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Book Section:

Is Media Work Good Work? A Case Study of Television Documentary

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To what extent is the work involved in media production *good work*? What is the quality of

working life in the media industries? These are surely vital questions for anyone concerned with

media production, and yet they have been neglected amidst the boom in studies of creative or

cultural labor in recent years. Many recent critics have rightly pointed to problematic aspects of

media labor, and we explore some of these below. But we shouldn't forget that there are real

reasons to think of media work as attractive, satisfying and rewarding, at least some of the time.

In one research interview, for example, a camera operator spoke of the pride and satisfaction he

gained from work that involved 'doing really good camerawork that really expresses the situation

and expresses it really honestly'.[1] Among a number of examples, he talked about a documentary

he had helped make about air traffic controllers at New York's John F. Kennedy Airport. Filming

was taking place in the air traffic control tower, and one of the controllers there was 'quite a

plane spotter, and he quite often went out on the runway anyway, so I said "why don't we do

some stuff out of the tower?"' Simon's instinct was to get closer to the planes. Although the

sense of planes being 'dots on the screen' was 'part of the story' Simon thought it would be a

good idea to get closer to these 'great big lumbering beasts' and to 'actually get down on the

runway with this guy because he was a fantastic talker'. Simon explained what then happened:

> We got down there and then this amazing fog came in and it was one of the most
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> extraordinary sequences ever and the guy was amazing. I thought 'that's fantastic', a plane
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> was coming through the mist and taking off when it was almost not supposed to be, and
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> you kept seeing great big jumbos lumbering by about 30, 40 feet away. We were really
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> close, and with this guy, these big, big planes lumbering by, and his dialogue, it was just

amazing. I thought 'we've really got this right. We're on a winning streak here. Because we've persevered and because we've tried so hard and because we cared so much, we're now reaping the rewards and our luck is in'. Just after this happened, there was a cloudburst and it was all [over] in a few hours, and the next thing the planes started taking off again and going up into the sky because the mist eventually cleared with this rainstorm, and I was getting these amazing things called vortices, which is where you get these amazing capes of mist and things surrounding the planes. Although that's been filmed before by people, even the air traffic control people said those shots were really amazing. The planes were taking off with these great capes on them and you could just see the wind flow, like little wind tunnels. We went back to the hotel and we looked at some of it on the monitor and we were just so happy. We thought 'yeah, we really did it; today we really did it. If we don't live another day'… and we got there, for once we got it right… Just to occasionally get it really right and to really hit the nail on the head and actually just express something perfectly so you can walk down the street on air and think 'I got that right'… There's a lot that goes into that to get to that situation, but if you do get there, boy, it's satisfying.

There is delight here not only in capturing the planes close up, a matter of unusual access, but also pride in having captured on camera striking and unusual footage. Simon quietly includes reference to the admiration and recognition of the air traffic controllers – perhaps suggesting a proxy for the audience that might eventually see the film – and that of his collaborating peers. Although of course his story involves an element of self-aggrandisement, it also conveys the shared, co-operative pleasures possible when good creative work is achieved.

Simon's account allows us to consider the issue of good work we raised at the beginning of the chapter in terms of the individual experience of one man, one worker. Yet quality of work is also

a matter of social justice. For access to such work is highly unequal, and is only possible under certain circumstances. This makes it important to consider what precisely constitutes good jobs, occupations and careers. And if we are particularly concerned with media production, as this book is, then we need to consider whether media jobs are good ones.

We explore these issues in the following way. In the first section of this chapter, we discuss a number of significant critiques of media work that have appeared in recent years. During this time here has been a remarkable rise in studies of creative or cultural labor. It is now more than reasonable to speak of a turn to cultural work in the social sciences and humanities. Much of this research has emerged from media production studies. We want to examine the normative assumptions underlying some recent accounts, and we also want to address the implications of such accounts for constructing a *politics* of creative media work, including the kind of emancipatory social action necessary to make access to good work, including good creative work, more equal and just. This, we claim, needs to be a central element of the analysis of production in media studies. In the second part of the chapter, we develop a model for the analysis of good and bad work in general, which might be applied to creative media work. In doing so, we bring together the analysis of media production with the analysis of work in general, drawing on sociology, philosophy and social theory. In our view, this is a long overdue move in media, communication and cultural studies. In the third and final section, we draw on qualitative empirical work conducted in the independent television sector in the UK and Germany to analyze some of these issues. We show the complex co-existence of positive and negative features in one particular media occupation.

Critical Analysis of Creative Labour

The problem raised by a number of recent critical studies of media work is whether the attractiveness of media work might be a kind of seduction, which encourages workers to accept

unjust and/or exploitative labour markets and working conditions. This in particular has been a line pursued in what might broadly be called 'cultural studies' approaches to media work. A large part of the motivation here has been to counter some of the complacency surrounding creative and new media work on the part of policy-makers (perhaps especially creative industries policy) and some of their academic cheerleaders who extol the benefits of creativity and entrepreneurship. These cultural studies-influenced writers have drawn, to varying degrees, on sociology and social theory concerning work and organizations for their examinations of new media and creative labor. In some analyses, the influence of poststructuralist studies of work and organizations has been particularly apparent.[2]

Gillian Ursell's (2000) early contribution was innovative because it drew attention to the potential importance of ideas, developed in other fields, concerning how 'subjective desires for self-actualisation' can in many cases be harnessed to business goals (Rose, 1999, p. 145). Ursell therefore was drawing attention to the particularly high levels of personal investment in media work – something that had increasingly been noted by sociologists of work and organizations concentrating on other fields (such as Kunda, 1992 on high-tech engineering) but which, somewhat surprisingly, had hardly been applied to the media industries at all.[3]

Discussing how notions of creativity, talent and work are being redefined in those burgeoning micro-businesses of the cultural sector associated with young people, including fashion and design, but also entertainment industries such as clubbing, recording and magazine journalism, Angela McRobbie (2002a, p. 523) echoed Ursell in pointing to the utopian aspirations involved in the 'attempt to make-over the world of work into something closer to a life of enthusiasm and enjoyment', and in focusing on how this leads to a situation where, when things go wrong, young people entering these creative worlds of work can feel they only have themselves to blame. In this respect, McRobbie usefully broadened the study of creative work to include a wider set of

conditions and experiences, including the way in which aspirations to and expectations of autonomy could lead to disappointment, disillusion and 'self-blaming'. She also pointed to the gendered aspects of these conditions, with women now expected to find full-time work, uninterrupted by family commitments, satisfying and enriching (McRobbie, 2002a, p. 521). The context for McRobbie's critique (see also McRobbie, 2002b) was the then UK Labour government's creative industries policy, and their general valorization of labor, where 'work comes to mean much more than just earning a living; it incorporates and takes over everyday life' (McRobbie, 2002b, p. 99). McRobbie was usefully questioning the 'ideal of self-expressive work' (2002a: 101) and its place in Labour's advocacy of 'a new youth-driven meritocracy', involving a labor of love and self-exploitation.[4]

