and I need a styling assistant and I can't find one anywhere, and I looked over [and said] excuse me, I just heard you mention that and I'm a styling assistant, so I got a contact and straight on the job...

Tanya has adapted well to the postmodern career. She embodies an attenuated form of agency, one limited to a sense of capitalising on the serendipitous moments on which the postmodern career is based. Yet, there is a sense in her narrative that while it is important to operate opportunistically, there is a larger fateful plot at work rendering long-term strategic planning futile; biographies cannot be engineered in this way:

I kind of really wasn't interested. I didn't know what I wanted to do... But I just had this kind of sense that it will fall into place, like I knew that something would become clear to me and I always had that faith, like I just never really worried about it that much, like oh, my god, what am I doing with my life? I was just like yeah, it will work out... and they [her parents] were just still seeing as I was, what path I was going down... But I was just like – all these little things were kind of cementing the fact that I was never going to be a – well, I knew it, I always knew I was never going to work in the

corporate kind of world. My parents never did it, my sister never did it, I've never done it...

Tanya emulates her hippy parents, who have lived and worked precariously and resisted conventional life. She draws on her bohemian upbringing to justify her willingness to remain open to chance and not formulate vocational goals. She believes that she is predisposed to insecure work, to fluidity and uncertainty, and rationalises this as enabling processes of self-fulfilment and/or self-discovery. Tanya is also entrepreneurial – she wants to start up her own production business making film clips and taking promotional photos for bands – but she wants to avoid following a structured life plan, particularly one that requires discipline and the predictable benchmarks of a career. So, although she undertakes commercial work, her narrative is characterised by non-conformism and a commitment to chance. She believes that karma will help her, that ‘it will always fall into place... always had that faith’. She is a postmodern worker, someone who can live diffusely but maintain a sense of purpose by employing a Zen or New-Age belief system.

This fatalism allows her to deal with vicissitude. It conserves her sense of self by providing a mechanism for coping with potential loss or failure. It is a narrative device that is homologous with a creative identity. However, because it excuses the uncertainty and insecurity of the postmodern career, it also ironically provides her with a sense of autonomy and is symptomatic of an attenuated form of agency. She sought to reassure me that she is not simply a subject of the new economy, nor is she stage-managing her identity to suit the fickleness of the industry. Rather, she would prefer to work in a job

that is not associated with filmmaking in order to retain a sense of artistic integrity and autonomy. She is saying that she is not desperate, nor is she a wallflower: a creative worker waiting to be discovered:

I've realised that I don't want to work in film for the sake of working in film, I'd rather be waitressing than working for a production company, corporate stuff; even though it's the film industry and should be up my alley, it just [isn't]. I like the freedom to be able to do my own things, things I'm passionate about, I've created myself; that's what I find most rewarding, and I'm not actually willing to kind of work in film just for the sake of working in film...

Tanya accepts the premise in the field of creative industries that skills are transferable, even if on the surface they do not really seem to be connected to the idea of creative work. She casts herself as a free-spirited bohemian, a condition that allowed her to get a break, but she also sends the message that these roles must not define you. She is at a stage in her life where she has industry experience but feels that the true meaning of her working life – that it is over-determined by the bohemian creativity bequeathed by her parents – has not yet been revealed. So her sense of agency is complex.

### Fulfilling the Fantasy

Stuart, the school AV technician and one of the older interviewees, sees filmmaking in vocational terms, but family expectations, his middle-class background and financial commitments steer him in the direction of a stable career. Life does not afford him the luxury of living the unstructured, untenured life needed to meet the requirements of the new economy and postmodernity. Nor can he satisfy the aesthetic/artistic values that shape the telling of his life story. The labour he performs is craft labour, and the context

of the school provides him with a workshop and tools. However, he works on his own, so many of the craft values associated with being part of a community, such as collaboration and working toward a common goal, are not within reach.

His wife is an academic and his in-laws both have PhDs. His father-in-law, particularly, helped shape his career by organising an interview at the school where he now works and by coaching him for the job interview. Such persuasion turned his skills and creative ambitions in the direction of the modern career, which hampers his capacity to perform an arts- or craft-based narrative. Stuart performs less fulfilling, less reputable work than Peter, and is less fortunate than Luke in that Stuart's brother, successful in the industry, does not support his ambitions and provides him with neither a stepping stone into work nor even much encouragement or moral support.

Like Tanya, Stuart felt pressured by postmodern structures; but, unlike her, he is less enamoured with the prospect of selling himself or waiting for the lucky break. His narrative takes on the dimensions of career even when he tries to maintain his creative sense of self. He grew up in the era before the onset of the creative industries discourse, so he is much more conventional when he rationalises his career pathway, and is less fatalistic than Tanya when he considers his future. As I indicated in the previous chapter, Stuart came from an upper-middle class background, went to a private school, lived in Melbourne's elite suburbs and (rather incongruously) grew up as a fan of kung-fu movies. He idolised Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee and connects his

creativity to these youthful enthusiasms. As is common, his desire to work in film and television was tempered by a realisation that there were few jobs. After training at a private college, he found work in the public service as an audio-visual (AV) technician, which is the same sort of work he now does at the school where he works, although he still yearns to make feature films:

VHS operation was my first course, then VHS editing, and then I got a job as an AV technician... I had a strategy. I knew I wanted to make films, but it's difficult to get into the film industry in Australia because it's small. So I thought it must be easier to get into television... I thought if I get into TV then it'd be an easy transfer into film. Then to get into television might be hard, so maybe I should get into video and that way I can get into television and then into film...

In other words, he tried to be vocationally strategic but failed.

Forced to lower his sights, Stuart started up his own wedding video production business. Unlike Tony, he gives voice to a key creative industry injunction: to add a patina of enchantment to mundane work. He talks about his quixotic aim of turning a wedding video into a work of art, and the frustration at the failure of his subjects to play the game. They are not actors and they do not collaborate in the creative process. His aims and theirs differ:

... with a [wedding] production you need stars, talent, and you've got that; you need locations, well you've definitely got that; you need wardrobe, well you've definitely got that; you need catering, you've got that with a wedding; and transport, all that sort of stuff. But when you get there on the day, no one cares about you making your video. You're not there to make a video, you're there, or everyone's there, to have a wedding, so they'll do things that totally disregard consideration that we're actually trying to make a video here... so you set your exposure because the church is dark, but when the doors open up there's going to be a big burst of light... so you're ready, they start the music, the door opens up, there's the bride, you start to zoom in and fifteen people get in the aisle and you can't rush up the aisle kicking people and say get out of the way, you've wrecked my shot, stop the music...

There is pathos in Stuart's frustration at being unable to elevate the form of wedding video into filmic art, but he is performing mundane labour, generic work. When the artistic or aesthetic quality of his work is disrupted like this, so too is his artistic sense of self. He tries to recapture this identity by describing the job he does at school as more creative than it actually is. On the one hand, he is unsuited to the grind and graft of selling himself, which is essential to the postmodern career; but he also lacks the luxury of being able to follow a 'craft calling', a vocation or artistic ideals, so he makes the work sound more creatively fulfilling than it is:

So I'm much better at doing the job than getting the job, I'm not that good at selling myself... When I did some work for the defence force – write a letter, send it to them and ring them up every two weeks and ask them how they're going and blah, blah, blah, I thought arghh, this is not making Juicy Juicy Green Grass [a song he filmed at school with primary school students]... I'm not doing voice overs and effects, that's the sort of stuff that turns me on; writing letters to people and networking and going out and doing all that stuff, that's the producer's job, I'm more the director, I'm very good at directing stuff...

Stuart craves creative autonomy and the freedom associated with being a crafts worker. He also values ideas and aesthetics and so applies an art-based narrative to his idea of work and career as well. Yet, his working life is conventional and, although not quite satisfying, affords him a regular pay packet and the stability needed to support his family. Therefore, his narrative continues to be informed by traditional gender expectations, commitments and constraints.

### Searching for Stability

Joe's narrative of career, so unlike Stuart's, is less fantasist and more pragmatist. He experienced a more modest upbringing than Stuart did, and



embodies working-class values, which means that he sees work as a place within which to forge an identity and through which to achieve social mobility. After embarking on an education/training program, Joe became aware, however, that the pursuit of creative ambitions did not present viable career options, and so retrained as a librarian. Library work has become his day job (although even this work is precarious), and it allows him to salve the anxieties about poverty/downward mobility that arise from his poor background:

[Paying for film courses]... I definitely didn't get my money back, not in the same way that I got my money back doing the library thing, 'cause the library thing was about \$1000 a year at TAFE for a diploma and yeah, you make your money back within a month basically. [And with the film course] you don't need to get a certain UAI or anything, you just need to pay a fee, show up and at the end you'll get your diploma or certificate or what have you...

When Joe commits to study, he feels he has entered into an implicit contract: that credentials lead to work. This might have been true in Fordist workplaces where the apprenticeship and/or the trade certificate often led to steady employment, but so much more is needed in competitive creative labour markets. In the course of his narrative, he demonstrates regret (even bitterness) that his film credentials were insufficient for even the sniff of creative work (and has now arrived at a very neo-liberal idea of education, 'you pay your money... '). The logic behind the process of becoming qualified and employed is important to Joe; you 'pay a fee, show up, and... get your diploma'. He believes that education institutions are responsible not just for training people up, but for providing a springboard into paid employment and a pathway to a reliable career path. It is the logic behind standard employment and the stable career.

Joe does not embrace the idea of the postmodern career. He views work skills as grounded, non-negotiable and non-transferable. The system has let him down and now the realities of survival lead him, like so many others, to relegate creative activity to something that he does in his spare time:

... [after film school] I wasn't very hopeful, and I was really blue about how it was going to turn out, so I packed it in pretty quickly; a few months, but it was enough time, well maybe not enough time, but there was a pressure to get some sort of an income, just to get on the radar, because by this time I didn't have much of a resume at all, you know... And it's just a matter of okay, well I've got to do my normal work or whatever, so I regard [filmmaking] as a hobby, but you know I'd like it to be more than a hobby if that makes sense. But it's like I've got this staple, I can depend on this, I can do my other stuff on the side as well [because] if you want to own your own house or want stability, it's not the right industry. I'd be happier with thinking that I've got money and I can eat... I've always been saving for a house, just a matter of getting a decent guaranteed income so that I can approach the banks and get a decent loan...

Joe assumed that he would develop vocational momentum and a secure and assured path based on structure and stability. He saw his career as flowing from the credentials on his resume which he believed should have ensured smooth progress from training into paid work. His reference to getting 'on the radar' suggests that whilst he is not earning an income, not composing a resume, not experiencing career movement, he is stagnant and unable to operate socially. Therefore, work and his career have to be tangible and able to 'guarantee' him an income. His career must give him financial security, and provide him with a living and stave off the threat of downward mobility.

His reference to a 'hobby' indicates a type of blunt working-class pragmatism, where unless he is paid for the work that he does, then it is not work. This means that what he does at home and after hours in the private sphere is not work. He embodies a Fordist, masculine idea of work, in that work is

performed in the public arena, within a community and under guidance, and within a formal, legitimate workspace over an eight-hour period and is pecuniary. However, project-based labour and flexible employment conditions, including the compulsion to work for free, undermine his commitment to Fordist values. The dichotomies that were products of industrial workday structure, such as work/leisure, amateur/professional and producer/consumer, have come undone. Network and labour market exclusion also play a part in this undoing, in that craft and creative practice is performed in the home, after hours and on weekends, and is a part of a creative aspirant/worker's everyday life.

Amanda, who grew-up in Newcastle, squats with her artistic mother. Something of a 'Faustian pact' narrative exists at the centre of her 'successful' career. Unlike Joe, who, failing to acquire work, reskilled and scaled down his ambition to make his creative enthusiasm into a 'hobby', managing, in turn, to retain a respect for craft, Amanda is more inclined to pitch for work as a freelancer and be employed under contract and the conditions of a 'creative brief'.

### Prosperity Above Craft

Like Joe, Amanda's narrative suggests she has no love for 'artistic' poverty, and that there is nothing inevitable about being poor. So, like Stuart, she relegates her ambitions to suit the unfolding of a career that is financially viable and based on postmodern convention. She can do this without compromising herself, because she is more entrepreneurial and less

attached, than Tony, for example, to Romantic ideals of her creative practice and creativity. She sees little value in the communal aspects of craft labour, nor is she disciplined enough to commit totally to the craft of making films. Unlike Tanya, she is more interested in prosperity than vocational or creative fulfilment, but, similarly, she can assimilate to the needs of the postmodern, creative career. She might appear to have 'sold out', in that she compromises artistic autonomy for making money but justifies this by assuming a postmodern career trajectory with modern career imperatives (money and security), which ironically she fulfils by adapting herself to postmodern structures (unpredictability, flexibility, freelancing). This is reinforced when she tells me:

I've had the good fortune at really critical points in my life to be told that there is another path and that there is another way... and I'm just extraordinarily stubborn and single-minded. I didn't get into any of this expecting to be freelance, but I had no alternative, I just wanted a job. I hadn't acquired the bolshie stand I have about [freelancing] now. I didn't question it; I just thought that it was normal.

Her experience of precarious labour and the advice she receives normalises vocational change and freelancing. To rationalise this, to embody the freelancing ethos, she claims to be driven by a single objective or purpose (stubborn... single-minded), yet her ambitions and identity are fluid and open to advice and change (another path... another way). She is prepared to dissimulate, in other words conceal, disguise or mask her personal creative ambitions in order to make her freelance career work.

Although she aspired to being a film director, she abandoned this upon realising there was little money for projects available to emerging directors. Consequently, she started up her own business producing government and

educational corporate videos. She also conducts workshops on how to be a successful freelancer, a gig she considers noteworthy and useful considering there has been an increase in the popularity of business/arts courses in Australia in recent years. She began teaching people how to freelance in a local community college but has taken this work into universities by tutoring, guest lecturing and co-ordinating units that cover creative industries business and entrepreneurship.

Amanda depicts the early years of her life as non-conventional, characterising her childhood as bohemian and counter-cultural:

I've learnt that [conventionality] is what society terms normal, but it's never been my version of normal. My version of normal has been more chaotic. You don't know that your childhood is weird until you are big, until you look back at it and go, actually my childhood was really strange. We lived... rent free, you know, we were squatting and I just remember that my mother let me paint on the walls, I was allowed to paint murals and that just did not seem odd to me, but later on I realised that a) most kids are not allowed to paint on the walls, and b) I'd grown up in a world where when disaster is approaching, you don't panic, rather you paint...

She grew up poor, and did not have the security of a home. Like many who were raised in arty, alternative/bohemian households, Amanda frames her creative calling with the narrative code of inheritance (Cohen, 1999):

Well, I had no choice really, I think I was destined to have a creative career. My parents were both creative; my mother is a visual artist and my father a musician, so that was a highly prized ability in my home. I had the good fortune to not be told to get a proper job growing up, but I did witness first-hand the experience of my parents not having much money. So I knew I had a creative destiny, but I also didn't want to have a poor destiny...

After university, she tried to get a job but found it hard. She thought that applying for work meant following the conventional path – check the

newspaper, send an application letter accompanied with an up-to-date resume. She assumed that film and television was different to fine arts or music, which have always been dominated by freelancers. She had little experience apart from volunteering on student productions, but, unlike Joe and Tony, she was willing to do a variety of jobs:

... [after uni I] checked the paper, sent out 100 CVs to 100 production companies in Sydney. I didn't question it, I just thought that [was] normal, I thought that's what you did and I got three interviews. One interview was just after I dyed my hair purple, and I'm still convinced that is why I didn't get the job... and yeah, [there were] no jobs out there.

Very few film industry jobs are advertised in newspapers, and the amount of paid work made publicly available is also limited, yet Amanda was under the impression that she was taking all the right steps – qualifications, 'positions vacant' classifieds and formal applications. As we saw in the previous chapter, creative work is usually not acquired in a standard way. Word-of-mouth and personal references are almost the only way to find work, which is why networking is an essential process for aspirants. Despite her bohemian upbringing and tertiary education, Amanda lacked the cultural resources required for a filmmaking career. So, rather than persist with developing craft skills or pursuing high art aesthetics, she developed what she considered was an inherited entrepreneurial disposition:

And I was really quite shocked when I realised that a Bachelor of Arts is essentially a worthless piece of tertiary paper, and then I was opening up the newspaper and there were no jobs there. So I became freelance almost by accident... My grandfather was [a small entrepreneur]... so maybe I take more after him...

The inheritance narrative of the enterprising grandfather serves to rationalise the unfolding of a career, and validates her freelance identity. Cohen (1999) would say that, because of this, Amanda was guided from a young age to freelance creative work:

[When Dad died], me and Mum did it tough for a long time, which is sort of good preparation for the being of my freelance life anyway. And it's really interesting because I've never had a job, and because I had that type of childhood, I don't think about it, I just do it subconsciously; but I've never acquired the habits of an employed person, even though I make a fantastic living. I have no framework for any other kind of existence. Like, for example, when I go out I will take cash in my purse, as much as I think I can spend, like a student, and when I spend that I'll go home. It's almost juvenile.

