THE LIFE OF

FREELANCE FILM PRODUCTION

WORKERS IN THE

NEW ZEALAND FILM INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Eleven male and 10 female freelance production workers were interviewed about their experiences of life within the New Zealand film industry. Respondents' accounts contrast sharply with glamorous images of the industry portrayed in the media. Respondents enjoyed the creative challenges, camaraderie, excitement, and intensity of their working lives and identified strongly with their work. However, they also experienced continual financial insecurity, unpredictable and demoralising periods of unemployment, and recurrent problems maintaining a reasonable work-life balance. Many of the older respondents cited these factors as their main reason for attempting to find work outside the industry.

Female production workers appeared to pay a particularly high price for their involvement in the industry and often sacrificed other areas of their lives for their careers. Women frequently compensated for this imbalance by becoming even more career focussed, thus compounding the problems in non-work areas of their lives.

Respondents' accounts are interpreted in relation to current structural conditions, working practices, and power imbalances within the New Zealand film industry. It is argued that freelance production workers' complex psychological relationship with their work is simultaneously a product of their work environment and helps to perpetuate industry conditions which disadvantage the workforce.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

1.   INTRODUCTION

The film industry differs from others in its absence of routine, and because of this its psychological problems are different from those in other industries. The chief problems are irritation due to uncertainty, desperation born of enforced though remunerated idleness, the presence and easy development of instability, the irksomeness of long hours, and the presence of a considerable number of crushed and thwarted personalities whose hoped-for forms of self-expression can never be realized (Skilbeck, 1937, p. 174).

This quote from Skilbeck describes a time in the United States (US) when the Hollywood studio system ruled the industry, prior to its eventual breakdown in the 1940s. It is interesting to note that back in 1937 Skilbeck considered film workers to be a unique group often working under difficult conditions. However, in the last 70 years little research has been carried out in this area. For film production workers in New Zealand today the problems described by Skilbeck remain, though the advent of short-term, project-based employment means that idleness is no longer remunerated and workers' financial anxieties have increased.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the impact of the structure of film production work in New Zealand on the lives of freelance production workers. This thesis will give the reader a behind the scenes glimpse at "Wellywood", as a group of film production workers share their views on working in their industry. Whilst many respondents tell of the intellectual and artistic joy of creative work and the rewards of collaborating with other highly talented individuals on film projects they also describe a financially insecure, highly competitive, tiring, and often lonely lifestyle, which sharply contrasts with the glamorous images portrayed through the media.

1.1   *Why study the film industry*

The film and media industry is playing an increasingly influential role in our lives today. We are overloaded with images of rich and famous Hollywood stars and their glamorous lives. Many of us are seduced by the opulence

and fantasy of this lifestyle and eagerly follow tales of their escapades through the tabloid press. In recent years the glamour of this Hollywood lifestyle has impacted more directly on us in New Zealand. The success of Peter Jackson's film ventures over the last 10 years (e.g., the "Lord of the Rings Trilogy" and "King Kong") has brought the New Zealand film industry world-wide acclaim. Much of this film production work has been carried out in Wellington, with the capital city embracing these developments and taking on the unofficial title of "Wellywood".

There has been little published research into the film industry in either management or organisational psychology literature. However, some writers view the new Hollywood film production model as the future of work in media industries (Florida, 2002). This fluid way of working relies heavily on the use of freelance contractors who are brought together for the specific task of producing a particular film and disbanded once the task is completed. As this research will show, this system is radically different from more conventional working arrangements and can present challenges for both the freelancer and the industry.

1.2   Background on the Hollywood film industry

The film industry did not always work to this form of production model. A description of the old Hollywood film studio system is warranted as this strictly hierarchical model still has an impact on the organisation of film production work today, albeit within a freelancer working arrangement.

The Hollywood film production industry which developed in the 1920s and 1930s was controlled by the big studios that employed actors and production crews on permanent contracts (Florida, 2002). These large studios had an effective stranglehold on the industry and produced film in an efficient, factory like manner (Caves, 2000).

In the 1940s however, this system began to break down. There were three important factors which led to the breakdown of this system. Firstly, the high rate of personal income tax at the time encouraged many of the most

successful workers to develop their own production companies and in so doing avoid tax payments. Secondly, the Paramount anti-trust case was brought against the seven major studios. This decision by the United States Supreme Court (US vs. Paramount, 1948) forced the studios to discontinue their ownership of the film cinemas. The success of this case meant an end to the vertical integration of the past, in which ownership of the cinemas was controlled by the studios, which also had control of the production and distribution of film (Christopherson & Storper, 1989). Finally, the onset of television as a major competitor in the entertainment industry meant that Hollywood had to adapt to a more fluid model of operation (Caves, 2000; Lampel, 2006; Lampel, Shamsie, & Lant, 2006).

In film production today the major film studios still assign their names to feature films and still market and distribute films, but this is done strictly on an individual film basis (Caves, 2000). The producer must sell the script idea to a group of investors and then pull together a production team, including actors, script writers, production crew, and post-production technicians. This production team is fluid and evolves during the course of the film with new members brought in and others who are surplus to requirements being removed. This mixing and matching of team members continues throughout the project (Perretti & Negro, 2006). This form of work organisation is often referred to as flexible specialisation (Caves, 2000).

The introduction of flexible specialisation has had a significant impact on film production workers. Flexible specialisation greatly reduced the influence of the craft unions and guilds within the film industry. These guilds and unions were originally set up to protect film workers' rights and maintain working conditions. Many of the skills of film production workers were available in the general working population, and the move to the use of nonunion casual labour weakened the union members' position. By 1988 approximately half of those employed in Hollywood were nonunion workers (Caves, 2000).

Flexible specialisation has also, in some respects, had a negative impact on the production companies. Large amounts of time and money are spent on each production putting together production crews and talent. There is also a high rate of turnover in the industry with many highly skilled and experienced people being lost from the industry due to the inconsistency of work (Caves, 2000).

These changes in the way that films are made in Hollywood have had a flow on effect into New Zealand, as many of the films made in New Zealand are either partly, or completely, funded by the US.

1.3   The development of film in New Zealand

There is a long history of film making in New Zealand stretching back to the late 1800s. The first moving picture was shown in New Zealand at the Opera House in Auckland in 1896. The Salvation Army was among the most prolific of the early film makers in New Zealand. As they travelled through the country in the early 1900s spreading their message, they recorded what they saw on film (Churchman, Cain, & Hudson, 1997). In 1914, George Tarr produced the first New Zealand-made feature film, "Hinemoa". The year 1996 brought with it the centenary of film making in New Zealand showcasing the vast array of film productions which were undertaken during the first 100 years of film in New Zealand.

The New Zealand film industry has grown enormously over the last 20 years with the development in Wellington of Peter Jackson's state-of-the-art film post-production[1] facilities, with the expanding pre-production[2] facilities of Richard Taylor's Weta Workshop and Weta Digital.

Defining and describing the individuals who work in the New Zealand film industry is a difficult task as film production involves a complex range of different activities which span many different occupational boundaries (Jones & Smith, 2005). Freelance production workers are a diverse group

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[1] Processes required after filming is completed, e.g. editing.
[2] Planning and development before filming begins, including model-making, set building, etc.

including such areas as animation, art and design, costume, make-up and hairdressing, special effects, and technical experts. One common feature that this diverse group of people does have in common is the nature of their employment contract. Film production work in New Zealand is project-based and there is a predominance of independent contractors/freelancers working on short-term, usually open-ended contracts (de Bruin & Hahrahan, 2003).

The next section will describe in more depth the structure of the film industry in New Zealand and the effect this structure has on the lives of the film production workers. This is necessary to give the reader a clear picture of the working conditions and the general working environment for production workers in this industry. This description is based on both the comments of the respondents during the course of the interviews and the researcher's knowledge of the industry through her close association with industry insiders over the last 10 years.

1.4 The structure of the film industry in New Zealand

A diverse range of production workers were interviewed for this research, including artists, sculptors, model-makers, special effects technicians, assistant directors, production managers, hair/make-up, and prosthetics technicians. All respondents are currently, or have recently, worked in film production in Wellington.

During the course of the interviews it became apparent that most respondents did not work solely in film. The project nature of their work meant that they were constantly on the lookout for the next contract. Although individuals often had a preference for specific types of work, they would take on any work that was available, in an attempt to maintain a constant income stream. This meant that they would take on work in television, and occasionally in theatre, to fill the gaps between film projects.

Several of the more senior production workers gave accounts of the early days in Wellington during the 1980s and early 1990s when television commercial work was their main income stream. Film production was in its

infancy at this time and was only beginning to offer a small amount of low-paid work. During the early 1990s in Wellington, Peter Jackson began to venture into professional film making (Sibley, 2006) and many of those interviewed were involved in these early projects. At the same time, corporate restructuring, downsizing, and the shift of many large corporate head offices, including many large advertising agencies, to Auckland, saw a major move in commercial television production from Wellington to Auckland, removing the main source of income for many production workers.

This shift meant that film production took over as the main source of employment. The gradual move from television advertising work into film has happened over the last 15 years. Today film presents as the main source of employment for production workers in Wellington. The continual development of the film industry in Wellington has not, however, brought with it any degree of stability or consistency of work for the majority. Several respondents objected to the term "film industry" when referring to film production work in New Zealand. Many did not feel that there was an "industry" in New Zealand, as this term implied that there was a constant structure in place rather than the series of short-term contracts.

1.5 Freelancers

Most production workers in the film industry are self-employed contractors who are engaged by a production company to work on a specific film production. As self-employed contractors they are responsible for billing the production company for their hours and paying their own tax. Many respondents operate as sole-traders for tax purposes and therefore are required to charge and pay goods and services tax (GST). Managing their businesses and the taxation liabilities proved for many to be a difficult task and several described finding it onerous to meet these obligations. Most respondents disliked the uncertainty of their freelance status and would have preferred to be permanently employed. Many also felt that they had no choice, or control, over this situation. They were compelled to accept that intermittent contract work was how the film industry operates.

This freelance system has recently been legally challenged. In September 2001, the practice of employing production workers as freelance contractors was challenged in the Employment Court with the case of Bryson vs. Three Foot Six Limited. Bryson was an independent contractor contracted by The Lord of the Rings Production Company Three Foot Six Limited. Bryson challenged his employment contract status after his contract was terminated by Three Foot Six Limited. On appeal the court ruled in Bryson's favour agreeing that the nature of his employment relationship was that of an employee rather than an independent contractor. The judge in her ruling was clear to specify that the decision applied specifically to Bryson's individual case only (Lawton, 2003). Although at the time there was concern in the industry that this ruling would have major implications for the film industry in New Zealand, in the last seven years little appears to have changed, with the majority of production workers still employed on short-term open-ended contracts. Many respondents in this study were employed under very similar circumstances to those in the Bryson case.

Several of the more senior respondents (15–20 years plus in the industry) were tired of the uncertainty, lack of security, and the absence of any benefits that came with this kind of working arrangement. They longed for a more permanent working arrangement which provided benefits such as sick leave, holiday pay, subsidised superannuation, and health insurance schemes. Those who had families to support and/or mortgage payments found it especially difficult to meet their commitments with this form of working arrangement.

The freelance contract situation which dominates the industry in New Zealand differs from film production contract arrangements in Australia, the US, Canada, and the United Kingdom (UK). Freelance production workers in these countries receive additional benefits which include holiday pay, superannuation, and in some cases sick leave, in addition to their negotiated hourly rate. The differences between working conditions in the New Zealand film industry and other countries were raised by several

respondents who cited these factors, and continued financial insecurity, as the main reasons for looking at alternative work outside of the industry.

1.6   Networking and reputation

A large part of the freelancer's time and energy goes into securing the next contract, as their livelihood depends on maintaining a steady stream of employment. In order to secure contracts, freelancers must first develop and build strong networks within the industry.

All respondents discussed the importance of developing strong industry networks in order to secure work. This was the case in all areas of production work and also at all levels of experience. It is, however, not only a case of knowing the right people but also of maintaining an outstanding reputation and keeping in favour with key industry people.

An essential part of the freelancers' time and energy goes into securing the next contract, but it is also crucially important for their careers that they choose the right contract. This choice comes down to a combination of inside knowledge and at times taking a calculated risk. Choosing to work on a production which fails can end or seriously damage a career, as can falling out of favour with heads of departments or production managers who are hiring staff. Who you know, and your reputation as a production worker, was crucially important to all respondents and they worked extremely hard to maintain and develop their networks. Networking and reputation, therefore, was crucial to obtaining work but it still did not provide any surety that a freelancer would be given the next available project.

1.7   Size of the industry

The small size of the film industry in New Zealand has an important influence on its operation. The New Zealand industry operates very much by "word of mouth" and this can either be an advantage or a disadvantage. In Wellington, in particular, there is a very close knit group of freelancers who work mainly in film. Although this group works for the most part as

independent contractors, many have developed close relationships with producers and other industry leaders.

The small size of the industry can assist freelancers in their search for the next project, as news travels fast among the core group, but it can also affect the freelancers' ability to negotiate higher pay rates. Several respondents described social pressures to accept lower hourly rates in order to ensure that a film project would be made in New Zealand. The justification from the production point of view came from the need to keep the cost of film production in New Zealand low as this was seen as the main drawcard for the big Hollywood producers to bring their productions to New Zealand.

Along with the size, the seasonal nature of film in New Zealand has an important impact on the industry. There is an increase in work available during the summertime when location filming takes place. Summertime filming is preferred as the environmental conditions are better. From a financial perspective making use of long summertime hours can also reduce costs. The costs of having a full production crew on set is enormous and stretches into thousands of dollars per hour, so the number of days on set must be kept to a minimum. During peak production workers can work on a film set for a minimum of 12 hours, with up to 14–16 hours being common practice.

During the summer months when several large film projects are in production at once there can be a shortage of skilled production workers. During these times casual workers are brought in and trained up to fill the shortfall. However, once this intense period has passed there is not often any ongoing work for these newcomers. This first break in the film industry rarely develops into regular film work for the majority of these casuals and for many it will remain a one-off experience.

There is an important distinction in the industry between the core and peripheral production workers. The core consists of a tight knit group of

workers whose main source of income comes from work in the film or related industries such as television and theatre. Entry into this elite core is difficult and in many respects is by invitation only. The periphery workers often work for low wages or for free in order to prove themselves. The periphery consists of those who take on film work in addition to, or as a break from, their regular employment and also those individuals serious about gaining entry. However, once a freelancer gains acceptance into the core group a steady flow of regular work is still not guaranteed. Even some of the more senior and well respected heads of departments interviewed still found that they needed to fill in the gaps between film projects with other forms of employment. Many respondents discussed the need to gain alternative employment, to have a "second string to your bow", during the downtimes between film projects. Several respondents cautioned against attempting to make a living from film work alone stressing this need for a financially viable backup.

The size of the industry in New Zealand also has an effect on the power structures within the industry. The film industry in New Zealand and by all accounts in the UK and the US (Jones, 1996, 2002) is still to a large extent based on the old studio system of power structures. Although the nature of the employment contract has changed to a project-based freelance structure, the power base within these projects is still tightly held at the top of the structure. These traditional power structures are intensified in the compact film environment in New Zealand, with power in the industry being tightly held by a small number of key individuals. The management structures below this top level are strictly hierarchical in nature with heads of department being appointed for each production team, no matter how small. This very structured and hierarchical structure of management contrasts with the general perception of film as a highly creative, innovative, and free-flowing work environment.

Respondents viewed the small scale of the New Zealand industry as a double-edged sword. Those who were in favour with the right people became part of a close knit "film family" while those who were out of favour

or had not yet gained access scratched at the periphery trying to "get a break".

1.8   Working conditions

Once a production worker does break into the industry and get their first contract many are ill prepared for the gruelling hours of work and the intense pressure to perform. Many of the older respondents in this study described how the pressure and pace of work became more and more difficult to maintain as they aged.

For the majority of freelance production workers the working day is a minimum of 10 hours, these hours regularly stretching to 12 or 14 during intense production periods. On set filming hours can at times stretch beyond this and for up to seven days in a row.

The Blue Book (2004), a document development by The New Zealand Film and Video Technicians Guild (Inc), and The Screen Production and Development Association (Inc) specifies best practice for the employment of production crew. This document outlines generally accepted ways of working in the industry and provides guidelines to both producers and production crew. *The Blue Book* specifies a minimum 10-hour turnaround between the end of the working day and the beginning of the next working day. Although these guidelines are designed to protect the freelancers, during intense periods of filming this restriction can actually add to the levels of exhaustion. As filming progresses the 10-hour turnaround can mean that the next day's filming begins later in the day and then continues on later into the night.

The dangers involved in working for excessively long hours, and sometimes in hazardous conditions, were discussed by several respondents. Many did, however, see that the industry was changing in respect to its responsibility towards the health and safety of its workers with a tightening of protocols around hazardous materials being cited as an example of this.

As freelance contractors, production workers are not entitled to sick leave. The combination of no income when you are not working, and the sheer pressure of workloads, results in many workers remaining at work when they are unwell. Many described times when they had been unwell but continued working, either due to the demand of production deadlines, or because they could not afford to lose pay. A culture has developed in the film industry in New Zealand which demands extraordinarily long working hours, sometimes under difficult conditions and in a high-pressure work environment. The effects of these working conditions on their health and wellbeing were clearly voiced by the respondents in this study. The focus of the production company, which is ultimately responsible for putting up the money for production, is primarily on the production of the film. The labour force is generally expendable and can be replaced quickly, and this fact is clearly articulated to the freelancers from the production heads.

1.9   Global context

The New Zealand industry does not operate in isolation. It is heavily dependent on overseas funding, and global factors play an important role in shaping the working environment in New Zealand. The film industry in New Zealand relies, to a large extent, on attracting international film productions to our shores, most notably the US. The findings of the Screen Industry Survey carried out by Statistics New Zealand for 2004/2005 and released in June 2006 quote $325 million of revenue coming into the New Zealand industry from the US (Survey of Screen Production in New Zealand, 2004).

New Zealand is becoming highly regarded in the international screen production industry. Film Wellington announced in September 2007 that it had won the right for Wellington to host the Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI) Cineposium in 2008, in Wellington. This event attracted several speakers who are international leaders in the industry along with location scouts. It was hoped that the "cineposium" would lead to more business opportunities in New Zealand, given the current world-wide economic climate, this remains to be seen. However,

from an international standpoint, the profile of the New Zealand film industry continues to grow.

Over the last five years the growth in digital technology in film has been enormous and Weta Digital Limited, Peter Jackson and Richard Taylor's digital production house based in Miramar, Wellington, has been seen as a global leader in this development. As a result of this success there has been an increased demand for highly skilled computer technicians such as animators and three dimensional graphic artists.

These developments have increased the global profile of New Zealand as a film production leader attracting many skilled production workers from the US and the UK to our country. This has increased the competition for work amongst the local production workers, who must now compete with overseas applicants for many of the larger contracts. Due to these factors, many production workers in Wellington have found that there has actually been a decrease in the availability of work and that they have had to lower their rates in order to secure this work. Many respondents felt that they were undervalued on an international scale. Their daily rates were being pushed down by the need to keep the costs of film production in New Zealand low, in order to attract more movie makers to New Zealand.

A recent article in *The Dominion Post* (June 23, 2007) interviewed Costa Botes, an experienced camera operator who has worked with Peter Jackson on numerous projects. He claimed that there was a significant downturn in the industry:

> *I've been making films for 25 years, I don't remember it ever being this bad, to the point where I'm really considering my options. Peter's (Jackson) making a film every two or three years – what does everyone do in the meantime (p.2)?*

Costa's experience of the industry in Wellington closely aligns with the comments of the respondents in this study and suggests that the increasing

international profile of the New Zealand film industry is not necessarily advantageous for local production workers.

The New Zealand film production industry must be seen in the light of its position in the global context. The US still dominates film production on a global scale and the New Zealand film industry must remain competitive within this marketplace in order to survive. The effects of globalisation can be seen in the film production industry just as they have been identified in other New Zealand industries (e.g., clothing and shoe manufacturing) in recent years. Several respondents commented on the growing practice of outsourcing some of the production of film props and equipment to China. The purpose behind this development was to take advantage of the low price of manufacturing in China. Some felt that these decisions were also made in order to avoid the cost of meeting tighter occupational health and safety requirements now in place in this country when dealing with many of the hazardous substances used during production processes (e.g., fibreglass moulding).