Similar issues have also been explored by other researchers in relation to work in the IT sector, forms of work sometimes unhelpfully blurred with creative labor in governments' conceptions of creative industries. Andrew Ross (2003, p. 9) observed how, in the eyes of a new generation of business analysts in the 1980s, Silicon Valley 'appeared to promote a humane workplace not as a grudging concession to demoralized employees but as a valued asset to production'. 'New economy' firms, he argued, aimed to provide work cultures that 'embraced openness, cooperation and self-management' (ibid). But this, showed Ross, was closely linked to long working hours and a serious blurring of the line between work and leisure. Whilst the dot.com working environments of the 1990s offered 'oodles of autonomy along with warm collegiality' they also enlisted 'employees' freest thoughts and impulses in the service of salaried time' (Ross, 2003, p. 17, 19). Also writing about new media work, Rosalind Gill (2002), in a study of European freelance new media workers, found evidence that features of the work that seemed superficially attractive, such as its informality and high levels of autonomy, were in fact particularly problematic for women because of the lack of clear criteria for evaluating work and especially because of the difficulties such informality caused when seeking new contracts.

More recently, a significant intervention has been made by Matt Stahl, who, more than most of these cultural studies writers, brings systemic political economic questions to bear on creative labor and, in so doing, advances debates about the relationships between capitalism, autonomy, self-realization and creative labor in intriguing and often valuable ways. Stahl's starting point is how 'the personal and political-economic dimensions of the alienation and domination characteristic of capitalist society appear in attenuated forms in popular music' (Stahl, 2006, p. 1). This combination of attention to both political economy and subjectivity is helpful. Drawing on the cultural industries tradition of political economy, Stahl recognizes that various historical forces protect the creative worker from the full force of alienation and expropriation identified as features of capitalism by many of its Marxist critics, most notably the contradictions arising from creativity-commerce relations. This, along with the attachment of ideals of self-realization to 'artistic' careers, makes music and other creative labor *desirable*.

Stahl's aim is to puncture this apparent desirability. In a fascinating range of cultural sites, Stahl sees evidence of intense struggles over the value and meaning of musical production. Rock ideology provides discourses of authenticity that superficially allow for musicians to struggle against capitalism in the realm of culture, even pop acts such as the Monkees, but this discourse is used by television producers to capture the identification and desires of audiences. The *Idol* television franchise shows provide narratives of meritocracy, offering drastic warnings to those who would seek to aspire beyond their abilities, whereas contemporary rockumentary, exemplified in the film *DIG!* (2002), offers moral tales about the dangers of taking bohemian excess too far. In all these cases, Stahl claims, we can see signs of the way in which authenticity and authorship are central to accumulation through cultural production. This is particularly apparent in battles between record companies and artists over contracts and legislation concerning creative labor and the rights deriving from it. Just as the primitive accumulation of

modern Europe enclosed common land in order to render it private property, copyright provides 'a new, inexhaustible common stock out of which new productive property can be generated and a new class of capitalists established' (Stahl, 2006, p. 224).

Stahl's account explains these roles for subjectivity, autonomy and authenticity in historical terms. The original primitive accumulation of medieval Europe (extended to other realms by European imperialism; see Harvey, 2003) forced production out of the family into waged employment outside the home. For Stahl, borrowing from Zaretsky (1976), this created a separation between work and life, with the latter 'more free' than the former, and this helped to create more personal forms of subjectivity by compelling men and women to look to themselves for meaning and purpose. Eventually, as mental labor becomes increasingly incorporated into production in the twentieth century, such 'personal' subjectivity became more important – even central - to capitalism. At the same time, however, the historical compacts between businesses, states and labor, where the latter traded in autonomy and ownership for decent pay and working conditions, were relinquished. Stahl suggests that the incorporation of subjectivity into capitalism acts as a kind of pacifying device in the era of neoliberalism and that popular music's democratic promise that 'you can do this too' is a particularly salient way in which 'liberal society' (a term that seeks to cover both capitalism and democracy) promises an end to alienation and appropriation by promising independence and autonomy (Stahl, 2006, p. 23). This has an important economic as well as a cultural aspect. Musicians seem to bypass corporate control by commodifying their identity as property which can then earn monopoly rents through the copyright system. But this apparent autonomy masks alienation and domination. Only a very few musicians really gain the autonomy and ownership associated with authorship; most musicians operate 'below the line' in ways that render them little better than wage slaves. Stahl suggests that the desirability of creative labor is a version of the way culture serves to affirm capitalist societies.

There are two important theoretical strands underlying Stahl's analysis. One is a concern, derived from post-structuralism and autonomist Marxism with 'the production of subjectivity', (Read, 2003) which might be better called 'the productivity of subjectivity': the way that certain modes of subjectivity are necessary and central to a given mode of production. This is apparent in the way that discourses of authenticity seem to offer a challenge to capitalism, permitting a certain amount of conflict in workplaces (possibly a distinctively popular music version of creativity-commerce relations). Ultimately, though, these discourses are presented by Stahl as sustaining new variants of capitalism, or at least masking alienation and domination. This understanding derives from the other main theoretical strand in his research, which is a very strong critique of the profoundly undemocratic nature of the relations between employers and employees.[5]

The debate about creative work

In a variety of different forms, then, these cultural studies-influenced critics of media production work have found autonomy and self-realization to be tied to conditions such as self-exploitation and self-blaming. In the strongest version of such critiques, involving political-economic as well as subjective processes, self-realization becomes a systemic requirement. These critiques have been central to recent analysis of media work and have been very valuable.[6]

Yet there is an absence in this work. In an important contribution, Mark Banks (2007) has partly endorsed the pessimism of many such accounts of creative work (and also, to some extent, accounts from critical theory and political economy perspectives) but has also qualified that pessimism, drawing on his own empirical work and on a range of social theorists. Drawing on the work of Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gersheim (2001) on individualization, Banks finds hope that transformations in modern life have enhanced the possibilities for social action and reflection. He refers to the views of Scott Lash and John Urry (1994) that the cultural industries themselves have provided flows of signs that have enabled genuine reflexivity and independent

creativity in modern societies. This is a world away from Adorno and Horkheimer's 'culture industry' thesis (1979/1947) of standardization and pseudo-democratization. Banks sees evidence of such individualization and reflexivity in a number of aspects of contemporary cultural production.