Amanda believes that she was destined for job instability and precarity but conditioned to handle it. She talks about freelancing as 'a way of being', a 'way of life', rather than as a way of working, and countenances long-term precarity. Freelancing precariously has become normalised. It might provide the means to an end, but the uncertainty and insecurity that surrounds it hinders her ability to move from youth into adulthood (she continues to count her pennies). Freelancing provides her with a sense of autonomy and agency, but:

... like many creative people, I do suffer from professional ADD. If I have to do one thing for too long, I get really bored and can't focus on it anymore, which is another reason why I know I'm unemployable. If I had to go to the same place every day and talk to the same people, I'd go mental. So [with freelancing] you are not just being bent by the wind, you're having a say over the direction of your life.

Amanda has embodied the ethos of the new economy, making what is now a prerequisite for success – occupational versatility – the outcome of a personal vice, 'professional ADD'. The job repetition that she says bores her gives her yet another reason to live precariously and embrace a portfolio/postmodern career. By doing so, she avoids committing to fellow workers, which is

characteristic of steady employment – community, loyalty, trustworthiness, formal obligation, commitment; in other words, the values of the craft/apprenticeship narrative. Her narrative stands for no long-term; it means ‘keep moving, don’t commit yourself, and don’t sacrifice’ (Sennett, 1999: 25). The requirements of the portfolio career, therefore, give credence to Sennett’s argument (echoed by McRobbie (2002a)) because the portfolio career requires people to multi-skill and to generate income from more than one source, which serves to weaken social bonds and community (Sennett, 1999; McRobbie, 2002a).

The courage and resilience needed to confront this uncertainty is associated with being young. In order to work in the new economy, people must be wedded to their youth. Amanda says that she must carefully manage her money and that to do so is part of her ‘framework’. At the same time, she says that she is not ‘bent by the wind’, which suggests some degree of vocational purposefulness. She cannot, however, govern her own life when she feels compelled to operate in what she calls ‘juvenile’ ways. Furthermore, she cannot be a free agent when claiming, as she does in the next quote, to have not grown up. This suggests that even people who, like Amanda, are approaching forty experience the syndrome of arrested adulthood:

I’m only just realising now what a gift it is to be convinced of a path, even a crazy path. I have not had a single moment of doubt ever. I’ve never had to think about what I wanted to do when I grow up. I’m doing it and I’ve been doing it since before I was a grown up. I don’t even know whether I’ve grown up... yeah and I’m superstitious because I won’t buy a diary till I get a job. And that thought fills me with fear, but it’s the same sort of fear that you would expect if you were going to go onto a roller-coaster or something like that. It’s fear of the unknown, but it’s an excited fear.



The courage required to face the 'unknown' is driven by excitement, and is reminiscent of the courage required of young people to believe in their future when they leave school. Amanda likens the experience to being on a 'roller-coaster', suggesting the liberating consequence of trepidation and that it is the key to occupational success. Furthermore, her narrative suggests that to function as a freelancer, to operate in the new economy and to realise ambitions, to live out the portfolio career, people must not only be courageous; they must have blind faith so as to be 'convinced' of their path, and a disengagement from any sense of tradition and community. Ironically, Amanda's creative path is so unclear that it warrants refusing to buy a diary, which is contrary to her claim that she has 'never had a single moment of doubt ever'. Her refusal to buy a diary is an indication of doubt, in the value of planning ahead.

At a certain level, the condition of being a freelancer nevertheless gives Amanda the feeling of being in control of her destiny, even though she is at the mercy of a precarious job market. Amanda has to employ strategies – namely, securing multiple sources of income and various skills – to overcome the insecurity. She must remain breezily detached from the forces of embeddedness and long-term belonging. This occurs in spite of the apparent excitement and fear that she claims to enjoy and that, she implies, drives her:

But I've always had multiple sources of income, and that is the way you manage to survive. The more strings to your bow, the more different ways you have to make money. You know that old thing 'jack of all trades, master of none', that doesn't apply to us. It's bullshit. People want to know you're flexible. I don't agree that there is no money in this; I'm walking proof that there is money in the arts, but you've got to be able to do more than one thing.

Amanda is a slashie, the epitome of a portfolio worker. She earns a living by doing a series of jobs, which she connects to narrate a coherent sense of self and working life. The trope of the postmodern career allows her to make sense of these multiple jobs and identities and normalises occupational diversion. While Tony and Peter resist the temptation to be a 'jack of all trades', to construct portfolio careers (they prefer to focus on art or craft skills and values, and so have more fixed plans in place), Amanda is prepared to improvise and to constantly pitch for work, namely by reproducing her identity in a variety of contexts and according to a variety of imperatives. The values of art and craft have the potential to bind her, to constrain her trajectory, because they command loyalty – to aestheticism and to the community that has the potential to judge her.

Amanda asserts there is money in the arts, but this is because she reconciles the art/money dichotomy by freelancing and embracing commercialism and occupational diversity. She happily makes corporate and educational videos and administers business workshops, something that people like Tony and Peter are reluctant to do. Not only has she embraced the ethos of the new economy, she teaches it. She capitalises on the very discourse that governs her:

I don't think there was ever any question about whether I was not only going to pursue a career as a filmmaker, but also help other people make that start... yeah, I got heaps of people and it grew all topsy and I never intended for it to be a business in its own right. But I have a compulsion to teach, so whenever I learn something new, I want to teach it to someone else.

Amanda has had a short-film/documentary in the pipeline for a number of years, but it remains incomplete. She is currently appealing to her networks for funding, 'crowd sourcing' in contemporary terms, but has raised little money. This indicates the limitations of the freelance career. Reciprocity is not a priority because the social relations she builds are fractured and often superficial. She experiences a lack of loyalty because she does not have the community behind her (or looking out for her) and so she experiences the shortcomings of freelancing.

Being a filmmaker connotes being a craft worker or technical worker, but not so much a teacher. Those who teach craft skills must be trusted to have earned their stripes by perfecting their craft and by having had something of a career. Amanda is not captivated by the need to embed herself in a community of practice or focus on a particular craft skill. This would threaten her ability to function in the new economy, to make money, to be empowered. Much of what she mentions below requires her to work alone, so she is only interested in a sense of community when she is teaching and thus earning:

I'm more interested in making money than in making art, but I haven't sold out as a result of that. If I had to rely on any one of my things, I'd be poorer than I am now and bored because it's not enough, and [producing] requires different levels of energy. I love the energy of producing, but I love the energy of writing and the solo focus. I mean, I'm an only child and I play very well by myself. Teaching is a different kind of energy as well, and I need all those things to keep me going.

The recurring reference to energy is interesting in that the energy she refers to is the outcome of a solo process and not the type of energy that materialises when people collaborate. It is individual energy of the self-

propelling creative that once again is posited as the product of her cultural make-up, 'I'm an only child and I play very well by myself', so is represented as an inherited disposition rather than a product of neo-liberal ideology. In conclusion, Amanda is defined by her occupational flexibility and versatility and her willingness to embrace a solo freelance postmodern career. She claims she has not 'sold out', but she has clearly worked at stabilising her career by making money off the back of other members of the precariat, and by calling herself a 'creative industry expert' on her business webpage, which implies that she is an expert in her field but not in a craft sense nor as an artist.

Amanda's drive to make money is motivated by her poor upbringing. She wishes to transcend her working-class background and to become an independent agent and creative industry worker generally. This is borne from necessity rather than privilege or choice in that her mother raised her poor, yet she describes her life as privileged in that she believes that she is being creatively fulfilled just in a business/monetary sense. She takes a corporate/commercial approach to her creative life/career because it provides her with financial security. By creating her own opportunities and working for herself, she is exhibiting neo-liberal tendencies which set her up to do well in the new economy. She is empowering herself because she is equipping herself with a track-record of work and thus reducing her ability to be seen as high-risk or subordinate to others in positions of power.

### Being 'Just Hayley': going solo

Hayley (29) also tries to live and narrate her life according to the imperatives of career, but is less willing than Amanda to freelance or to relegate her ambitions and skills to suit various employers. She prefers to permalance and to use her networks and contacts to structure her career. This requires her to be opportunistic, so, unlike Peter, whose masculine craft ideals see him answer to the community within which he works, she appeals to the industry for validation and opportunity. Consequently, she maintains relationships with those who make decisions and are in positions of power. She spends little time communicating or socialising with colleagues of equal status and has, as a result, severed many social ties. She is detached from the forces of community and resists traditional social life.

Hayley grew up in Sydney's western suburbs. She went to her local high school, completed year twelve and then worked in shops and offices. Her parents did not pressure her to get a job, instead she was encouraged to find her calling: 'I've always gone with the flow and Mum's always just been, "Do whatever you like, whatever makes you happy, it'll work out", and Dad's kinda chilled like that too.' In this way, she was set on her path to achieving self-fulfilment in a creative context. She also believes that she inherited the ability to draw from her mother, 'she used to paint things on cups, really good at drawing', and characterises herself as a rebel, artistic and vocationally uncertain but able to formulate and fulfil creative ambitions:

I wouldn't wear shoes to school. I walked around barefoot, but I always had thongs in my bag. And I didn't have books, so I didn't really apply myself. Got fake ID, hit the town, partied, went off the rails... did art and music, and was kinda good at art, but

I've never really known what I wanted to do – be an actor, advertising, photography, fashion design, documentary maker... but I've kinda done short projects on different things...

After a few years of working in what she calls 'yuck' jobs, 'promotions, sales rep', Hayley started a degree in health and nutrition, and dreamed about writing a cookbook and producing her own television cooking show. But later she transferred into a creative arts and communications course, believing that studying media was more conducive to these ambitions. At this point, she also realised that creative industries discourse requires people to reconcile the commercialism/art dichotomy, and to embody both commercial and artistic imperatives. Consequently, she began to merge the two:

[At uni I] did design and then started picking media electives, and it's a good combination because I get to get my creative on... I'm an aesthetically driven person and the conventions I learnt through design and photography have influenced my media work...

Whilst at university, Hayley completed an internship at a public broadcast station, \*GMT, with a number of other students. In a matter of weeks, she had secured herself regular work in a job that she continues to do. Currently, she holds down three casual jobs: assistant director [at GMT], university tutor and freelance filmmaker/documentary maker. She still lives at home with her parents, into her late twenties, an arrangement that allows her to endure precarious economic conditions, 'I've got no super[annuation], sick days, holiday pay, and I'm just kinda taking things as they come', yet her narrative suggests otherwise.

As Hayley's story unfolds, we learn that although she claims to be vocationally uncertain and to be 'taking things as they come', she is determined to construct a generative network, manage and work on her own projects, and organise her personal life around two regular paying jobs, and a third freelance job. Hayley tries to stage-manage her career, and narrates it so that it reflects what appears to be a steady accumulation of achievements, mainly through hard work:

... drawing was the thing that I was really good at, but I never really felt it. But it's kinda what I put my mind to I do well, because I'm really determined... whatever I apply myself to and as long as you set your mind to it, it will happen and there's an addiction to success... It's just I've never really known what I wanted to do, still don't know, even now, so totally fell into it... But for me to get that far, I've had to push really hard and for me to go further, I need to push harder... your life becomes your work and you can't do this career without it taking over your life...

Like many of those drawn to creative careers, Hayley began with youthful artistic enthusiasm but soon recognised that talent is not rewarded, although determination and application is. Her career is not one that she 'fell into', as she suggests, but rather earned, 'had to push really hard', was 'really determined' and 'set [her] mind to it', a necessary means to an end because the creative industries are not meritocratic, despite the values disseminated by career discourse. She acknowledges that her career has not been the result of strategising, but of falling into something; discovering something by chance rarely requires application, pushing and determination. Rather, falling into something is the outcome of serendipity and/or luck, both of which would not be required of somebody with talent, unless of course talent was not rewarded or easily conveyed or recognised.

Pushing hard here means networking hard, forming connections and impressing people. Hayley's narrative suggests that career is a process of self-discovery, 'totally fell into it', the product of a plan, a strategy to achieve certain goals. She implies that life is therefore also constituted by the 'career plan', it 'takes over'. Relationships become instrumental to her career. She is under the sway of occupational gatekeepers, powerful figures in her 'addiction' to success.

When she commenced the internship, Hayley tried to counter the perception that she was a university student by separating herself from the group and befriending her bosses. She traded solidarity with fellow interns for individual goals:

I remember when I walked through the doors at GMT I was like, I am not leaving here... And I was there, and I would always keep away from all the other students because I just wanted to be on my own... it wasn't the group from uni, it was always just Hayley they were talking to... because I'm a bit chatty and friendly with people and I'll often talk my ideas through with people there... [And] I'm good at calling people and getting through to the right people...

In CoPs, even project-based communities of practice, however improvised and institutionally convened, people are expected to be loyal and generous subjects of an occupational community. Workers are united and accountable to their peers, and as a whole, are also accountable to bosses. As newcomers, people often undergo initiation processes<sup>5</sup>, but by doing this they prove their worth and therefore contribute to the sense of solidarity that defines these groups. Much of this, however, is lost on Hayley. These values are perceived as constraints. How can she be 'Hayley' the atomised individual amongst the herd when she is bound morally and ethically to her peers? She

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<sup>5</sup> Which in hyper masculine contexts of industrial workplaces were often cruel (see Cohen, 1999).



seeks validation, not from the community but from those in positions of power. This is how she reifies her career narrative.

When Hayley was given the job of assistant director only two weeks after starting the internship, the director who wanted her on-board had to justify to his peers why he felt she was worthy of the job. Although in this context, he has less power than the head of department, the director often reserves the right to work with and choose his assistant (Blair, 2003). Hayley got the job, and this soured workplace relations:

He had to really fight for me to get the DA job because the head person was like, you can't do that, I was trained for six months and I still wasn't allowed to go on a live show. And the director was like, she can do it, and they really had no other choice and they ended up throwing me in the hot seat and [I've] just stayed there ever since... [and] because I learnt quickly, some women tried to mess me up on air, got catty, bit narky, and me being younger and swanning in there and picking up the job in two weeks was probably a bit threatening and they don't want me taking their shifts and stuff...

To secure herself a job, Hayley had to sever social ties. She 'put a few noses out of joint' because she did not work her way through the ranks. She immediately landed in the 'hot seat', in the coveted role of assistant director, which brings to life the discourse of career. It indicates the degree to which Hayley is more interested in outward, industry validation/recognition than in peer group validation or acceptance. Those with career ambitions prove their worth by meeting industry markers – qualifications, work experience, coveted jobs; it helps to make their skills and knowledge transferrable, and brings kudos to their careers. However, those who are affected by narratives of vocation and apprenticeship, art and craft (Tony, Peter) are more loyal to their communities and admire and answer to craft peers. Hayley feels worthy

because her sense of self-worth is shaped by career rhetoric, which suggests that worthiness comes from being better than others, by competing and winning, by impressing authority, by manipulating circumstance, by being resilient to hostile conditions, and by being individualistic.

If she operates as an atomised individual, then she does not have to share information, kudos or potential success with others, particularly those with whom she feels she is competing, despite the support and predictability that communities bring forth. Hayley described a few projects that she was interested in working on. One is in collaboration with her friend, \*Mary, and another is a solo endeavour:

I get industry recognition by working there [at GMT]... and because I've got industry credibility, I could probably get funding... and Mary's [project], I'd like to do on our own; and what I just mentioned before [another project that she is working on], I'd like to do on my own, like if someone has done the research then they can be credited, but I'd like to go out [on my own]...

The industry recognition Hayley receives by working at GMT, particularly as an assistant director, enhances her career and reputation. In this sense, she can secure funding and be of benefit to somebody like Mary who, it seems, has an idea but lacks access to resources. Mary, therefore, relies on Hayley, who retains power over both the direction of the project and the working relationship that she has with her. 'Friendships' in the 'creative industries' are instrumental to careers. Hayley gets credited for Mary's project and builds her own portfolio career:

... I had that moment, working at GMT and making all the film stuff, where I thought my gosh, maybe this is what I'm meant to do, and now I'm like, I don't know. I'm

starting to change again. Like I want to make my doco and I have no idea what I want to do still, I'm kinda open...

People like Hayley who are prepared to live out a career narrative and embody career discourse within the context of the creative industries must be determined and ambitious but without fixed goals or sense of direction. So, even though Hayley says, 'I'm kinda open', she also has a plan and operates within an arbitrary system, one that devalues the certainty that comes with working in a permanent job and the commitment, embeddedness and solidarity associated with working in a community of practice:

I wouldn't like to work at GMT full-time, don't want to end up like one of those sour people that work there... wouldn't wanna work at GMT full-time unless I was making the show, directing the show, hosting the show like an independent sort of project. I'd have to be the director or producer and definitely work up...

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So it seems that Hayley must find ways to resolve the inconsistencies that become evident when the reality of creative career does not reflect new economy rhetoric. On the one hand she is required to be flexible and willing to take on various jobs, perform various tasks and skills and be open and mobile enough to take up any opportunity that arises, however, she is also required to be determined, goal-oriented, career-focused and independently committed to transient work. This means that she aspires to the type of work that provides her with a degree of agency over her working life. In other words, she aspires to work in jobs where she calls the shots.