In conclusion, for many of us the film industry is synonymous with glamour and excitement. However, the respondents in this study describe a side to this industry which is far from glamorous. For respondents, the reality of life in film production involved incredibly long hours of work under tight pressure deadlines, and sometimes difficult or dangerous working environments. The long-term prospects for many were not good and as they aged many found it increasingly hard to sustain these working hours. Many also found it increasingly difficult to meet their financial commitments due to the inconsistency of work. For many respondents, the structure of the film industry in New Zealand and the drawbacks of insecure, project-based employment within an ever more competitive global industry eventually outweighed the creative rewards of their work. In consequence, several highly talented, experienced, and well-respected respondents were seriously considering leaving the industry. Clearly, this potential waste of talent is a loss for both the individuals concerned and the New Zealand film industry as a whole.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section reviews the literature on structural features of the film industry and analyses the impact of structural factors on the behaviour of film production workers. This section aims to illustrate the ways in which freelancers need to act in order to create and maintain successful careers within the industry. The second section explores the psychological effects of this form of organisation on workers. The extant research in this area is very limited so this part of the chapter extrapolates from research in several other areas of organisational psychology to try to illustrate the psychological impact of film work on freelance production workers. Coverage of the different literatures drawn upon is necessarily brief and is intended to illuminate issues of particular relevance to the film industry rather than to provide a comprehensive review of each area. The final section of this chapter examines gender issues within the film industry and suggests that women pay a higher price than men for successful careers within this industry.

2.2   Structural factors

This section will look at the literature relating to structural factors influencing the film industry. The small body of research from the UK and the US will be covered first. This literature gives an overview of project-based employment in film, the importance of networking, and also examines some of the pitfalls and some of the advantages of this form of employment. The literature on boundaryless careers, as it relates to the film industry, will also be reviewed, along with some research carried out by Jones (1996, 2002) which looks at careers in project-based employment such as film.

Project-based employment

Film production is based on project network employment. Diverse teams of highly skilled individuals are brought together for a limited period of time to

create the range of products and services required in the production of the film. The "organisation" which is producing the film is made up of a range of different firms and subcontractors. This organisation is temporary and is constructed for the sole purpose of producing the film (Jones, 1996).

Industries such as film that make extensive use of subcontractors have permeable organisational boundaries consisting of a core of closely interconnected people who are in turn more loosely connected to those in the periphery. The social structure of this periphery is open and all individuals with the necessary skills and determination can attempt to gain entry. However, the inner core of the industry is restricted and does to some degree provide access to the higher paying jobs with greater status. At the core, the informal communication networks effectively spread information about work and upcoming opportunities. Conversely, at the periphery, these communication networks are less effective and information filters more slowly through to the outer periphery. The process of building and maintaining a career in the film industry is therefore very competitive, with few succeeding in reaching the elite inner core (Jones, 1996). The majority operate in the uncertain realm at the periphery, struggling to hold their position in the labour market (Blair, 2001).

Project networks can provide individuals with more varied work and potential opportunities for development than those offered by traditional, permanent, working arrangements. A strong system of interpersonal networks gives the skilled entrepreneur access to a vast range of different employment opportunities. The individual can gain access to many different projects while increasing their skill base and growing their reputation. However, if the individual is to be successful in this entrepreneurial venture they need to be prepared to invest enormous amounts of time and energy into this task and this can impact heavily on other areas of their life (Jones, 1996).

From an organisational perspective, project-based work is cost-effective, efficient, and innovative, but this form of work organisation can also

become rigid and inhibit growth (Davenport, 2006). Defillippi and Arthur (1998) describe the work structure of the film industry as being similar to Handy's (1993) Shamrock organisation which consists of the professional core of permanent staff, specialists who are outsourced, and groups of temporary, flexible workers. However, in the film industry everyone is temporary and organisational learning is dispersed once the project is completed. This learning can only be retained through the individuals involved in the project who will bring this knowledge with them to the next film venture. Ferriani et al. (2005) argue that this learning is stored in a form of collective memory which is held in the professional networks of the freelancers. Knowledge retention and transfer can therefore be easily compromised and there is a strong reliance on the informal collaborations and networks among freelancers to maintain and develop knowledge within the professional communities (Davenport, 2006).

A consequence of this lack of knowledge retention can be seen by the static nature of the production process in the last 30 years. The production process in film has not changed dramatically since the industry restructured in the 1950s. This failure to capture key learning on film projects means that production companies can make the same costly mistakes production after production. The introduction of vast amounts of new technology in the industry has not resulted in any significant change in the production process; for example, heads of department are appointed, even when the department itself may only consist of two staff (Davenport, 2006). Furthermore, due to the short-term nature of the work contract and the need to develop multiple skills in diverse areas, the workforce can end up with a predominantly shallow level of skills in a wide range of areas (Davenport, 2006).

Individual learning within the film production industry is an experiential process and formal training through training institutions is seldom viewed as adequate (Davenport, 2006; Jones, & Defillippi, 1996). Therefore, formal training does not necessarily gain access to work opportunities (Jones & Defillippi, 1996), with graduates of film training courses being seen as

equally inexperienced and unskilled as others who are new to the industry. In the UK, Davenport (2006) found that film and television production workers are responsible for their own training and learn their skills on the job. Experience was considered to be of overriding importance to a producer when "crewing up" (recruiting the production crew). Formal qualifications were seen as unimportant when it came to assessing levels of competence.

When it comes to the actual recruitment of production crews, the film industry does not generally use formal human resources processes (Blair, 2001). The lack of job standardisation results in a great deal of ambiguity regarding the skills and experience required for any specific role, so job advertisements are not an effective means to access potential workers (Bauman, 2002). This lack of formal standardised recruitment and selection processes can then make it difficult for individuals to both get work in film and to sustain it (Blair, Culkin, & Randle, 2003; Jones, 1996).

In the film and television industry a clear status hierarchy is evident in the labour force. This is clearly reflected in the recruitment practices with each level in the hierarchy recruiting the level beneath it, while the whole process is overseen by the watchful eye of the producer and/or the director (Ursell, 2000). The most preferred means of recruitment is simply to use a well-known circle of close professional associates (Bauman, 2002) contacted through the use of highly developed informal networks (Ursell, 2000). These networks often consist of a complex series of relationships among trusted colleagues, friends, family members, and other professionals (Platman, 2004; Storey, Salaman, & Platman, 2005). Personal referral is then the most common means of gaining employment in this industry (Bauman, 2002), with selection being made on the basis of a mix of professional reputation, personal acquaintance, or family connections (Ursell, 2000).

Some individuals do gain entry through direct approach to production companies (Bauman, 2002). However, this can often prove a fruitless exercise if the individual does not have the necessary connections or experience. Many hopeful film workers will work on low budget films, or

music videos, for free in order to build their reputations and gain the necessary experience (Blair et al., 2003).

In New Zealand, it is also very difficult to enter the film industry without first gaining experience and developing professional networks by becoming known to industry insiders. Weta Workshop states on the recruitment page of its website that it receives 30 to 50 portfolios a week from employment seekers and that it is currently holding 5,000 portfolios on file, for an average of five to 10 new contractors' roles which it has available each year.

This lack of standardisation in the recruitment process has several advantages for the employer. It is a very flexible system that can quickly, cheaply, and very selectively access the workers required (Storey et al., 2005). It also enables the employer to negotiate very selective individual contracts, with each contractor having to negotiate their own working conditions and remuneration rates (Blair, Grey, & Randle, 2001).

There are, however, disadvantages to this form of recruitment for the freelance worker. Due to the tightly controlled recruitment processes, knowledge about job vacancies may not be generally known, or may be restricted only to those workers who are invited to apply, or those who already work with a specific team or group of freelancers (Storey et al., 2005). This system may also have an impact on the remuneration which freelance workers can negotiate. As each freelancer bargains as an individual, their pay rate is solely dependent on the individual's ability to negotiate. Other factors may also influence the individual's negotiating power, including such factors as the availability of other contracts, the length of time they have been between contracts, and financial commitments. Storey et al. (2005) reported that in the UK the pay rates for freelance workers in the media industry have declined in real terms since those of the early 1990s.

In the allied industry of UK television production, Ursell (2000) found that these conditions did not encourage the workforce to develop feelings of commitment, loyalty, or trust in their employers. However, among the production workers themselves, these qualities did often develop within the production teams, with teams of workers continually working together. Selection into these teams was based on a mixture of reasons including professional skill, being easy to work with, and close personal relationships. To summarise, production workers in film and in television work in a collegial environment, often sticking together in production teams over the course of many different projects. However, an added complication to this relationship is the fact that these colleagues are often also in competition with each other for work contracts (Ursell, 2000).

Networks and reputation

The existence of complex and intertwined social and professional networks underpins the film production industry. These networks can provide access to work for some individuals and can also exclude others from gaining access. These networks not only play an important role in gaining initial entry into the film industry they also play an ongoing function in maintaining employment and gaining access to sought-after jobs.

Due to the lack of standardised job descriptions and recruitment processes employers rely on an individual's reputation to assure themselves that prospective workers are capable of meeting the requirements of the job (Bauman, 2002). The prerequisite of an established reputation acts as a barrier to those who try to enter the industry without the necessary ability and experience. These informal networks are vital in this freelance industry (Davenport, 2006) and individuals who do not have an outstanding reputation are rarely considered (Blair, 2001). Networking then can be seen as an effort of self-enterprise, and a necessary part of the freelance worker's life. The cultivation of friendships, goodwill, and support needs to be achieved whether it is sincere or purely instrumental in order to build the necessary associations to gain access to employment opportunities (Ursell, 2000).

In order to be successful or simply to remain in sufficient employment a freelance worker needs to be nested into the larger supporting structure (Alvarez & Svejenova, 2002; Svejenova, 2005) of the industry. This involves important networks and associations with key contacts who can provide access to contracts.
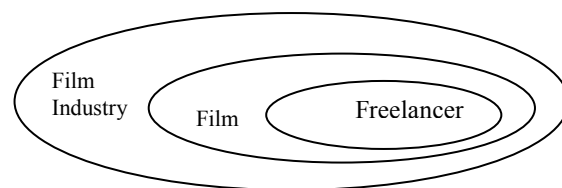
Figure 2.1 **Structural nesting of the freelancer**[3]

Networks are important to the freelancer, but they also help enforce industry norms and individuals who do not conform will not be accepted into the fold. Accepted working practices are therefore maintained and reinforced through this structure. The producer and director both benefit from these networks, but at the same time they are also network members and as such also subject to its constraints. The heavy reliance on reputation within the network may therefore act as a barrier to risk and experimentation (Davenport, 2006). These strong ties may hinder the development of innovation or change in both the structure and the processes in the industry (Delmestri, Montanari, & Usai, 2005).

Freelance production workers operate in an intertwined system containing both open and closed networks. The "address book" is an open network. It consists of a list of personal contacts whom the freelancer may contact in the search for work. These contacts may not all be personally known to the freelancer and are often shared amongst freelancers as possible sources of employment. This sharing of address book contacts brings with it a sense of

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[3] Adapted from *Symbiotic Careers in Movie Making* (Alvarez & Svejenova, 2002, p. 190).

reciprocity; for example, passing on the names of other freelancers to producers is expected to be reciprocated at some stage (Antcliff, Saundry, & Stuart, 2007).

Project networks or team networks are closed networks and are also very important to the freelancer. These relationships have developed over the course of many projects and these individuals actively seek to work together on projects where possible. There is often a high degree of reciprocity amongst the members and a strong relationship of trust which has been built up over time (Antcliff et al., 2007). These networks serve more than an economic function. As well as enhancing the members' employment opportunities they also provide a degree of collective security and provide opportunities for collaboration within the highly competitive freelance workers' employment market. Along with this sense of belonging there is also a sense of obligation to perform well on the project, not only for your own reputation but also for that of your collective team (Antcliff et al., 2007).

The close ties which develop within these networks can provide the freelancer with a more regular stream of employment opportunities but they can potentially destroy them as well. An individual who fails to perform, who challenges authority, or who raises grievances runs the risk of being blacklisted (Antcliff et al., 2007). The threat of these kinds of sanctions is a powerful force which ensures that the freelance worker adheres to the rules of network membership. Film industry networks are complex and intertwining and the freelancer uses different networks to achieve different goals as and when required. The individual freelancer uses these networks both to further their own individual aspirations and to collectively support others in their close network (Antcliff et al., 2007) all the time maintaining a tentative balance between competition and collaboration.

Careers

The freelance employment practices seen in the film industry have been described by some as an example of the future of work employment. This

trend is often referred to as the "boundaryless career" or the "new self-employed" (Bauman, 2002).

Defillippi and Arthur (1994) define boundaryless careers as being careers in which the:

> *Career paths may involve sequences of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of single employment settings (p. 307).*

Careers in a broad sense can be described as an "evolving sequence of work experienced over time" (Anand, Peiperl, & Arthur, 2002, p. 2). Careers are also commonly described using metaphors, such as "journey" and "career path" (Inkson, 2002). However, these new forms of employment require new ways of describing work arrangements and the careers which emerge from them. Arthur, Inkson, and Pringle (1999) describe careers in the new economy as being enacted by career actors who improvise and experiment with new roles, learn new skills and then move on.

The success or scope of an individual's boundaryless career is influenced by three important factors: know-why; know-how, and know-whom (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994). The know-why refers to the individual's career identity – knowing what it is that they do and being able to advocate this to a prospective employer. The know-how refers to the individual's employment skills which need to be broad enough to be useful in a range of employment settings. Finally, the know-whom refers to the individual's social networks and connections – knowing whom to contact for work opportunities (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994).

Jones (1996) identified four stages of career development for boundaryless careers in project networks such as the film industry. These four stages are: beginning; crafting; navigating; and maintaining. Jones also identified the specific skills and competencies that she sees are essential for success at each of these stages. These skills and competencies are summarised in the table below.

Table 2.1

Interaction of boundaryless careers and project networks[4]

Career stage and primary issues	Skills and competencies
Beginning: *Getting access to the industry*	• Identifying gatekeepers to gain entrance • Demonstrating interpersonal skills • Showing motivation and persistence
Crafting: *Learning required skills and culture*	• Learning technical skills and roles • Assimilating industry culture – norms and values • Demonstrating reliability and commitment
Navigating: *Building reputation and personal networks*	• Establishing reputation through quality work • Expanding one's skills and competencies • Developing and maintaining personal contacts
Maintaining: *Extending the profession and gaining personal balance*	• Mentoring and sponsoring others • Balancing personal needs and professional demands

Careers that develop in project-network industries such as film exist through a series of projects. These projects are the individual's career and are often also a source of creative output for the individual. The goal for the individual in this system is to develop a line of identifiable credits, showing a history of their past achievements through working in a succession of temporary, and often short-term, contracts (Jones, 2002).

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[4] Adapted from *Careers in Project Networks: The Case of the Film Industry* (Jones, 1996, p. 68).

Jones (2002) believes that signals and indices are important in such project networks to convey important information about the individual to others in the network. Signals include such things as education and experience and can therefore change from project to project. They include all activities used to showcase the individual's skill and competency such as success on previous projects. These signals are used to predict an individual's likely behaviour, value, and quality. Indices, on the other hand, refer to such attributes as gender and ethnicity which are fixed.

In creative industries such as film, work is developed around many, often short-term, projects and skilled individuals must compete for an opportunity to participate. In an environment such as this, signalling codes and reputations are representative of the knowledge and expertise which are held by the most successful – the "survivors". At the same time, even these successful individuals are faced with a great deal of uncertainty due to the shifting nature of fads and fashions within the creative industries (Jones, 2002).

This signalling content centres around three key aspects of information – identity, skills, and relationships – the *knowing-why, knowing-how, and knowing-whom* of signalling. The table below explains the important features of each of these factors.

Table 2.2

The knowing-why, knowing-how and knowing-whom of signalling[5]

Knowing-why	**Signalling an identity** What is distinctive and enduring about the individual and is reflected in career choices – values, passion for work
Knowing-how	**Signalling performance** Relevant skills, experience, and knowledge needed for competent performance
Knowing-whom	**Signalling relationships** Social capital which comprises career relevant networks

[5] Adapted from *Signaling Expertise: How Signals Shape Careers in Creative Industries* (Jones, 2002, p. 214-215).

The information provided by signalling allows prospective employers to sort and select those individuals who are perceived as best matches for a project based on their identity, past performance, and their network relationships (Jones, 2002). To succeed, individuals need to develop effective strategies to enhance status, build reputations, and deflect or reframe how signals are interpreted when required. These signalling strategies are, however, modified by indices such as race, gender, or ethnicity which also facilitate or limit access to work opportunities, with individuals often preferring to work with like people. This can prove to be a barrier to employment for older workers, women, and minority groups who can be severely restricted in their access to work (Jones, 2002).

Some workers in this industry can find it difficult to move from one area of work to another. They can come up against a career progression paradox. Employers prefer to employ workers who have previous experience in the area, so those new to the field will find it difficult to get a start in the field. This paradox is relevant for many workers who are attempting to make career transitions. It is, however, exacerbated for contract workers who are repeatedly hired for short-term contracts and must continually find new contracts (O'Mahony & Bechky, 2006). They are regularly faced with having to stretch their particular skill set in order to meet the requirements of the next project and at the same time they run the risk of being rejected for projects because they lack the necessary depth of experience in a particular area.

Conclusion

The structural factors described in this section play an important role in influencing the operation of the film industry in New Zealand. The project-based nature of the work can operate both to the benefit and to the detriment of both the freelancer and the film production company. Freelancers must work hard to maintain strong networks and a impeccable reputation in order to survive in this arena. While production companies operate in a fluid and often cost-effective manner, they do run the risk of

losing key learning and institutional knowledge once the film project is finished and the freelancers move on to the next project. In order to forge a career in this environment freelancers must be prepared to work hard at crafting and building their careers in this heavily competitive environment.

2.3 Psychological consequences for the individual

This section explores two key issues. Firstly, it tries to explain why people choose to work in an industry that provides low-paid, insecure, arduous, and highly competitive employment. Secondly, it examines the negative effects of this type of employment on workers and, by extension, their families. The section starts by discussing the idea of film work as a collective vocation and links this idea into research on workaholic organisations. Next, recent literature on psychological contracts is reviewed, in particular examining the role of social referents in the forming of these relationships. The psychological impact of job insecurity and work strain is examined using Karasek's model (1979) of job demands and control and Lewchuk, de Wolff, King, & Polanyi's model (2005) of employment strain. It is argued that the heavy demands of film work, coupled with little control within the workplace and nonexistent job security, create a psychologically damaging environment for many workers. The final section examines recent critical literature in the area of work–life balance, arguing that the concept of workplace flexibility within the film industry operates primarily for the employer's benefit.

Film as a vocation

In contemporary Western society the concept of work often takes on more than a purely economic value. Work is seen by many as a principal source of self-worth and self-fulfilment. It goes beyond providing the necessities of life and also provides the individual with a place or status in society (Bain, 2005). For those who work in the creative industries, work can take on an even greater meaning than for other professions, with creative work being closely tied to their sense of self. Work for many can be best described in terms of vocation rather than an occupation and, therefore, the relationship that these individuals have with their work can be very intense. Lips-

Wiersma and McMorland (2006) have defined four dimensions of vocation: animation; dedication; evaluation; and coherence. Firstly, animation refers to an individual knowing what they are "called to do". Next, dedication involves commitment or investment from the individual and may also involve some form of personal sacrifice for the greater good. Evaluation is the knowledge that the individual is making a contribution to society. Finally, coherence refers to the sense of meaning the individual gains when reflecting on their contribution. For many working in film, this sense of vocation can drive them to devote their working life to this passion (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006).