First, says Banks, there are widespread signs that 'social creativity and independent artistic production are actually on the increase' (Banks, 2007, p. 102) and a willingness to explore counter-rational and radical creative impulses remains alive. The aesthetic realm 'continues to provide resources and inspiration to a whole range of social actors, not just artists and creative cultural workers' (Banks, 2007, p. 103). Regardless of whether or not this realm is a creation of bourgeois society, a practical belief in it has proven persistently inspiring. This is linked to a broader democratization of the aesthetic domain, which provides capital with new opportunities for commodification, but it also broadens the constituency of people who can live a life governed less by accumulation than the pursuit of aesthetic goals. Related to this, Banks (2007, p. 108ff) turns to the Aristotelian concept of *practices* to argue that the pursuit of internal rewards continues to provide a very important part of the motivation of cultural producers. A practice, as defined by the philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre, is a coherent and complex form of cooperative human activity 'through which goods[7] internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended' (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 187). Practices need to be sustained and of sufficient size to include numerous sub-activities. Planting turnips is not an example of a practice in this sense, says MacIntyre, but farming is. Kicking or throwing a football with skill is not a practice, but football is. But many activities are practices: 'arts, sciences, games, politics, the making and sustaining of family life' (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 188).

The notion of *standards of excellence* is extremely important. MacIntyre is defending the ethics of pursuing excellence. *Goods internal to that form of activity* is a crucial phrase too. Internal goods or rewards 'are such that their character can only be identified by reference to the specific nature of the practice concerned and its particular standards' (Keat, 2000, p. 23). External goods or rewards are by contrast not dependent on the nature of the practice through which it is achieved. These include money, power, prestige and status.

Banks asks his readers to consider the possibility that there is enough variation within the institutions of contemporary capitalism that practices might endure in modern cultural production.[8] Internal and external rewards may not be quite so mutually contradictory as is implied by perspectives that see markets as necessarily eroding quality.[9] What's more, practices can flourish at the expense of market-led imperatives. Firms can act as profit-satisfiers rather than profit-maximizers, summed up in the idea of doing it for the love and not the money. This can lead to self-exploitation, but it has another side too, encouraging resistance to the excessive pursuit of external rewards. Banks (2007, p. 120) also claims that moral systems of trust, honesty, obligation and fairness remain present in contemporary capitalism, and he provides examples of the resilience of social and cultural values amongst the creative workers he interviewed in previous research. Later in his book, he (2007, p. 184) elaborates on this view by suggesting that we need to think of creativity-commerce or art-commerce relations in terms of a triad, composed of orientations towards creativity, commerce and the social. The idea here is that such a conception would allow us to consider the degree to which creative workers seek not only to live an aestheticized life, but also actively seek to intervene in social relations. Political and aesthetic goals may often be in tension, in that many may feel that pursuing morality through artistic production undermines aesthetic and 'practice'-like aspects of production; others may be looking for some kind of synthesis of the two.

Banks's contribution is a valuable one, because it suggests the possibility of a more balanced appraisal of the relationships between subjectivity and creative labor than that provided by many of the cultural-studies critics. So too does the work of Georgina Born. In an essay on the way in which aesthetic value has been treated in television studies, Born (2000) trenchantly critiques debates about quality in television for their relativist unwillingness to adjudicate between producer and audience discourses of quality, and she argues for the importance of analyzing the discourses of media professionals. In particular, Born suggests that researchers should attend to

> a category of specifically media intellectuals whose task is to mediate the generic dynamics that bridge the past, present and future of media output. Their skill is in the art of judging how to progress a set of generic possibilities in given conditions, and how to balance the enhancement of the entertainment, pleasure and education of the audience. (Born, 2000, p. 406)

Crucially, this puts emphasis on the *positive possibilities* of cultural production, by asking when its powers might be used 'responsibly, creatively, inventively in given conditions, and when not' (ibid). It also suggests the importance of theorizing agency, reflexivity and value. In later work, based on her own ethnographic research, Born analyzed the 'situated ethics and aesthetics' of BBC television producers in documentary, drama and current affairs (Born, 2004, p. 84-7; see also Born, 2002). Born does not claim that reflexivity always results in better television; rather, she argues that a key analytical task is to consider how the reflexivity, intentionality and agency of cultural producers conditions the creativity and innovation possible within a given medium. This task in turn she locates within the context of genre theory, stressing the difference between various attitudes to generic change: 'nostalgic repetition, the rich mining of the familiar, which may itself be achieved in more and less inventive ways'; 'a self-conscious exceeding of the

previous horizons of expectation'; and the production of generic stasis, involving the entrenching of given codes (Born, 2000, p. 421).

The tensions between the pessimistic accounts discussed above, and Banks and Born's critical insistence on a more balanced appraisal brings us to the fundamental problem raised at the beginning of this chapter: *to what extent is it possible to do good work in the media industries?* For if the high levels of autonomy and the enhanced possibilities for self-realization that some sociologists (e.g. Sosteric, 1996; Ezzy, 1997) have identified as features of good work, and which seem to be present in the media industries, lead in the end only to self-exploitation, then these supposedly desirable forms of labor look bleak indeed. Is creative labor, then, really barely-disguised 'bad work'? Might it even be a particularly modern form of bad work, where the subject's desires for autonomy and self-realization become folded into systems of discipline and accumulation? It seems to us that these debates rely fundamentally on assumptions about and interpretations of the subjective experiences of workers, and it seems only right to listen and observe creative workers reflecting on their work, while taking into account the probability that their relationship to their own experience will often be opaque. In order to address these questions, we need to develop and draw on theorized, historicized accounts of the forces shaping cultural production And as we have explained, an important 'intermediate' level, between the subjective experiences of workers and the historical and systemic forces structuring those experiences – and in turn being at times structured by them – is that of the organization: of how work in the cultural industries is managed, co-ordinated and divided. These elements are discussed in greater detail elsewhere (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010). In the remainder of this chapter, though, two different strategies are employed. The first is to outline an approach, developed more fully elsewhere, that might clarify the normative dimensions of creative media labor, in other words that might clarify what the relations between attractive and problematic elements of media work. The second is to draw on qualitative and ethnographic empirical analysis

of subjective experience to illustrate some of the ways in which a particular site of labor combines good and bad work in complex ways.