So, even though previously Hayley referred to her job at GMT as the 'hot seat', the pinnacle of her career, in that it provided her with access to a reputable organisation, it also provided only irregular work. Hayley suggests here that the predictability that comes with regularity, with being committed to

one job and one place of employment, limits people and turns them 'sour', or bitter and resentful. So her career ambitions mean she must embrace the role of freelancer (Morgan et al., 2012) and the unknowingness of the postmodern creative career. She strives to not only be in control of her own project and be employed on an individual contract, but also to be independent of other staff members and those hierarchically above them. In this way, she is free to improvise, to capitalise on opportunity as it arises, rather than adhere to the structures and requirements of a CoP and craft community. The irony is that she is prepared to work up, but the 'creative' career ladder does not exist. A career ladder implies structure, bureaucracy and predictability, but the postmodern paradigm of the creative career is built on unknowability and chance. Climbing the career ladder requires occupational commitment and a refinement of skill, yet Hayley is also invested in keeping her options open and her skills transferable. It is just that she needs to be morally, ethically and socially free of obligation, free of community and value systems that are potentially constraining, in order to capitalise on chance when it comes her way. In other words, her strategy is not applicable, but her ability to operate tactically is.

Although the postmodern career is inherently precarious, and creative work carries with it the inference of precarity, the postmodern career is not conterminous with the creative career. Not only does precarious labour have the capacity to destabilise people's occupational narratives and identities, it can also shape the way people approach and view their careers in narrative terms. Such narratives are indicative of people's value systems and thus

social and cultural make-up. Precarious careers normalise low pay, irregular hours and casualised employment, but they also require people to act tactically to overcome its constraints. Cultural practices and contemporary ways of living and dealing with precarity, uncertainty and change become currency in the new economy, as do the narratives that convey or frame such experiences.

## CONCLUSION

There is a paradigm of masculine labour dating back to pre-industrial guilds and surviving into the twentieth century that revolves around CoPs, the transmission of craft and trade skills and the power of observational settings. This cultural form, and the social relations that flow from it, has been transposed to work in the creative economy. The notions of community of practice and of craft labour protect the integrity of creative work, and that solidifies the identity of creative workers. This paradigm resonates more with men from working-class backgrounds, or men generally who seek out occupational contexts characterised by relations of reciprocity and endurance, of grind and graft. It is not that women cannot share in this, but the women in my sample and, in particular, those presented here, appear to assimilate much more easily to the individualism of the portfolio career. This is perhaps because it connotes autonomy and the flexibility they need to straddle personal and public life, giving them a means to earning money without having to overcommit to work and with the benefit of working from home, thus supporting their commitment to family.

Sennett (2008) argues that it takes many years for skills to become engrained and automatic, to become the product of a tried and trusted craft, and that perfecting the use of tools and bodily performance of skill keeps people rooted in material reality in world that overrates mental faculties. The men discussed here tended to subscribe to this material sense of making films, whereas the women tended to perform and embody a more abstract version of creativity and filmmaking. There is a transparency and objectivity associated with the concept of craft labour that other more feminised, subjective aspects of filmmaking such as networking, communication and branding do not possess. Being a location scout, for example, is not the same as being a film editor or camera operator, nor is being a producer the same as being an animatronics technician. The women tended to strive for autonomy by assimilating to needs of the postmodern/portfolio career, whereas the men were harking back to craft ideals, as well as to the autonomy associated with being a crafts worker and part of a community that conceives filmmaking in a typically masculine trade skill way. The men presented here tended to distance themselves from those being seduced by images that paint creative labour as urbane and glamorous (Nixon and Crewe, 2004). These men saw what they did as an extension of proletarian work, and if at times they did not, they struggled to do so given the self-fashioning, self-reflection required of more abstract career forms.

These patterns were reflected specifically the interviews presented here but were also reflected, albeit to various degrees, in all of the interviews conducted. These patterns are also indicative of broader trends and could

relate to a number of occupational fields particularly where short-lived, contract-based labour is the norm, however, these patterns are most pronounced in creative labour where there are various roles, departments and processes of production (ie. preproduction, production and postproduction) that come together at various times.

Banks (2010) speaks of a hierarchy that exists within creative industry production models that valorises the artist above the crafts worker; however, it is the combination of both that ensures quick-paced cultural production. Art skills are aesthetic skills and are abstract, ephemeral and largely individualised, whereas craft skills are concrete/hard skills and provide the necessary technical labour required to produce films. Artists are integral to creative industries labour markets and cultural commodification, but so too are crafts workers, and they deserve equal reward and status (Banks, 2010). The problem for crafts workers is that their fate is not assured, but neither is the artist's unless they are highly successful. This is why the narrative of the modern career also played a role in the shaping of my interviewees' identities, as described in this chapter. The struggle between Taylorist managers, artists and crafts workers still exists, and all three narrative tropes exemplify workers trying to retain or regain autonomy over their working lives. The working-class interviewees generally saw making money as enabling autonomy, which was more so the imperative of the modern career, the middle-class aspirants and those from bohemian backgrounds were more enamoured by the potential of the creative career to fulfil their aesthetic impulses. Art-based narratives preserve creativity of the mind, and craft-based narratives preserve creativity

of the body, and the modern career narratives applies structure to what is largely an unstructured postmodern career. But as this chapter has tried to illustrate, where worker exploitation and scarcity of work condemns people to poverty and to the margins of labour markets and consequently hinders potential social mobility and career construction, the residual effects of class and gender provide familiar narratives to aspirants disembedded from tradition and a sense of communal self, but also give rise to familiar inequalities and constraints, which due to processes of 'individualization' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) are the burden of the individual and not so much society or the welfare state.

Peter and Tony come from dissimilar backgrounds – Tony is more conventional and working-class than Peter, and less successful – yet both embody traditionally masculine ideals. Both value master-apprentice relations but also the freedom and creative autonomy associated with traditional notions of craft labour. They feel though that creativity transpires differently – Tony's from within and Peter's through practice – which indicates the degree to which craft skills are perceived and performed differently, as well as a difference between art and craft values. Peter performs his creativity by reconciling mechanical know-how, subcultural participation and an affinity to craft techniques and community, whereas Tony's creativity is explained by arts discourse. He may harbour romantic notions of creativity, but he does not work as an artist because his working-class background does not lend itself to such an identity. Rather, he adopts the narrative framework of art, but is conflicted with a duty he feels to the craft and to his teachers. Tony is aware



of the cultural capital that gives rise to an embodiment of craft, which is why he admires his mentor who knows about old ways of editing, but he also believes talent should be rewarded and so struggles with the conditions of postmodern, creative careers, and particularly with what he sees as the lack of meritocracy operating in those careers.

Like Peter, Luke has some success, but he is more able to tolerate the process of networking and to use the relations he forms with people to construct his career. Although he values craft ideals, he is committed to pursuing a creative career and negotiating the demands of postmodernity. He, therefore, has adapted to the disciplines of postmodern capitalism and, in the words of Cohen (1999), can see how certain narrative forms and attempts at embodiment grate against each other. A career, in Luke's view, earns him money and should ideally keep him permanently employed. He tolerates the people he works with – the commercial advertising people, for example, or the American producers who make him feel like a servant – because they may potentially lead him to paid work. By contrast, Peter tolerates those he works with only if they share their resources (occupational know-how), otherwise he is impervious to detractors. Both Peter and Luke work in the creative industries, but their narratives take very different forms. Luke's aligns itself with postmodern conditions, and as a consequence he dissimulates his ambitions; Peter, however, is single-minded and is faithful to his craft.

Tanya's working life is fluid, and so is her sense of self. Much more so than Tony and Joe, she has the chutzpah required to construct a career in the

creative industries, to capitalise on serendipitous moments and redirect her ambitions to suit the opportunities that come her way. Her parents provide her with the vocational patterns to do so, and she adheres to postmodern career structures because she is fatalistic, which helps her to resolve the uncertainty they are both built upon and bring about as well as the individualism she must embody. So she resists committing to work that requires the performance of mechanical skills and the discipline required to commit to a craft skill. This is why she found the sound engineering course unsatisfactory, and why she prefers to work as a location scout or styling assistant, which require more abstract, subjective and aesthetic skills. Her freelance photography relies on the performance and refinement of craft skills, although it is also work that she can do alone and of her own volition and not something that she connects to her filmmaking aspirations.

Amanda, alternatively, tries to stabilise the vocational turmoil that postmodernity and the creative career create by becoming a freelancer, an inherently volatile and unpredictable career path. She finds narrative continuity by embodying and performing an occupational identity that embraces the unknown, but she does so by prioritising material reward over creative satisfaction. Stuart takes a similar course, and so stabilises his trajectory by corporatising his skills, although this leaves him feeling creatively unfulfilled. Despite being in a better financial position than Tanya or Tony to be able to indulge a craft calling, Stuart finds the insecurity of freelancing too unpredictable to manage, particularly in light of familial expectations. As his narrative is shaped by the need to support his children, it takes on a career

form, albeit with postmodern aspirations, even though he values craftsmanship and maintains arts-based notions of creativity.

Joe's narrative is shaped by career discourse, because he values social mobility and financial security. Unlike Stuart, he does not have to support a family; however, he aspires to own a home, so he needs to be able to convince money lenders that he is not a financial risk. He also values independence, so he needs a stable narrative of working life – predictable, translatable and discursively sound – in order to rationalise recalibrating his ambitions. He wants the assuredness of credentials to see him through his working life and to possibly lead to promotions. The prospect of reskilling and starting again deters him from the uncertainty of the creative career where academic achievement and formal qualifications are undervalued and where relying on parents for financial help is the norm (Haukka, 2011). His working-class background means that he communicates a career narrative simply out of a fear of downward mobility and poverty.

Joe may not be swayed by craft values, nor is he enamoured with arts discourse, but, like the other men discussed here, he struggles to dissimulate his identity and ambitions, to forgo relationships and a sense of community for the sake of his career. Amanda, Hayley and Tanya, however, are more prepared to resist communal identification and are less loyal to the craft and community. None of the women feel compelled to embody, perform or enrich their narratives by adopting art and craft tropes because, in film and television, it means embracing the values of a patriarchal system and

adopting, as an organisational narrative device, a narrative trope that has its roots in cultural value and distinction. None embodied a creative ethos that in any way indicated a loyalty to the craft, rather they all expressed feeling that being part of occupational communities binds and limits you.

Giddens says that the 'reflexive project of the self generates programmes of actualisation and mastery' (1991: 9). Cohen echoes this statement, arguing that when we construct our selves we become 'omniscient first person narrators' who develop 'special powers of mastery over self and society, which are held to characterise the essence of a singular and autonomous progress through life' (Cohen, 1999: 91). Narratives of working life, in general, are attempts by precarious aspirants to actualise and master their identities and gain some autonomy over their working lives, a particularly difficult task to fulfil when lives are diverse and fractured and when one's working life is not clearly laid out. The degree to which they achieve autonomy is questionable when some of the narratives presented here are shaped by external pressures and by a sense of community and family, or an adherence to craft values, community or the ever-changing face of the postmodern, portfolio career. More research is required to confirm the findings here, but this chapter demonstrates at least provisionally that the residual effects of class and gender steer people toward particular narratives of identity, even though the new economy is supposed to have disembedded them from such categories and structures and compelled them to commodify their aspirations, careers, crafts skills and artistic sense of self. The next and final chapter explores how people take stock of precarity, and how they rationalise it in light of the tactics,

strategies and narrative forms they have adopted as well as ideologies that have contributed to taming occupational volatility.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Taking Stock of Precarity

#### Rationalising 'Underachievement'

To summarise a key argument of this thesis: the extent to which social and cultural capital is a prerequisite of the new economy and the creative career becomes apparent when those who lack it attempt to construct creative careers. The limitations of being working-class become pronounced when one's social life and habitus provides resources, and represents network worthiness and the means to occupational opportunity. Furthermore, class inequality becomes even more pronounced when particular cultural practices and familial ties hinder rather than enable career trajectories and thus the ability of people to fulfil career aspirations.

Careers are fragile and often subject to elite, competitive networks that, on the one hand, connect people, but that lead aspirants to render wider relationships and social life instrumental to careers. The earning power of creative workers is limited; funding processes are competitively structured. Work is scarce, short-termism is pervasive and occupational communities are unstable. These are the conditions of precarious labour in the Australian film and television industries, and aspirants can spend their whole working lives trying to find ways to internalise them and rationalise their investment.

We met Luke in the previous chapter, a freelance assistant director and independent filmmaker who has worked precariously for the past twenty

years. Recently, this instability and uncertainty has led him to question his commitment to filmmaking:

I have moments, lots of them, when I think this isn't for me, it's a hard industry and you've got no money. [It's] frustrating, bad for self-esteem, bad financially, hard to make plans around the so-called freedom you get from freelance, it has limitations... so I sort of tend to veer toward hoping that I'll make a successful living out of this, and some years I earn good money and other years it's fairly crap.

It is hard to plan ahead when the future is unforeseeable. Luke couches this in financial terms, but other factors are the lack of independence and autonomy and the psychological strain that working precariously generates. Like Luke, Annie (47), who we are meeting for the first time, has also spent many years working precariously, yet she continues to pursue her creative aspirations. Annie went from being a long-term freelancer who worked autonomously to an embedded creative who produces media campaigns and podcasts for a health organisation. In the case of the embedded creative, craft skills and a commitment to the craft have to be negotiable:

... [because creative work is] like a drug and that is what I started to realise in my late twenties, that it was a drug and unless it was going to deliver with some sort of not necessarily stability but some return on some level, that I had to wean myself off... It didn't have to be financial, it just had to be in some way recognition of something ongoing that was really satisfying...

The addiction to creative work is so strong that it orders her to forgo financial security in favour of satisfaction. So it is a deferred sense of gratification that helps her to rationalise her ongoing pursuit of precarious work, and not the compulsion to earn money.

### ‘And Then You’re Fucked’: living precariously

The creative industries aspirant goes from project to project like Amanda, from film course to film course like Jack, or from network to network like Hayley. Often they do this as atomised individuals (even when challenged by instability and precarity), in an effort to cohere their working lives, but often without a structured career plan in place. They go without the support of community, which provides ‘stable practices, codes of ethics and norms of behaviour, reciprocity and fraternity’. This means that they lack a solid ‘work-based identity’ (Standing, 2011: 12), which craft communities or CoPs can provide members. This dislocation intensifies feelings of alienation and instrumentality, and consequently encourages acts of opportunism and perversity (Standing, 2011:12).

Mike (50) is filmmaker and youth worker who emigrated from Ireland to Australia in his late twenties. Originally he learnt to make films and videos in London whilst unemployed, as part of a government-subsidised project, ‘one pound fees’, and thought at that point, ‘Right, I’m a filmmaker type of bloke’. He ‘liked the idea of working with people, on their wavelength, felt like I was belonging and didn’t have to pay the earth to do it’, so the promise of community drew him to his vocation, as did the prospect of working with ordinary people much like himself. He characterises filmmaking as:

... very competitive working with filmmakers who are dysfunctional and narcissistic and completely crazy and who climb over their grandmothers to make a film... trying to make a living in this low-budget arena is extremely stressful... psychologically punishing... there is no division between your personal life and your professional life, it’s all in there in one big, fucking mess, and you’re talking about large amounts of money, you’re talking \$200 000, a small house or a medium drug deal, you know, it’s a fuck of a lot of money to be up for; and if things don’t go right, and when you’re dealing with those amounts of money, there is always the possibility that things will go down the toilet and then you’re fucked...



Mike provides us with a candid account of what it is like to be a film and television aspirant. He describes fragile social relations and the pressure of production deadlines, film budgets and social networks, as they exist in the absence of protection, institutional structure and a sense of community. When resources are limited, friends constitute networks and competition pervades projects, work and social life, and the prospect of sheer existence/survival becomes tenuous. Mike's depiction of filmmakers ('dysfunctional', 'narcissistic', 'completely crazy'), whether interpreted as his view of what filmmakers are or of what they become, is symptomatic of the consequences of precarity and tension. So, when Mike talks of 'things' going 'down the toilet', he is talking not only about the film project, but also about finances, his mental, physical and emotional wellbeing, and friendship groups that once dispelled are irredeemable – 'and then you're fucked.'

The aim of this chapter is to explore how aspirants rationalise a sense of underachievement and retain a sense that they have agency when they face perpetual uncertainty and occupational insecurity. This is particularly pertinent to aspirants who believe they have taken all the 'right' steps – tertiary education, courses, networking, volunteering – but do not have the social and cultural capital to turn this investment into a career. How do they rationalise this underachievement in narrative terms? Do they further commit to, withdraw from or recalibrate creative skills and/or ambitions, and in what way (if any) do they attempt to reclaim agency in the face of perpetual uncertainty? As Beck (1997) argues, such people must find 'biographical' (individual)

solutions to systemic problems. However, in order to seek out resolutions without appearing desperate, anxious or uncertain, they must, as Frank (in Cohen, 1999) argues, 'play it cool', for this is the new work ethic. To play it cool, people must have a degree of confidence and direction, which can often be found in the certainty of the past, the traditions of family and in social and cultural backgrounds.

Without security, stability and control, the creative career, far from delivering the emancipatory promise, can create a level of anxiety that incapacitates people and interferes with their ability to develop a coherent narrative for working and living (Standing, 2011: 155). The accounts presented here illuminate the rationale adopted by precariat to make sense of anxiety and turbulent working lives. The interviewees construct coherent narratives of self, of working and everyday life, by using these occupational identities to justify how and why they continue (or not) to pursue ambitions that are unforeseeable and steeped in insecurity and instability.