Glaeser (2000, cited in Bain, 2005) has identified five ways in which an individual derives meaning from work: by the activities and processes of work; end products of work; prestige associated with work in a particular occupation; the prestige of the social context within which work occurs; and by the position that work is allocated relative to other pastimes. It can be argued that for the creative worker in the film industry many of these five sources of meaning can be achieved by working in this industry. Not all film production workers are involved in creative activities. Some are in assistant positions and are hoping to move into more creative roles. Others are not personally creative but still feel the drive to be involved in this creative process or have a love of film or the creative industries in general. The collaborative environment of film production means that even those not involved in strictly creative roles often still feel a part of the creative process. The film industry provides an outlet for these creative talents and dreams; the end product is often a significant piece of work that is admired by many, and there is the prestige and glamour associated with the industry.

This sense of vocation and meaning that is gained from their work can be a motivating factor for many to work in this demanding industry. It may be that they are driven to create film, or simply that film is a means to express their creative talents. However, the draw to work in this industry, and the sustaining feature for many, is the benefit of working in a collective creative

environment. Artists and other creative workers often choose to cluster together in communities, either for work or pleasure or both (Bain, 2005). Film is very much a collective creative enterprise where groups of individuals with a strong sense of vocation cluster together on creative projects. As Törnqvist (1983, cited in Bain, 2005, p. 36) so eloquently described: "Creativity flourishes when different specialities and competencies are squeezed together on a small surface." The production of film provides this environment in which a diverse group of talented, creative people can work together to create the collective work of art which is the film. In this working environment there are strong social pressures at play which ensure that freelancers conform to accepted norms and working practices. This sense of meaning and contribution that the individual gains from their creative work is, however, always balanced against how their talents and abilities are viewed, both by society in general and by their employers and peers. Film industry freelancers must often reconcile the gap between their actual ability and their vision or belief in their own artistic capability. The film industry is replete with many creative individuals who seek to gain recognition for their talents, some who are successful and many who are not (Sternbach, 1995).

Psychologists have characterised the artistic persona as hypersensitive, autonomous, independent, and at times preoccupied with work to the exclusion of social activity (Bain, 2005; Steptoe, 1998). The preoccupation with work to the exclusion of other activities along with the personality characteristics described are often attributed to the "creative temperament" and can be seen as the result of artistic gift or talent. However, when these behaviours manifest in a workplace they are viewed differently. The organisational literature describes these behaviours in terms of workaholism which can have negative consequences for both the individual and the organisation.

The psychological literature in this area examines workaholism from an individual perspective. For example, Fassell (1990) states that workaholism consists of the following characteristics: multiple addictions; denial; self-

esteem problems; external referenting; inability to relax; and obsessiveness. Spence and Robbins (1992) define the workaholic type person as one who is "highly work involved, feels compelled or driven to work because of inner pressures, and has low enjoyment of work" (p. 162). Porter (2001) sees workaholism as including identity issues, with rigid thinking that includes the desire to control, perfectionist standards, withdrawal, and denial. In a similar vein, Scott, Moore, and Miceli (1997) see that the amount of time spent on work activities is the critical defining factor of workaholism. Many of the personal characteristics described in this literature on workaholism could also be seen to describe behaviours associated with creative of artistic temperaments.

Much of the current psychological literature on workaholism is limited by the fact that it is described in terms of individual personality characteristics, rather than examining broader organisational or sociological issues, which may lead to, or contribute to, this behaviour. Workaholics are described as having an exaggerated belief in their own ability, and judge their behaviours and results against superhuman standards (Fassell, 1990; Porter, 2001). They will consistently work beyond a 40-hour week and will be constantly thinking of work, even when away from work (Fassell, 1990; Scott et al., 1997). The work addict will also sacrifice personal relationships in order to pursue work (Fassell, 1990; Porter, 2001; Scott et al., 1997). When we examine these definitions of workaholism, clear parallels can be drawn between these behaviours and those of the freelance production worker. These workers routinely work beyond 40 hours a week, and they are constantly work obsessed, in terms of either the project they are involved in or securing the next project. For many, their work commitments are given greater priority than their personal relationships or family obligations.

The results of this form of behaviour can be detrimental for the individual and can result in a reduced involvement in social and family life, failed relationships or marriages, physical exhaustion and trouble sleeping, severe headaches, backaches, high blood pressure, ulcers, and depression (Fassell, 1990; Scott et al., 1997). The long-term effects can also contribute to

stroke or other serious illnesses (Fassell, 1990). The film industry freelancer must maintain this level of commitment if they are to continue to work in this industry, and the physical and psychological outcomes of this behaviour, as described, are a distinct possibility for many.

In the workplace, workaholics can have an impact both on co-workers and on the functioning of the organisation as a whole. Workaholics judge themselves and others against superhuman standards that ensure failure for themselves and their co-workers. Co-workers may find themselves having to work harder to try to meet these standards, whilst receiving no recognition and often being blamed for failures (Porter, 2001). Workaholics tend to be obsessive, self-centred, and unable to relax and this behaviour can create conflicts with co-workers (Scott et al., 1997). Co-workers are also at risk of greater stress and strain at work as workaholics are often unable to delegate control to others (Porter, 2001; Spence & Robbins, 1992). It can be argued that many of these behaviours described in this literature could apply to creative individuals who can become obsessive or overly involved in their work, to the detriment of themselves and others around them. When we look at the film industry, a good example of this can be seen with the common perception that many successful film directors are perfectionists who are often impossible to work with, and totally obsessed with the production of their film. There are regular examples in the media of such individuals. However, we do not hear about the production workers, and others who work with them, and how they cope with these behaviours on a daily basis. It seems that at some levels in the industry behaviours that would be unacceptable in many other industries are explained as part of this creative temperament. Whereas, at lower levels workers, both creative and noncreatives alike, must work away to meet the sometimes unrealistic demands of the creative directors further up in the hierarchy.

From the perspective of the organisation, workaholism can initially be seen as an asset to the organisation, as the worker is initially highly productive and very dedicated. However, this situation can progress over time with stress and burnout being a possible outcome (Scott et al., 1997).

Workaholics can experience more job stress than others as a result of being overwhelmed by their own high standards and expectations. The longer term consequences can result in workaholics experiencing more minor physical symptoms and illnesses than their co-workers (Spence & Robbins, 1992). Once again, the media provides us with stories of high-profile actors, directors, and camera people who are described as "burnout" and require rest and recuperation after a gruelling film production.

Workaholic organisations put their organisational goals above everything else. Everyone is expendable in these organisations and loyalties are often not honoured. The workers are commodities who are used up and then discarded for others who are waiting to replace them (Fassell, 1990). Workers who are not predisposed to workaholic behaviour patterns either try to live up to these workaholic expectations or resign. Alternatively, they will have their employment terminated when they cannot meet the organisation's impossible expectations (Scott et al., 1997). Workers themselves can become co-dependent with these organisations as they co-operate with the excessive demands in order to maintain their employment and their livelihood. It can be argued that workaholic creative workers become co-dependent with the film industry. Although the industry fulfils their needs in terms of creative outlet, it takes a high price in doing so, as it also encourages and ultimately demands workaholic behaviours from its freelance workers.

Workaholic organisations often deny the effect that their work practices have on their workers while boasting about their achievements (Fassell, 1990). A workaholic organisation is one which holds its goals above all else. The film industry can be viewed as the epitome of the workaholic organisation. The completion of the film is of utmost importance, people are expendable, freelancers come and go, and those who are sick or who do not perform are replaced. The film must be completed at any cost. In film, where large numbers of workaholic individuals come together, the pressure to perform is immense. This can create a workaholic working environment in which extreme conditions are endured for the sake of the film production.

This tendency towards workaholism in the film industry is exacerbated by the structural issues of the industry which act to encourage this behaviour amongst the workers.

Psychological contracts of contingent workers

The film production industry as it operates today is heavily reliant on contingent labour. How freelance film workers view their working relationship with their employer is a complex issue which cannot be fully explained by the current literature on contingent labour. The uniqueness of this industry and the workers' relationship with their work does bring into question some of the current literature on contingent workers and their psychological investment in their work.

A recent review of the psychological impact of temporary employment has highlighted problems with much of the current body of research. A major concern is the heterogeneity of the types of temporary work arrangements studied, along with the lack of consistent definitions (De Cuyper, de Jong, De Witte, Isaksson, Rigotti, & Schalk, 2008). There are problems with relating the current literature to creative workers, as the majority of this research has been carried out with temporary office workers, whose experiences vary greatly from film production workers. To further complicate this comparison, film production workers are considered to be self-employed contractors, and some researchers do not include the self-employed in this research. It still remains, however, an important area to consider when examining the relationship that film workers have with their work and with the film production companies that employ them.

A psychological contract can be defined as an individual's understanding of the terms of exchange between themselves and the organisation (Rousseau, 2001). The literature on psychological contracts attempts to understand the employee's attitudes and behaviours, in order to examine their perceptions of this contractual working relationship with their employer (McLean Parks, Kidder, & Gallagher, 1998). These complex relationships define whether the employee feels that the employment contract with their

employer has been violated or upheld. Psychological contracts transcend the legal or formal specifications of job requirements or obligations (Ellis, 2007; McLean Parks et al., 1998). Psychological contracts are promise-based and over time take the form of a mental model or schema. These schemas may differ for employees in the same organisation due to their previous work experiences and also due to occupational influences which help to define for them how they should be treated (Rousseau, 2001). Psychological contracts are often described as being either relational contracts where the employee has a greater psychological investment in their work or the purely transactional financial exchange which is commonly described with temporary employment (Guest, 2004). According to some writers, contingent or temporary workers are less committed, less satisfied, and less likely to go the extra mile for their employer than permanent workers (McLean Parks et al., 1998). However, the current body of literature on contingent workers does not look at creative industries, such as film, which are in many ways distinct from other industries. This assumption can, therefore, be challenged for two distinct reasons. Firstly, the importance of their job as a creative outlet for many of these workers would indicate that they would have a greater psychological attachment with their work than might otherwise be the case. Secondly, the highly competitive nature of the industry means that these workers must invest all of their time and energy into their work in order to gain contracts, further increasing the importance of their work in their lives.

Much of the current body of literature in this area has concentrated on contract breaches, although more recent literature examines these contracts as operating on a continuum from unmet to exceeded promises (Ho, 2005). The research on the psychological contracts of contingent workers is scarce and difficult to fit into this current framework, partly due to the large variation in the types of contingent working arrangements (McLean Parks et al., 1998). Recent research which examines the social forces within the workplace that influence both the formation and the perceived fulfilment of these contracts (Ho, 2005), provides a more helpful explanation of this process for contingent workers. The behaviours and

attitudes of co-workers and supervisors, therefore, influence the shaping of these psychological contracts (Ellis, 2007). There are strong structural and social influences at work in the film industry, which play an important role in the development of these contracts. Although production workers have a temporary or contingent work contract they are acting within a complex structure of close network relationships, often working closely with the same production teams over long periods of time, and so developing close professional and personal relationships with co-workers and supervisors alike. In this environment the individual's evaluation of contract fulfilment is more than the simple computation of how much they received versus how much they were promised but rather a much more complex personal and social construction of the relationship (Ho, 2005). It is reasonable to conclude that how an individual views the fulfilment of their psychological contract would be heavily influenced not only by the evaluation of their own receipt-promise disparity but also by that of others in their social referent group (Ho, 2005) in this case other contract production workers. The importance of social referents when evaluating the receipt-promise agreement can help to explain why they endure the often harsh working conditions in this industry. It is reasonable to argue that as long as the worker's perception of this exchange agreement appears equitable to that of their social referent group, then it is likely that they will feel their psychological contract is being honoured.

In the film industry, individual workers negotiate their own contracts directly with the production company. Often they will begin negotiation based on the terms and conditions of their last contract; however, this will often be competitively negotiated by the production company. The contract negotiation is conducted in a situation heavily influenced by the individual's market power and also with reference to their social referent group. There is, however, also a strong degree of trust required between the worker and the production department. The production department is in a strong position to set up a contract which is either fair and equitable in relation to other workers, or inequitable, and how this contract is established initially will set the tone for the ongoing relationship. Rousseau (2001) sees that

idiosyncratic deals such as these where individual workers negotiate their own contracts can undermine trust and co-operation in the workplace. The amount of leverage or power that individuals have when negotiating these deals is important. If they are not in a position to negotiate their work contract strongly they may later feel a disparity in this receipt-promise contract, when they compare their own situation to that of their work colleagues, thereby undermining the trust in their own contract relationship. In the competitive job market of the film industry, where there is generally a surplus of contractors and a scarcity of work, the power in this relationship lies solely with the film production companies, and situations of inequity, in both working conditions and remuneration, are common place.

It can be argued that there is likely to be a discrepancy between the production department's view of the psychological contract and the production worker's view of this contract. The film production department often has a ready supply of freelance workers waiting for work, whereas the freelancer themself often has more investment in the working relationship, both from the creative satisfaction of the work and financial needs. If we accept this premise, then it is also likely that the production departments would view these contracts as narrower and more transactional, as is commonly stated in the literature (Guest, 2004). Given the amount of psychological and physical investment necessary from the individual to operate in this environment, it is more likely that workers would hold a relational view of this working arrangement. It is possible that over the longer term this gap in expectations may lead to resentment, as freelancers come to view themselves as giving more than they are getting in return. When we also consider the added pressure of job insecurity, and the high work load demands, it is even more likely to be the case.

Impact of job insecurity, job strain, and work demands

Job insecurity is a constant feature of project-based employment such as that in film. Freelance film workers suffer job insecurity on a regular basis. The psychological impact of job insecurity is an area that has been extensively covered in psychological literature. However, to date there has

been very little research examining this issue within the film or allied industries where job insecurity is a major factor in their working lives. Job insecurity has been described as a concern about the continued existence of work in the future (Hartley, Jacobson, Klandermans, & van Vuuren, 1991). Job insecurity has been found to reduce overall psychological wellbeing and has been associated with psychological distress, anxiety, and depression. Job insecurity is a chronic stressor which can reduce wellbeing both in the short and long term. It can also result in various physical complaints such as heart problems and high blood pressure (Bernhard-Oettel, Sverke, & De Witte, 2005; De Witte, 1999; Ertel, Pech, Ullsperger, Von dem Knesebeck, & Siegrist, 2005; Storey et al., 2005). Not only does job insecurity affect the individual, it can also have a spill-over effect where it can affect the quality of life for the individual's family and friends (De Witte, 1999).

Film production work often demands high workloads in situations where workers have little control over their work schedule or other work outcomes. This limited ability to influence the work environment has been found to compromise an individual's wellbeing (Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2005). Karasek (1979) developed the Job Demands-Control Model which identified two core aspects of work which can produce psychological strain: workload demands and decision latitude. The combination of high workload demands with low decision latitude creates stress and reduces physical and psychological wellbeing. The combination of these two factors is very common amongst film production workers. Sternbach (1995) found that amongst professional musicians, irregular work schedules, shifting work locations, constantly rotating managers with different demands, vulnerability to physical injury and disablement, and the ever present financial insecurity, all contributed to increased stress. The lack of control over their work schedules was also cited as an important factor. A study carried out with professional footballers in the UK also found that the fragile nature of their work contracts, along with the intense pressure to perform, resulted in a working environment dominated by insecurity, fear, and physical injury (Roderick, 2006).

Strain can also be examined from the view of the employment relationship, rather than the job tasks themselves. Employment strain combines high demands and low control but unlike Karasek's model is shaped by the employment relationships, rather than the job (Lewchuk et al., 2005). In this model, employment strain is made up of a combination of: work uncertainty (level of control over future employment); earnings uncertainty (level of control over future earnings); and scheduling uncertainty (level of control over where and when they work). The authors found that as the uncertainty and workload increased, and levels of support were reduced, the workers reported poorer health outcomes. Contract workers in film are constantly searching for new contracts. They need to maintain top performance levels at all times, in an attempt to keep in constant employment. Some of these workers are also juggling multiple commitments from different employers or overlapping contracts and this also adds to their strain. One quantitative study which was carried out in the media industry also found an association between adverse psychosocial work conditions and subjective health in a group of freelancers. The findings demonstrated a strong association between effort-reward imbalance and poor self-reported health ratings (Ertel et al., 2005).

Due to the irregular nature of the work in the film industry, freelancers can be forced to work very long hours, delay holidays, social, or family gatherings, and work when they are unwell in order to meet deadlines or financial commitments (Ertel et al., 2005). This can increase the physical and psychological pressures that these workers are under. Employees working continuously for long periods of time have been found to experience a greater number of physical health complaints (Martens, Nijhuis, van Boxtel, & Knotternus, 1999) further adding to the pressure and strain in their working lives. Storey et al. (2005) found that freelance film workers used different strategies to cope with these pressures. Some described how their spouse, friends, and families had pulled them through times of despair. Others attempted to build up psychological defences against the risk of personal failure through lack of work, by viewing their work as selling a service or business rather than selling themselves.

To maintain a freelance contractor's career in the film industry places enormous demands on the individual. They are required to expel copious amounts of creative energy and at the same time seek out and secure a steady stream of projects. This requires absolute commitment from the individual and takes a toll as they try to balance these demands with their personal life (Jones, 1996).

Work-life balance

The use of flexible work contracts and work-life balance (WLB) initiatives has been viewed as a way for employees to balance their home and working life. Freelance film workers often work under "flexible" working contracts being paid by the hour for the hours they work per week. However, the flexibility in this contract is totally for the benefit of the film production company rather than for the benefit of the workers.

Flexible workplace practices and WLB initiatives have been growing in popularity in New Zealand and globally over the last few years. This growth has been driven in many respects by employers as an effort to secure and subsequently retain top-performing employees (Smith & Gardner, 2007). The popularity of WLB in recent years also reflects the broader social and economic developments which have led to profound changes in the nature of work for many workers. Changes such as globalisation, organisational restructuring, the weakening of unions, and increasing technological advances have brought with them the 24/7 workplace (Lewis, Gambles, & Rapoport, 2007). The current emphasis on WLB has been criticised for not addressing these broad systemic issues (Lewis et al., 2007) which lie at the heart of the problems faced by families balancing work and life commitments. The current focus of much WLB research also overlooks the constraints of gender, workplace culture, and societal norms and assumptions which impact on the uptake of these initiatives (Lewis et al., 2007). In addition to these problems the concept of WLB has also been challenged as being too narrowly defined, focusing predominantly on women (Ransome, 2007; Reiter, 2007).

Fleetwood (2007) has described three kinds of flexible work practices. Employee friendly practices which include such things as flexi-time, voluntary part-time work, and job-share arrangements. Employer friendly practices are the next type and these include temporary work or part-time work, which involve unsocial working hours such as weekend work and seasonal work. This kind of working arrangement has been referred to as "flexploitation". The last type of arrangement is considered to be neutral and may be friendly to both parties. WLB initiatives often fit into this category. By this definition freelance film work fits into the category that Fleetwood describes as "flexploitation" being temporary work which often involves unsocial hours, including working on public holidays and weekends.

The film industry is well known for its long and unsocial working hours; however, it is not alone in this respect. There has been an increase in the average working hours of many workers, in the Western world in recent years. In Australia, recent research has found that the majority of workers work more than a 45-hour week (Van Wanrooy & Wilson, 2006). In New Zealand, as is the case in Australia, there are few legislated limits on working hours and a national culture of long working hours has developed. However, extensive research has shown that long hours can adversely affect health and safety of employees, and have a negative impact on family and community life (Van Wanrooy & Wilson, 2006). The actual hours worked (Byron, 2005; McElwain, Korabik, & Rosin, 2005; Thornthwaite, 2004; White, Hill, McGovern, Mills & Smeaton, 2003) by an individual and the amount of control (Hyman & Summers, 2002; Tausig & Fenwick, 2001) that they have over the hours worked has the greatest amount of influence on negative spill-over from work into family life. The time pressure that is caused by working long hours has been identified as a source of conflict for workers trying to meet work and family commitments (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Yardley, Yardley, & Markel, 1997). Time pressure (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2002) is an important factor for freelance production workers who work 12 hours a day minimum. The amount of time that workers have to commit to being at work can

make it very difficult to maintain personal relationships while involved in a film production.