Toward a Model of Good and Bad Work

We are not alone in considering explicitly what might constitute good and bad work. Writers have used various terms for 'good' and 'bad', and have developed various frameworks. Randy Hodson (2001), in his invaluable summary of numerous ethnographic studies, uses the concept of *dignity* as the basis of his assessment of contemporary work, and he outlines ways in which workers experience challenges to their dignity: mismanagement and abuse, overwork, incursions of autonomy, and problems of participation and involvement. We draw on Hodson's useful deliberations, and comment on his categorization below. His concept of dignity is a valuable one, but we feel that simply to use the terms 'good work' and 'bad work' allows us more flexibility, and to cover the normative ground more easily.[10]

A helpful and comprehensive discussion of research on 'good jobs' is provided by the economist Francis Green, in his book *Demanding Work* (2006). Green identifies six aspects of job quality: skill levels (because skills are 'the means by which people have the potential for self-fulfillment', Green, 2006, p. 16); work effort or intensity; personal discretion over job tasks and participation in workplace decisions; pay; low risks and security (in terms of health and safety, and job tenure); and job satisfaction and affective well-being at work. Green is dealing almost entirely with 'objective' aspects of work, in the sense that they would widely be agreed to be quantifiable and measurable.[11] It will become apparent that some of his categories overlap with ours, which focus on subjective experience. Leaving such issues aside, we repeat that our concern is primarily with the exploration of subjective states and people's reflections about them (and on forces that might

shape such experiences); and this is best done through the kind of qualitative work that we have undertaken.

In his 1964 book *Alienation and Freedom*, the sociologist Robert Blauner took up the concept of alienation suggested by Marx and Durkheim, and attempted to provide a more careful specification of it, so that it might act as the basis for research.[12] In our view, Blauner's discussion remains useful, because it is an unusually bold and transparent effort to develop normative concepts for the analysis of work. What's more, Blauner was helpfully clear that the concept of alienation had only an indirect relationship to questions of human happiness. In his view, work was rarely experienced as either entirely miserable or totally pleasurable. This is surely right. Our discussion will look primarily at elements of good work understood in terms of *the experiences of individual workers*. By good experiences, we do not mean happiness, joy or even pleasure – though these may be fleetingly part of the experience of work. Labor often involves an element of struggle, difficulty and compulsion, even for those who 'like' or 'enjoy' their work. To seek happiness in work might be to invite disappointment, as it inevitably involves frustration and struggle. We need other conceptions of good and bad work (or unalienated and alienated work, in Blauner's terms) beyond happiness and pleasure.

Blauner provided a thoughtful outline of four types of work alienation that he felt were of particular significance in modern societies: powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation and self-estrangement. There are problems and contradictions in his categorization, his choice of terms and his discussion. We point to these in what follows, and develop our own conceptualization, building on Blauner's thinking, and that of other social scientists and philosophers who have studied work in the interim.

An alternative word for the freedom and control that Blauner sees as the positive opposite pole of powerlessness is *autonomy*. Hodson discusses the importance of autonomy, which he feels to be particularly central for professional and craft workers whose jobs 'depend on the daily exercise of autonomy in relation to tools, techniques, and work priorities' (Hodson, 2001, p. 140). Workers in these *relatively* powerful and high status forms of work often have a very uneasy relationship with managers, and greater power in relation to management than many other workers. Hodson also states that such workers often report greater levels of job satisfaction and meaning, and greater levels of creativity at work, than other types of occupation. Many creative workers, we will argue, can be thought of as craft and professional workers, and seek forms of autonomy – though with crucial differences deriving from the particular status of aesthetic autonomy. Autonomy is such a difficult and disputed concept that we must refer readers to discussions elsewhere (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010). Nevertheless, it is a crucial normative concept for work as a whole (not just the professional and craft workers that Hodson discusses) and perhaps especially for creative work as part of media production.

Turning to the concepts of meaninglessness and meaningfulness, Blauner seems to use these in two different and rather narrow ways. One refers to the worker's sense of the whole process of production, or her lack of it. But it is not clear here whether Blauner's main concern is the effects of this on a worker's individual autonomy (that they become unable to exercise discretion because their own role is strictly delimited) or on their level of absorption and interest (the job is *boring* because its relation to the whole is not understood, or felt to be of concern). The former aspects are best dealt with under autonomy. The latter are important aspects of work. It may be best actually to use terms such as *interest*, involvement and absorption, or detachment and boredom, rather than meaningfulness and meaninglessness, which might best be reserved for the second way in which Blauner uses them, to refer to awareness of the purpose or, better still, the social and cultural value of products, and linked to that, the goals of the organization producing

them. We think it is best to deal with issues concerning good work in relation to the social and cultural value of *products* separately from process, and we return to this question of value briefly in the next section (see also Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010).

Blauner's discussion of isolation is marked by an appeal to the value of integration into a community that is not unusual for US sociology of the middle twentieth century. One danger of Blauner's take on this is how easily integration into work organizations might, under profit-making systems, become a way of encouraging a false sense of unity among workers, in the interests of profit-maximizing firms. Yet, if we modify our conceptualization of it, it may be possible to talk of isolation as a feature of bad work. The desirable opposite of isolation might be better conceived as *sociality* rather than membership, and the merits of sociality might be conceived of in terms of the values of friendship, solidarity, co-operation and *shared* enjoyment and interest. Hodson writes that co-workers 'provide the social fabric that is often crucial for meaning at work' and 'a significant line of both formal and informal defense against managerial fiat' (Hodson, 2001, p. 18). This conceptualization of isolation and sociality is developed elsewhere.[13]

Most problematic of all is Blauner's conception of self-estrangement. This merges three different aspects of good and bad work: discussion of the 'alienating' experience of boredom or the 'non-alienating' experience of interest or absorption; questions regarding the relationship of people's work to self-esteem; and their sense of fulfillment and development over time. We have already mentioned above that the first of these, interest or lack of it, is a separate feature of our model. The second element in Blauner's discussion of self-estrangement, *self-esteem*, also needs to be separated out, as it is too important to be merged into a broader category. It matters that work can enhance or diminish our sense of self-esteem and, related to this, our sense of others' respect for us, and recognition for our work.[14]