#### Swimming with the Sharks: conserving occupational identity

One way that the people I interviewed rationalised precarity was to adopt a particular occupational identity and work ethic. In the preface, I have classified and defined these occupational identities as those of 'freelancer', 'permalancer', 'embedded creative' and 'craft worker'. If these options were exhausted, or found unsuitable and hard to meet, the other response was to relinquish ambition and to 'walk away'. As in the previous chapters, this chapter aims to provide a series of responses to precarious labour rather than

a normative account of overcoming it, and so the classifications I employ here are used in the broadest terms.

### The Freelancers

'Freelancing is not for the faint-hearted', writes Monica Davidson in a recent piece in the careers section of the Sydney Morning Herald (Davidson, 2009: 5). There is certainly 'a lack of fixed employment in freelancing, that's part of the adventure', she chirps. 'If you feel nervous but excited about not knowing where you'll be in 12 months, freelancing could be ideal for you... a love of unpredictability is essential' (Davidson, 2009: 5). Here Davidson suggests that freelancers must internalise an openness to vocational restlessness and renewal. They must be willing to take risks, value flexible work relations and be open to radical change.

Freelancers perform what McRobbie calls 'permanently transitional' work (2002a), or project-based labour that requires highly individualised, mobile and disembedded personnel. They are hired to provide a service, usually under the terms of a contract and according to criteria of a specific job or task. They work to achieve an agreed result, usually by providing a skilled service. Freelancers can subcontract the work to others (if required), but supply their own materials and tools. They can advertise to the general public without being legally bound to their 'hirer' during periods of employment, because they must always be on the lookout for the next job. As Annie explains:

... and freelancers must be highly, highly motivated people and work like dogs, about sixty hours a week; and you need to be constantly, constantly lining up the next thing after the next thing, because my problem has always been I get totally immersed in

what I am doing and then I come out of it and bang, there is no work and no income, so you always have to be thinking ahead...

The commitment required to be a crafts worker is compromised by the need to fulfil current occupational obligations in a timely manner and to secure new jobs. Annie yearns to be a crafts worker, to slowly refine her skills and to take her time with production, to be 'totally immersed', but the freelance career does not afford her this luxury. The time and space required of craft labour is constrained by short-termism and commercialisation, both of which speed up production (McRobbie, 2002a) and interrupt processes of craftsmanship and routine (Sennett, 1998, 2008).

As Annie suggests, freelancers must produce opportunity after opportunity, stack project upon project. However, as Bennett reminds us, this is a working life that is subject to constant change, and attempts at encouraging back-to-back employment are hard to sustain (Bennett, 2009). This is because at the extreme end of the 'portfolio' career is the 'protean' career, and an increasing number of creative workers need to maintain a variable career in order to remain employable (Bennett, 2009: 311).

The postmodern, creative career requires people to frequently shift or split focus in order to stay open and to appear versatile, even though to do so could be detrimental to their career because creative workers are judged on what they produce. The need to project into the future cannot be allowed to affect the task at hand, because reputation and careers are fickle and one

mistake can put a career on the line (Gill and Pratt, 2008). This represents a difference between networks and communities of practice: the former is not designed to accommodate mistakes, whereas the latter deals with them internally. The imperative to stay focussed conflicts with the need to look forward, which also means that one's sense of loyalty conflicts with a need to maintain employment.

This is true for women who take on the challenge of both family and work life. Jane (33) is a full-time editor at a television station in Sydney. She has ambitions to be a screenwriter, but took the safe road and studied information management at university. She landed a job in the library of the broadcast station she now works for, and heard 'through the grapevine' that a job was going as editor on a particular program. So she gave up her spare time and volunteered to learn editing skills. She also 'didn't rock the boat', so was popular within the organisation. When the job was formally advertised six months later, Jane applied and got it over more long-standing and qualified applicants. At first this upset other staff members, but her eagerness and her willingness to volunteer was seen as enthusiasm and dedication, and now she is a well-regarded employee and peer.

Although Jane is part of a CoP and strongly networked, the organisation is restructuring, which means her position there is under threat. She is currently on maternity leave and says:

Yeah, well even taking nine months out now I'm still in contact with my colleagues at work and things are moving, and I'm very aware of the fact that I'm not there and I'm not learning new things [retraining in digital techniques]... because the industry

moves so quickly and you're learning new things all the time, a year out is a long time, especially with all the changes that are getting made structurally, so every decision I make will have to be [based on whether] it's going to get me closer to getting on a new show, longer format, or new department. [As for] freelancing... when I was younger I thought money didn't matter, it was all about the creative aspect and whether that would satisfy me; but now it's more important to have a steady income and to get more experience.

For women particularly, the networked career, even when constructed in a CoP, remains precarious. Furthermore, in Jane's case permanent employment does not shield her from the dangers of re-structuring, of precarious, competitive, creative employment. She recalibrates her ambitions and replaces her desire for creative satisfaction and autonomy with an imperative to earn a wage and to extend her skills and knowledge; to not only get better at what she does, but to also secure her future. Whilst away from work, she remains connected and so continues to appear committed and invaluable and not completely immersed in motherhood or conventional life.

As Davidson (2009) informs us, freelancing requires an ability to work flexibly, for multiple employers, under variable contracts and job specifics. Creative workers need to straddle the demands of work and domestic/family life, a particular challenge for women, and to be able to disengage from the values that define craft communities and become less defined by the habits and values associated with the Fordist era, which is generally difficult for men. To fulfil these requirements, an occupational identity must be negotiable; creative workers must be able to recalibrate their ambitions, skills and creative ambitions regularly. This means that the 'healthy dose of creativity' to which Davidson (2009) refers is by no means a freewheeling artistic licence; it must

also be in line with the imperatives of business, the hirer and the job at hand, not to mention everyday social life.

### The Freelancer Extraordinaire

Amanda, the freelance film producer who runs courses on freelancing on the side, has published on the topic of freelancing and informs people about the business aspects of working in the arts; how to manage and negotiate contracts, write and execute arts-based business plans, understand arts-based accounting and tax, copyright laws, as well as how to market and brand yourself and how to 'structure' contacts.

Amanda muses on the notion that the commitment she has to freelancing could bring into question the commitment she has to the craft of filmmaking:

And I don't know how I'd go as an auteur; I think my true colours would come out, but it doesn't matter. I'm not concerned about that, but what I'm interested in is that I'm still here and those 12 people that I studied film with are all gone... I'm an awesome producer, I know how to get money out of people and I know how to hire people, which is all you need to be a producer. I mean that's a skill in itself... talent is not the thing that makes us successful, it's stubbornness, an absolute refusal to do anything else other than this...

She does not value auteurism because she has too much invested in her identity as a freelancer and her networks. The singularity required to be an auteur would mean disconnecting from her networks, and would require her to commit to the craft of filmmaking rather than the business of filmmaking. Being an auteur would limit her capacity to make money and embed her within a labour market that is highly competitive and more subjective than corporate work. Given her artistic/bohemian upbringing living with her mother

in squats, she has relinquished the quest for creative autonomy/craft fulfilment in favour of the entrepreneurial.

Amanda is a postmodern worker. She pieces together her working life by internalising the injunction of vocational restlessness, which makes her identity flexible in a way that reflects a disavowal of aesthetic and craft impulses. She says at a later point, 'I'm more interested in making money than in making art', although she capitalises on an apparent 'artistic identity' when she claims to 'now teach my business workshops to every creative profession to walk the face of the earth'. Her wish to move beyond the poverty of her childhood and to stay abreast of the disembeddedness associated with the creative career indicates that she values money above craft. However, she draws on the narratives of bohemianism and craft when she markets herself and her courses.

So she is not an auteur, as she admits, but neither is she primarily a filmmaker or writer, despite embracing these labels. She is a businesswoman in the most conventional sense. Amanda does not really make money in the arts by embodying an art narrative, or even by way of her freelance career; she makes an income teaching people how to become freelancers, which suggests that she should be an expert in her field as well as an artist. Echoing the new economy rhetoric, Amanda internalises the compulsion to remake or reproduce herself regularly, thus differentiating filmmaking from other elite cultural/craft practices:



... it's not like training to be an athlete or dancer, not one shot at your dream; you get a million shots, it's just a question of whether you fall at the first hurdle or just get up and keep going so no plan B, no fall-back position, don't have a parachute...

Therefore, she capitalises on the popular-culture fuelled ambitions for fame, much like television talent shows and the institutions peddling creative industry courses. The trick, of course, is not simply to freelance but to freelance opportunistically, across a number of disciplines and platforms and also according to a conventional marketing/business model. Amanda says 'you get a million shots' at achieving 'your dream', but that those million shots are enabled when people transpose their skills, diversify their ambitions, abandon any ethical misgivings and relinquish their auteur and craft identities, even when the future is uncertain:

I have [been a freelancer] all my life, and I'm probably about as secure as a freelancer could be. I own my own company, I make six figures. I've been financially secure for a long time, I've raised kids by myself on a freelancer's income as a filmmaker and writer and they are two things that you are not meant to make any money doing. And I still don't know what I am going to do in six months...

This quote implies that despite financial security, the freelance creative career is always uncertain and it is one's ability to live with this uncertainty that sets them apart from others. In an earlier quote she says that talent is not rewarded but persistence is. However, this quote suggests that it is her business mind that holds her working life together. She admits that her 'multiple sources of income' are the essence of her survival, and that they are in themselves a back-up plan or security net. Therefore, she may believe she is a freelancer who lives with perpetual uncertainty, but she is certainly established and living according to structural compulsions – minimise risk and occupational down time, and perpetuate the ongoing opportunities that

generate income. Consequently, art and craft is traded for social mobility and an ability to support her family. She is a true new economy assimilate and portfolio worker.

### The Freelancer Auteur

Annie, now in her late forties, grew up on Sydney's lower North Shore with professional parents. She had an upper-middle-class upbringing, which up until recently supported her freelance career. Tired of 'being broke', she took a permanent job and moved back in with her parents to save money.

Annie went to an elite private school where she was encouraged to learn music. After leaving school, she went to London to play in a band. However, the band struggled to secure a recording contract, and she became disillusioned with playing covers and supporting herself long-term as a waitress with her parents' help. She returned to Australia to study anthropology. Acknowledging her 'position of privilege' and wanting to 'understand more about cultures... injustice and disparity', she travelled to non-Western countries and started making films/documentaries about social issues and democracy. Currently, she is working on a self-funded film, which means that both work and pay is sporadic and limited. She 'did have a small inheritance, all gone' (she is also reliant on government funding and private investment), so she has shelved the film for the time being and has taken on a job as a media manager in order to stabilise her working life and secure herself a regular income and independence:

... you either have to do something else or accept you are going to be broke. Look, the thing with documentary making, especially film, is that your life is kind of held to ransom by funding and events and getting approvals; that was one of the reasons why I decided to take a job for a while, for a couple of years... so for the first time in

my life I have a permanent nine to five job, and I was really uneasy about that; but one of the reasons that I have taken this job for a while is to get enough money in place to free me up so I can do this [freelance] stuff again... I mean it is going to take a year at least for the film to be back up and running...

Annie moves away from freelancing to become an embedded creative, but only for 'a while' or the time it takes to make enough money to continue working as a freelancer and on her own project. Becoming an embedded creative, though, means that she must temporarily suppress her freelance impulses and negotiate her creative identity. She rationalises this by connecting it to the greater good of her career, her film project and her financial position, 'free me up... do this [freelance] stuff again'.

Unlike Amanda (who seeks out instant gratification but of a different sort), Annie is able to defer gratification because for her, creative fulfilment is always just over the horizon. She craves both creative and financial satisfaction, but comes from wealth and possesses both social and cultural capital (her father is an academic and her brother is a filmmaker). In her twenties, Annie had the luxury of being able to indulge her cultural interests, whereas Amanda had to commodify hers in order to survive. The moment Annie felt like she was selling out or compromising her creative identity by playing covers music, she quit. When Amanda did something similar, she resisted the notion of being an auteur; but Annie found ways to conserve this notion:

... it has got to be a balance between self-expression and making money, and you know, I had to do it as a form of self-expression. There is not a lot I can do you know, that is the problem with having principles, you know. Ninety-five per cent of it [freelance work] is for crappy commercial stations... so by the time I was hitting my thirties, it wasn't just about money, it was about having felt that if I was ever going to get any significant recognition, it would have happened by then... I wanted to be taken seriously...

Annie's preparedness to conserve her artistic tastes and her craft identity, even though she is an embedded creative temporarily, is consistent with her upper-middle-class background. She is a freelancer who is committed to the craft of making films, which stands in contrast to Amanda who is a freelancer committed to the craft of making money. Both try to confront precarity, Annie by standing by her principles and Amanda by being business savvy. The main difference is that Annie's occupational identity hinges on her desire 'to be taken seriously' and to be recognised for her creative capacity/ability, whereas Amanda's hinges on her ability to achieve social mobility and to transcend her poor background. In her eyes, she has made it. Annie does not need to prove her worth socially or culturally; her class background speaks for her, which means that she can indulge artistic and craft impulses because her background supports it.

### The Restless Permalancer

Unlike both Amanda and Annie, Hayley prefers the stability of permalancing to the impermanence of freelancing. She is employed on short-term contracts as a university tutor and works casually for a broadcast television station for industry recognition; she returns to these two fixed sites of employment regularly, rather than relying financially on corporate work like Amanda, or money from funding bodies and family like Annie. This semi-permanent work provides the security Hayley needs to escape the poverty of her past:

... always had hand-me-downs, bikes and clothes... never had lunch money, got a [school] lunch order on my birthday; still take a packed lunch everywhere, and I think hard before buying something... I'd get pocket money and save it...

Hayley grew up in a blended family and is one of six children. She is not like her siblings, though, who work in secure jobs ('nurse, security guard, pest-control man, businessman, army officer'). Her mother is an animal welfare worker; her father is a professional golfer – albeit not particularly successful, he has never made much money from his sport. So, although she grew up poor, Hayley had an unconventional upbringing and believes that she had the freedom to follow whatever path she chose, despite the insecurity it represented. This means that economically she is working-class, but culturally she embodies a middle-class work ethic that inclines her to indulge her cultural interests. Neither parent tried to persuade her to follow a conventional career path, but neither did they encourage her to take risks:

... and Mum was like, you need to apply for uni now, so she pretty much was the one who got me the form and was like c'mon. So I don't even really remember, I just applied for whatever and got into nutrition and then it turned into communication then design then communication arts... 'cause I was never really sure, but there was no pressure except [when I'd been] out of school [for a few years] and she was like, you're going to have to start doing something... .

Hayley assimilates to the postmodern career by remaining occupationally versatile, by casting her net widely and by avoiding work that requires long-term commitment. Like Amanda, she keeps her options open. The television broadcast station where she works provides potential stability, but it maintains few permanent staff. Despite the impermanence, a job as an assistant director is a coveted role and provides the type of capital (reputation, contacts) that is required to become socially mobile and occupationally empowered. It is not creative in an artistic sense – an assistant director manages people – yet there is kudos associated with the position.

The broadcast station is institutionally structured and hierarchically managed, providing a transparent model of work; so Hayley knows with whom to network and which jobs hold value. She resists settling on one career path and limiting her prospects to one employer. Therefore, as Luke admitted in the previous chapter, she is 'apprenticed to honour that casual basis'. Like Amanda, she exemplifies vocational restlessness and would not be willing to commit permanently to either job if that option were ever to be available. She does, however, crave occupational stability, so she keeps returning to the same two places of employment:

Yeah, so that's the thing, teaching is a sweet job... and GMT, I'm grateful to have had the experience, but I don't really see myself [staying there]... maybe I'll do my film stuff where you never have a solid income, so I'll just have to do a bit of teaching, maybe a DA [Director's Assistant] sometimes, I'm not sure... or maybe my film career will kick off and I'll just be able to do that... There is no money in any of this stuff that I'm doing, so I'm not really sure how I'm gonna live... isn't that funny... Gen Y trait, to not really think about that, but I suppose I do. I think in terms of one year, I just don't really think further than that so I'm trying to relax and not be such a controlling person, tell myself that everything falls into place...

As a permalancer, Hayley is relatively free of long-term structure, so she can move on easily without any moral, ethical or legal obligation. It is no surprise, then, that she describes casual teaching at university as 'sweet', which means easy to do, institutionally structured and thus always there, but not limiting, definitive or communal. The work she does provides her with a legitimate job title, and something tangible and regular in which to invest (she says that unless the course does not run, she is guaranteed some teaching work albeit only on a casual basis, and that she can return at any time to the broadcast job) that is also free of the encumbrances of working in a team and by someone else's rules. Therefore, she is never bound by one line of work or

tied to one occupational identity, and can continue trying to ward off precarity by being multi-disciplinary or a slashie (teacher/assistant director/filmmaker). She is not an auteur, in that she lacks the courage required to commit totally to the art of making films; nor is she a crafts worker, in that she resists embodying the communal aspects of craft labour and the courage to commit solely to the craft. Her rationale is that it will hardly ever support her financially, yet her commitment to a permalence career means that it is not income security at the core of her ambitions but rather mobility and freedom from tradition and structure. For aspirants like Amanda, Annie and Hayley, the turbulence is too difficult to negotiate and the risks are too high to be ethically and morally bound to colleagues and peers. Their loyalty lies with those who can pay them, hire them or help them.