It is also common practice in the film industry to work weekends and public holidays. Public holidays and weekends are generally considered to be work days, which can conflict with family and social relationships, causing strain (Shamir, 1983), especially when experienced over long periods of time. The unpredictability of work schedules can also add to this strain for production workers trying to balance family commitments (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2003).

How secure workers feel in their work has an important impact on workers' decision to work long, unsocial, or inconvenient hours. In highly competitive industries such as film where workers need to constantly prove their commitment in order to maintain their working contract there is little choice involved in this decision. Employees in other industries where high commitment labour management models are common place are also feeling this lack of security. The pressure for workers to work long hours in order to be seen to be committed to their jobs ("presenteeism") and be recommended for promotion, or simply in order to retain their job, is now common place in many industries (Hyman & Summers, 2002).

Some argue that WLB and flexible working arrangements are introduced as a means to try to accommodate those who cannot conform to the inflexibility of these long working hours. WLB, therefore, can be seen as a means to allow workers to conform to these pressures to work longer hours, rather than challenging these beliefs about ideal workers and long working hours. WLB can then serve the interests of employers rather than employees. The rhetoric of WLB supports the idea of workers making a personal choice. However, prevailing workplace practices and beliefs define the ideal worker as one who takes on heavy workloads, and puts in long hours in the workplace (Lewis et al., 2007). The reality of WLB being a personal choice is eroded for many workers by this pressure to confirm to these expectations in order to maintain employment or gain promotion.

This emphasis on individual choice in the WLB literature, and subsequently in WLB policies, puts the onus on getting this balance right on the workers themselves. The workers then blames themselves for not getting this balance right; however, they may not be free to make these decisions, due to structural constraints (Ransome, 2007). Choice is always socially imbedded (Lewis et al, 2007) and film industry contractors are heavily constrained by industry structures when making decisions about their working lives. The insecure nature of their work means that they must accept the working conditions which are given. However, they are still impacted by these notions of "choice" that are common with the WLB rhetoric and may, therefore, at some level, view these working conditions as their own choice, to either refuse or accept.

Work such as that in the film production industry which involves long hours or long periods of time away from home puts strain on other family members to cope with this absence. Film production industry workers, as with many other workers in New Zealand society, still generally adhere to traditional gender divisions in family structure, with men taking on the traditional breadwinner role, while women maintain the majority of the responsibility for the family and home (Crump, Logan, & McIlroy, 2007). Those freelance production workers who have families are generally men, and they usually have a partner at home who must take on the majority of the responsibility for the family care due to the long hours and frequent travel that is required in this industry. In situations such as these where men are involved in occupations requiring extended absence from home, the wives or partners at home must undertake all the family work tasks including the tasks traditionally carried out by men. These women are also faced with having to relinquish their own careers in order to take on the primary responsibility for family care (Zvonkovic, Solomon, Humble, & Manoogian, 2005).

Family life for those involved in occupations such as film revolves around their work schedule and places constraints on families which in turn affects

the relationships within these families (Zvonkovic et al., 2005). Most especially in precarious employment such as film production this reliance on breadwinning as a source of identity and family involvement for fathers is tenuous. Changes in the economy or the simple cancellation of a film project can have devastating effects on the family. Zvonkovic et al. (2005) in a qualitative study of long distance truck drivers and fishermen found that intra-family role tensions were experienced when male breadwinners encountered declines in their earnings. The stress that these men felt by the reduction in the security of their roles as breadwinners was fed back into the family dynamic and could lead to tension and conflict between men and women regarding gender roles. It is possible to speculate that freelance production workers find themselves suffering these same tensions when they are between work contracts, placing similar strains on family relations as described in this study.

As self-employed creative workers, film production workers will often have a high level of emotional investment in their work. This emotional engagement with their work can carry over beyond work and interfere with home and social life (Parasurman & Simmers, 2001). Along with this, they also have the added pressure of maintaining the quality of their work, as their future work prospects rely on this. This pressure in the work environment can result in strain-based conflict and can produce symptoms such as tension, irritability, fatigue, anxiety, and depression (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The film industry demands that individuals work at an intense pace, under constant pressure to perform. This working environment can put strain on family and personal relationships. Along with these psychological outcomes, physical problems can also occur, such as an increased risk of hypertension, anxiety disorders, and depression (Frone et al., 1997).

The optimum balance between work and nonwork life is an individual preference and this can change as it is influenced by other broader structural constraints and personal factors in the individuals' lives (Porter, 2001). The film industry demands total commitment from freelance

workers. Therefore, those wishing to find a greater balance between work and life outside of work may find this very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Once the film project has ended the balance shifts in the opposite direction, bringing with it a different set of challenges.

Working in the film industry can impact heavily on production workers' lives, both physically and psychologically. Many of these workers are creative individuals, and are drawn to this work more as to a vocation, rather than merely as a way to earn a living. The concept of vocation helps to explain why many stay working in this industry which brings with it uncertainty, long hours, and often high-pressure working conditions. Many of these workers are highly creative people who gain a sense of fulfilment and a sense of self from this work. They invest much of their time and energy into this work, putting them at risk of being hit incredibly hard psychologically, when the work comes to an end.

2.4   Gender issues

This final section explores gender differences in employment in the film industry. Parallels are drawn between the literature on professional working women and the film industry and in particular on a study of professional Information and Communications Technology industry (ICT) workers in New Zealand. The similarities between the experiences of women new media workers in the UK and the New Zealand film industry will also be discussed in this section.

The production side of the entertainment industry has traditionally been a heavily male-dominated area (Ensher, Murphy, & Sullivan, 2002) in which women worked in assistant roles only. In 1987 Anne Ross Muir (Ross Muir, 1987) wrote that women were barred from many jobs in film and television due to discrimination, and that the time was right for change. At this time in the UK, out of 306 camera operators, 12 were women. There were 269 male sound technicians compared to eight women, and 1395 engineers of which 19 were women. In contrast, in the production area, all the production assistants and secretaries were women.

The situation in the film industry in New Zealand was, and in many respects still is, very similar to that described by Muir, with a heavily gendered division of labour. This labour division can also be seen in many technical industries in New Zealand, such as the ICT industry. Crump et al. (2007) carried out a study of ICT professional women finding that the majority of technical roles were held by men with women being employed on the softer side of the industry. The softer side was described as roles with customer interface that required "feminine" attributes such as flexibility, communication skills, and a more collaborative working style. Parallels can be drawn with the film industry, where women are employed in production roles and often work collaboratively between production departments, or are dealing with human resources issues.

Industries such as ICT are well known for having cultures of long working hours and high-pressure workloads, based on strong masculine ideology (Crump et al., 2007). The film industry can be seen to be very similar in many respects. However, this trend of extended working hours and high-pressure workloads is not confined only to these industries (Wood & Newton, 2006).

Gender roles can be described in terms of schemas which represent the cognitive lenses through which individuals view women and men differently (Bem, 1993). These culturally based schemas impose gender-based classifications on our social reality which encourages the sorting of people, attributes and behaviours based on the prevailing cultural view of masculinity and femininity (Bem, 1993). Those who deviate from established gender schema can be viewed harshly by society (Etaugh & Folger, 1998). For example, it is still the view of some that if a woman fails to take care of her family responsibilities she is a failure no matter how successful she is in other areas of her life (Aaltio & Huang, 2007). The position of women in the film industry is therefore, in many respects, a reflection of the position of women generally in our society. Inequality in gender roles still exists in our society today, with women continuing to carry

out the major share of parenting and household tasks (Deutsch & Saxon, 1998). In many instances, men continue to view themselves as the principal income earners and even women in full-time employment retain the principal responsibility for family and home caretaking (Marler & Moen, 2005). Feminist writers maintain that the primary reason for differences in men and women in terms of labour market outcomes lies with both direct and structural sex discrimination, and that there are no natural differences between the sexes. However, there is evidence that men and women do differ when it comes to broader life goals, such as the relative importance of family life and careers (Hakim, 2006).

In New Zealand, while it is generally accepted that the majority of women will have careers, this gender-specific division of labour within the family and home still perpetuates (Crump et al., 2007). It is an often unacknowledged reality that women hold the most loyalty and commitment to the family. This reality contrasts with the ideal of marital and parental equality, which is often not borne out in practice. This gap between reality and ideal can result in emotional turmoil and conflict for many women (Wood & Newton, 2006). Gender schemas are also reinforced at the interpersonal level through family structures. These family structures reinforce the separateness of the family and work spheres and the "naturalness" of these different roles to different gender groups. Women, therefore, despite making financial contributions to the household may not consider themselves successful unless they can also take care of the family and home life as well. Conversely, men may see their career and income being their major contribution to the family, even if this means less time can be spent on family matters (Marler & Moen, 2005).

Feminist writers view gender as operating on multiple levels. At the social structural level gender schema is reinforced by either increasing or minimising role strain in each arena. For example, traditional masculine roles and career structures facilitate the success of the breadwinner role for men through access to great financial rewards through steeply hierarchical employment structures. Conversely, traditional feminine occupations reflect

the assumption that women will leave employment due to marriage or birth of a child (Marler & Moen, 2005). The heavily gendered division of labour in the ICT industry reflects this socially constructed underlying assumption (Crump et al., 2007), and the film industry can be seen to be very similar in respect to how roles are divided based on gender.

The standard hierarchical career path can therefore be seen to be clearly gendered and designed for those who do not carry the burden of family responsibilities (Marler & Moen, 2005). For women then, who do generally carry the majority of this burden, there remains the decision whether or not to have children. Furthermore, if they do decide to have children, will they continue to work and will their present employment be tenable with this changed family dynamic. Crump et al. (2007) found in their study of ICT professional women that the majority of these women did not have children. Many respondents cited the long working hours and lack of flexibility as a concern, with many doubting that they could cope with the responsibilities and pressure of this kind of employment while caring for a family. In a study of new media workers in the UK Gill (2002) found that the majority of these workers also chose not to have children, as fluctuating workloads of portfolio work made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to manage family life as well. Women in the film industry in New Zealand are faced with very similar challenges to the women in both these studies. The pressures of working in an industry with a culture of long working hours, and the impact this would have on effective parenting, appears to be an important factor for many professional women in the decision not to have children (Wood & Newton, 2006). One study in the UK observed that over half of the senior-level professional women in managerial occupations were childless, while men can achieve the same by having a wife as a full-time homemaker and devote little or no time to domestic activities and family work (Hakim, 2006). In the film industry this situation also holds true, with the majority of senior roles held by men, with those few women who do reach top roles often being childless.

Among the professional women in the New Zealand ICT study there was a common view that taking a break from the industry to have children was detrimental to their careers. As the ICT industry is one in which change is very rapid and employment very competitive, re-entry to the workforce was seen to be very difficult and, if possible, would be at a more junior level (Crump et al., 2007). The film industry is also a fast-paced, competitive industry and for freelancers, taking a break from their employment can spell disaster in terms of future work prospects. When transitioning back into work after the birth of a child, women can come up against other stereotypes blocking their path. In a 2004 study in the US Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick (2004) found that working mothers in comparison to working fathers or childless women where viewed to be more easily distracted by family commitments and more likely to be absent or resign from work in order to give more time to family. The underlying belief that men should be the primary income earner and women the primary caregiver in our society leads to the assumption that women will be less committed to work and more likely to leave their job after the birth of a child.

The image of the "superwoman" suggests that women can combine occupational roles with family and motherhood (Gillespie, 2000). It is questionable whether this is in fact obtainable for many women. If women reject family ties and motherhood and choose to remain childless, society can view these women as barren, fruitless, and indulgent (Gillespie, 2000). For many women this decision to be childless or "childfree" is an ambivalent one, reflecting a variety of personal or social circumstances (Wood & Newton, 2006). Women with careers are viewed in our society as capable but also as being overly ambitious and often antisocial in sharp contrast to those who work in the home who are often seen as less competent but kind and caring (Cuddy et al., 2004). Childlessness can be seen as the consequence of failed or flawed femininity, with women who decide to remain childless being viewed as unfeminine (Gillespie, 2000). In order to succeed in the film industry women must be intensely career focused and must reflect these masculine qualities demanded by the industry. In so

doing these women can be labelled as being "hard" and overly ambitious and lacking in feminine qualities.

Alternative work arrangements such as self-employment or contract work would appear to provide the perfect solution for working mothers, who can choose a flexible lifestyle, spending time both in the work arena and with family responsibilities as they choose. However, Marler and Moen (2005) found that those women in alternative work such as temporary work or contract employment fared no better than those in permanent work arrangements. The pervasiveness of gender schema means that even those in alternative employment, such as contractors, continued to perpetuate normative beliefs about the gender roles of paid employment and unpaid family care responsibilities. Women working as freelancers can also come up against problems gaining access to work contracts in industries where contracts are allocated based on personal connections rather than ability. In male-dominated industries such as film the "old boys' networks" still control much of the flow of contracts and "who you know, not what you know" will often prevail. Furthermore, the lack of transparency in hiring practices often makes it impossible to contest hiring decisions. Gill (2002), in a study of new media workers, found stark differences between men's and women's experiences freelance work in the new media industry. Women won significantly fewer contracts and those they did were often for voluntary organisations rather than commercial organisations. Women earned less money than men and often became de-facto part-time workers as they were pushed into other occupations to earn a living (Gill, 2002). For many of these workers the informality of the work practices and the relationships with clients and other creative workers was a major attraction to this work; however, this informality caused problems for some women. These women often worked in male-dominated teams with a "laddish culture", inappropriate sexual interaction, sexist assumptions, and an absence of clear criteria for evaluating work (Gill, 2002). Many of these problems described by Gill in the new media industry are clearly applicable to the film industry where women must also work in a male-dominated working environment.

Some do, however, feel that the situation for women in the film industry is changing and that women are making inroads into this male-dominated environment. There has been significant growth in women heading independent production companies and support services to the entertainment sector in the US. In Los Angeles, 30 percent of the new entrepreneurial ventures in the entertainment industry were started by women (Ensher et al., 2002). In Hollywood, women are still under-represented in key roles such as directors and directors of photography. It is questionable how far women have managed to penetrate into the Hollywood system (Jones, 2002), and to what extent they are able to bring a female perspective into an industry which demands very masculine ideals and behaviours from its workers.

Working in the film industry in New Zealand is hard work for all those concerned; however, for women there are added pressures to bear. Whilst their male counterparts generally seem to maintain a career in the industry along with raising a family, for women in the industry, like so many other professional women in our society, it is just not possible. Freelance production work brings with it an expectation of total commitment to the job, at the expense of all other outside interests, including family. For many women in the industry this means a choice between working in film and having a family. In addition to this dilemma, it is questionable whether women have as free an access to work contracts in New Zealand as their male counterparts, as this male-dominated industry is heavily reliant on a complex system of networks in order to build reputations and gain contracts.

2.5 Conclusion

The literature on film workers specifically is very sparse. As freelance contractors this group of workers falls under the literature on contingent labour, some of which is relevant to this group, and some which is not. This review has attempted to draw on the available literature to give the reader some insight into both the structural and the psychological issues facing this

group of freelancers in the course of their lives. Finally, gender issues have been examined separately, to explore some of the issues faced by women trying to make their way in this traditionally male-dominated industry.

3.   METHODOLOGY

3.1   Theoretical stance

Many writers have criticised the field of organisational psychology for adopting a highly managerial approach. Nearly half a century ago Baritz's (1960) famous book *The Servants of Power* argued that American organisational psychologists had "sold out" to managerial interests and were more interested in enhancing profitability, productivity, and managerial control than in increasing our general understanding or improving people's working lives. Forty years later, Brief (2000) concluded that Baritz's criticisms are as relevant today as when they were first written. Brief ended his article with the simple statement "Question who you serve" (p. 351).

The constituency that I hope to represent through this research is not managerial. I am not concerned with improving the profitability or efficiency of the New Zealand film industry. My primary aim in this thesis is to illustrate the ways in which the lives of film production workers are shaped by organisational practices within the industry. I hope to convey the views and experiences of this group of workers honestly and compassionately, to document the rewards and stresses of their work, and to suggest ways in which industry practices could be changed to improve conditions for this group. My aim is therefore to represent the views of one particular group of workers. In so doing I freely acknowledge that the views presented by my respondents may be partisan and that other groups within the industry may have equally valid alternative perspectives and may experience different stresses and constraints within the workplace.

In contrast to most research within organisational psychology I have chosen to investigate the views of my respondents using a qualitative, interview-based research strategy and taken a social constructionist epistemological stance. I have used this approach because I believe it enables me to investigate, understand, interpret, and communicate the experiences of my respondents more fully than quantitative research techniques. I am aware

that in choosing this approach I am departing from the quantitative orthodoxy which has dominated organisational psychology.

Symon and Cassell (2006) argue that the field of organisational psychology has long been dominated by research processes heavily reliant on statistical analysis and measurement within a positivist epistemological framework. Research within this paradigm forms much of the research base for organisational psychology and is heavily represented in the major psychological journals in this area (Schaubroeck & Kuehn, 1992; Symon & Cassell, 1998). Some see the dominance of this paradigm as responsible for the stagnation of research in the field (Anderson, 1998; Johnson & Cassell, 2001).

It has also been observed that qualitative research carried out in organisations is often driven by a positivist epistemology as opposed to alternative perspectives (Prasad & Prasad, 2002). Qualitative positivism may use non-quantitative methods, however it still operates within a traditional positivistic framework. From this viewpoint, objective methods of data collection are used to access a distinct reality which exists separate from the researcher. Interpretive organisational research which uses qualitative methods and a social constructionist epistemology represents a distinctive break from this mainstream research in organisational psychology.

Interpretive approaches which are informed by different perspectives on the world and different research goals have not been given much credence in organisational psychology (Symon & Cassell, 2006). However, many researchers argue that through the use of less well established research practices such as these we can develop a deeper understanding of our social experience through acknowledgement of its contextual nature (Cunliffe, 2003). In interpretive research the aim is to represent the research phenomenon as fairly as possible and present research which makes sense to both the researcher and the respondents.

The roots of contemporary interpretive research lie in social constructionism, which views reality as being socially constructed through the interpretations and meanings which are given to social interaction (Prasad & Prasad, 2002). Research within the constructionist paradigm does not claim to present absolute truth or reality but recognises that research findings are constructed between the researcher and the respondents. Constructionist theory does not deny that there are external social realities which exist independently of the research setting and which are generally the main focus of research interest. However, in contrast to positivist research, it recognises that the form which research data takes may be influenced by the social context within which it is collected. From within this paradigm, interview findings are, to some extent, the outcome of negotiated understandings between the researcher and respondents (Stratton, 1998).

The qualitative researcher who works within this framework needs to recognise and make explicit their own philosophical commitments. This involves reflecting on and questioning their own processes as they construct meaning in their research. Accounts of the world which researchers receive should not be accepted at face value but rather should be examined in the context of the social interaction in which they were created (Cunliffe, 2003).

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) suggest that the value in considering epistemology comes in researchers becoming more consciously reflective, therefore thinking about their own thinking. It is through this acknowledgement of their own epistemological standpoint and the effect it has on their research that researchers are able to explore other viewpoints. A critical examination of what researchers consider as knowledge and their own assumptions can add valuable insight into their research (Cunliffe, 2003). Researchers who are more reflexive in organisational research are more likely to challenge the dominant epistemological assumptions and bring growth and change in the field (Johnson & Cassell, 2001). Organisational research from the perspective of the reflexive researcher is actively constructed between the researcher and the research participants.

It is acknowledged that the research findings are an interpretation of the research phenomenon within the context of the researcher's own culture and experience. Meaning, therefore, in this context is subjectively created rather than fixed (Cunliffe, 2003).

Researchers need to take responsibility for their own theorising and make clear the situated nature of their research (Cunliffe, 2003). The position of the researcher is subjective and has enabled some things to occur during the research process and, conversely, it has possibly closed others down (Parker, 2002). The characteristics of the researcher such as gender, culture, and socioeconomic class all have an impact on the research process and this impact needs to be acknowledged (Parker, 2002). Researchers need to confront these issues and make their assumptions explicit so that the reader is aware of the impact these factors have on the research itself. The process of reflexivity challenges the researcher to examine their assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge. Constructionists would argue that we all construct and make sense of our reality through discourse. Reflexive researchers recognise their own inter-subjective part in constructing the objective realities that we think we are studying (Cunliffe, 2003).