The third element of Blauner's discussion of self-estrangement, people's sense of fulfillment and development over time, is in our view extremely important in relation to good work. Concepts such as career, vocation and calling indicate desires for people to sustain good work over time. The term we want to borrow to refer to this aspect of good work is *self-realization*. This has its origins in translations of Hegelian ideas about humanity's historical achievement of its own potential, and has come to refer to 'the fulfilment by one's own efforts of the possibilities of development of the self' (the Oxford English Dictionary's definition). The idea has roots that go deeper than those of the English word. Articulated by philosophers such as Rousseau and John Stuart Mill, it is a core goal of post-enlightenment thought. Later, Freudian psychoanalysis sought to increase the individual's understanding and awareness for the sake of the development of the self. By the mid twentieth century, however, the idea of self-realization had become attached to popular therapy movements that some writers see as deeply bound up with problematic forms of individualism (Illouz, 2007, p. 45). The humanist psychologist and early management guru, Abraham Maslow, placed 'self-actualization' – realizing one's own personal talent or potential - at the top of his famous hierarchy of needs: when other more basic needs (physiological needs, needs for security, love and esteem) were met, then self-actualization, 'the desire to become more and more what one is', could serve as a motivating force for human action.[15]

One problem with the concept is that in contemporary culture, notions of self-realization and its close relative self-actualization are often not far removed from narcissistic forms of competitive individualism. Life coaching guru Anthony (or Tony) Robbins for example offers books, recordings and classes that use the concept of self-actualization to show us 'how to awaken the giant within' (Robbins, 1992). It is possible then to see a focus on self-realization as mere evidence of a 'culture of narcissism' (Lasch, 1980). The German social theorist Axel Honneth has argued that increasingly, in the twentieth century, 'members of Western societies were compelled,

urged or encouraged, for the sake of their own future, to place their very selves at the centre of their own life-planning and practice' (Honneth, 2004, p. 469). As a result, individual self-realization becomes linked to 'institutionalized expectations' and 'transmuted into a support of the system's legitimacy' (Honneth, 2004, p. 467).

Do such developments make self-realization irredeemable as a normative concept? Not necessarily (and Honneth does not think so either). The concept of self-realization need not be an example of out-of-control narcissism or competitive individualism. Progressive collectivist political projects generally involve some kind of notion of self-realization. Jon Elster claims, for example, that while Marx thought that communism would be better than capitalism for a number of reasons, he condemned the latter 'mainly because it frustrated human development and self-actualization'; this was the other side of Marx's much more sketchily portrayed concept of alienation. Communism was a society in which people could 'fully realize their potential as all-round creators' (1985, p. 83). Nor does the appropriation of the term by management gurus and therapists diminish its importance in understanding human life. The fundamentally ambivalent achievements of psychoanalysis (see Zaretsky, 2005) include an emphasis on the pursuit of healthy self-realization, and at its best this can involve working towards a reflexive understanding of the limits on this goal. Our aim here is not to advocate a Marxian or psychoanalytical concept of self-realization, but to point out that the term need not be linked to competitive individualism or narcissistic fantasies about individual triumph. It can serve as the basis of ethical discussions concerning the place of work, and of creative labor, within conceptions of human well-being and social justice. It makes it possible for us to discuss how work, and other key elements, might contribute to a (pluralist) notion of successful development of the self over time.

Some vital aspects of bad work appear to be missing from Blauner's breakdown of alienation. The improvements in working conditions in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s may have

led him to assume that problems of job *security* and *overwork* were not sufficiently important to include in his framework. Or it may be that Blauner did not consider these to be aspects of alienation per se, but part of some broader problem of pay and conditions. Whatever the reasons, these surely need to be included in any consideration of the quality of work as experienced by workers. It is true that under his categories of powerlessness and control, Blauner recognized that control over the pace of work was critical and constitutes 'the most insistent, the most basic aspect of a job' (1964, p. 21). But to subsume it under control seems not to do justice to this importance, and moreover, this is only one type of overwork.[16] Hodson categorizes overwork as one of the major challenges to dignity in the workplace, and as well as the intensity of work, he also considers excessive hours. Employees work too hard and too long not only where they lack autonomy, but also in cases where there are 'contradictions of employee involvement'. Programs calling for heightened employee involvement, such as work teams, quality circles and so on, have the potential to increase responsibility and dignity at work, says Hodson, but 'they also can be used manipulatively to pressure workers to work harder and to increase output through intensified self-supervision and peer pressure' (Hodson, 2001, p. 20).[17] All this relates to the question of balancing the emotional, physical and time demands of work with other aspects of life, including caring for the young and the elderly, contributing to communities, and simply enriching one's life through leisure.

Insecurity is an interesting term, because it has an objective, measurable sense, concerning conditions and length of job tenure, but it also has a widely-used subjective meaning too. When we say we feel insecure, we suggest that we lack a sense of safety. At work, this might involve threats to physical health, through injury and contact with harmful substances, and physical effects of mental states such as anxiety and 'stress'. But workers might also feel insecure about their futures, especially those on short-term contracts. There are other dimensions too, related to ethnicity, class, gender and age. One of the most important contributions to sociology of work in

recent years has been Richard Sennett's explorations of the 'corrosive' effects of flexible work (Sennett, 1998). In his chapter on risk (Sennett, 1998, p. 76-97), he writes about how the current conditions of corporate life are 'full of prejudices against middle age, disposed to deny the worth of a person's past experience' and treating the middle-aged as averse to *risk*; and he traces the disillusioning effects of this on Rose, a New York bar-owner who tried to break into advertising.

We have now encountered a number of the main elements comprising our model of good and bad work, one which is substantially different from Blauner's model of alienated and unalienated labor. To summarize so far, we have outlined a conception of good work as involving autonomy, interest and involvement, sociality, self-esteem, self-realization, work-life balance, and security. Conversely, this is a conception of bad work as involving control by or dependence on others; boredom; isolation; low self-esteem or shame; frustrated self-realization, overwork and risk.[18]

Let us clarify our purposes here. We have spent some time clarifying these normative grounds because a) the quality of working life is a fundamental matter for everyone, not just creative media workers; b) the analysis of creative media work has neglected any extended consideration of these issues so far. However, in order to make such clarifications, we acknowledge that our discussion has had to be somewhat abstract. So we now relate the above conceptualization to media work by drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork (see also Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010). In particular we focus on questions of autonomy and self-realization.