As I have observed elsewhere in this thesis, precarious labour arrests the processes through which conventional social ageing is usually marked. This keeps people wedded to the youth phase of life – insecure, low income and hopeful. Young, working-class aspirants may have hope, but they also have to grow-up quickly because they need the money to survive and feel compelled to arrive at a particular career destination. Joe studied film production to get his parents off his back, but then faced their dismay when he could not find work. Tony continues to account for himself to both his parents and his siblings. Tom has to convince his parents that what he does is worthwhile, despite the lack of income it generates. Hayley has not faced such pressure and values her postmodern existence. She is, of course, working as a filmmaker within a post-Fordist framework.

Like other assimilated subjects of the new economy who have to find ways to diversify their working lives, and without the security of structured work, Hayley is swayed by Gen Y discourse, which characterises young people as lacking loyalty and being lazy, self-interested and overly confident as well as non-committal and expecting instant gratification from their pursuits (Martin, 2001). She internalises its effects. Hayley aims to shed what she calls a tendency to be 'controlling' and assumes a familiar and typical fatalism, 'I tell myself that everything falls into place', which is also a middle-class luxury. So when she says, 'I'm not really sure how I'm gonna live', she means that she is not sure how she is going to live financially, even as a permalancer, and accumulate the material items that indicate the traditional markers of adulthood and success as well as the transcendence of social class:

I'm just hoping that I can make something that earns me a lot of money so I can buy a house or something... Well, I've never really thought about [this] until recently, I just don't really like paying rent. I have thought about everyone doing so much work and paying off houses and stuff and I don't really have anything, like I have a car and I'm nearly thirty, you know, and I've got nothing. But there is nowhere in my plan for me to get a full-time job, get a home loan and pay it off. It's just not in my psyche.

She pathologises the condition of precarity. It is not just a structural imperative but symptomatic of her own restlessness. This affects other areas of her life as well, because work and life have become intertwined. She expresses a reluctance to prioritise family, personal life and relationships above work:

... it's weird, it could seem like I have no plan and that I'm flying by the seat of my pants, but I'm very regimented and I have a plan... and unfortunately that plan is a plan that I can probably only do single... How am I supposed to have kids and do anything that I want to, they just seem like a real career stopper... and my life is so full, it's hard to fit another life in on top of my life...



When Hayley rationalises largely conventional, suburban life aspirations, (house, car, kids) through an age-specific lens, 'I'm nearly thirty, you know', she also reveals the force of social convention: that work, age and gender define you. Where Amanda finds a way to make such life aspirations coexist with her freelance life, Hayley resists the unification. Where Amanda says that freelancing has enabled her to be 'a stay at home mother with a full-time job...' and has provided her with enough income to raise kids by herself, Hayley says that kids are 'a real career stopper'. Both aspire to social mobility, but for Amanda this is to be achieved materially, while for Hayley it comes by being autonomous and not bound by social convention or material needs. Both internalise the postmodern notion of workers as 'bodies in motion', and the view that institutions like family and work immobilise you (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991; Lash and Urry, 1994).

Amanda and Hayley are compelled to internalise the requirements of post-Fordism, because they aim to be independent and autonomous in a largely patriarchal industry. As Giddens argues, the task is to be reflexive, to make choices and to respond subjectively to constraints, yet this 'freedom of choice' sees Hayley sacrificing her personal life, relationships and fixed plans for the future for the apparent benefit of her 'career'. To be loyal to her craft and to her craft community, she must value the masculine values that define the social relations that constitute workshop floors and craft communities but that also run counter to her feminist sensibilities. She wants to be seen as autonomous, empowered and not subject to constraint. Yet she continues to

pathologise and internalise postmodern discourse, and she structures her life according to the constraints of the precarious creative career.

### The Passionate Post-Fordist Worker

After some festival success, Tom had his documentary televised nationally. Like Hayley, he is a permalancer and, like Amanda, also runs his own production company with a friend. He works as a university tutor and lecturer two days a week and for the rest of the time canvases for commercial work. He is a freelance filmmaker as well, and this is where his priorities lie; yet he lacks the financial means to focus solely on independent filmmaking. He has, however, had some success, with his films funded and publicly screened on commercial television and at film festivals where he has won a number of awards.

As mentioned in chapter three, Tom grew up in a working-class family and is the child of migrant parents who worked in labour-intensive jobs. Unlike Amanda, Annie and Hayley, who were given more freedom from expectation, Tom described being held to account at times by his parents:

... they are parents and they want you to be as financially and emotionally stable as possible... and a few times my dad was like, 'Are you sure you don't want to do law or maybe something different?' They were never discouraging... but never fully like, that's amazing, go for it! It was not like, you can do anything you want to do. But when they started seeing my success and when I started teaching, I think my dad was like, 'Yep, okay, cool, that's dignified', and I think that tied it up for him. And I think they had a quiet respect for what I did, quiet in that it wasn't openly encouraging. And I really wanted to prove to them that I'm pretty okay at [filmmaking]. And I was like, 'Look at what I've done and look at the awards that I have won', and for me, I'm really happy when I show them. And when it happens, I'm like, see, like I can do it. But still, occasionally Mum will say, 'Now what about a nine to five job?', get a house, all this sort of stuff, which is not my thing.

Tom's parents lived through the demise of Fordism and the decline of stability, so they were seeking stability for their son after their own lacerating experience of deindustrialisation. His parents value home ownership and encourage stable, professional, white-collar work, financial security and occupational certainty; the values, in other words, of Fordist stability, which was embraced particularly by migrants and the traditional working-class (see Morgan and Idriss, 2012). Yet both Tom and Amanda are open to the idea of unstable careers, contingent upon cultural and creative interests as well as communication and management skills. Tom has a bohemian openness to chance, as does Amanda, and both are prepared to forgo the security of work in favour of the insecurity and unknowability of the creative career. Tom says that a stable career is 'not my thing', yet he strives for his parents' approval and support. By drawing attention to his achievements and awards, he legitimates his filmmaker identity but also becomes a worthy son.

Early in his career, he relied on call centre work to pay the bills. But an opportunity arose to teach film production, so he took that on instead. He says his goal is to make his life as film-oriented as possible, but he lacks the financial backing to do it autonomously. Consequently, he wears a number of occupational hats and, like Annie, is holding out for the potential rewards:

... juggling [career goals] and I think it will be juggling for the next couple of years, but I think it's making my week, most of my life... [but] teaching, I applied thinking I've got a bit of experience, and it'll be great because it will allow me to be flexible and it's still film... I enjoy it, but teaching, it's not my ultimate goal, it's a means to an end... I'm young, why am I teaching? Usually you have teachers who are 50, it's what you do at the end...

Tom suggests that teaching should be done by wise veterans. Where once 'old-timers' (Wenger, 1998) held this right, or people with years of on-the-job experience and knowledge, film schools employ people like Hayley and Tom to teach people the craft of filmmaking. Aspirants are teaching aspirants. According to Tom's father, teaching is a 'dignified' profession, yet Tom implies that there is a perversity about employing aspirants to impart knowledge when he has little experience himself. The fact that Tom and Hayley, and even Amanda, rely on teaching for stability indicates just how unstable film and television production work is. Moreover, the fact they are teachers with very little teaching and practical experience suggests that the craft of filmmaking only comprises a fraction of what is taught to students in film school.

According to various film school curricula course sheets [for an Australian context see AFTRS, JMC, SAE, International Film School and various Board of Studies websites], the majority of the curriculum, particularly in universities, is film theory or consists of subject matter that relates to the 'business' side of cultural production such as social media usage/marketing, public relations and digital media technology. It seems that the new economy and the creative career requires people to be skilled in technical, creative and business aspects of cultural production generally, and more specific to this this study, the production of film and television.

Tom distinguishes between the act of teaching and the practice of filmmaking by informing us that teaching is not his 'ultimate goal', yet he takes it on. Teaching undersells his 'creative identity' and to some degree affects his capacity to be seen as an autonomous filmmaker and dedicated crafts worker:

The whole thing is just hard to balance. I'm at a time where I keep saying to some friends of mine that I wish there was two of me. Like, I wish one of me could teach and the other could focus on film because there is not enough time in the day, particularly for the creative process...

He compromises his singular creative ambition in order to make money, to stabilise work patterns and to prove to his parents that he is doing something worthwhile. However, it is hard for Tom to balance his craft calling and his economic needs. He suggests that committing to the craft enables the 'creative process', but is not financially viable, yet teaching, which is financially viable, takes away from his ability to commit to his craft. He needs to justify his willingness to persevere despite feeling compromised:

[Passion is] the main thing. If you are passionate, that will drive you, if you're passionate and talented, even better... and that passion will keep you going. It's what makes you get up and write and push yourself, and I think the people who give up, I wouldn't say they are passionless, they're not, but I think if there is a big driving force in your mind that says this is what I want to do, you'll do it and I really believe that... and I think if you have that passion, you will succeed... [because] if you have a passion for something, you'll go out on a limb... because that what fulfils you creatively, emotionally, psychologically... people who question the risks, then I would question the passion... [and] this is the thing, I would rather be dead than not making films... you make it work, just like anybody that needs to survive; you do what you need to survive and make films and to have that creative part of you fulfilled...

Passion is a yardstick by which to measure people's worth, and is a term that often features in creative industries and new economy discourse. Tom seems to be saying that those who can endure precarity are those with the most passion and compulsion to succeed. Using passion to distinguish between people's commitment levels and to describe and/or explain what is largely an individuated and subjective process reflects a neo-liberal notion of what is

required to succeed. We all have passion, Tom suggests, even those who 'give up'. But those with the most passion will take risks, will 'go out on a limb', and will be fulfilled 'creatively, emotionally, psychologically'. In this way, Tom also suggests that agency is governed by passion, 'I would rather be dead than not making films'. This embodies the sort of all-consuming sense of commitment conducive to the neo-liberal worker: one prepared to carry on without material reward.

A readiness to work precariously, guided by passion rather than a regular income, indicates a yearning for the satisfaction that one experiences from practising their craft or expressing themselves artistically. Tom says that he is motivated by passion, which rather nebulously allows him to become detached from material needs and the prospect of a stable income, even though he requires material wealth to persist:

Money is not important to me; I'd rather be happy, and [filmmaking] is my happiness. I would hope that my filmmaking would be fruitful down the track financially... If it happens, that's fantastic, you know, if I'm living in a beautiful mansion, that's great, but again, that's not my goal, not my focus. Some people try to get together an amount of money to buy a house, and that's not my goal. I'd love to get together money and make a film and continue to rent. For me, that's my focus, that's my passion, I don't see any other option.

He uses ideas like 'passion' and 'happiness' to reclaim agency in the face of a lack of remuneration. As McRobbie observes, some creative workers are attracted to 'freedom' and 'status', 'upward mobility' and 'self-actualisation' and seek this out through the labour they perform (2002b: 518). These conventional markers of achievement help people like Tom escape denigration, but they are hard to achieve when the work is precarious without

giving up the 'vocation', ignoring the 'craft calling' in favour of a compulsion to become an individualised, post-Fordist worker:

... really for me, now, it's about branching out. I'm quite a traditional filmmaker, so [I want to] push myself into other areas; mobile phone apps combined with film, combined with things that go viral. Diversify, spread my wings and go, I can only try this, let me give it a go... I have some colleagues who [produce] television commercials, and they are developing scripts and they get to make them every two or three years, but that's their main income. But at the same time, they are developing their craft as short-film storytellers in commercials and viral videos and things like that, and I think I'd like to start doing that or at least trying to, you know, moving away from teaching and having that be my base income. It's about learning your craft regardless of the stories you're telling.

Tom describes a compulsion towards flexible specialisation as consistent with post-Fordism (Piore and Sable, 1984; Fieldes and Bramble, 1992), although he does not use these words. Rather, he embraces technology and adapts his skills to suit new markets, to create niche products and to accommodate changing consumer tastes. In other words, he finds a way to become highly skilled but to also churn out products in what McRobbie calls an 'accelerated cultural realm', (2002b: 518–519). In turn, under the conditions of 'speeded up' cultural production, (McRobbie, 2002b: 519), Tom commodifies his craft and spreads himself across a number of projects as a subcontractor.

McRobbie argues that this downgrades creativity, craftsmanship and the value of the autonomous, independent artists (2002b: 519). Tom, however, rationalises this as a learning process, as a way to perfect his craft and to reduce or eliminate teaching, which ironically frustrates his crafts worker identity. However, whilst he negotiates the content and form of his filmmaking practice, he may be further from being a teacher, but is no closer to being a crafts worker. Rather, he becomes assimilated to the individualism of the new economy.

## The Creative Libertarian

Chris (46), who I have not yet discussed, is a freelance graphic designer and a filmmaker who finds the lack of reward and precarious labour challenging. Unlike Tom, he resists diversifying his filmmaking ambitions and skills or commercialising his ideas, preferring instead to preserve his craft identity. He is less inclined than both Hayley and Tom to abide by institutional structure (teaching, flexible specialisation), so he chooses to freelance as a graphic designer and write scripts from home, although he is yet to produce a film. Chris lives in Sydney's upper-middle-class North Shore with his partner who has subsidised his creativity, yet says he is on the verge of giving up. However, he continues to write three days a week, so he has not quite come to the end of the road.

His father was a visual artist, and although he went to art school and sent Chris to a Steiner school, he earned a living as a builder, just like Chris' grandfather. So Chris comes from a long line of manual labourers, and men who separated their creative impulses from the manual labour they performed but this instilled in him a respect for craftsmanship and community. His mother died when Chris was young (he is the youngest of five), so his sisters helped their father to raise him. Chris maintains a familial belief that allows him to privilege his creative ambitions, 'I've come from an environment where it is, of course, you go where your passion lies because that's where you'll be most powerful', so his upbringing complements his creative ambitions. He also embodies a belief that:



... all people have creativity in them, it's not defined through your day job and [to think that] reflects a lack of understanding of human capacity. And I think most people are capable of many things, but it is what you focus your energy on and are doing...

Consistent with the observations of Florida (2003) and Leadbeater (1999), Chris builds aspirations around the belief that creativity is liberating, and that performing it, which is an individualised and competitive process at times, is largely a birthright. It is not only the birthright of the 'artistic genius' or the middle-class bohemian who can afford to indulge their artistic tastes and capacities. All people, according to Chris, are talented and creative enough to produce artistic works and be recognised for them regardless of their family background, which indicates his progressivist tendencies. However, Chris believes that the systems in place fail to affirm this ethic and that his work is judged according to an arbitrary yardstick defined by class, culture and taste distinctions:

... when I look at getting funding and developing my own feature, I look and think [that] it is so restrictive, I can't jump through these hoops. I don't think in the way that they do, and the people making decisions are middle-class, university graduates that have an idea that's linked to an academic understanding of what a good film is. I don't think it is representative of diversity. Bottom line.

Chris feels like an outsider, in that he does not 'think in the way that they do'. He implies that there is an underlying elitism operating at the heart of film production funding, application and distribution that thwarts or limits people's creative capacity and their ability to be accepted as artists. He also suggests that in the film industry nepotism favours those who 'hoop jump' and those who align their thinking with the ethos of funding bodies. It is not a level playing field, and because Chris lacks the financial luxury needed to produce

his own films, he remains on the outer because he refuses to 'jump through hoops'.

The institutional structures in place to help people like Chris become filmmakers and constitute a field of production (Bourdieu, 1984) perpetuate an exclusionary ideology and impose norms on the production and value of artistic work thus controlling how artistic work is produced and consumed. This system legitimates and empowers people from specific educational and class backgrounds, 'middle-class, university graduates', in turn preserving an ideology and 'an academic understanding of what a good film is'. Chris' artistic identity, therefore, is brought into question when he feels that his work is not seen as legitimate and worthy of production and his aesthetic tastes not deemed worthy of funding. So, although the degree to which he can earn money as a crafts worker is limited, he endeavours to retain that identity by drawing a distinction between economy and culture and therefore passing his own cultural judgement:

They [funding bodies/producers] have been influenced by the idea that in order to improve their name throughout the world, they need to produce a more commercialised product that can be more mainstream that strengthens their brand globally. How do you do that? Get someone who is going to conform and you know, be very clear on that level. But the problem with that is that you discard creativity... [you get] very poor storytelling, cliché, middle-class fantasies, not researched, where it's clear that [scriptwriters] have no clear understanding of the subject that they are focussing on...

Chris' storytelling craft skills are brought into question by bureaucracy, yet he maintains the value of his work by categorising what bureaucracy produces as 'mainstream' and 'lowbrow' and not what he does. This represents a common form of rationalisation through which artists/performers cope with rejection,

but also suggests a resistance to mass production and contrived creativity and ideas. If you meet bureaucratic criteria and 'jump through hoops', then you will sell out by writing clichéd stories. However, if you preserve your craft and therefore your artistic integrity by resisting bureaucratic direction, then you might remain a struggling scriptwriter/filmmaker existing on the margins of a labour market.

In his early thirties, Chris experienced a crisis and retrained as a graphic designer in order to subsidise his scriptwriting:

I was about 33, it was my lowest point and I was thinking oh man, I just can't do this work. I was thinking that I'm going to have a nervous breakdown if I don't change and do something different... I felt lonely and hadn't gone anywhere with this, and I'd put in so much fucking effort, so I thought if I gotta work I better do something where I can use a bit of creativity and you know, be competitive to get a job, you know, don't go and do something where you train for three years and you're never gonna get a job doing it, because it would drive you insane and you'll be back in the same place. So graphic design is something I feel like I can do naturally, being creative most of my life...