Given this subjectivity, a key reflective responsibility for the researcher is to examine whether the interpretations discussed by the researcher in the research report are congruent with the commitment which has been made with their co-researchers, the research participants (Parker, 2002). This does not mean that the positions taken by the researcher and the respondents need to be identical, but does mean that researchers need to represent their respondents' viewpoints as sympathetically and honestly as possible and to indicate clearly where and why their interpretation differs from that of the respondents. To give an example from this research, male and female respondents often took differing positions concerning some gender-related issues within the film industry. As researcher, I have tried to convey both male and female respondents' views accurately but have also tried to analyse the reasons why men and women may have different views.

In so doing, I need to be aware that my own position as a female researcher may influence my theorising and to alert my readers to this possibility.

3.2   The respondents

Freelance production workers in the film industry are a diverse group. When accessing respondents for this study the rationale behind selection was to present as broad a cross-section of this group as possible within the restrictions of the availability of the respondents and the size of the study.

Due to the nature of their work, freelance film workers generally have free time when they are between contracts. When engaged in a film project they can be very difficult to contact due to the long hours of work and sometimes the remote locations in which filming can take place. During conversations with freelancers, before I started this research, I had found that an individual's views on working in the industry often varied depending on whether they were currently in work or between contracts. I therefore considered it important that the group of respondents was a balanced mix of those currently involved in film projects and those who were either between projects or had left the industry.

The 21 respondents in this study were accessed initially through my informal connections with industry insiders. These industry insiders then facilitated access to a wider group through their personal and professional networks in a "snowballing" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) chain. Once a sufficient pool was accessed the final group was selected to provide a diverse mix of age, gender, and job descriptions. A balanced gender mix was obtained for this study. It was considered important to have a balanced gender mix so that any possible gender differences identified during the interviews could be explored as fully as possible.

The final group was made up of a balanced gender mix with interviews conducted with a total of 11 men and 10 women. Of this group, 14 were currently working on a film project at the time their interview took place

and the balance (seven) were either in-between film contracts or had recently left the industry.

As the first stage in recruiting the respondents for this study I approached all those identified as possible candidates either face to face or over the telephone and gave them a brief outline of the nature of the research. Those who were interested in finding out more were sent a formal information sheet[6] and consent form[7] along with an interview outline.[8] I then followed this up with a telephone call and set up interview times.

In some cases, interview times were scheduled weeks ahead and then cancelled at the last minute due to work commitments. Several respondents who were keen to be involved were unable to do so due to pressures and deadlines involved in their work. Therefore the final interview group was a reflection of the individuals' availability together with their interest in being included in the study.

A brief description of the respondents is given in Table 3.1 in order to provide the reader with some background information on their roles and their personal circumstances. The respondents have all been given pseudonyms to protect their identities. The particular challenges and the importance of confidentiality and anonymity in this research will be discussed in more depth in the ethics section.

Definitions of each of the work areas which were covered in this study are given in a table, Descriptions of Freelance Film Industry Roles,[9] attached as an appendix to this document. The purpose of this table is to clarify for the reader the roles that the respondents carried out in the course of their work.

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[6] Appendix 1: Film industry study information sheet.
[7] Appendix 2: Participant consent form.
[8] Appendix 3: Interview structure.
[9] Appendix 5: Descriptions of freelance film industry roles.

Table 3.1

Description of respondents

Name	Details
Men currently working in the film industry	
Patrick	Age: 50+ Art Department - 20 years Patrick is currently working on a high-profile film project. Patrick lives with his long-term partner and has two teenage children.
Ian	Age: 50+ Special Effects - 11 years Ian is currently working on a high-profile film project. Ian lives with his partner who is also in the film industry. He has no dependent children living with him.
Malcolm	Age: 40-50 Model Maker - 7 years Malcolm is currently working on a high-profile film project. Malcolm is married and has two young children. His wife is also in the industry.
Lionel	Age: 50+ Actor / Dialogue Director - 35 years Lionel has now left New Zealand in search of film work overseas. Lionel has recently separated from his long-term partner and has cited financial strain as a contributing factor. He does not have any children.
Sam	Age: 30-40 Special Effects - 14 years Sam is currently working on a high-profile film project. Sam has recently separated from his second wife. He has two dependent children from his first marriage not currently living with him.
Greg	Age: 40-50 Prosthetics - 25 years Greg is currently working on a high-profile film project. Greg lives with his partner and has one young child. His partner is also in the industry.
Alan	Age: 30-40 Artist - 10 years Alan is currently working on a high-profile film project. Alan lives with his partner and has two young children.
Jack	Age: 40-50 Purchaser - 9 years Jack is currently working on a high profile film project. Jack is currently single, with no dependent children.
Men who have left the film industry	
Ned	Age: 50+

	Model-maker - 15 years Ned left the film industry four years ago – no intention to return. Ned lives with his long-term partner and has one teenage child.
Michael	Age: 40-50 1st Assistant Director - 20 years Michael left the film industry 12 months ago – no intention to return. Michael lives with his long-term partner and has two teenage children.
Donald	Age: 30-40 Designer Engineer - 17 years Donald left the film industry 14 months ago – no intention to return. Donald lives with his partner and has no children.
Women currently working in the film industry	
Natasha	Age: 40-50 Hair / Make-up - 3 years Takes on film work when available; not main source of income. Natasha is married with no children.
Sonya	Age: 30-40 Designer - 10 years Film industry main source of income; currently between projects. Sonya is living with her partner and has no children. Her partner is also in the industry.
Sally	Age: 40-50 Line Producer - 20 years Had just left the industry at time of interview, but has subsequently taken on another large film project. Sally is currently single, and has one dependent child. Her ex-partner and the father of her son is also in the industry.
Hilary	Age: 30-40 Production Manager - 12 years Hilary is currently working on a high-profile film project. Hilary lives with her long-term partner and has no children.
Brenda	Age: 30-40 Sculptor - 17 years Film industry main source of income; currently between projects. Brenda is married and has two young children. Her husband is also in the industry.
Neena	Age: 20-30 Properties Buyer - 3 years Film industry main source of income; currently between projects. Neena is currently single and has no children. Her current partner is also in the industry.
Lucy	Age: 40-50

	Casting Supervisor - 19 years
	Lucy is currently working on a high-profile film project. Lucy lives with her partner and has one young child.
Women who have left the film industry	
Jane	Age: 30-40
	Transport Coordinator - 2 years
	Not currently seeking work in the film industry – possible may return. Jane is recently divorced and has no children. Her ex-husband is also in the industry.
Susan	Age: 30-40
	Art Department Assistant - 9 years
	Susan is not currently seeking film work – trying other employment. Her current partner is also in the industry.
Deborah	Age: 40-50
	Personal Assistant - 3 years
	Denise has left the film industry. She lives with her long-term partner and has two young children. Her husband is also in the industry.
Couples	
Three sets of couples were individually interviewed for this project, along with one divorced couple. It is also interesting to note how many ex-partners or current partners are currently or have been employed in the industry.	

3.3   Interviews

Smith and Eatough (2006) describe the interview process as being the most widely used, and one of the most powerful tools available to qualitative researchers. For this study a series of 21 semi-structured interviews were held between May and October 2007.

In the initial stage of interview planning I developed a list of topic areas based on my prior knowledge of the industry and also from a preliminary search of the small amount of literature available in this area. Broad interview questions were then developed to fit under these main categories. I then trialled this draft interview structure informally with an industry insider and modified the final structure before the interviews began.

The final interview guide covered the following broad categories:

1.   Starting out in the industry

2. Working conditions

3. Rewards of the job

4. Social relationships

5. Disadvantages of the job

6. Work-life balance

7. Importance of networks

8. Training and development

9. Young people entering the industry

10. Gender

11. Careers

12. The future of film in New Zealand

A copy of the full interview outline is included as Appendix 3 to this document. The interviews were kept very loosely structured, so that I was able to adjust the flow or order of the prompting questions depending on the feedback given by the respondents. The interviews took place informally, more in the form of a conversation rather than a structured interview. The purpose behind this was to allow for the free flow of discussion between myself and the respondents (Burgess, 1984). This loose structure also allowed me to explore interesting lines of discussion as they developed during the course of the interview, which would not have been possible with a more structured format (Smith & Eatough, 2006).

The interviews took place at a variety of locations. Some were held at my home and others were at the respondents' homes. The location and timing depended purely on the respondents' availability and preference. The interviews were generally held outside of working hours, so that respondents were unrushed and untroubled with work deadlines.

I began the interviews with an initial discussion about my connections in the industry and gave the respondents some background on why I was carrying out the research. This was followed by the formal process of explaining the information sheet and the consent forms which were both completed by the respondents before the interview began.

The respondents were assured that the interview format was merely a guideline and they could refrain from answering any questions they felt uncomfortable with. The process of interview tape-recording, confidentiality, and the use and storage of the data were also discussed. At this stage I also offered to return the interview tapes after transcription; however, all the respondents declined this offer. A summary of the research findings was also offered and many of the respondents expressed an interest in receiving this summary. The Summary for respondents[10] was sent to those who had requested a copy in October 2008.

Twenty of the 21 interviews were over an hour in length, with several that exceeded two hours in duration. The majority of respondents appeared to welcome the opportunity to discuss their experiences. For some this was an emotional experience as they held particularly strong views on the industry. In particular, those respondents who had worked in the industry for a number of years had many experiences to share. At times the interviews strayed into personal and private areas and much of this personal information proved to be too personal to include in the findings of this thesis. During the course of these interviews I was mindful of the wellbeing of my respondents. This meant allowing them as much time as they needed to discuss topics of particular importance to them. The sensitive nature of much of the findings of this study will be discussed in more detail in the ethics section below.

A constructionist view states that meaning and story are co-created during the interview process through the interaction of the respondent and the researcher. A successful interview is therefore constructed through the skills and input of both the researcher and the respondent. The respondents are actively creating meaning throughout the interview process (Silverman, 2006). During the course of these interviews, at times questioning on certain topics had to be abandoned due to lack of response or interest by

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[10] See Appendix 4 Summary for respondents

the respondent. Conversely, some topics were more salient to some respondents than I had initially expected. The flexibility of the semi-structured format therefore allowed the direction or focus of the discussion to alter and move into areas which were more important to the respondents.

3.4 Analysis

A total of 20 interviews were recorded and transcribed in full with one respondent providing her response by email. As I personally transcribed these 20 interview recordings it gave me the opportunity to listen to the interviews again from an external rather than an internal perspective (Parker, 2005). It also gave me the opportunity to make all the decisions regarding how the written format of the transcript was presented. Before the actual analysis phase had begun I had already been through the interview tapes and transcripts numerous times. This transcription phase is seen by some as a key phase in the analysis of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The careful and thorough transcription of the data was an important foundation stone on which the analysis and the subsequent findings were built.

After full transcription of the interview recordings was completed a thematic analysis of the transcripts was undertaken. Braun and Clarke (2006) see thematic analysis as a widely used, though often under-acknowledged method of analysis in psychology. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data. Its aim is to provide organisation and to describe the data in rich detail. One of the benefits of this form of analysis lies in its flexibility.

It is important that the theoretical framework and research methods that are used during the research process complement what it is the researcher is attempting to interpret. Furthermore, it is also important that these decisions are recognised and acknowledged by the researcher. In this research, thematic analysis was chosen as it provided a simple framework on which to organise the richly interwoven data provided by the

respondents. Thematic analysis is also considered to be a particularly useful method when investigating an area in which there is very little prior research such as this. Finally, thematic analysis is also found to fit well within a constructionist paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A theme is seen to capture something important about the research data. A theme's prevalence in the data may be described both in terms of the space it takes up and its number of occurrences. The researcher needs to make a judgement when determining which data are considered important enough to be labelled as a theme. It is important that the identification of themes is carried out in a consistent manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this research the key themes were identified in the first stage simply by the number of occurrences in the data. Secondly, the depth of discussion and the importance given to the topic by the respondents also led to the identification of a theme. In order to be considered a theme, data needed to meet these two criteria. For example, the majority of the participants discussed at length the uncertainty associated with the contract nature of their work and the impact that it had on their lives. I therefore decided that the uncertainty of their work life was an important theme to discuss in the findings.

The data analysis process in this piece of research followed the steps as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) which are detailed below.

Phase 1 - Familiarisation with data
This involved the transcription process, reading and rereading the texts, and jotting down initial ideas.

Phase 2 - Generating initial codes (repeating ideas)
The next phase involved highlighting interesting pieces of data across the entire data set. Here, rather than coding all the data the highlighted repeating ideas were identified across the entire data set. These repeating ideas were then grouped into coherent categories (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Phase 3 - Searching for themes

These repeating ideas categories were then analysed, regrouped as necessary, and developed into draft themes.

Phase 4 - Reviewing themes

These draft themes were then reviewed in context to the entire data set and with other themes, and once again sorted and resorted as necessary.

Phase 5 - Defining and naming themes

Ongoing analysis refining themes and grouping into final set of themes.

Phase 6 - Report writing

Finally, extracts were selected to provide vivid descriptions of the themes which were identified. This final stage of report writing involves going backwards and forwards through the analysis phase until a clear and coherent picture of the data can be developed.

Firstly I identified and isolated the repeating ideas from the transcripts. I then examined all the relevant text and 20 themes were identified. As part of this process I reflected on the aim of the study "to explore the experiences of freelance film workers" and focused on the key areas which were repeatedly emphasised as important to the respondents. My intention was therefore to keep the focus of the analysis firmly positioned on what I considered as being important to my respondents. The 20 initial themes identified are listed below:

- Addiction
- Careers
- Creativity
- Filling the gaps
- Gypsy life
- Money
- Professional networks

- Power

- Rewards

- Social relationships

- Starting out

- Training

- Uncertainty

- Getting out

- Politics

- Identity

- Authenticity

- Young man's game

- Gender differences

- Wellbeing

I discussed this initial set of themes with several of the respondents and with my research supervisor. As a result of these discussions I then reduced this group to a core of six key themes. This process of analysis involved flowing backwards and forwards through the phases described above.

It is important to acknowledge and emphasise the researcher's part in the analysis as being an active interpretive one. My close association with many of the respondents, the intuitive feel for the respondents gained during the interview process, and my intimate association with the data during the transcription process all influenced the identification of what I saw as important or less important in the final analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2006) also suggest that the aim of thematic analysis carried out within a constructionist epistemological framework is to attempt to examine socio-cultural contexts and structural conditions rather than focus on individual psychologies. The analysis carried out in this research attempts to do this also.

The final stage of the analysis process involved the review of the draft findings by industry insiders. My commitment to the respondents was to

interpret and represent their views as clearly as possible within the confines of the research process. A draft of the introduction and the findings sections was reviewed by two of the research respondents for their comment. These sections were also given confidentially to two industry insiders who were not themselves interviewed during the course of the research. The purpose behind this decision was to gain the perspective of industry insiders' views on the validity of these research findings in light of their own experience and knowledge of the industry. No changes were made to the final draft from these reviews.

3.5   Ethical considerations

Due to the small size of the film industry in Wellington and the unique set of respondents in this study, maintaining their anonymity was a particularly challenging feature of this research. Many of the respondents in this research would be recognisable to other industry insiders, and in some cases the general public, if film titles and the respondents' roles on those films were not disguised. Throughout this thesis all such references have been disguised to ensure that respondents' confidentiality is not jeopardised. A copy of the research findings was reviewed confidentially by two industry insiders who were not involved in the research in order to establish that no individuals were recognisable. Any information that could not be sufficiently disguised was removed from the final thesis.

My challenge was therefore to interpret and present the views of this group without compromising their trust and confidentiality in any way. Many of the respondents held strong views on the industry and current industry practices. These views on industry practices and the impact that it had on their lives was an important reason that many agreed to be interviewed. This process gave them an opportunity to discuss their thoughts and opinions and their experiences in the industry in a confidential manner. However, including the detail of these comments in the research findings could lead to identification of individuals and the possibility of jeopardising future work contracts if their views were known to industry leaders. In order to meet my primary ethical obligation of protecting my respondents I have

avoided presenting data which could compromise their anonymity. All respondents were also offered the opportunity to review the final draft thesis to give them an opportunity to remove any comments relating to them which they were uncomfortable with. None of the respondents wished to view the final draft.

3.6   My experiences

My first experience of the film industry in New Zealand began 12 years ago when I met my current partner, who was at that time working as a freelance film production worker. Over the last 12 years I have become involved with many industry people through many social gatherings and functions and have developed close personal friendships with some. During this time I have been struck by the depth of passion and commitment that many of these highly creative individuals bring to their work. Conversely, I have also been moved by the constant hardship and uncertainty faced by many people working as freelance contractors in New Zealand.

I therefore found myself in the privileged position of having a close association with many industry insiders, but also maintaining enough distance to be detached from the political nature of their work environment. As my partner left the industry five years ago, this also further removed me from any association with the different political agendas which operate within the industry. This background experience with industry insiders did, however, provide me with an internal frame of reference (Parker, 2005) from which to develop and conduct my interviews from a position closely aligned with my respondents.

This familiarity with the industry meant that I had a ready source of respondents as a starting point for this research. Although many of the final group were not personally known to me prior to their interviews, connections were made through associates so there was always a common starting point. Therefore, a natural rapport and mutual understanding was easily obtained through all the interviews.

As a part of this research process it has been necessary for me to reflect on my own agenda in this research and how this may be different from the respondents' agendas (Parker, 2005). What were their reasons for being involved in the research? What were they hoping to gain from this experience? This was a concern throughout the analysis and interpretation process as I reflected on my own biases and views in contrast to those which the respondents had voiced. To give an example: I was confronted with this when I was interviewing a male respondent on possible gender differences in the industry. He did not believe that there were any differences for men and women working in the industry. However, with further discussion he added that he did not generally employ many women with children in his department because they always needed extra time off. Even if they had a partner at home, as he described it, the woman was still the best person for the job of taking care of children. My respondent's superficially disguised sexism ran deeply in contrast to my own beliefs, therefore I had to put these aside in order to continue to explore my respondent's strongly held beliefs on this subject.

At the same time it is also important for me to acknowledge that as a researcher I cannot step outside of my own socioeconomic and cultural sphere (Smith & Hodkinson, 2005) and therefore this research is presented to the reader through the lens of my own individual perspective on life. In this regard it is important to acknowledge the influence that my age, gender, and status as an interviewer/research may have had on both the interview process (Burgess, 1984) and also on the subsequent findings in this paper. In particular, I feel that my gender both facilitated and in some instances inhibited some of the discussions around gender issues in the film industry. The women interviewees talked at more length on this subject than did the men. They generally appeared to be more at ease discussing these issues than the men in this group. It may also be that as women they were more aware of these differences than the men.

I also became aware of the influence of my gender on the interview process as many of the men appeared to hold back during discussions of the often

talked about wild side of the industry. Many of the men acknowledged that "partying hard" (usually involving casual sex, excessive alcohol, and drug taking) was a part of the industry but they were at the same time reluctant to talk about their own experiences. I believe that they may have been more open during these discussions with a male interviewer. I felt that many of the male participants were editing this information either through embarrassment or because of impression management. The women participants on the other hand were generally very open on this subject and several spoke at length about these experiences.

Throughout the analysis and writing process I was mindful of my commitment to the respondents who had put their trust in my representation of their industry and their lives. My challenge was to present a thesis which would put across to the reader both the respondents' passion for this industry and their despair at the inherent difficulties with the freelance nature of their work.