Working in Television: Documentary Development

In the following, we draw on an ethnographic study[19] to analyze the personal experiences of cultural workers in relation to the above model of good and bad work. In particular, we are talking here about labor in the television industry, more specifically, in independent production

companies specialized in documentary and factual programming.[20] The study focused on the development process of television production, that is, the first stage of the production process during which ideas for future programs are conceived and further developed into program proposals to be pitched to broadcasters and other funding bodies. Development work involves the brainstorming of new ideas, and researching content and context. This might include whom and what might be filmed, and where. A crucial aspect of development is the presentation of such research in the form of written proposals to broadcasters, who of course act as the main financiers and distribution platforms for independent television producers. Development teams of researchers, producers and assistant producers (AP) are led by the Head of Development (HoD) who coordinates and guides the activities of the team in conference with the companies' executive producers[21].

A marked feature of both companies that were studied is a high degree of independence for workers of all levels and responsibilities. They exercise discretion over their work tasks, for example, when, in what order and in what way work tasks are carried out. The workers comment positively on this form of *autonomy* and in some cases even value it more highly than financial gain. Other forms of autonomous work include working from home, relatively flexible work hours, an individualized work schedule and a lack of (close) supervision. All this is clearly appreciated by the workers as the German Head of Development explains when asked about what she enjoys about her work:

> Today I only got here at 2 pm, I did not have to justify that to anyone for example. The job needs to be done, how I do that is entirely left to me. In the end I am a freelancer for [the company], a service provider. Nobody is looking over my shoulder every five minutes, that's really nice. (…) The style here is very delegating. It would be hard for me if it was any

different. It's quite a luxury and for that I happily put up with the not-so-great pay. (HoD / D)

Even at the more junior level of researchers and assistant producers, where workers are given greater guidance in their work, the specific execution of work tasks is largely left to the individual. This autonomy provides workers with a sense of responsibility and contributes to work motivation and satisfaction. The standard recruitment phrase - 'able to work independently' - seems to be a practical requirement for this type of work. This is apparent in the following statement:

> I don't fancy at all telling you exactly what to do down to the very last detail. That's no use, because then I can do the job myself, really. But that also requires a high degree of independence and self-reliance, and there are people who you have to explain every little bit of shit to and they are just not suited. Someone who can't work independently is not suited to the job. You never do anything twice. Everything changes all the time and you have to be extremely flexible. (HoD / D)

Autonomy in documentary development not only concerns issues of work organization but also creative activities and decision-making. This is a major factor in the attractiveness of television labor, and potentially an important contribution to self-realization. The degree of creative autonomy in the independent television sector is closely related to the hierarchical position of a worker. Some creative input in development involves all members of the team. But decisions about the creative content or style of a program and about whether an idea is further developed or rejected are made by workers in more elevated positions – notably the Head of Development and the Executive Producers. These more 'creative' elements of project development include for example the conception of new program ideas including potential narrative structure and

visualization, and the writing of program proposals. Such activities can be carried out by a team, for example, in brainstorming and development meetings where every worker can equally offer input, as well as on an individual basis. Workers even at the junior level have the freedom to 'run with an idea' and 'shape it' (HoD / UK), that is, to further develop what might be just an issue or a problem into a full concept for a TV program including narrative perspective, choice of specific content, locations and potential contributors. The evaluation of such creative efforts is reserved for senior workers who decide about alterations and future actions regarding the project. The British HoD describes this process as follows: 'So it's not that I'm being told initially, this is what you must do, it's that I'll go to them [the executive producers of the company] with what I've done and then we'll move it from there.' Executive producers consequently have the highest degree of creative autonomy. This is a central part of their motivation for work. In both case studies they are co-owners of the production company and creative independence in the creation of TV programming was a central reason for setting up the companies in the first place as one British executive describes: 'We were three filmmakers who thought that we would like the opportunity to work on our own rather than within Yorkshire Television where we all worked.' (Exec. Prod. A / UK) Nevertheless, there are also elements of dependence and control in this setting where conflicting views might exist. For example, during the fieldwork a junior worker expressed criticism of a senior producer's insistence on continuing research for a project despite a continuing lack of success in the junior worker's search for matching contributors. On other occasions workers insisted on the potential of a project idea contrary to skeptical views or rejection by the executive producers or the HoD. In addition, there are dependencies on a larger level, that influence the degree of autonomy as executives need to consider economic rationalities and their dependency on their broadcaster 'clients' in their decision-making.

In addition to autonomous work, there are other desirable features of working in television in general and in factual and documentary production in particular. Such features contribute to a

sense of fulfillment and *self-realization* beyond material rewards and are sought out by the workers in the course of their professional career. Despite differing work roles and responsibilities, workers share many values which provide them with work satisfaction, and even pride. In our case study such values include creativity (as addressed above), variation and the (potential) impact of their work. Program making for television is perceived as a creative activity.[22] The potential to reach a large audience means that this creativity has the potential to be widely shared (see Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010, chapter 9). To be involved in this process is considered attractive - as this development producer describes:

> It's quite exciting, you feel like you're in the fast lane of stuff. You're where it's happening, you're where programs are getting made and that's what the country is seeing on television. So that – it's really exciting. And I like Channel 4, if you'd said to me, 'who'd you like to work for, what programs do you watch?', I'd say Channel 4.[23] (Dev. Prod. UK)

Fulfillment through work is strengthened if work responsibilities coincide with personal interests and preferences, as in the case of this worker's personal preference for Channel 4 programming. The German HoD considers such an overlap of work and personal taste a specific advantage of her job as it provides her with the opportunity to follow up personal interests through work projects. This blurring of work and leisure can be a problem, but it also has its potential pleasures and rewards. **The issue here isn't so much excitement per se; it's that the excitement derives from the ability to realise one's sense of self by pursuing work projects that comply with a person's sense of what is ethical, interesting or high quality, a sense that in the case of media producers is built up partly, though not of course entirely, through media consumption (other sources include family, education and religion).**

Workers further value the variation of their everyday work both with regard to the kind of

activities involved and with regard to the program content they develop as, so it is claimed, 'you never do the same thing twice'. Although processes and methods follow specific patterns, every project has a different story and requires an individualized approach. This development researcher considers this an attractive aspect of her work: 'And it's an exciting job, and you learn stuff every day and you meet new people whereas working on dramas apparently from what I've heard is really boring, and soaps and all this kind of thing is really dull.' (Dev. Researcher UK) Contributing to documentary programming carries a particular value for the workers in this sector due to the genre's potential for portraying social reality, for critical investigation and for influencing audiences' views of the world. Workers talk of countering ignorance and prejudice, and of the opportunity to 'change people's perception' and to 'make them think' as ideal outcomes of their efforts. This is of course closely linked to a notion of politics, or at least of ethics: of a goal of contributing to the well-being of others. Variation and impact also relate positively to *interest and involvement* as elements of good work in relation to the social and cultural value of the products the workers create.