He realised that the field to which he aspires does not reward creative talent and originality – 'so much fucking effort, hadn't gone anywhere'. Chris can be contrasted with other interviewees. Tom refused to blame his underachievement on either the industry or the new economy – he equates passion with success. Amanda evaded the question of worth by admitting that money is the driving force of her ambitions and thus her freelance life, whilst Hayley resisted committing long-term to one employer or one occupation. All of these interviewees were able to find ways to assimilate to the new economy and postmodern structures, Chris, by contrast, seeks to separate his

day job from his filmmaking aspirations in order to preserve his sense of creative self.

He sees filmmaking as separate from graphic design, yet he considers both to be creative occupations. However, he contradicts himself when he connects creativity with naturalness, by stating that it is a natural part of who he is. He makes the job in graphic design a natural vocational progression, and so too his scriptwriting. In this way, creativity is and remains an extricable feature of his identity. Therefore, like his father, Chris acknowledges the need to earn a living. However, he also endeavours to maintain a high cultural aesthetic, so he does a job that does not interfere or cross over with his creative/artistic work.

### The Bohemians

Like Chris, Tanya is also loyal to the craft of filmmaking, and also needs to earn a living. She is not driven by money, but rather an 'artistic logic of practice' (Bourdieu, 1983). Therefore, both Chris and Tanya seek to produce 'art pour l'art' in order to preserve their artistic sensibilities. Consequently, they live what Taylor and Littleton call 'double lives' (2008: 287) and rationalise this through the figure of the artist. Unlike Chris, who maintains biographical coherence by recalibrating his ambitions and reskilling in order to preserve his craft, or like Amanda, who eclipses creativity and commerce, or like Hayley and Tom, who diversify and teach but continue to resist long-term commitment, Tanya and Adam extricate their creative working lives from their 'regular' working lives. In this way, they are artists because what they do for

money does not interfere with their aesthetic traditions, beliefs or creative autonomy.

With a father who is a musician and unpublished writer and poet, and having grown up in the counterculture of Nimbin, Tanya (30) sees her upbringing as unconventional:

... Dad was really cruisey, still plays folk guitar, writes songs, books, comics... [our futures] were never pushed, left up to us, can't remember having those conversations about what I wanted to do. Mum just thought, 'You'll work it out', although was a bit more university focussed [than Dad]. Even still, she only [encouraged] uni as just a back-up...

Previously, Tanya worked in some conventional jobs, but also as a location scout and stylist. When I interviewed her she was working as a waitress in a trendy cafe and in a bar at night on weekends. The following quote appeared in the previous chapter, but it is also fitting here, in that it shows she understands that skills are transferable, but is committed to the autonomy that underlies art-based narratives of self:

I've realised that I don't want to work in film for the sake of working in film. I'd rather be waitressing than working for a production company, corporate stuff; even though it's the film industry and should be up my alley, it just [isn't]. I like the freedom to be able to do my own things, things I'm passionate about, I've created myself; that's what I find most rewarding, and I'm not actually willing to kind of work in film just for the sake of working in film...

This is an explicit disavowal of creative industry rhetoric and the commodification of culture. In chapter five, Tanya reflected on her twenties and portrayed herself as flexible and adaptive, which is very different to the way she sees herself now. Rather, at thirty years of age she is committed to doing her 'own things, things I'm passionate about'. In the early stages of her

working life, Tanya was prepared to transfer her skills and work in largely service-based areas. Later she became protective of her artistic identity, and she now finds that she values creative autonomy so is selective about the work she does. In other words, like Tony, she is not as prepared as she had been in the initial stages of her working life to compromise her creative principles in order to earn money. However, unlike Tony, whose parents are commercial cleaners and whose brother runs a bottle shop, and who complains of being 'ragged on', Tanya comes from the type of background that supports such a commitment. Her bohemian family has always allowed her the space she needs to work precariously and creatively without judgement, and provides her with necessary cultural capital. Her father's artistic inclinations and her sister's creative ambitions – she is an aspiring actress and musician – legitimate her own.

Although both Chris and Tanya maintain the belief that creative work is more valuable and brings more kudos to their work if it is not driven by commercial imperatives, Chris is more prepared to align his creativity (but not his filmmaking/scriptwriting ambitions) with corporate, commercial work. This means that he embodies an abstract notion of creativity in order to maintain a coherent narrative of creative identity, but does not view scriptwriting in such abstract terms. This is more pertinent to graphic design work. Tanya alternatively, prefers to keep her regular working life separate from her creative working life, and is more prepared than Chris to suppress her ambitions whilst working in hospitality rather than transfer them to another field or discipline. However, we know that Tanya works at a cool cafe, one

frequented by other creative types and where her creative ambitions are reflected in the occupations of the people she serves, and the chance occurrence of a 'break'.

Where Chris is prepared to provide a creative service, Tanya is more resistant, preferring instead to fulfil her own personal creative imperatives:

... I didn't want to be a location manager for the rest of my life, or for any point of time. Like it was great for getting money together, but I could see the bigger picture and I was like this is not what I want to do...

The 'bigger picture' is the realisation of her creative impulses, and the freedom and status associated with being autonomous. By dividing her working life in two, she is no longer alienated from the means of production (as she was as a location scout or as she feels that she would have been working for a production company), nor does she work according to a creative brief/specifications as she would as a freelancer committed to corporate work or as an embedded creative like Annie. In this way, she avoids being integrated into an 'art economy' (Becker, 1982) and finds financial support from other sources. In other words, it is normal for Tanya to earn very little from her craft (McRobbie, 1999), and it is acceptable because it preserves her creative ambitions and her creative identity.

Adam (22) similarly resists commodifying his craft, particularly because, for him, precarity is the norm:

In terms of a job or career, I don't really mind what I do. I can look past having a crappy job and living with not very much money, and that's what I enjoy in a weird

way. It's risky; yeah, I'd enjoy financial security, but it's not something I'm always certainly going to have, so sacrifice and that's okay... remember, this was my parents' lifestyle as well...

Adam also grew up in an artistic family, not so bohemian, but socially and culturally connected to the Australian film industry, and not conventional. His mother is a known local actress, although she works in a call centre between acting jobs, and his father, a former actor and sound and lighting technician, worked in government defence for a long time and now runs his own media consulting business. His uncle is also a known actor who also directs and produces feature films. Adam grew up in Sydney's inner western suburbs, went to a selective, musical high school (his grandparents had a hand in raising him and were both musical) and has gone on to study arts at university.

Although he possesses the required social and cultural capital for working in the creative industries, he witnessed financial hardship growing up, 'very much uncertain, it wasn't unstable, it's just that some times were easier than others'. He circumvents the effects of this when he says, 'remember, this was my parents' lifestyle as well'. His parents' lives, and the cultural capital he possesses, provide the rationale he needs to persevere in the face of uncertainty and without financial assurance. His mother works in a call centre to pay the bills, consequently Adam says:

Don't mind working a normal job. What I like about working at the market is that it's so far removed from what I want to do... I worked in a video shop and it was nice and it was across the road from my house, but it's close enough to what I want to do that it was painful watching movies all day, so I'd rather have something that I'm completely removed from...



For Adam, the job he does needs to be different enough from the creative work that he aspires to do if it is to provide some sort of consolation or alleviation from the pressure he feels to maintain his craft impulses, aesthetic values and thus creative sense of self. It is difficult for Adam to suppress his creative aspirations and to sustain the outward countenance needed to work in a video shop, because by working there he feels like a failure and it reminds him on a daily basis of his marginal position, despite coming from a family of film industry workers.

Adam now works casually on the weekends at a growers market. Despite being determined to write and direct feature films, he does not want to enter the industry from the bottom, 'I could get work as a sound assistant or editor, but I'd just get bored and I don't want to end up hating the industry', so he chooses to sell apples instead. And so he may be committed to the idea of craftsmanship, but he has a particular understanding of what constitutes craft labour. This means that his narrative of self is informed by artistic discourse, high art aesthetics and the creative industries model of work that values the contribution of the artist more than that of the technical/craft worker (Banks, 2010).

#### Finding Fulfilment by Becoming Embedded

Some of those who train as creative workers earn a living by working in embedded creative jobs outside of the creative industries (Higgs and Cunningham, 2008). In contrast to Tanya and Adam, they are prepared to barter their creative identities and to sacrifice creative autonomy for the sake

of occupational stability. Like Annie, Stuart has recently become an embedded creative, working as an AV technician, but is able to sustain some sort of craft identity (Banks, 2010). He is permanently employed at a school, but he hankers after the creative autonomy linked to traditional ideas of craft labour. Stuart tried to realise this initially as a freelancer but found the bulimic work patterns too unsettling and destabilising:

... I charged \$90 an hour and so \$720 a day, so when I worked it was good. You'd get [a] twelve or thirteen thousand [dollar] contract for two weeks' work, but then wouldn't get anything for a month and then a month's worth of work... so things would come in. Just when we thought we're in trouble, the phone would ring, so I led this life of mania where you'd be really freaked out that things aren't going to happen and then you'd get a job and you'd be really happy, so it was up and down like that...

Terms like 'mania' and 'freaked out' describe a bodily reaction to the risk of being broke and thus the power of precarity. They are the internalisation and subsequent expression of 'trouble' that is apparent and affective in freelance work. To process it, Stuart must have faith that the phone will ring; in other words, have faith that the market will pick up and he will be commissioned to work. But this commitment to the unknown reflects hope and wishful thinking more than faith, the presence of which would allow him to counter feelings of doubt. However, in the above quote faith is the narrative device used to help him rationalise the 'up(s) and down(s)' of freelancing.

Freelancing, though, eventually becomes more of a burden than a solution, leading Stuart to seek out alternatives to stabilise his work. The responsibility of family and children generates the need to find permanent, secure work and, as outlined in chapter five, he feels compelled to try to conserve his middle-class status, particularly in the eyes of his father-in-law. His narrative,

however, continues to be shaped by a yearning for craft and creative autonomy and the chance to be self-expressive:

This job [at the school] is the best job in the history of the universe. So cool. They recently made me full-time permanent, so I'm here forever. I would've loved branching out [the production business] because I really wanted to do music video, [but] the video production business is gone, I live and work here now. This is what I do now... so these are my new clients. I've got a junior school, lower-middle school, upper-middle school and a senior college. Kids come in here and say they need me to do stuff and I say, why don't you make your voice sound like the trailer for a film with a sort of low voice [provides an example, slowly speaking in a low voice], and I needed dramatic music so I downloaded it, sound effects, bombs and stuff; so I get to do this, that's one thing that's fun.

Unlike the subjects in his wedding videos, the children at school are under his direction and therefore his subjects. The students are not actors, but they are more willing than the wedding guests to comply with and collaborate in the creative process; in this way, work is 'fun', which is another example of the way that creative industries rhetoric talks up creative labour. Stuart's students are young and not concerned with commercial imperatives, nor are they aware of the process in which they participate; rather, they embody the carelessness and youthfulness that appeals to Stuart's creative sensibilities and that help him to enact his fantasy of being a feature film director:

... up until I got this job [at the school], the priority was the end dream. There was an end dream and that was to make a feature film, that's were I've been going all these years and it's still the same dream... . And I'd said to my brother, you can produce them, but he's really pragmatic and practical and he said where are we going to get the money from and it'd be a conflict of interest, and I'd say we don't have to get money, let's just make kick-arse, bloody, culty, martial arts, vampire horror films. Australian wombats that have got terrible diseases and attacking people, you know... [But] I'm 50 years old, so now it's time for me to get real with my dreams and just accept that this is great; autonomy, mastery and purpose and I still get my AVID edit suite and I still get my cameras and I still get that creative buzz, which I really love...

Stuart refers to an 'end dream' ('that's where I've been going all these years'), but he realises it is out of reach despite the connection he has to the industry through his brother and the safety net provided by his upper-middle-class background. At this point, neither financial nor social capital can/will help him. He is governed instead by convention and the need to be financially secure and not precariously employed. Like Hayley, he is only willing to tread water for so long, and now, at fifty, it is time to grow up. At thirty and single, however, Hayley can afford for her private life to be subordinate to her working life. Stuart's responsibilities must take precedence.

He believes that in the new economy, age and youthfulness are structural forces, but he continues to fulfil his craft sensibilities with the work he does at school. So it seems that some aspects of people's creative identities have inertia, even when they fail to provide material reward, but remain the subject of fantasy or imagination. In this way, though, Stuart tries to retain a work-based optimism, which is nourished by the energy and enthusiasm of the children at school. The work at school generates a 'creative buzz' but also provides him with agency and a permanent job. Consequently, Stuart experiences some fulfilment. Therefore, although it appears that there is virtue in the turbulence that the new economy inflicts on people, there is underlying disappointment, feelings of inadequacy and underachievement.

### Walk Away

Precariousness creates a syndrome of vocational skittishness. People must appear to be genuinely committed to present tasks, jobs or projects, but must

always be looking to bridge the gap between jobs. Some can sustain a coherent sense of self through narrative flexibility. For those who are less flexible and for whom the constant change is a burden, the aspiration to work in film and television is a constant destabilising, individuating force that often brings into question their morality and work ethic. The masquerade is a cross to bear and many eventually walk away. Unlike Amanda and Hayley who transfer their skills and adapt their identities to suit various social/work arrangements, Joe and Melanie are more brittle in their vocational identities.

### The Sceptical 'Securist'

In previous chapters we learnt that Joe experienced long-term unemployment prior to undertaking film courses, and then again for some time post film school. After becoming qualified to work in film and television and unsuccessfully trying to secure work, he discovered that it was not just economic capital he needed, but also social and cultural capital. As these are not easily earned or accumulated, even with qualifications, he once again faced the threat of long-term unemployment and a working-class future. While working, Joe came across veterans who had always been precarious and poor:

... I was getting discouraged by it all, talking to people on set and listening to someone who was 40 years old with his own family and hearing him talk about how he'd been accountable for 8 weeks doing sound and camera work for a certain TV show and beyond that, nothing. So if you want to own your own house or you want stability, it's not the right industry...

The stories of others like him, but also of those who are twenty years further down the track, are a source of insight. They reflect his bleak future – the risks

are lifelong and the lack of opportunity, employment and financial constraint has the capacity to set living conditions for years. If the time committed does not increase chances of finding work, then why run the race? Why endure the instability?:

... like I remember being part of this job seeker thing through Centrelink and all these people with film and TV backgrounds got together and I think I was the youngest there... I remember looking around at people in their 30s and I thought, okay, they've reached that stage in their lives and they're here with me, then something's up... not lucrative. There's a nice gloss on the surface, but the reality is probably a bit mmmm... a patchy way to earn a living and it weren't going to be easy... so I was unemployed for six months and my parents, well yeah, I think they were at the end of their tether, getting the shits, yeah. And my job on the railways was a milestone reached in their eyes, and so no, never done any networking, nah, nothing like that.

So alienating are work relations, so atomised and isolated are the various film industry wannabes, that it is only when Joe's peers/competitors are assembled in a room that the full horror is revealed to him. We saw in chapter four that he experienced frequent knockbacks, but it was most starkly brought home to him when he heard the stories of others who have experienced long-term unemployment.

Joe has crafts worker aspirations but realises the chances of making money are low. Admitting early in the interview to enjoying 'metal work, woodwork and things like that', the craft narrative continues when he admits that he wanted to 'hang around on set [to see] how they do things', but felt compromised when he couldn't 'bring more to the table'. He realised that the craft comes second to contacts, which left him disillusioned. The only one in his family to finish school, he strives to achieve social mobility by accumulating material wealth and property, an admission we examined earlier. Here, however, he realises that his parents were not prepared to

financially support him, 'I think they were at the end of their tether, getting the shits, yeah', and that he did not come from the type of family that would allow him to indulge his interests unconditionally nor could they afford to. So it is not only the stories he has heard but also the unwillingness he has to network and rely on his parents that impel him to walk away.

### The Misgivings of Monotony

Both the threat of long-term unemployment and the shortcomings of work led Melanie, who we met in chapter four, to also walk away. Melanie developed aspirations to work in film after a filmmaker came to her school and appealed not only to an interest she had in films, but also to her anime subcultural interests. One year out of a university communications/arts course, she was already considering a second degree in teaching. After landing a casual job in television, at the completion of a three-month internship, she found the work unfulfilling:

... what I applied for was production and what I ended up getting was technical directing... like what I really want to do is something creative and what I'm doing is something technical... basically record all the stuff, use the computer to set up records, set up all the media, I press buttons, you know when the presenters talk... and it's not fun at all – vision switching, I thought that there was more to it than that... like there are standards as to how everything has to be framed and everything's recorded and there is no creativity whatsoever... there are a lot of scheduling jobs where basically you just sit at a computer and make sure that everything is on time and I think that's even more boring...