In some respects then I have been conflicted during the writing of this thesis between the desire to present the respondents' views honestly and the necessity of strictly maintaining their anonymity, so crucial for their continued work in the industry. I hope that I have gained a successful balance between these two opposing poles and succeeded in giving the reader a glimpse into the life of the freelancer film worker.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the interview findings and interprets the complex relationships between the structural conditions within the New Zealand film industry and freelance production workers' working experiences. The chapter is divided into seven main sections. The first section describes how the respondents first started working in the industry. The next section discusses the financial and emotional insecurities created by project-based employment. Thirdly, social relationships within the industry are explored and the ideas of the film family, collective creativity, and social networks are discussed. The fourth section analyses respondents' emotional relationship with their work using the concept of the addictive workplace to interpret the intense love/hate relationship many respondents described with their work. Respondents' views on work-life balance in the film industry are examined next, showing how the lack of balance within film work has deleterious effects on workers' physical and mental health and family relationships. The sixth section looks at gender issues and advances the argument that women will often pay an even higher price than men for their involvement in the industry. Finally, the problems that workers experience in attempting to leave the industry are examined and it is suggested that the structural conditions which cause the freelancers problems whilst they are working also impede their chances of finding alternative work outside of the industry.

4.2 Getting started

This section describes the ways in which respondents began work in the industry. Since the majority of the respondents began working in the film industry several years ago this description is of past, rather than current, conditions within the industry. Whilst the increasingly high profile of the New Zealand film industry has made it more difficult to gain entry into the industry, many of the issues described by the respondents are still important today, in particular the importance of personal connections and high performance, rather than formal qualifications. The glamour and

excitement which the industry holds for young people, and their tendency to initially discount issues such as low pay, long hours, and endemic job insecurity, are also as relevant today as when this group of respondents was starting out in the industry.

For many respondents their first contact with the industry came through a mixture of chance events, meetings, and connections with key people. Many respondents recalled how they fell into the film industry, rather than made a conscious decision to work in film. A chance meeting got many into an industry, which they had not previously considered. However, many of this group were highly creative and talented individuals, who were looking for somewhere to apply their skills, and the film industry seemed, at least initially, to offer this opportunity. Once in the door, they had to prove that they had the right mix of creative talent and stamina, to cope with long hours and the time pressures inherent in the industry.

Several of the respondents were given opportunities to work in areas where they had little or no experience through personal relationships, highlighting their importance in this industry. Deborah, who had worked as a personal assistant to a high-profile film director for a period of three years, explained how she was offered a job through her personal connections, even though she had no experience either in the film industry, or as a personal assistant.

> … I was a masseuse. So she became one of my clients and then as time went on she thought it would be interesting if I became her personal assistant. Even though I had no experience in the film industry … that was probably what she liked, with no preconceived ideas.

Hilary, a production manager with 12 years' experience in film, also found that having the right connections kickstarted her career. Although she had completed a polytechnic course in film and television production, it was not until the father of her partner recommended her, that she got her first paying position:

> *I used to go out with a guy whose father is quite a big time producer in the industry ... they had a mate up in Wellington and I met with him and ended up getting the job in the first week.*

Developing the right connections is essential, both to get started and to help the individual to develop their reputation and standing in the industry. Those who have the right connections will often get work over those who do not, as personal recommendations carry a lot of weight in the film industry. Several respondents talked about a chance meeting, or being in the right place at the right time as being their route into the film industry. Donald, a special effects technician in his late 30s, described how he became involved in film while studying design:

> *I did industrial design through Wellington Polytechnic and one of the guys in a year behind me had a part-time job working (in film). He had to go overseas and he recommended me for the job. I started work way back in 1991.*

Malcolm, a model maker in his early 40s, who came out to New Zealand from Europe over 10 years ago, also moved into working in film through a chance encounter:

> *I worked for a photographer and we used to have our studio next door to a model-making shop and they had a big job for an artist called H.R. Grieger. He is the creator of Alien. So I used to help out a bit, then this movie came up Species and we started filming conceptual stuff and that's how I got in there. Then we moved to New Zealand and I started to move into model-making.*

Malcolm's experience starting out in Europe mirrors many of the respondents' experiences in New Zealand. He took advantage of an opportunity, which in this instance resulted in work on a highly successful international film. On arrival in New Zealand, his work on this international project opened up new opportunities for him. However, in order to secure ongoing projects, he needed to continue to prove his ability and build his New Zealand networks.

Many production workers gained their first practical experience in the industry working on music videos or student films, learning on the job. These first projects were often unpaid or very low paid. The onus was very much on the applicants to show their enthusiasm and ability, often working long hours, and in poor conditions, in the expectation of gaining paid employment on the next project.

Sam, a special effects technician, came to Wellington in the 1990s, without any connections or knowledge of the film industry. Sam spent several months working for free and making connections before he was offered his first paying contract role:

I had a diploma in graphic design and he said you should speak to a friend of mine he does film. I had never even heard of film happening in New Zealand. So probably for about 2 or 3 months I just went in there ... it was probably one of my best working experiences ever because I didn't have anything to prove. I wasn't being paid and I just had a go at anything. So I ended up helping them and then this job came up and I was just saying yes to anything...

Starting at the bottom and working your way up and paying your dues is still valued in the industry as the best way to learn how the industry works. Some individuals can spend months or even years working for free or low pay, in order to prove themselves. Sally, a successful television and film producer, still sees this to be true of the industry today:

I think if a young person did want to get into the industry they would have to be really dedicated. It is a bit like if you want to be an artist you have to be prepared to starve for your art. It is a terrible thing to say in this day and age but it does still happen in our industry. There is an expectation that new people will work for free or work for very little money.

A common theme that runs behind all these accounts is that the opportunity or "break" that these individuals were given was either unpaid or for very

low pay. For many of the respondents, during the early days, their work involved extremely long hours, often for little reward; however, the excitement and glamour of being involved in the film industry compensated for the lack of financial recompense. This initial indoctrination into the film industry gives the young freelance worker a sample of what film work involves. There is a strong emphasis, in the early days, of gaining contracts and making connections with very little emphasis on money. Sam talks about his early excitement for the industry which outweighed, for him, the reality of his financial situation:

I remember first being in the industry and so taken by the fact – wow I'm working on a movie – or wow there's Michael J. Fox – I can't say that I was really present to the money. I remember what I first started on and when I look back now it was definitely crap.

This lack of emphasis on financial rewards sets up an expectation, or rather a lack of expectation, over monetary rewards from the very beginning of the newcomer's association with the film industry. Both the industry itself, and fellow freelance workers, play an important role in this indoctrination process, explaining to new recruits "how things are done in film". There is, to a certain extent, a feeling amongst freelancer workers, especially those new to the industry, that they are privileged to be involved, and that the money is not the motivating factor.

Deborah worked as a personal assistant to a high-profile international film director. This role involved at least 12-14 hours of scheduled work each day and, beyond this, on call when required by the director. During periods of intense filming, and during contract negotiation with international producers, Deborah worked excessively long hours. She found this work to be emotionally and physically demanding and it took a toll, both on her personal relationships, and her health. Like Sam, Deborah was struck by the excitement of meeting famous people, and being involved in high-profile projects. So, for a time, she pushed herself to keep up with the exhausting hours, in order to be a part of this incredible project:

I was quite unbearable to share a house with, but of course, they just loved the stories – what was going to happen, or who turned up for a meeting. There was all that sort of stuff and for me too it was hilarious, all these famous people rocking up for a chat … yeah it was fun. So those were the good things I guess, but also, you know, I was in such a place of exhaustion, that my opportunity for learning was really low.

To get ahead and make a name for themselves, young freelancers need to have a single-minded determination, and be prepared to put work first. This can impact heavily on other areas of their life (Jones, 1996). The freelance structure of film industry work does, in many respects, exploit this often naïve enthusiasm for the industry, which many young workers have, by encouraging them to work such long hours for little return. Sally reflected on her enthusiasm for her work in the early days and the sacrifices that she made in order to succeed in the film industry:

… when I was young and ruthless, it always came first, and a lot of things suffered in the early days, relationships, family, friends, everything was put on hold until the job finished.

Others in this group were not taken by the glitz and glamour of the industry, but found other aspects of the work appealing. Jane, a contract transport assistant who worked on two major film productions, talked about the fantastic location on the set of one major film:

The location made up for a lot. Sunrise and sunset on top of a mountain every day you can appreciate that kind of stuff and I think sort of remove yourself and go – this is pretty cool what I'm doing – you know you can take that kind of thing out of it.

The film industry tends to exploit this romantic perception of film work, which is glamorised through the media. The headlines which we read in our papers and view on our television screens give the impression of a booming

film industry in this country, describing New Zealand as a sought-after destination for international film productions. This media hype has helped to raise the profile of the industry in New Zealand, attracting more young people into the industry. This constant stream of young production hopefuls are described as "fresh meat" by the older, seasoned freelancers as they watch them giving their time and energy for free, as they once did themselves. Experienced freelancers joke and make fun of these keen new recruits, eager to make a name for themselves. However, they also bring more competition for work into an already tight labour market. The oversupply of freelance workers, together with the high profile of film in New Zealand, creates a situation where older, more experienced workers can find themselves having to drop their contract rates to compete with the much cheaper new entrants.

The industry in New Zealand, like the industry in the UK and the US runs on a complex structure of personal networks and connections (Alvarez & Svejenova, 2002; Svejenova, 2005) through which freelancers must gain entry through a combination of personal contacts and through building a good reputation (Bauman, 2002). The reality of the enormous hours, high-pressure environment, and often little financial reward becomes obvious during their first projects in film. However, in the early days many of the respondents were overwhelmed by the excitement and glamour of the industry. Initially, at least, having a great tale to tell their friends and family, and rubbing shoulders with the rich and famous was enough to keep them coming back for more.

4.3 Project-based employment and financial insecurity

Project-based employment is an inherent feature of work in the film industry. In New Zealand the insecurity that comes with this form of employment is exacerbated by the lack of end dates on freelancers' contracts, further adding to their insecurity and inability to plan financially. Freelancers in this country do not receive any of the fringe benefits available to freelancers in other countries such as Australia and the US. Their self-employed status brings with it added tax responsibilities often

including GST (good and services tax), which many find difficult to cope with. Many freelancers find themselves in the position of having to apply for benefits during the down periods in order to meet their financial commitments. The effects of project-based employment and the financial insecurity that accompanies employment in the film industry were discussed at length by all respondents. Many found the insecurity of their work contracts emotionally difficult to cope with and the financial impact on themselves and their families to be crippling.

Once workers became established in the industry, the hourly rates for their work increased significantly, and many initially felt that they received higher pay than they could make elsewhere. Some freelance workers do receive weekly pay cheques which are in excess of what they could make in other industries. However, these higher figures are often the result of a minimum 60-hour week, and the majority of freelance workers will also be responsible for paying their own tax. The advantage of a higher hourly rate is also quickly eroded by the long periods of down time between film contracts. Michael, an assistant director with a 20-year career in the industry, who was himself financially successful, saw that for many of his co-workers, financially, it was not so easy:

> *The money – well I worked it out – when you spread it out over a year – its fabulous money on an hourly or daily basis but if you include the downtime then it's not so flash at all. In fact it goes from $50 per hour down to $20. For some people it got down to where you are actually better off working at McDonald's full time than working in the film industry, you'd have more to show for it.*

The growth in the film industry in Wellington, and New Zealand in general, does not appear to have benefited many of this group. Work in the film industry has become highly competitive in recent years. Several respondents discussed having to drop their hourly rates in order to gain contracts. Some respondents described being paid either the same hourly rate, or less, than they were being paid 10-15 years ago, when they started

out in the industry. In line with the views of these New Zealand workers, pay rates for freelance workers in the UK have also reportedly decreased in real terms since those commanded in the 1990s (Storey et al, 2005).

This culture of poor working conditions in the film industry does not appear to be contained to New Zealand. A recent (October 2008) strike in "Bollywood", the highly successful Indian film industry, has seen a range of production workers on strike, including dancers, carpenters, lighting technicians, cameramen, soundmen, and script writers. The production workers cited unreasonably long working hours and late payment of wages. There was also a lack of formal work contracts and in some instances workers had not been paid for several months. Any workers who complained about the conditions were instantly replaced.[11]

Many of the respondents came into the industry expecting that they would have to work for free, or low remuneration in the early years, until they had built up their reputations. However, for many, even though their experience and reputation in the industry were well established, it was still a struggle for them to meet their financial commitments. The down times between work contracts took a heavy toll on their financial situations. Several of the respondents talked about feeling trapped in a downward financial spiral, which they felt powerless to change. The inconsistency of the work, coupled with the uncertainty of contract end dates, meant that for many, their financial affairs were in a constant state of turmoil. This situation was felt more intensely by the older workers with family commitments, who were often the sole income source for the family. Due to the long hours, and the intense nature of film work, the workers' partners often had to carry the full burden of the family responsibilities, which sometimes restricted their own opportunities for careers or paid employment. This heavy reliance on a single breadwinner to provide for the family both increased the vulnerability of the workers' already insecure situation, and also heightened the financial worries in many families.

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[11] See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7651586.stm

The need for better budgeting and saving was identified by many respondents as being a problem. Even amongst the older, experienced workers, not many were happy with their ability to budget and save. Budget advice is clearly something that all young freelancers starting out in the industry need, in order to adjust to the freelance contract lifestyle. Many of this group viewed this problem as being their own inadequacy to handle their financial affairs. This predominance of this problem amongst freelance workers does, however, point to a deeper structural problem which is perpetuated by the film production companies' practice of not providing clear start and end dates on freelancers' contracts. Even seasoned professional freelancers such as Sam, a senior special effects technician in his late 30s, with over 14 years in the industry, still found it difficult to keep ahead of his credit card debt:

... normally I go on to a film job and I'm that in debt with Visa cards, that probably the first three or four months at least on a film job I'm paying off my Visa cards. Then I manage to get some money in the bank when the job ends. I live off that and then I don't get work for six months or whatever, so back on to the Visa cards.

For some of the freelancers these periods without work meant that they had to apply for the Unemployment Benefit to make ends meet. These highly talented and skilled professional people found it both depressing and degrading that they had to receive a benefit in order to feed their families. This was a last resort and many of the respondents talked about taking any kind of work they could get at these times, in order to pay their bills. However, those respondents who ran small businesses (usually employing only themselves) were unable to receive any compensation without putting their businesses into bankruptcy. These workers were often under even greater financial burdens. Many had overdue tax payments and the hire of premises and equipment to contend with. The lack of any form of financial support during these slack periods meant that at times their situation

became dire. The majority of respondents described being close to financial bankruptcy on more than one occasion.

The subject of money was an emotionally charged topic for many respondents who spoke at length of the contrast between their constant fight with production companies to maintain their pay rates, whilst overseas actors and film crews working on the same productions received seemingly exorbitant rates. Many felt that the pay inequality in the industry was morally wrong. Lucy, a freelance casting supervisor, described what she saw as the huge inequality in the industry:

… this is out of control, it's wrong, it's obscene. You can't do a movie without a director, an actor, or a make-up person. So let's get it all even and a little bit more balanced."

Lucy described the endemic problem that she sees with the film industry. The hierarchical nature of the management structures means that those at the top of the structure receive the majority of the profits from the film, while those at the bottom receive very little. To further enhance this problem, there is the issue of fame and popularity, with film stars often being paid vast sums of money, whilst their co-workers are struggling to make a living.

The overwhelming majority of respondents felt that they were not sufficiently rewarded for their efforts and often found it difficult to make ends meet financially. For many of the older and more experienced freelancers this was a particularly difficult situation. Patrick, a highly successful creative director in his early 50s, illustrates the financial situation many of the freelancers found themselves in:

I'm finding it a struggle to keep in operation, say I'm a bad budgeter or whatever. I'm not where I want to be in my life … I'm at the top of my game in the film side and basically my builder or plumber or whatever is more successful financially than I am. I'm doing something wrong. I'm doing

something right. You know intellectually and creatively it is working for me, but financially it hasn't really been a winner.

There is clear evidence in the psychological literature that job insecurity can contribute to psychological distress, anxiety, and depression (Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2005; De Witte, 1999; Ertel et al., 2005; Storey et al., 2005) and many of the respondents frequently fought with these issues. Many were seasoned professional freelance film workers who were experienced with the contracting environment. However, many discussed how they still struggled with depression and feelings of worthlessness, as mounting bills and pressure from partners and spouses increased. Sam described how he spent a lot of time sleeping during these down times to avoid having to think about his financial predicament:

I remember I had a mortgage and not having the money to pay it, my warrant was out, my registration I couldn't afford to pay that, I had a cat. I remember for quite a while there I was just living off 99 cent instant noodles and buying tins of cat food for the cat, and that was really it. I slept a lot between jobs. When I think about it now, I think it was just my way of forgetting about the world.

This constant pressure reached danger point for many of the respondents when they were between contracts and the bills were mounting with no contract in sight. Alan, a set painter in his mid-30s with two small children, described how his mood changed the longer he was without a starting date for the next project:

Jenny always talks about when I'm not working. When I finished a job and I don't have a start date on another job. I last about a week or two and then I start to get really scratchy … grumpy … oh god what's going to happen next – I've heard about this other job but so and so might get it, I might not get it. I think it is just the uncertainty, you can't plan anything. You can't say well I've got two months off so that's fine, let's go and have a holiday, because I know

that I'll start work then and I'll earn this much until then, because you can't do that, so it is all a bit hand to mouth.

After long periods of intense work on a film project, many of the freelancers were physically and sometimes emotionally exhausted and in need of rest and recuperation. However, the gaps between projects did not often provide the rest and relaxation that they needed. If they did not have a firm start date for the next project then it could be a troubling and unsettling time. Patrick, an experienced and highly successful art director in his early 50s, observed that film projects are being cancelled, and start dates are being put back, more often than in the past:

… scheduling – it's getting more fickle. There are all these people in the production side – getting very creative and saying – we'll do it in New Zealand. Start the process and then change their mind – they'll do it over in Spain because they want to save themselves x dollars – it would have been unheard of … everything had to be planned in the old days and they'd stick to it. … people are just totally unable to plan ahead … it's just pissing a lot of people off.

Several of the older respondents, who have been around in the industry since its early days, described how they felt their situations were now even more tenuous. Patrick explains how the "booking" and "pencilling in" system used to give the freelancers more certainty in their contracts than they get today:

In the old days you used to say right I'll book you August 15 through to September 15. Now it might run on. So can I pencil you from September 15 through to October, but now they know that they have got so many people, that they can just (snap of fingers) as well. It doesn't matter how clever you are these days, there is always another clever person around the corner or cheaper or whatever …

Furthermore, with this system the freelancer had some redress if the project was cancelled but, as Patrick explains, payment of reparations is no longer common practice in the industry:

Pencil means it's in pencil. You can be rubbed out. Booking means it's in ink and there are certain reparations if they reneg on the deal, especially the closer something gets. You can be booked for 10 days and start in three day's time. Then in two day's time they tell you it is off, well then you can turn around and say right I want a certain percentage, cancellation fees, but on big shows now you don't even hear of them – people don't know what cancellation fees are.

This system seems to work totally for the film production companies' benefit, and at the expense of the freelancers' livelihood. The oversupply of workers in the film industry means that power in this relationship rests primarily with the production companies. The production company can at any time cancel the freelancer's contract or the entire project, seemingly without the need for any compensation. The freelancers themselves play a role in maintaining these industry norms, by adhering to this system and thereby reinforcing its power (Davenport, 2006). When young freelancers enter the system they will work often under any conditions in order to be involved, and the film industry is ready and willing to make use of these newcomers. In the beginning they enter into this relationship as willing participants, however, as their experience grows they come to expect more from this relationship. As a freelancer gains experience and contacts they have access to more work, however, given the crowded labour market which exists today, securing this work is more difficult, even for highly experienced workers. The intense competition for work means that, for the more senior freelancers, the rules of engagement have changed, and in many cases they are working hard to hold on to their livelihoods.

4.4   Social relationships in the film industry

Social relationships within the film industry are complex and multi-faceted. Freelancers must often work in collaboration in order to succeed on their

allotted production tasks. Through this close collaboration freelancers often develop close professional relationships, with teams of freelancers working closely together over many film contracts. There is, however, a limit to this camaraderie as team members are often in competition for the same projects. There is, here, an interesting tension for the freelancer between loyalty towards colleagues and the desire to gain contracts, and ultimately income for themselves. This issue is something that several respondents tried to discuss, but were clearly conflicted about. Patrick, tries to explain how he sees this system works:

The thing is that in the film industry there is no such thing as a favour. You think there might be but there isn't. You can't expect a favour in return. Whatever favours you give out, do not expect anything in return because otherwise you'd be in a really sorry state. You know there are lots of people out there worked for virtually nothing for a long time and they aren't being rung when the money does come through for a project. But often it is nothing to do with that director it is the trickle down. It is what team they want that's very important. Favours do get you around but you can't rely on them.