Workers accept that there are limitations to their roles and responsibilities, and the degree of autonomy and self-realization that is available to them, but often they compare their work positively to other jobs. A strong sense of personal career development that involves a belief in future career progress encourages workers, especially junior workers, to accept compromises with regard to interest and involvement, autonomy and self-realization in their current work role. By moving up in the hierarchal structure they expect to have greater opportunities for creative autonomy and self-realization as well as larger monetary rewards. At the top of the ladder in the independent sector are executive producers who, as in our case study, are often (co-)owners of their businesses who possess a high degree of creative autonomy and control with regard to the programming they create and a strong sense of self-realization as successful creatives/program-makers *and* entrepreneurs.

However, this sense of potential progress can be understood as a way in which workers come to accept dubious features of media work. There is an enormous oversupply of workers and the television labor market is extremely competitive. Most workers will never reach this level of career status. Yet career-building and future work-satisfaction provide strong motivations for television workers which ultimately facilitates the acceptance of exploitative elements such as overwork and insecurity among workers as a necessary evil in exchange for the privileged opportunity of self-realization. One executive producer even claims, that 'it's not a job, it's a vocation' (Exec. Prod. C / UK). Overtime, working on weekends, working while unwell, and changing one's personal plans to accommodate work are typical features for all workers and are particularly intense the higher the hierarchical position of the worker.

For example, one worker jokingly complained about her boyfriend forgetting what she looks like because she had to work so many hours. The HoD in the same company kept an air bed in the office to sleep for a few hours when doing night shifts – which happened several times during the observation period. On another occasion, a producer and a director commented on the fact that they were finishing their work for the day at an unusually early hour (5:15 pm) and the producer encouraged her colleague, who had two young children, to go home as his family would be happy to see him in person once in a while rather than just talking to him on the phone. So workload and *work-life balance* are frequent topics of conversation between the workers and sacrifices in private life for the sake of good work performance are critically or empathically commented on but accepted as normal, just 'part of the job'. In the German case study this became a kind of competitive element between some workers who seemed to show off or overtrump each other with the excessive numbers of hours they worked.

Pressures such as high work load and tight deadlines limit autonomy. As the British Head of Development observed, 'I haven't got the time to have a lot of freedom but I do have the option to have a lot of freedom.' But overwork is not only down to managerial decisions within the company, for example understaffing or the use of inexperienced but cheap labor, or a result of the nature of project development where many projects need to be 'juggled' at the same time. It is also often caused by the company's 'clients' such as broadcasters and funding bodies whose requirements and deadlines guide the activities and work priorities of the development team. For example, in the British case the company was asked by a commissioning editor at Channel Five on a Thursday night to develop ideas for an observational series by the coming Monday morning. This left only Friday to brainstorm and contact sources for research and access during business hours and eventually most of the team was feverishly involved in this task. The HoD and an executive producer then worked over the weekend to prepare their suggestions for the broadcaster. During the first week of our observation in the German company a project idea about the future of food for the Franco-German culture channel Arte had to be researched, written and presented to the commissioning editor over the course of five days (Thursday to Tuesday) to meet an internal deadline at the targeted broadcaster, which involved weekend work and very long work days for the two-person development team of HoD and the observing researcher.

The general acceptance of overwork is facilitated by the *lack of job security* in the independent television sector. All workers (except for the executives) are employed freelance or on short-term contracts (ranging on average between 3 and 6 months) and, especially at a junior level, workers are subject to a high degree of uncertainty about what will happen when their contract ends. In many cases workers' contracts were repeatedly renewed, on a short-term basis, especially if work relations were successful and the company was satisfied with the performance and commitment of the workers – including their readiness to work extra hours. Workers at a senior level, such as

the Head of Development, are employed freelance but in a more long-term, non-fixed appointment. However, their higher levels of security, pay and creative autonomy also subject them to higher performance pressure and to substantial personal investment in their working life. Several workers said that, despite their insecure and uncertain working conditions, they enjoyed the flexibility of the employment structure as it provided them with more variety in their working life and more control over the development of their career. Nevertheless, insecurity is a central concern for television workers. One AP expressed the view that her ideal employment model would be 'a steady part-time job that paid the rent and the rest freelance work', and this is typical of many workers.

Closing Comments

As is the case with most occupations, working in television is not good or bad per se. Rather, we have observed a complex and sometimes contradictory combination of elements of good and bad work.[24] The results confirmed that autonomy and self-realization can be thought of as positive characteristics of television work, but at the same time workers experience negative conditions in form of overwork and insecurity. On the whole though, the workers observed in our studies perceived insecurity and overwork as manageable pressures given the satisfaction they gain from autonomous work and the opportunities for self-realization. Part of this is the *excitement* of being involved in television and building a successful career in this area. For many, this tips the scale towards a positive experience of their work life.[25] We further argued that these features of good and bad work are common to many workers but the degree of their influence differs according to workers' position in hierarchies. Working in television can offer many workers of all hierarchical levels an experience of good work but positions of higher seniority seem to provide more opportunity for autonomy and self-realization. Career building becomes a central objective for

television workers and elements of bad work are temporarily accepted as a worthwhile investment for a better (professional) future.

The recent boom in studies of cultural and media work is potentially a vital contribution to media production studies, which might be accused of having neglected media production as *work*. But an adequate normative conceptualization of media work depends upon a much closer engagement with other disciplines that have also analyzed labor, occupations and careers. We have tried to show, by surveying a wide range of recent research and by drawing upon our own empirical analysis, the potential benefits that such an engagement might bring, by developing a more fully conceptualized scrutiny of the nature of contemporary media labor.

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[1] This example is drawn from fieldwork conducted by David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker, carried out between 2006 and 2008 in three different industries (television, magazines and music), and funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. See Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010).

[1] Approaches to production that draw on the interdisciplinary project known as cultural studies tend to draw on understandings of the relationships between subjectivity, meaning and social power on the other more than other approaches. Here we pay less attention to what might be called 'political economy' approaches to media work, but see Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010, 2011) for further discussion. For definitions and an attempt to clarify discussions about the relationship between these two sets of approaches, see Hesmondhalgh (2007, p. 29-50).