Genuine creative jobs in television are reserved for better established, connected or experienced people, and the more repetitive, less autonomous roles reserved for newcomers and/or interns like Melanie. She found that the new economy discourse suggesting work should be 'fun' and 'creative' rang

hollow, and 'button pushing' was neither fun nor indicative of making film and television. Naively, she went into the job believing that working in film and television meant she should work creatively. This squares with an official classification of film and television workers as creative workers (Hesmondalgh, 2007; Hesmondalgh & Baker, 2011; Blair, 2003, 2008; McRobbie, 2002a, 2002b; Cunningham and Higgs, 2008). Melanie believed her communications/arts degree had prepared her for creative work, but what she found instead were Taylorist work patterns and Fordist organisation, and not the type of work environment that provides a platform for radical free-thinking, innovation and creative ideas:

I mean the guy that trained me, he's been there for however many years, and it's a bit sad for him because [I was told that] the most creative thing that he gets to do is promotional videos and the only time he gets to be creative is with how he lines up the shot, you know, maybe tilt the camera this way a little bit... and he used to be a producer and director for some massive TV company in the Phillipines and you know, this is where he's ended up and he can't find anything that pays him better and that would be enjoyable... and even sort of complains that so and so doesn't know what they're doing and they won't let me do anything...

The experiences of both Melanie and her colleague suggest two things: that in commercial broadcast settings Taylorist work patterns govern cultural/creative production; and that structured, hierarchical workplaces continue to exist, despite vertical disintegration, horizontal expansion and labour market atomisation. What this means, in the context of this chapter, is that Melanie cannot escape her working-class roots by working in television, and what she recognises and resists, although she does not use these words, are Fordist processes of production and organisation. The quest for liberation from the drudgery of Fordist work (Ross, 2009) is unrealised. Melanie is remote from high-end work, and because of this she contemplates becoming a teacher,



which is more like the conventional work performed by her parents and which she disparages:

... and my stepdad is the vice-principal of a school, moved to the senior campus but the same position, and my mum is a secretary at an ultrasound place. She's done that for her whole entire life. The only time she left was like, when I was younger and got sick and she took time off. She's done the same job all of her life, and Dad does window tinting and signs and he's got his own business, and his wife does nothing, sits on her arse and does nothing... and I think my dad was more creative, he's been most supportive 'cause he's been like, do whatever you want to do, just be the best at what you do... I mean what he does is not entirely creative because he's just putting [the signs] up and he's got someone else who does the graphic design stuff for him...

So working in broadcast television does not provide Melanie with a springboard for social mobility. Instead, she is seeking out the type of creative work that enables her to live a middle-class lifestyle and a type of subcultural 'hipster' 'dream':

I have all these ideas I enjoy and that I'm interested in and I don't know what to do with them. Like I've sort of had this dream that I might retire and have this little library/cafe one day... And even if I don't teach full-time, I've got a chance to do something on the side, like I can maybe do TV stuff on the side because I don't have much of a chance finding full-time work in film and television. But if I did, I'd take it...

Despite resisting convention, she is swayed, whether she likes it or not, by the vocational patterns of her parents and by the messages communicated to her by her parents. Her working-class background, therefore, guides her working life:

... most people in my family wanted me to do law or politics. I like politics but not enough to do that. I was interested in creative writing, but Mum wanted me to do journalism... [that's] not really what I think would be an enjoyable job. And when I got the internship in television she was like, what do you want to do film for? You're not going to get work, you need to work a nine-to-five job and you should work hard as we've had to, kind of thing. And I'm like well, you know, if I can get by doing less than that, then why can't I? I don't have to do what you did. She's sort of keen on me doing teaching, doing something stable... and my stepdad is in teaching [sic], might be able to help me get a job.

School teaching is conventional and more secure than working in film and television, and her social and cultural background is better suited to these conventional pathways. Yet Melanie (although seeking stability) finds it hard to give up her creative ambitions. She aspires to the material security that allows her to indulge her interests, and to seek out autonomy, self-fulfilment and gratitude, but lacks the social and cultural capital to attain it. Her teacher stepfather may be able to help her, but this would mean her creative identity was only periodically performed.

If, as Florida (2003) suggests, 'creative workplaces rely on people's intrinsic motivations' for a type of 'soft control' to exist, then he is saying that people work best when motivated by their own needs. This normalises atomised, competitive and exploitative labour markets, and gives people like Melanie a false sense of what it is like to work in the creative industries and to be part of the 'creative class'. However, while working in television she realises her needs are irrelevant and that her background governs her chances, and that her marginal position means she performs repetitive, non-creative labour. For Melanie, being creative should be laborious, which brings in the concept of 'creative labour'. Stuart, too, embodies the vague notion that work should be fun and fulfilling and nothing like the drudge labour performed within industrial economies, which again brings into question the notion of 'creative industry' and creativity.

During the interview Melanie described being dismayed to discover that work in television is structured, routinised and technical rather than creative.

However, at work she must conceal her disappointment or risk being replaced, 'they take on all the interns, it seems, for full-time jobs as technical directors'. So it is not only the precarity that steers her away from film and television work, it is also the lack of genuinely creative jobs as well as her unwillingness to see technical work as part of the craft process. Like Adam, she prioritises the artistic notion of craft labour above the technical notion of it. This means that she has come to the end of the road before she even started:

... kind of feels like I've already wasted those four years [at uni] because it's like what do I get with that, you know, what do I get out of it? Oh, I learnt how to do a few things, learnt how to use a camera better than I would've known, but I don't feel like I'm any better off. I've done a film degree, but I don't know how to implement that; so now in the back of my head, it's just keep the creative things to hobbies...

She feels betrayed, let down by the system and consequently relinquishes and walks away.

Working-class aspirants like Joe and Melanie are initially prepared to take risks, to follow their aspirations, but they yearn for stable pathways and search for guarantees. When they work out the degree to which working life is uncertain and unforeseeable, neither is prepared to plough on regardless. The lack of opportunities and tangible rewards leads them to consider alternative work options and to leave their filmmaking aspirations behind.

#### The Fall Back Careerist

Leonie, who tried to get a break whilst volunteering at the Sundance Film Festival, which is a renowned international film festival held annually in Utah for independent filmmakers, conveys a narrative peppered with intermittent

filmmaking experiences, but also the compulsion to walk away, both regretfully and with self-blame. Currently she is employed as a temporary office worker, but has previously worked full-time as an accountant. Leonie completed a couple of film production short courses and developed a couple of film projects that have received some acclaim at local festivals. However, she felt that she could never afford to pursue her aspirations and always favoured making a regular income over filmmaking.

Her parents encouraged her creative ambitions but also encouraged her to study accounting as a fall-back career, which suggests they were sceptical about the capacity of filmmaking to support her. This fall-back career became her primary career, although she did, at times, take time off to pursue filmmaking. Now, in her mid-forties, she feels compelled to either try harder or give up on filmmaking.

Leonie defends her priorities, which were putting comfort before poverty and frugality, security before precarity. At the same time, she holds these priorities responsible for the non-realisation of her filmmaking career. Consequently, she internalises her situation as evidence of inability, unwillingness or personal failing:

... I thought that if you are creative, you can't get work; that you have to do something else, you have to have a boring office job to pay the bills... Maybe I wanted a bit of everything; I wanted my own place, I didn't want to be a starving artist. If, maybe, I was willing to live in a hovel and work crappy jobs at night and not get a lot of sleep, well yeah, [but] I've wanted comfort as well as other things... it's always been a practicality thing, because I've never wanted to be ridiculously rich but never a starving person living in a house with 20 other people...

Her narrative reflects the embodiment of two discourses: neo-liberal discourse, which perpetuates ideas of self-responsibility and self-blame; and 'starving artist' narratives, which suggest the need to sacrifice. Leonie feels compelled to point out explicitly the effects of precarious labour in order to justify her unwillingness to accept it and her decision to pursue more conventional paths. By painting a dire picture of what living precariously is like, she justifies her decision to prioritise financial security over filmmaking.

Neo-liberalism normalises the idea that we can all produce better lives for ourselves if we are disposed to risk taking and opportunism. This pays no heed to the psychological impact of such expectations and the sacrifices involved. People like Leonie believe that they must either choose to earn very little and put up with precarious conditions and poverty to attain job satisfaction or choose to earn a regular income but give up the aspiration and quest for job satisfaction. The result is that they are inclined to assume sole responsibility for their own chances and opportunities, as well as their failings, despite knowing that they suffer from a lack of access to occupational support, organised labour representation and communities of practice. Walkerdine (2003) characterises this tendency as 'psychologization', or the interpretation of imposed constraints as personal failings. So at 46, Leonie contemplates her future. She believes that she is running out of time and that she has not done enough; she is unhappy about making very little progress with her filmmaking and feels that, as a result, her personal life is dysfunctional and lacks meaning:

I don't know, in fact lately I've been having a little 'What will I do with my life?' ... I do go through this every now and then, and I end up in debt and exhausted... meanwhile I have no personal life, no boyfriend, and I don't have time to do any of that. [But] I am thinking, is this really worth it? And I'm not necessarily getting anywhere... and sometimes I think I make a lot of excuses, but it's been the practical thing of trying to work other things, unrealistic expectations and even lately I've thought maybe I should give up for a while... or maybe I haven't tried hard enough...

Leonie believes her creative aspirations are destabilising and that they leave her socially isolated, removed from any sense of place or belonging and a failure. She fails to recognise (or perhaps acknowledge) the structural forces that are imposed upon her. Like a 'good', postmodern, reflexive worker, she reflects on her working life and says, 'maybe I haven't tried hard enough', and either decides to continue or lets go. In not giving herself over totally to precarious labour, she is influenced by the fear of failing commonly experienced by working-class people (Ehrenreich, 1989).

Like Hayley, Leonie put her filmmaking ambitions before her personal life, but not her financial security. She has a mortgage but lacks a solid social life and is still a filmmaking aspirant. Fifteen years older than Hayley, the odds are still stacked against her, so it is getting harder to sustain the momentum. Leonie lacks the luxury of time and money to indulge her creative ambitions, aspirations and values, and feels isolated and a failure as a result. Without Tanya and Adam's youthfulness andchutzpah, like Tom, Leonie internalises some of the new economy rhetoric, believing that a lack of 'passionate commitment' has let her down. She tried her hand at becoming an embedded creative like Stuart, but lacked the technical knowledge required to practise

filmmaking. She worked in administration, but it too was a 'long-term temp job that ended'.

Leonie believes that her lack of effort has stymied her filmmaking ambitions, where in fact it is the residual effects of her class background that limit her. Her working-class roots are deeply embedded, despite her attempts to escape them. The fall-back career encouraged by her parents, for example, became a primary source of money and security. So it was not only the lack of social and cultural capital that limited her; her conservative upbringing (mortgage, office work, accounting degree, fall-back career) meant that she was hesitant to take risks. Consequently, she never did gain admission to bohemia:

I think the problem was that I wasn't meeting the right people; everything I did was kind of conservative and so [it was] conservative people that I was meeting. Maybe that's why you don't end up pursuing things, because you are not around people that pursue those things.

### The End of the Road

Unlike Amanda, Hayley and Tom, Mike is less prepared to endure insecurity or live as Tanya and Adam and embrace the double life. Like Annie, he has been commissioned to make films on government and limited private funding, but he is less inclined to use his skills to perform corporate media work. He is more like Joe and Melanie, who resist the compulsion to become multi-skilled, see through the creative industries façade and are pragmatic in their approach to working life. And Mike is unlike Leonie, in that he does not take

his underachievement as a sign of personal failing; instead, he holds policy, institutions and governments accountable.

Mike, who is Irish and learnt to make films in London, experienced long-term unemployment during the eighties (a time of political unrest in the UK) and so developed an ethical commitment to people in similar circumstances. He went on to be a youth worker and set up media training programs at the local youth arts centre and as part of the local council, for young people at risk. However, by doing this he felt as if he was 'wiping the arse of Tory Britain, and was part of the apparatus that was just a fuck up', mainly because he was essentially picking up the pieces of a broken system (corruption, debt, high interest rates, unemployment). He felt there was a problem in training disengaged, troubled youth to become filmmakers with little thought for their ongoing security and wellbeing, 'we were really committed to this but just got burnt out, the limits of what we were doing was becoming apparent'. So he set out to make films with troubled youth about their marginal experiences, an ambition that brought him to Australia.

After emigrating to Australia, Mike initially worked as an AV technician, and also put posters up on telegraph poles, 'what a shitty job that is'. He lived on film production funding and went to work as an independent filmmaker, continuing his work with young people from marginal communities. He relied heavily on social security and funding grants for the next fifteen years. He made a number of films with friends that brought him some acclaim, but he eventually recalibrated his filmmaking ambitions because:



I realised in 2008 that I had no saleable skills, and I couldn't carry on in that situation. It's just not viable, and when you've got kids and a mortgage... I suppose the long and the short of it is that filmmaking on its own isn't going to cut it and isn't ever going to be financially sustainable, and I realised that the only jobs I could go for or the area of work I could get cash money was in production management, which is a shit job, only uses a small amount of my skills and experience and I'd be a cog in the wheel...

He also feels the pressure of family responsibility and maturity, and realises that his life situation does not provide him with the space to live frugally or precariously. As a provider and father, he cannot afford to rely on intermittent income, nor can he indulge his creative ambitions. After investigating his options, he discovered that by doing a doctorate in creative arts he could study, receive a regular 'wage' (scholarship) and continue to make films. He sees it as an opportunity to recalibrate his skills, continue to produce films and make money:

... and I'm up against these kids coming out of college who work 14 hours a day and who have probably got more up-to-date computer skills than I got... so one of the big pluses with the doctorate is that I could continue to produce stuff, 'cause if I wasn't in a job where I could be creating stuff, I'd probably get frustrated and want to move on. So the idea would be that I [could] be involved on some level with creative work, [and work] with ideas and [work] in areas of screen production. Then there would be some element that would satisfy this creative urge...

So, despite feeling the need to give up, Mike also still feels compelled to make films, to 'satisfy this creative urge'. So he reclaims agency and tries to overcome the precarity by living off a scholarship and integrating filmmaking and study. By adding another string to his bow, he feels confident enough to no longer conceal his feelings, perceptions or beliefs for the sake of saving face and protecting his professional networks and filmmaking career. It is no longer worth the ethical compromise. Mike has neither the patience nor the

drive to pretend any longer and to uphold bogus social relations in the hope that they generate opportunities:

... so for filmmakers, it's just a fucking nightmare... there [are] way, way, way too many filmmakers for the amount of jobs there are... ... and I'd be better off flipping burgers... so I suppose in terms of being or having the financial luxury to be a filmmaker, well I've come to the end of the line (long pause), but on the other hand, it's fucking good to not have that pressure and stand back from it. And it's nice to know that and, because I am a professional knower of people, that [if] I decided out-and-out to no longer be a filmmaker and I was in a bar and there was this guy and I really [couldn't] stand him but normally I'd go say hello 'cause he's the kinda a guy that knows people, and I [would be able to think] nah, I don't have to talk to you today, ya fuckwit. I'm going to have a drink in peace...

Mike can no longer tolerate the fickleness of the industry, or the pretence that characterises it. He no longer feels compelled to invest in the relations that constitute his network. Unlike Hayley, he feels ready to burn his bridges. He finds consolation in not having to socialise with people who repulse him. While the doctorate ostensibly funnels him towards an academic career – also fractured, insecure, competitive – in reality he is probably too old to achieve success there. But the scholarship helps to keep the wolf from the door by providing him with enough income to sustain him, and also provides him with the opportunity to make a film without drawing on his friends, financiers, government funding and networks. As he states, he can finally drink his beer in peace.

## CONCLUSION

Whilst some people are prepared to accept the poverty that accompanies creative ambitions, others are not. To persevere as precarious workers, people need capital, in its various forms; they need to come from connected

families, and they need to overcome feeling pressured to network, to work day jobs, to negotiate skills, ambitions and identities, and to find ways to maintain a sense of occupational mobility alongside a yearning for stability. Despite the identities they adopt, few are far removed from their social and cultural backgrounds. Whether they become freelancers, permalancers, embedded creative, craftspeople (where the craft can be relegated to a hobby) or walk away, they internalise rhetoric and use it as a yardstick. Some get the urge to eventually dispel this rhetoric; others are prepared to play the game. As we have seen, in order to rationalise precarity, those who are compelled to express an interest in semi-related work/occupations (although for some this seems hollow) and blur the lines between reality and fantasy fare better than those who try to beat the system and insulate themselves and those who conserve their craft identities. Unless, of course, these latter people employ tactics and/or strategies such as a fatalistic approach to life in order to make sense of underachieving. Those with middle-class aspirations adopt personas that allow them to negotiate the conditions and uncertainty of precarious labour and that also allow them to be 'bodies in motion' (freelancers, permalancers, embedded creatives and those who walk away). Crafts workers must remain committed to their craft despite the threat of poverty. To some crafts workers, like Tanya and Adam, making money from filmmaking is not imperative; selling apples or working in a cafe are better options for making money. Tanya and Adam feel justified in their actions by arguing that the imperative to live precariously is the residual effect of their parents' lifestyles, which means that for both of them, the apple has not fallen too far from the tree.

Some people adapt to the needs of the creative industries by internalising their requirements; others refuse to conform. This is complicated by the fact that the creative industries provide sporadic work, competitive labour markets, financial stress and fickle networks. They do not provide the majority of people with concrete, tangible careers, or durable communities, and they require people to draw on their social and cultural resources. Those interviewees who were more inclined to indulge creative identities for long periods of time tended to embody middle-class attributes – wealth, social and cultural capital, and a vested interest in the postmodern ethos that maintains we can construct ourselves according to our desires and ambitions and transcend our social class. We are only ever limited by our imagination ... or so the story goes.