A sense of reciprocity was seen as very important to the respondents, with favours being freely given; however, the expectation remained that they would be returned at some stage. These often unspoken agreements between freelancers were, however, limited in their influence by the decisions of the production department. The freelance structure of the industry, therefore, holds in check the development of these teams and relationships, keeping the ultimate power and control over who gets the most lucrative contracts with the production heads.

The collaborative working environment of film, where a diverse range of highly creative people come together to produce a product, was talked about by several respondents as the main reason that they stayed in this work. These professional relationships form into tight bonds and groups of freelancers often work as a team on project after project. The cohesion of

these groups grows in commitment and trust as time progresses and offers a measure of security and stability in this unstable industry (Antcliff et al., 2007). However, this loyalty has a limitation as it is often the case that team members will also be in competition for the same contracts (Ursell, 2000).

Other freelancers may not meet up with each other for months at a time until they meet by chance on the next big contract. The majority of respondents talked about the ease at which they could pick up these professional relationships and carry on where they had left off months or sometimes years before. The common thread of creativity and challenge brought them together again.

Several respondents explained that the film industry provided a unique setting where individuals were involved in collective creative projects. It is a place where like-minded people work together to create a unique product or goal, that was more than the sum of its parts. As Patrick explained:

… so creatively there is a challenge and of course you're working with lots of neat people – who are clever and who are specialised and that's always good because you're rubbing ideas off people and it's great. You think that you can be a hermit and be creative somewhere in a mountain by yourself or whatever but in fact you're more of a social animal because you enjoy working with all those people …

Working in a creative environment with like-minded people was very important to many of the respondents, as was the challenge of being involved in the creation of something unique and new. Many of the respondents felt that they became part of a collective creative circle or film family that was forged through working for long hours on challenging and sometimes secretive projects. Along with professional relationships, personal relationships were often formed in these intense working environments, sometimes during periods of isolation from family and

friends. Production crews formed a very close "family"; however, these relationships do not often last beyond the film contract.

The feeling of family and sharing or togetherness was a common theme discussed by many of the respondents. This sense of family often developed on the film set, with freelancers working together for days, weeks or even months at a time. Many of the freelancers enjoyed working in this environment but it could also result in both personal and professional difficulties as Sally, a freelance producer, explained:

... if you're away from home on a long job you become an instant family and you tend to work and play together which does often cause a lot of problems. Boy, the stories that I could tell. It can be quite hard when that job is finished, you do feel a kind of a let down ... suddenly you're back at home ... it can be quite hard to adjust because you have had intense relationships ... then suddenly you are ripped apart and really when you haven't got the common bond of the job you find you don't have a lot in common with those people outside the job.

Working on film production is often a short-lived, intense experience and as quickly as the production crew come together they are disbanded. Both personal and professional relationships are formed during this time. These personal relationships could become very complicated and often did not translate back to normal life after the end of the film contract. This isolation from family and friends could result in the erosion of relationships and family connections. Some workers began to rely heavily on these often very superficial relationships. For some of the respondents a pattern of short-term relationships developed which further heightened the sense of loss they felt when between film contracts. The excitement and thrill of a new relationship formed on a film set, however, was short-lived and this high was soon followed by the low that came when they returned home alone. Once this pattern had developed it became very difficult for some to maintain long-term relationships.

Hilary, a production manager in her mid 30s, saw these social relationships with work colleagues as being a means to cope with the long hours and isolation from family and friends. This pattern of working hard and playing hard could only be maintained by those with enough stamina, mainly the young:

So especially on location people get into a pattern. They work all day then they have a brief window of time before they are supposed to go to bed and they go and hang out and self-medicate … drink alcohol or take drugs or whatever and they'll have to be up four hours later back on set. So to keep that kind of stamina it tends to suit the young who get burnt out and spat out of the industry pretty quickly unless they can find some way to maintain some kind of balance.

These close, sometimes intimate relationships which developed between freelancers were fuelled by the pressure of work, drugs, and alcohol and the knowledge that it was temporary. Many respondents described this work hard, play hard culture with casual sex, drugs, and alcohol providing the relief from the pressures of the working environment. For the most part the respondents viewed these relationships, just as they viewed their work contracts, of a temporary nature. However, many of the respondents were in long-term relationships with partners who had either previously worked in film or who were currently still involved the film industry. Longer term, more serious relationships did sometimes develop from these casual beginnings. As the majority of the respondents were in the late 30 age group plus, many had experienced several relationships with other film industry workers. Maintaining these relationships proved difficult for many, due to the long hours of work, time away from home, and also the intensely close working environments on set, which meant that infidelity was common. All these factors meant that maintaining close relationships was often very challenging. This complicated mesh of working and personal relationships in the small environment of the film industry in New Zealand resulted in a workplace in which the line between personal and professional relationships often became blurred. However, maintaining professional

working relationships is crucial for freelance film workers to maintain their reputations and livelihoods. Therefore, both personal and professional differences between co-workers were, for the most part, suppressed to ensure that the film production ran smoothly.

Film provides for many this unique environment in which they can work on highly specialised, often secret creative projects with other talented people. The inability to find this kind of work environment outside of the film industry was for many of the respondents the defining factor which kept them working in this industry.

4.5 The addictive workplace

Many respondents described their working life in the film industry in a very intense and emotional way. Working in the film industry was seen as more than a job; it was a way of life for many of these people. For many, so much of their creative energies were tied up in their worklife that they gained a good deal of their self-worth from their work. Therefore, in addition to the financial insecurity, the feeling of not being valued for their work could also add to the risk of psychological problems, such as depression and anxiety, during the period when they were between projects. Many respondents described having an intense love/hate relationship with the industry. Some described feeling compelled to return to work in an industry which they knew was not good for their physical or emotional wellbeing and that they were somehow powerless to change this situation.

Hilary, an experienced production manager, was constantly reminded of the temporary nature of her employment. This fact, apart from being a constant source of anxiety, also kept her trapped in the industry. She continued to take the projects which were offered to her, but constantly expected the flow of work to end, and at times she wished that it would. She described her total ambivalence towards her work. On the one hand feeling desperate that she could not continue to work in the industry, but she felt powerless to change her situation. At the same time that she hated the idea of

working in the industry and what it meant for her wellbeing, she loved the idea that she was special or sought after enough to be continued to be offered the work, and she could not turn it down:

I'm truly at the mercy of the events that come up. And in a way to be let go would be a total relief, you know permission to be free to find other options, but while I still have work I'm quite addicted to the fact that … make hay while the sun shines, it is that kind of mentality, but I have been luckier than most to have such long-term employment in New Zealand in this industry.

Hilary's description of her feelings towards her work parallel those of any addict trying desperately to break away from their addiction, only to be drawn back in for one last fix, all the time promising themselves it will be the last time.

For some of this group it had got to the stage where they had decided to leave the industry altogether, because they could no longer cope with the gruelling physical and emotional pressure of the work and the financial insecurity. Michael, a first assistant director in his late 40s who had a very successful 20 years working in the industry, had decided to leave the industry altogether. What had started out for him as an intense love of the industry had 20 years later resulted in total loathing. He talked about having totally lost the energy and desire necessary to work in this industry. Due to his financially secure situation he was in the enviable position of being able to walk away without having to replace his income stream:

Totally all gone. I don't want to work in the industry at all – I'm over it. The thought of going back just makes me want to throw up. … this is going to sound awful but I just don't want to fuckin' know anymore.

Many of this group talked about the intense nature of the work. A number of respondents in their mid 30s or older appeared to be exhausted from the working hours and the high-pressure environment. Many talked about getting out of the industry for this reason. Donald, a special effects

technician in his late 30s who has very recently left the industry, talked about feeling undervalued by an industry where he had given his all for many years:

I built a lot of really good stuff. I felt pretty undervalued for most of my actual time in the film industry. I achieved a huge amount compared to the people around me. I was far more cost effective and far more efficient and productive but there was no recognition of that in any way, so I have felt kind of let down over that.

Many respondents who were still working in the industry shared Donald's sentiments. The majority had spent 10-15 years plus in the film industry and much of the glamour and excitement which had initially attracted them had now faded. However, some still felt a strong pull to this work, and an intense love of the creation of film. There was often a strong tension between this desire to work in film and the knowledge of the implications this would have on their personal wellbeing, personal relationships, and financial situations. Many of the respondents described continuing to go back to the industry after they had made the decision to leave, and they found it very difficult to explain just why they did.

Several respondents described working in film as a form of addiction. There were several different slants taken on this concept from different respondents. Lionel, an experienced freelancer and drama teacher in his late 50s, saw that this addiction stemmed from the creative nature of these individuals, who were, as he saw it, addicted to the high that they felt when a project was successful:

Yeah it is very drug like – it is a cliché but it is true. I mean most people working in the arts I think will say that. There is something about it that hooks you and it is like a drug. It is an adrenalin boost, actually working, and it is incredibly tiring and incredibly stressful because of the constant deadlines with shows. But just to get that kick that you get when a production has gone well.

The downside of this for Lionel was that when he was not working he went through periods of depression and self-doubt as he desperately sought work to feed this addiction, and to boost his failing self-esteem and feel good about himself again. For Lionel, working in film and television was tied closely with his identity and his belief about himself:

… if you work in the arts, particularly in film, television, and theatre it becomes part of your life, really part of your life. That's how I get my creative kicks. Everything from your own image of yourself and self-belief right through to the money, but it is also something that you can't pin down. If I'm not working either in film, or television, or theatre or even training drama students, then you feel there is something missing. That is the way that you contribute.

In addition to feeding his own desires to work creatively, Lionel also felt that his work provided him with a means to contribute to society. He therefore, required this work in order to feel that he was a worthwhile member of society. This added dimension made the down times between projects particularly difficult for Lionel.

Sam, a freelance special effects technician, also sees the industry as addictive. The community of fellow film workers provides both social support and the fuel for this addiction, with insider information and rumours circulating amongst the freelancers, as they wait anxiously for news of the next project. The freelancers themselves, in many respects, provide each other with the support they need to stay hooked into the system on which the film industry draws to crew its productions:

The thing with the film industry is it is kind of like an addiction in a lot of ways, because when you are on a job you're completely consumed by it, to the point that everyone is going – fuck when is this going to finish – we haven't got long to go now. Then as soon as it is over you're like – Oh my God when is the next one going to be on. You hear Peter is working on this or I hear that this

project is coming to New Zealand – oh really – oh wow – oh cool and then you
kind of get your hopes up again and that really keeps you going until such
time as you hear that it is not.

Jane, a woman in her early 30s who initially took on transport work in film for the adventure, also described the industry as being addictive. She sees the excitement and thrill of working in the industry to be addictive for some:

I think that it is addictive to some people, that whole environment, the
unknown, the people ... it is unusual and it does feed on you ... people see it as
really cool and it isn't a real world, cause nothing is based on the real world in
there, which horrified me.

The theme of addiction came through in many of the respondents interviews. Many used this analogy to describe their feelings towards the industry. Respondents talked about their desire to leave the industry after just one more job and that they felt helpless to change their situations. They often described a lack of control over their lives, their financial situations, and felt they were at the mercy of film production bosses and international financiers.

For some of the respondents the draw to work in this industry came with a desire to achieve both professional recognition and in some cases personal prestige and fame. The desire to obtain this for some was the motivation needed to keep returning to work in the industry. Working on high-profile productions did bring a degree of fame and professional recognition to some of the respondents. A number of those interviewed had worked on large, high-profile films, and held important positions which gained them world-wide recognition and awards. Sam, a special effects technician, explained what these awards meant to him:

I think that Lord of the Rings – to actually achieve that award – not that is
was actually on my list of things to tick off in my lifetime or anything. I really

felt that I deserved the award and that it was something that I had worked really hard on and for me it was just an acknowledgement.

However, for Sam, the professional recognition of his creative work and to some degree recognition by society of his value, proved to be more important than any fame or prestige that it may bring:

Yeah and also with international recognition and awards and stuff – it's a bit of a fuck you in some ways to those people who you were at school with who said you were a loser.

Inspite of the fact that many of this group were scathing of fame and prestige as a motivation to work in this industry, many did like the idea that they were living a life that was somewhat different or removed from the real world, and that they were involved in creating something that was different or special. Other respondents described the excitement and adventure of the industry as their motivation to do this work. Living a life that was outside of the normal nine to five existence, with no two days the same was seen by some respondents as an important reason for getting into the industry. Michael, an assistant director in his late 40s, who has been in the industry over 20 years, described how the excitement and adventure of the industry attracted him when he was in his 20s:

You'd pull into a new town with new hotel rooms and new bars to explore and it was really like being part of a circus. You'd meet new people in new places and go partying with them but you'd always pack up and go.

For Michael, this love of the adventure of film making that had got him started in the early days, developed and brought him back to the industry time after time. He especially liked the glamour that is associated with working in the industry, even though he knew the reality to be different. Michael had some great stories to tell at parties, and had felt that he was somehow removed from normal society, and this appealed to his ego:

... it felt like you were a kind of a pirate in a normal world – you know what I mean. You weren't living by everyone else's normal nine to five Monday to Friday and that adds a kind of a benefit and being able to say that you're in the film industry even though you know it's just a boring grinding nightmare. It sounds like it should be fun.

Several respondents described the lifestyle as similar to that of a gypsy packing up and moving on to the next location; it could be the next day, the next week, or the next month. The majority, however, saw the industry and the erratic lifestyle as a young person's game, and what had started out for them as an advantage had become a disadvantage as they aged. The very things that many loved about the industry in the early years, they came to dislike as they aged. Many of the respondents talked about this change in their attitude towards the industry as they aged and commitments such as partners, marriage, and/or children increased in importance.

A common perception held by many is that those who work in the film industry do so because they have a strong passion or desire to create film. Some of the respondents were drawn into the industry through this desire. Hilary, a production manager in her mid-30s, talked about her desire to create film. She had felt compelled to work long hours and sacrificed her personal life in order to pursue this dream. However, after 12 years of working in the industry, she had not managed to get any of her own projects off the ground and her desire to do so had now died:

I think that I've come to realise over the years, I went out fully intending on being a director and have realised over the years that I really don't enjoy that aspect, but I love coming up with the ideas, but filming them and then editing them and putting them together I just loath every aspect of that process.

For many of the respondents, however, it seemed to be more a desire or need to be involved in creative or artistic endeavours that led them into a role in the film industry and the creation of film came secondary to this. Ned, an experienced model maker, saw that the majority of the people

working in film were creative or artistic people and that this desire to work in a creative field was for many the motivation to work in this industry:

Most of the people involved in the film industry are artistic people, that is why they are there. And it is a creative process, although it is hard work and unglamorous a lot of the time, nevertheless it is a creative process and you will find that most people involved, whether they are lighting or gaffers or grips, model makers or special effects people, whatever, they are still reasonably artistic people.

Working in the film industry has the potential to be addictive to some workers. Many respondents used this term when they described how they felt about working in the industry, for several different reasons. The desire to create and be apart of film was for some the draw. This factor kept them motivated through some very difficult times, hoping that they would eventually get their own projects started. For others, creativity was the addiction and in the film industry they found an outlet for their creative talents. For these individuals, work in film was a very important part of their life, and some were prone to suffering from depression and anxiety when they were not working. Others were drawn by the erratic lifestyle and the chance of fame and recognition that comes with this glamorous industry. The freelance structure of the film industry feeds these addictions through its complex intertwined social and professional networks providing rumours and scant details on the next exciting project that is just around the corner. The opportunity to work with some well known and talented individuals, learn some new techniques, or be involved in some ground-breaking special effects is enough to draw many back into the industry.

4.6   Work-life balance

Maintaining a good balance between work and personal activities is increasingly being seen as essential for good health and wellbeing (Frone et al., 1997; Porter, 2001). Work-life balance (WLB) has been extensively studied in the organisational psychology and management literature, although much of the current body of research has been criticised as being

too narrowly defined, often focusing exclusively on the experiences of women (Ransome, 2007). Recent New Zealand Government[12] initiatives (2003) are aimed at providing more flexible working arrangements in order to promote greater WLB and improve workers' wellbeing and WLB policies have been adopted by many workplaces. It has been found that WLB policies are more likely to exist within public sector organisations, those with strong unions, and also those operating under specialised human resources functions (Hyman & Summers, 2002). The New Zealand film industry does not fit into any of these categories and the intense nature of the work means that, for many respondents, looking after their wellbeing and maintaining a healthy WLB was often impossible while working on a film contract. Many of the respondents described bouts of illness and exhaustion brought on by or exacerbated by their long working hours. Maintaining close personal relationships and being involved in family life also suffered. The end of the work project brought with it a rest from the gruelling working hours but it also brought the anxiety associated with finding the next contract. This meant that even when families were able to be together their relationships could be undermined by ongoing uncertainty concerning future employment prospects.

Project-based employment such as film production provides the ultimate in flexible workforce. However, the flexibility in this system is controlled totally by the employer and can be described as employee-unfriendly or "flexploitation" rather than employee-friendly working practices (Fleetwood, 2007). The film production heads use this arrangement to suit the needs of the production, rather than the needs of the workers. Flexible work contracts such as these which involve alternating working hours and uncertainty of work have been found to detrimentally affect workers' wellbeing (Sternbach, 1995). A lack of control of the location of work, length of the working day, and the number of hours worked in a day have also been found have a significant influence on whether an individual can meet the requirements of home and work life (Hyman & Summers, 2002).

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[12] http://www.beehive.govt.nz/node/17591

Many respondents initially believed that the flexibility of this working arrangement could work to their advantage, but they quickly discovered that achieving any kind of WLB within this environment was very difficult. There is either work or life; in this industry the two do not mix. Ned, a model-maker in his early 50s explained his view:

If you're in with Peter Jackson and you've got a job working in a studio or Weta Workshop, as one of the regular staff then you've got a full-time job. Everybody else is contract, so family life – there is no work-life balance, you're either working 150 percent, or you're not working at all, that's the balance.

The long hours often required on film projects meant that the working day could be stretched beyond a maximum imaginable in many other work places. If a freelancer takes time off sick and lets the production down, they may find themselves branded as unreliable. The structure of the freelance working arrangement does not provide a culture supportive of WLB but instead encourages freelancers to push themselves beyond what many would consider to be reasonable in order to maintain their contract. The majority of respondents were distinctly aware of the effect their work was having on their health, but many were also resigned to this, believing that it was simply how things worked in the film industry. Hilary, a production manager in her late 30s described the effects of 12 years in the industry.

I've aged a lot in a very short period of time and got very sick on one job. I had glandular fever and I have never quite recovered since then. I get really chronically depressed if I get burned out which happens a lot. At times I've been really down to the point where doctors say you have to start medication and I think that is a symptom of getting so physically run down that everything spirals down into it. So the only way to stay out of that is to maintain some kind of balance and it is very difficult to do that in this industry. The expectation is ultimate service, ultimate kind of expectation that you will give it your all, all the time.

During times of intensive filming or tight production periods freelancers would often spend their days off sleeping in order to prepare themselves physically for the week ahead. Michael, an experienced assistant director with 20 years in the industry, talked about the impact that one film contract had on his health. On this particular job he considered the demands of the production to be dangerous to the workers:

I would actually claim that it (the film project) was immoral in the way it worked out for the workers – it was just wrong. We shouldn't have actually been in a position where we had to work as long as we did – it wasn't morally correct … It just about broke my career and I looked after my career really well. People were getting sick – I got sick for the first time ever from stress.