[2] It is worth pointing out that this is somewhat different from a Marxist critique. Building on groundbreaking studies of the formation of 'consent' in workplaces by Marxian sociologists such as Michael Burawoy (1979) Ursell acknowledged that processes such as union de-recognition and considerable reductions in labor costs and earnings provided plenty of evidence to support a Marxist reading, focused on exploitation and property. But she also noted 'an intensification of

the self-commodification processes by which each individual seeks to improve his/her chances of attracting gainful employment' (Ursell, 2000, p. 807) and analyzed how television workers had, in the era of casualization and increasing freelance work, come to take on the work of organizing their own labor markets.

[4] On the idea of the 'creative industries' and its adventures in global policy, see among others, Hesmondhalgh (2007) and Ross (2009).

[5] Stahl refers approvingly to Ellerman (1992), for example, who sees work in capitalist modernity as based on an illicit hiring and renting of people, which, in the private sphere, fundamentally contradicts democratic norms and values established in the public realm. Capitalist modernity is therefore seen as at odds with itself. The problem is that this relies heavily on a notion of self-ownership which, Cohen (1995) convincingly argues, undermines collectivist claims for justice.

[6] Though there have also been significant contributions from organizational, business and management studies (McKinlay & Smith, 2009) and from the political economy of culture (Mosco & McKercher, 2008). For discussion see Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010).

[7] 'Goods' here is used in the sense of 'rewards' rather than 'things to be possessed'. And, in case it isn't clear, the term 'practice' is being used here in a specific philosophical sense rather than in the broader sense, recently popular in social and political theory, to refer to the importance of understanding societies in terms of routinized forms of action and understanding (Schatzki, 1996; Warde, 2005).

[8] To do so, Banks draws on Russell Keat's (2000) impressive modification of the ideas of Alisdair MacIntyre's ideas discussed above.

[9] A perspective that was to be found in post-war cultural policy for example; see Garnham (1990, p. 158) for criticism of this tendency.

[10] Russell Keat (2009) makes a similar move to us, preferring the term 'good work' to the term 'meaningful work' as discussed by a number of political philosophers, such as Rawls (1973) and Schwartz (1982): 'work that is interesting, that calls for intelligence and initiative, and that is

attached to a job that gives the worker considerable freedom to decide how the work is to be done' (Arneson, 1987, p. 522).

[11] The obvious exception is Green's category of subjective well-being. The use of survey data to measure other aspects of well-being besides wages is a welcome development in economics, even though there are many very difficult conceptual issues surrounding the operation of terms such as 'job satisfaction' and well-being in surveys. The move is welcome because it goes beyond the one-dimensional model of the person in neo-classical economics (see Nussbaum & Sen, 1993 for a critique). Our concern is qualitative, but we would be very pleased if this made a contribution to the building of theory that might help to refine well-conducted survey work concerning labor.

[12] Blauner's study was of factory workers in four different manufacturing industries, and he was interested in the way that new forms of automated technology might actually serve to reduce alienation. Our concern here is not with this aspect of his book but with its conceptualization of good and bad aspects of work.

[13] One prominent variety of modern Marxism, often referred to as autonomism, puts special emphasis on the possibilities that solidarity and co-operation in modern forms of work might encourage broader forms of social solidarity that could bring about revolutionary transformations in society. See Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2008, 2010).

[14] In recent years, matters of esteem have been pushed to the fore in political theory by contributions that have argued for and against the idea of *recognition* as the basis of justice and other normative claims. These are notably encapsulated in Fraser and Honneth (2003). See Rössler (2007) for discussion of the politics of recognition in relation specifically to work.

[15] Creativity was tied closely to this. As Maslow himself put it, 'the concept of creativeness and the concept of the self-actualizing, fully human person seem to be coming closer and closer together, and may perhaps turn out to be the same thing' (Maslow, 1971, quoted in Illouz, 2007, p. 45).

[16] Green (2006, p. 47-9) provides a valuable discussion of conceptualization and measurement (through surveys) of work effort or work intensity.

[17] This kind of internalized commitment to work, resulting in overwork, is a key part of the critical case 'against' creative labor in recent years. See, for example, Ross (2003).

[18] These elements relate mainly to the experience of the *process* of paid work. However, as we indicated above in our discussion of Blauner's concept of meaninglessness, there are crucial further dimensions to our understanding of good work involving *the social and cultural value of products* (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010). A notion of good work that involved only workers' experience of the labor process would risk severing the ethics of work from the ethics of production.

[19] The study involved five month of participant observation in the development department of a British and a German production company in 2008 as well as interviews with the observed workers. In total ten workers from different hierarchical levels were interviewed, ranging from researcher to executive producer. For reasons of confidentiality the identities of the workers and the companies have been anonymized. See Zoellner (2009, 2010) for further discussion. Both studies reported in this chapter (by Hesmondhalgh and Baker, and by Zoellner) made use of participant observation – a key method in the analysis of media production, and of labour.

[20] For another significant study of labor in the independent television production sector, see Lee (2008).

[21] The size of project development teams varies even among middle-sized companies and can range from a single person to whole teams in single or even double figures per company, in some cases workers switch within a company between development and production.

[22] Though of course there are different work roles with varying degree of creative involvement. See Hesmondhalgh (2007, p. 64-5) for an overview of the division of labor in the cultural industries.

[23] This development producer was employed on a fixed contract and specialized in developing program ideas for Channel 4. As part of her work role, she liaised with executive producers and commissioning editors.

[24] For a similar analysis of work across three industries – television, music and magazine journalism – see the empirical research reported in Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010).

[25] Workers may of course be coping with the negative conditions of their work through a certain amount of denial. However, those negative conditions can become overwhelming and workers might consider a career change as a result of a lack of opportunities for self-realization. This was the case, for example, with one of the observed development workers in the UK. He expressed frustration over the conditions he encountered in television production. In particular, he found the short-term nature of work-contracts a severe burden but he also had a deeper problem with the overall approach of television documentary. The development producer was in his twenties, he had a background in science and worked as a science communicator prior to his employment in television. To 'see science on television in creative ways' was one of his main motivations to work in the sector and he was disappointed by the superficiality and sensationalism that accompanied much of contemporary science programming. As a result, he considered a career change if his current contract was not to be renewed.

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