Interviewees from working-class backgrounds – with poor parents who performed manual labour and who communicated the importance of material wealth, financial security and social mobility – were more pragmatic in their approach to work. The working-class interviewees valued the practical application of their skills and considered the craft of filmmaking a trade that they felt that they were equipped and qualified, mainly through study, to perform apart from Tony who exemplified and experienced a tension between art and craft narratives and imperatives, whereas the middle-class interviewees valued a high cultural aesthetic and discussed the concept of craft in abstract terms. Whilst the working-class interviewees aspired to a type of middle-class indulgence by choosing to pursue a creative path, they lacked the financial capital required to tread water, the social capital required to

access work opportunities and industry-based social networks, the cultural capital to rely on their wits, which hindered their ability to overcome poverty and achieve social mobility through the work they do. By participating in creative labour, the working-class aspirants were at risk of reproducing their class status, not only in the paid work arena but in social life generally. How could they go on to be 'someone' when the opportunity to do so rarely presents itself? So, although most of the interviewees fit the precariat typology, the way in which they rationalised precarity was governed by their social and cultural backgrounds, which suggested much more nuanced and subjective responses. People's responses to precarity are shaped by their histories, their social and cultural backgrounds, their moral and ethical values and their memories. !

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to explore the idea of the disembedded, creative, unencumbered neo-liberal subject. I chose to explore this within the context of the creative industries and the creative career firstly because creative workers exemplify a move away from traditional notions of career to more informal precarious and intermittent employment, secondly because they are said to be 'iconic' in terms of the new economy (Gill, 2002; Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999; Ross, 2007) and thirdly because the biographical patterns of creative workers and creative careers reflect the structural force of postmodern, reflexive modernity. In this context the guiding ideas and institutional features of modernity and the industrial era (class, gender, family, community) are said to no longer hold sway (Beck, 2002: 203). Now cut adrift, rootless and unencumbered by traditional social life, people are (apparently) able to capitalise on opportunity and to make worthwhile use of the inevitable risks and precarious freedoms to which 'individualization' and reflexive modernity give rise (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

The findings of this thesis, however, bring the reflexive modernity thesis into question. The data presented here indicate that there are residual effects of class and gender that continue to guide people's career trajectories and identities in a traditional sense despite the erosion of traditional working-class masculinity. In tune with longstanding arguments about class and gender, several of the men interviewed for this research constructed their career narratives in terms that reflected a loyalty to manual, craft labour and to

community where the compulsion to be entrepreneurial, to network and to seek occupational validation from people outside of the craft community was resisted. Several of the women, however, were able to assimilate more readily to the performative and individual aspects of the creative career, notwithstanding the (valid) observations about the ways they are handicapped by the informal processes and bulimic work patterns of the new economy.

Both McRobbie (2009) and Eisenstein (2005) take this a little further by arguing that contemporary feminism has been shaped by neo-liberal thought, which has served to undermine female workplace equality and solidarity. Whilst both acknowledge that economic restructuring, female activism and other forms of social and cultural change have enabled more women to participate in the workforce, both scholars also argue that women continue to experience the regulating effects of gender inequality, as well as the effects of class, race and precarious labour. McRobbie (2009) argues that neo-liberal ideas such as 'empowerment' and 'choice' now constitute contemporary feminist ideas, which in turn conceal new modes of gender regulation. She argues that women continue to be objectified but problematically are embodying modes of objectification consequently adopting and performing a number of stereotypically feminine, sexualised roles. She argues that increased visibility in the workforce along with the consumerism requires women to become more (self-) reflexive, to be able to assess and critically analyse their lives, opportunities and constraints. She suggests that the need for this type of (self-) reflexivity reinstates gender hierarchies and breeds new forms of patriarchal power (McRobbie, 2009: 47). Consequently, she argues,

women enter into a “new sexual contract”, one which requires constant “self-styling” (McRobbie, 2009: 70) in order to reach capacity, success, attainment, enjoyment, entitlement and social mobility, but one which actually disempowers women as it makes them vulnerable to the forces of a patriarchal system, where bodily objectification and deportment as well as sexuality is couched in competition. Some varieties of contemporary feminism considers this type of sexualisation as instrumental to so-called female empowerment but rather McRobbie (2009) considers it central to current day forms of gender inequality. She argues that neo-liberal feminism or “post-feminism” as she calls it, breeds “intra-female aggression” or “aggressive individualism” (McRobbie, 2009: 5) which includes competitiveness, bitchiness and verbal violence (McRobbie, 2009: 127). In turn, this divides women, pitting them up against one another which leads to “disarticulation”, a concept borrowed from Stuart Hall but which McRobbie argues captures the undermining and disintegration of inter-generational, female solidarity (McRobbie, 2009: 27).

Similarly Eisenstein (2005) argues that contemporary feminism and female workforce participation have been (and continue to be) useful to capitalism. She argues that although second-wave feminism and service sector growth has enabled women’s workforce participation, both in the US and abroad (Eisenstein, 2005: 4), this has led to a decline in social security, the welfare state and the family wage (Eisenstein, 2005: 499). She argues that the dismantling of such welfare systems is beneficial to capitalism and US government economic policy, yet what this does is disempower women by removing social safety nets, breed inhumane workplace conditions particularly



in developing countries and force women to “pick up the slack” of what is essentially a patriarchal workplace system (Eisenstein, 2005: 507). Eisenstein argues that feminist ideology is used to reinforce patriarchy (2005: 509) so more problematic is the use of feminist ideas to perpetuate these types of conditions and paradigms but the outcome is the exploitation of women under the guise of capitalism, progress and empowerment.

Several of the women that I interviewed chose to live and work without strong community ties in an attempt to curb the structural force of precarious creative labour. Consequently they embodied the requirements of the creative career and narrated their identities in terms that revealed the shaping force of individualisation and their willingness to self-reinvent. Several of the men I interviewed resisted or lacked an ability to perform these requirements. Further investigation into subjective postmodern experiences of gender and class is required to fully substantiate these claims. I may have provided evidence from only a small sample of interviewees yet the argument that I present provides some insight into the ways that men and women operate and experience the conditions of reflexive modernity and the creative career differently and unequally. My intention was not to make definitive claims about class and gender but rather to indicate that there are gender and class norms that continue to operate at the heart of society and work, and that these norms have the capacity to guide people’s trajectories and sense of self.

In *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Florida offers a bright view of working in the creative industries, but overlooks the processes of exclusion to which creative

work gives rise. Where once upward mobility was achieved via education and qualifications, and more often than not, acceptance into a community of practice, today and within the context of the creative industries and the creative career it is networks of social capital that enable job prospects and careers. Media representations and creative industries discourse seek to glorify rags to riches stories, suggesting the importance of individualism and the self-reflexive individual. In this setting, as Peck states, summarizing Florida, people who lack 'creative capacity', particularly from the working class, must find ways to 'pull themselves up by their creative bootstraps' (Peck, 2005: 757) and to 'look on and learn' (Peck, 2005: 746). It has been a central argument of this thesis, however, that the ability to participate in creative on-the-job learning and work experiences is hampered by a lack occupational opportunity and exclusive network structure. Even volunteer work and the unpaid internship are hard to come by.

So in the context of precarious work and the creative industries individualisation and reflexive modernity have not released people from the structures of society or traditional social roles as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) suggest. Rather, as I have found, the residual effects of class and gender continue to shape people's biographical narratives and trajectories of career. Grounded in cultures of learning and labour these class and gender dimensions limit people's capacity to be free agents, but to also structure their vocational identities according to postmodern neo-liberal requirements. These class and gender dimensions are not easily translatable into the forms of presentation of self required of new economy subjects and post-industrial

society. For working-class men (but also to a lesser degree working-class women) this is problematic because as Walkerdine (2003) argues the qualities ascribed to femininity are central to post-industrial working life as well as the need to 'make oneself over' in order to achieve social mobility.

Several of the men interviewed for this research resisted refashioning their identities to suit different occupational contexts and network arrangements. They struggled to dissimulate their ambitions, to ingratiate themselves to external gatekeepers, and to perform a sense of self that is guided by context, by individual and occupational needs and by neo-liberal narratives of individualism and reflexive modernity and the self-made career. Those that did not, (Jack for example), partook in ongoing networking and study, making himself over each time he begun a new course or faced a potential networking opportunity. Walkerdine argues that this compulsion to 'makeover' objects including the self is a feminised practice and is visible in working-class women who aspire to middle-class lifestyle (2003: 242). The successful reflexive individual 'negotiates, chooses, succeeds in the array of education and retraining forms that form the new 'lifelong learning' and the 'multiple career trajectories' that have replaced the linear hierarchies of the education system of the past and the jobs for life of the old economy' (Walkerdine, 2003: 240). The men that resisted dissimulating their ambitions or refashioning their identities or constantly reskilling or retraining either pursued aesthetic values away from institutional contexts (like Adam) or craft values within communities and workshop arrangements (like Peter, Luke and Stuart). Despite their resistance they nonetheless found ways to manage and rationalise their

creative careers because they possessed social, cultural or economic capital or a combination of each.

So although reflexive modernity and processes of individualisation release people from particular narrative scripts of class and gender, and despite the erosion of traditional labour and leisure lifestyles, notions of working-class masculinity continue to shape the identities of several of the men discussed here. Peter, for example, connects the mechanical work he performs building animatronic puppets to the experience he had watching his father pull apart and rebuild car engines. Tony has a quiet respect for the craft skills of the teacher who teaches him old, pre-digital methods of film editing and Joe believes that credentials and a commitment to the craft should prepare him for work and acceptance into a CoP. Although many of the male interviewees were searching to escape the monotony of Fordist work and masculine trade labour, they made sense of their narratives through a masculine working-class lens.

In post-industrial society the belief that people are no longer governed by external regulations or structures, by traditional class and gender constraints (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) is not only made questionable by the continued existence and experience of inequality and exclusion (Christopherson, 2008; McRobbie, 2002a, 2002b; Hesmondalgh and Baker, 2011), but also by the way that new economy ways of working require specific feminized practices Walkerdine (2003) within the context of competition and an open marketplace (McRobbie, 2002a). Working-class men in such settings

have been displaced. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim argue that reflexive modernity has destabilized traditional notions of class and gender, yet Walkerdine has found that the very essence of neo-liberalism and the self-made individual reinforces class and gender distinctions. The research that I have conducted, although provisional in nature, offers a variation to this argument in that I have found that women not only deal better with the need to be reflexive than several of the working-class men that I interviewed, but also respond differently to the existence of competitive structures. The ability to truly be a free agent and negate the complexities and 'risks' (Beck, 1992) of reflexive modernity require people to be footloose: not committed to craft, to community, to family, to a trade and to communal identity. The working-class men interviewed were less inclined towards such individualism. As was apparent in Hayley's narrative she sought to distinguish herself from other members of the university intern group whereas Peter, Joe, and David identified with their communities and their peers.

Several of my male interviewees were the children of manual labourers and so were more inclined to value the security of a regular income and stable hours as well as the work performed by their parents. David was following his father and aspired to a building career before he decided to try his hand at filmmaking and Tom was quite proud of the fact that his parents were manual workers because it suited his belief that he had transcended his class background. He was different to them. He was a university lecturer, a producer and had won various film awards. But when people like Joe, Tony and David tried to construct their identities to suit the requirements of the

postmodern career, they only came to make sense of their life worlds through narratives that reflected allegory. But when people like Joe, Tony and David tried to construct their identities to suit the requirements of the postmodern career, they only came to make sense of their life worlds through narratives through allegory such as 'the Aussie battler', 'the Australian dream' or the 'struggling artist' and/or stories that highlighted one's humble beginnings and/or their ability (or not) to overcome working-class stigmas. In other words, they turned to myths to make sense of their underachievement, career struggle and working-class lives. What became apparent was a schism between who they were and who they aspired to become.

The working-class men, many of who were pragmatic in their approach to working life, experienced pressure and difficulty in piecing together the fractured parts of a fragmented working life. More than Hayley, Amanda and Tanya, these men struggled to mend the fractures, to embody a blind faith in the prospect of success, and to construct a narrative whole out of myriad potentials that postmodern life apparently brings about (Giddens, 1991; Lash and Urry, 1994). Rather than articulating a convincing narrative of self, they tended to convey a narrative imbued with doubt and pragmatism.

The desire to be part of work-based communities was common amongst the men I interviewed for whom full-time jobs and stable careers were difficult to come by. However, they found the networks that insulate these communities difficult to penetrate. Those who lack the chutzpah required to insinuate themselves into groups or to perform the role-playing this type of networking

required – men like Tony, David and Joe for example – found themselves on the margins of both the core and periphery of film and television labour markets, and also socially marginal in a more general sense. Tony, David, Joe and Peter found comfort in the workshop communities and in the places where they were located: the editing suite or art room. In these places, they could be themselves.

The men more than the women attributed their occupational marginalisation to network exclusion, and the tendency of their peers to protect their networks, their jobs and their sources of information. This behaviour is not conducive to the codes of conduct that underlie craft communities, CoPs and masculine notions of labour. Their aspirations and values were informed by traditionally masculine, Fordist modes of occupational organisation – trade and apprenticeship traditions incompatible with postmodernity.

Many other researchers (Gill, 2002, 2008; 2010; McRobbie, 1991, 2004, 2009; Christopherson, 2008; Ursell, 2006) have found that women experience marginalisation and under-representation in a largely patriarchal labour force and production system. I agree with this research but I also provide an important caveat to the larger argument about retraditionalisation. Women commonly find it difficult to resolve the tension between a commitment to home and family life, largely reflective of tradition, and the need to be agile, mobile individuals able to work in accordance with the conditions of flexible labour and postmodernity. However, the women I interviewed were better able to network than the working-class men, mainly because in order to straddle

the needs of both public and private life and to possibly attain work/life balance, they have always felt a compulsion toward individualism and to be released from traditional narratives of femininity and gender: too big a commitment to community and craft would only undermine their ability to focus on family and personal needs; too big a commitment to domestic life would compromise their ability to act on a whim, to seize fleeting opportunity and to work flexibly and be on-call.

So in other words, women have always had to deal with precarious labour conditions and workplace inequality. This willingness to dissimulate or distance themselves from a fixed sense of self, and to therefore, effectively perform post-Fordist work and embody the narratives of the new economy comes from having to protect and defend one's occupational position and worth, but doing so with fewer opportunities at hand (Gill, 2010). Kate described herself as more versatile and responsive to the possibility of becoming the protégée, Leonie's ambition was to be being recognised, discovered. The difficulty for most women is that creative industries work consists largely of sub-contracting, freelancing and permalancing, and such conditions can stop women earning enough to sufficiently support themselves. As Christopherson (2003, 2008) and McRobbie (1999, 2011) and Gill, (2008) have extensively argued, women remain marginal, under-represented and underpaid in contemporary and creative workforces.

The presence of the term creativity in career discourse is used to justify increased labour market competition, short-term employment, a lack of union



representation and workers' rights, a shift in employer/employee relations and the demise of institutional support (Oakely, 2006). It suggests the prospect of emancipatory work, yet fails to deliver jobs. Those interviewed for this research, adopted narratives of art, craft and/or career to make sense of this disjuncture, and it was these narrative tropes that indicated the degree to which gender, class and family ties continued to exert residual influence (Beck, 2000; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

So the idea of craft in creative industries, which has reappropriated this as discourse, harmonises with an experience of alienated youth. Tony, David, Jack all found refuge in art rooms, as students and in youth groups. By contrast with the model of the postmodern career, the craft impulse was embodied by working-class men, many of whom desired stability, and yearned for peer recognition rather than credentials, and who aspired to work in workshops or CoPs. The craft impulse, which at first was closely associated with traditional notions of masculinity, is now affiliated with more contemporary notions of women's work, conflicts with the idea of the flexible worker and the unfolding of the career where institutional employment is merely a momentary stopping point for a larger biographical narrative/plot. The craft community with its own internal value system harmonises with the operative structures found in subcultures, which on a number of occasions in this thesis were indicated as being the impetus behind creative ambitions.

This thesis set out to explore the ways that reflexive modernity and the creative career are experienced and embodied. In an attempt to become

autonomous beings, the men and women interviewed in the context of this research tried to find ways to overcome precarity and to live out their creative ambitions. The previous chapter described the various occupational forms (freelancer, permalancer and embedded creative) that several of the interviewees adopted in an attempt to realise their creative careers/goals. This was dictated by a commitment to art, craft and/or career values, which in the context of postmodernity revealed inherent class and gender differences. The well-adjusted new economy assimilate is a flexible autonomous subject who, through processes of self-reflexivity, is required to cope with constant change in work, income and lifestyle and with constant insecurity. The ways in which people deal with such demands were made explicit by the narratives presented here and their inherent class and gender dimensions. Although further investigation is necessary, I maintain that class and gender continues to influence the capacity of creative aspirants to take on risks and provide resources in the context of the creative career. In the quest for equality and inclusion, it is imperative that researchers continue to question neo-liberal assumptions of what it is like to be an 'individual', 'freed' from traditional ties of class and gender, because not everyone finds fulfillment in this version of freedom.

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