For Michael and many other freelancers who suffer illness when contracted on a film project there is often no alternative but to continue working and deal with the consequences to their health once the project is completed. It is at the end of the project that for many freelancers the long hours and intense pressure to perform finally take their toll, with many respondents describing feelings of both physical and mental exhaustion at times. Ian, a special effects technician in his mid-50s, who has worked on numerous big budget feature films in New Zealand, Australia, and more recently also in Europe acknowledged that he often suffered depression at the end of projects and got through this with the support of his partner:

I remember when the end of the Olympics came – I was working on the opening and closing ceremonies with a lot of people from the film industry in Australia and New Zealand and when it came to a close … a lot of other people too went into depression. 'Cause we spent so much time and it was hyper, full on … then it suddenly stopped. I get that with films every now and then and so does Anna, my partner, who is also in the film industry and we help each other through those times. You start thinking, oh God I'll never get employed again. That's probably the last time that I'll ever work on a film and all these thoughts go through your mind …. The next thing the phone rings and they want you there tomorrow and you're into it again.

Some of this group used these down times to start their own creative projects, or to socialise and party with friends and family. Many described using drugs and alcohol as a means to block out the ever-present financial and professional implications of being out of work. Sam, an experienced special effects technician talked about how he occupied himself with other creative projects to fill in those gaps between film work and used drugs to try to forget his worries:

I just keep myself busy by coming up with ideas and probably diverting my focus and not thinking about the state of mind that I was in or feeling worried and I suppose drugs were probably quite a good thing, just to forget about things.

This lack of balance also places a heavy strain on personal relationships. The sheer hours worked (Greenhaus et al., 2002; Hyman & Summers, 2002) and also the need to be away from home on location for extended periods of time can cause major interference with family life and personal relationships. Ian talked about the difficulties involved with keeping in touch, when he and his partner were in different parts of the world:

… there are times when my partner and I don't see each other for four months. That can put a strain on things, to say the least. I was working in New Zealand while Anna was in Prague. It is a totally different time lapse and so you don't really know whether she is starting work or finishing work, and because of the nature of film making, the hours vary and it is hard to actually get a time when you are both not working so you can ring.

However, it is not only being physically away from home that has an effect on relationships. The stress and strain carried over from the work environment can have detrimental effects on home and social life (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Donald, a freelance design engineer in his late 30s, explains how the intense nature of his work seems to take over his thoughts even once he has arrived home:

… it is really hard to find time for other people, it is really hard to find time for yourself. You are basically constantly working and with the sort of work that I do when I'm not working, when I stop work, I still have to design what it is that I'm going to be building the next day. So you pretty much never stop and I very rarely go out. It definitely has affected my social life.

The impact on personal relationships of this kind of work was acknowledged by many respondents. Sam, a special effects technician in his 30s saw that his worklife had contributed to the end of his long-term relationship:

I was working 12-hour days and Robyn was pregnant. I was trying to renovate a house and preparing for a child. Twelve hours a day fibre-glassing and the end of the day you would just float out of the workshop. Go home to renovating the house, and then Jonathan was born. I just wasn't in any head space at all to deal with that. So that all fell apart and so for that relationship, no it wasn't any good at all.

Many of the respondents readily accepted these working conditions when they were young and trying to break into the industry. However, as they matured and family and relationships became more important, it became more difficult to cope with work and family commitments. Several respondents discussed problems with close relationships and family due to their work commitments. Some managed to make the lifestyle work, albeit with difficulty; others, as in Sam's situation, resulted in broken relationships and families.

Alan, a fine artist in his mid-30s found, it difficult to step between the two roles – work and family – with two small children and a partner who required his attention:

I'm finding that more and more with having a family now and having little ones. Coming home, I'm drained. I come home and Jenny is like … thank goodness you're home, you can take James … and she is like … come on you've

got to read him a book, play with him and it is almost more difficult than being at work because you're tired and it is a big psychological shift as well.

The psychological shift between work and family domains can be a cause of strain for some. Behaviour-based conflicts can occur (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) when, for example the work arena, such as film, requires fast-paced, demanding interaction style whereas the role of a father requires a more supportive and loving style. As Alan described above, at the end of a tiring 12 hour day, it can be a difficult adjustment to make successfully.

The way the film industry in New Zealand is structured makes it very difficult for freelancers with family commitments to effectively carry out their parenting or relationships roles. Michael, a successful first assistant director, sees that the way the film industry in New Zealand is run makes it very difficult for freelancers to maintain any balance in their lives.

I'd say it's basically because the way we run the film industry you can't have a family, and connect with all those really important things.

Many respondents had accepted the total commitment required from the industry while they were young and keen to make a name for themselves. However, many of these respondents had been in the industry for 10-15 years and now had partners and children. In consequence, home and family generally took on a greater priority than it had in the past. Time away from family and friends became more of a sacrifice and for some this sacrifice was becoming too great. Unfortunately, the changes in their personal circumstances were not echoed by changes in the structure of freelance work, leaving many in a situation of having to choose between their work and their family.

4.7   Gender

When asked about gender differences in employment in the film industry many of the male respondents saw no differences for males or females. Most men believed that the industry was hard for all freelancers and not

any way biased against either gender. This comment by Ned, a freelance model-maker in his early 50s, is a common example of many of the male respondents' views on this topic:

I think that maybe the film industry is a genderless industry – everybody is screwed equally. You don't have to be a woman to get a harder time than a man.

The majority of the female respondents, however, felt that the film industry was still very much a male-dominated industry, with power being held tightly at the top by a few key men in New Zealand. Sally, an experienced production manager in her early 40s, with over 20 years' experience in the industry, could only think of two women who were, as she saw it, at the top of the industry in New Zealand:

The power base is with the men still in the industry. I think there are a couple of powerful women and a few women film producers but the power base is still with men.

Sally went on to describe what she called the old boys' network of powerful men, as being part of the problem preventing women from entering some of the traditionally male-dominated areas of film:

I still think that the old boys' networks exist in the industry and I do think that it is harder for women to work in some areas of the industry. I think there are some very brave women who have broken into the traditional male areas of camera and lighting and grip but I think that the other departments are pretty equally sprinkled with male and female. But technical areas do tend to be quite male-dominated – sound, camera, lighting, and grips and effects.

Hilary, a production manager, with experience working in New Zealand and in the US, also held this view, and suggested that men's informal and formal networks gave them several career advantages:

I think that in Hollywood, for example, women do hit a glass ceiling and that men do have an easier time of it and the network does get them further but, yeah, I still think that to get where they are everyone works really hard.

Hilary's comments on the situation in the US are also reflected in New Zealand. Some see that the importance and power of these exclusive male-dominated networks are even greater in the small environment of the film industry in New Zealand.

The issue of pay inequity was addressed by one young art department properties buyer in her early 20s. Neena found that she was getting paid significantly less than her male counterparts and it was explained to her by production staff as being the result of her inability to negotiate:

It is my own fault. I have actually talked to a producer and she told me that a lot of the time when she sees contracts coming through the men are getting paid more, mainly she reckons because women don't push for it. She sees that men are more likely, in her experience, to say hang on let's raise it a bit, whereas she has found a lot of women just accept what they get offered. So I need to make sure that I push for it.

In aggressive bargaining situations, where contractors are trying to secure work and the production staff are pushing to keep costs down, young women such as Neena, who are unskilled at aggressive bargaining, often find themselves being paid significantly less than their male counterparts. The freelance work structure makes it very difficult for all freelancers new to the industry to know how far they should go with negotiation. An added problem is also that once a freelancer has been out of work for a number of months they will be even less likely to bargain a top rate. This seemingly free bargaining situation is in reality loaded against the freelancers, as the production heads are usually in the more powerful position and are often more experienced at contract negotiation.

Although the majority of the men commented that women were treated equally in the industry, they were still seen as somewhat of a novelty in the more traditional male areas of the industry. Ian, a special effects technician in his mid-50s, described the fondness with which the men in his team viewed their female counterparts and the need to protect them from other, less progressive males in the industry.

The girls in our department are very much loved and respected and they are usually very much defended too. I remember one time we were at the pub and the carpenters made a snide comment about one of our girls from the special effects department and the carpenters very nearly didn't leave the premises. The boys just leapt on them. You don't speak like that about her … no way. Other departments I don't know, there must be a bit of sexual harassment I suppose …

This view of women does reflect a paternal, rather than an equal relationship and points to a deeper undertone of sexism that comes through some of the male respondents' comments.

Susan, a vibrant and assertive woman in her mid-30s, sees film production to be very male-dominated and personally enjoys the banter and innuendo which is common in the workplace, but she also acknowledges that women working in this environment need to be "tough" in order to cope with this culture:

Some of the conversations at work … you think God, if we were working in a proper 9-5 place, like a bank or a mortgage broker or something, there is no way you could get away all the sexual innuendos that are constantly flying around. It is great fun, really freeing. You know it is just fantastic but sometimes you just think it would be sexual harassment suits left, right, and centre if you were working somewhere else. I suppose that you have to have that humour to handle the pressure, which again is I think why you have to be a pretty strong woman to handle it, because it is a very male world …

This kind of fun environment that Susan described was for many of the women and men one of the things they enjoyed about the industry, and a way to relieve the stress from the heavy workloads and high-pressure environment. In the majority of cases, the respondents described this kind of behaviour as fun; however, if things did go beyond what was considered to be fun there was nowhere to turn for assistance.

Jane, a transport coordinator, in her mid-30s, described a situation where a co-worker (also a woman) was harassed by a male freelancer and how they had to cope with this situation without support:

> *... there was a dude down south, who was the transport manager, who was a guy who somehow had to have Rachel. Anyway, it is a long story but he was seriously male chauvinist and he gave her a hell of a time because she was a female. He just couldn't cope with it very well at all – that she might know better or make him look bad ... there was no support at all. Rachel didn't get any support, drove her mad. I think that if I hadn't been there ... so between us we were okay. We could laugh about it, joke about it. There isn't really anyone higher that you can go to. It is basically deal with it or leave. 'Cause you're a contractor, if you cause problems you can be got rid of ... that's the problem, you can't really piss people off ... it doesn't take much to get a bad reputation.*

The inability of Rachel or her co-worker Jane to deal with this clear case of sexual harassment in the workplace does raise an important issue for the industry regarding the safety of contractors (male and female) in the workplace. It was very clear to Rachel that if she wanted to keep her job, or in fact to continue working in the industry, she needed to keep quiet and manage the situation herself. However, not taking any formal action does allow this kind of behaviour to continue and her silence does signal to the perpetrator and to others in the industry that it is acceptable behaviour. Women freelancers, as with all freelancers, are in the unenviable situation when it comes to dealing with this kind of workplace problem. If they complain they risk being branded as troublemakers and having their contracts terminated. Likewise, if they leave the project before completion

they once again risk being branded as unreliable and jeopardise future work prospects. For many, the only viable course of action is to continue with the project and take no action, managing the situation as best they can.

It became clear through the course of the interviews that working in this industry was particularly difficult for freelancers with family commitments. As in our society the main burden of care for the family does still lie with the female (e.g., Deutsch & Saxon, 1998; Marler & Moen, 2005), women freelancers were particularly disadvantaged when it came to accepting work which conflicted with family responsibilities.

Alan, an art department head with two young children of his own, considered the difficulties women faced when trying to juggle work and family commitments:

I have people who juggle young children, single mothers with a young child working in the film industry and working 50 hours a week and doing overtime where they can to make money. The amount of money that you'd have to spend on child care – you would only be barely keeping your head above water.

Men and women with young families are often faced with conflicting demands between work and family, no matter what field of work they are employed in. However, working as a freelancer in the film industry, there is often very little room for negotiation regarding working hours. Patrick, also heads an art department head, holds a different view on employing women in his department. He explains the situation that he is faced with in running a busy art department:

I've had situations where there has been a woman doing this job in my department and she's got young children and you've got a nanny or child care thing ... can I come in at 8 rather than 7 because I've got to take the child to ... and you say fine as long as it doesn't interfere with your work. When it does interfere, well then you have to say, okay how do we sort this out. I'll need somebody at 7 o'clock in the morning, so sometimes you have to say, look can

you sort it out so that you are here at 7 or I'll have to let you go and have somebody who can be here. 'Cause usually it's not just the 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning thing, it is other things. I mean being a mother usually means more than being a father because who's the right person to take that child to the doctor and it's not always the men...

Patrick's comments on the difficulties of employing women with young families reflect his conservative views on the roles of women and their responsibilities for child care. At a broader level it also demonstrates the lack of commitment in the industry to create a more family friendly workplace. Unlike many industries where initiatives to encourage WLB and rectify gender inequalities are gaining momentum, in the film production industry the production of the film takes absolute priority and contracted freelance workers are not entitled to this degree of flexibility. Women working in this industry must be prepared to give their work top priority and for some women this reality has strongly impacted on their decision not to start a family. Hilary, a production manager in her mid-30s, explains how her work has influenced her close relationships and also her decision not to have children:

In terms of my relationship, I have chosen a partner who doesn't really care if I'm there or not. So he just accepts that it comes with the territory, that I'm a workaholic. So in a way, I have chosen a partner who won't give me grief about the fact that I've chosen this kind of life. So I think it has definitely impacted on my decision that I won't have children, I just won't do it. I mean even having a dog I would feel so guilty because I come home so late and I've got like an hour before I go to bed. I don't think that I could handle that, so children would just be much worse, you know. Either that or I would just leave the industry.

Many of the female respondents in this study felt that a personal decision had to be made whether to have a family or work in the film industry. This was for many a difficult decision and one which they had given a lot of thought to. Research in other industries in New Zealand has also found that

many professional women are faced with the decision to continue with their chosen career or have children (Crump et al., 2007). Other female respondents had put off making this decision, many hoping that at a later stage in their careers they would have the resources and experience to pick and choose work as they required and have a family as well.

In contrast, the majority of the male respondents had families, some with very young children. All the male respondents acknowledged that their partners were responsible for the majority of the care of their children and running the household. It appears that male freelancers did not need to make a choice between having a family and film work, but they did need a partner who was prepared to carry the full burden of child care and household responsibilities.

Those women who did decide to forego having children, and in some cases close relationships, and devote themselves to working in this industry did often manage to carve out a niche for themselves. Several of the respondents (both male and female) referred to these women as "film widows". This title usually referred to women in their late 30s plus who generally worked in production-related roles. Michael, a first assistant director in his late 40s, described these women as martyring themselves to the cause (the film) and he felt they filled the gap in their personal lives with their work. However, it could also be viewed that the lack of personal relationships for many of these women was a direct result of their complete focus on their work, which was necessary if they were to succeed in their roles. Michael is generally describing women who work in production roles, where the long hours and work pressure can be extreme:

> *... a lot of women, for some reason, seem more prone to what we call film widows, where their whole life becomes the job. You can tell because they will be first in at 6am in the morning and they will still be working away at 12pm at night. And that's just wrong. They could easily afford to get an assistant in so they didn't have to, but they kind of martyr themselves to the cause. I suspect that because men are emotionally shut down and internalise a lot of*

their emotions and they're used to dealing with it like that. Women, unfortunately, are used to expressing their emotional life and what happens is when you are in a job that is totally consuming it becomes all your life, you start expressing your emotional life through the job. They become difficult to work with because it's actually not about the job, it's about their emotional state.

Michael's comments reflect the common perception in our society that women with careers who have chosen to remain childless are hard and unfeminine and somehow lacking or failed as women (Gillespie, 2000). In order to be successful in the film industry these women freelancers must be incredibly dedicated and be prepared to give up their personal life in order to succeed. Susan, an art department assistant in her mid-30s, describes the determination required by these women. She sees that some of these women may become so caught up in their work that they reject the opportunities for children and family life which come their way, which they may regret later in life:

It is a male-run industry and it is hard. The majority of females will be in production and sadly they become known as the production spinsters. A lot of them get to the point where – oh fuck I'm 40 something or 50 something and I forgot to have kids and they are single and they work really hard. First in, last out, and they are very good at their job and they have to be so hard as well ... I think it is kind of sad. I see that it replaces all those relationships that they give up on ... I'm not going to have kids, I'm not going to bother having a partner and that is why they bury themselves in the work. Well that's an individual choice but it is not my cuppa tea.

Hilary, a production manager in her mid-30s, found it interesting to reflect on her reasons for not having children, and also noticing how many of her female contemporaries were doing the same:

At this point I have ruled out having children as an option, it is just not an option for me for all sorts of reasons and what's interesting is to notice the

other women in my industry who have made that same choice. I call them work widows. They're married to their work; they have very little else. They may have a partner, if they ever see them and they may have a pet, it's probably a cat … they're married to the job and the other term for it is Brides of Peter – yeah, you know we're all brides of Peter and you know, to be honest with you, I fit in the genre and it is really scary.

Hilary is well aware of the film widow persona and sees it clearly in her female colleagues; she can also see herself fitting into this mould. Hilary has made a firm decision not to have children, and this is for many reasons; her work not being, as she sees it, the main factor. She does, however, question why it is that so many of her female colleagues are also making the same decision.

The description of "film widows" came from many of the respondents, both male and female. This group of highly skilled and driven women had risen to important production roles through sheer hard work but many also paid a high cost in terms of personal and family life for this success. In terms of their work colleagues, the men saw them as putting too much emotion into their work, whereas the women pitied them for their lack of emotionality.

Women who are driven to succeed in any occupation may decide to delay having or not to have children. In the male-dominated environment of film, women who make this decision are viewed by many of their male and female colleagues as being somehow emotionally troubled and not generally well liked. The sexist view that women need to have children in order to be of value, and that they are emotionally troubled if they do not, seems to be perpetuated in this industry by both the male and female freelancers. However, the important question is whether these women are making this decision from a position of freedom of choice or through a desire to succeed in an industry where, at present at least, they cannot appear to do both.

Working in the film industry was described by all respondents as extremely hard work. To succeed, freelancers must give 100 percent of their time and

energy to their work, leaving little over for their personal life. For some women freelancers this lifestyle means making a choice between working in the industry or having a family life.

4.8   Getting out

Throughout the course of these interviews many respondents talked about leaving the industry. Some had plans in place and were in the process of moving into other work, while others wanted to leave but were at a loss to know what else they could do. Many of the respondents underestimated how difficult it would be to get out of the industry. For many there were features of the industry which still strongly appealed to them, such as the collective creativity, and many still saw the industry as providing an important outlet for their individual creative talents as well. Once they had made a firm decision to leave the industry, which for several respondents took years of indecision, many did not know where to start looking for alternative work. Transitioning out of the industry proved for many of the respondents to be as difficult and costly as it had been breaking in.

Alan, an experienced set designer, commented that leaving the industry was a common topic of conversation amongst the freelancers, and that many experienced difficulties with making this change.

> *Everybody talks about what they are going to do once they get out of the film industry, but that actually takes so much investment – time – go back to study or take financial risks and all that kind of stuff which is quite a difficult position to get into.*

Several of the freelancers objected to talking about their work in the film industry as a career. The lack of consistent employment and in the majority of cases the lack of progression meant for many of these workers that there was in reality no career in film open to them. Ned, an experienced freelance model-maker, in his early 50s, explains how he sees the career prospects in his field:

It's not a career that's obvious. It's a number of short-term jobs and you earn enough money to pay the bills and if you're very lucky to pay the bills you've run up in the time that you're not earning. That's on a good year. … if you're a model-maker or a set builder or something like that – once you're head of department you might get to upskill yourself and work at a higher level, but chances are at the end of the day you're unemployed again. It's certainly not a career.

Donald, a designer engineer, in his late 30s, also echoed Ned's view on a film career. He had expected that the industry would provide him with a career and was disappointed that for him there was no form of advancement or progression after all his years of hard work:

I have felt kind of let down over having worked 17 years and there has been no advancement. Up until last year I was in exactly the same position. I've had the same job title, same job description as when I first worked in the industry. I've found that pretty disappointing. I was hoping that it was a career, that you could move up and sort of progress in it, but it turned out it's a flat line.

The lack of career progression or any form of advancement was mentioned by several respondents. This factor was not something that they had considered when they had started out in the industry. The common expectation that after a period of time, if you work hard and are competent, you will progress both in job status and financially, does not seem to apply to freelancers in the film production industry. Their freelance status means that they are, for the most part, self-employed contractors and these benefits do not apply to their work arrangement.

Once a freelancer had made the decision to leave the industry and take up a new kind of employment, the pathway forward for many was not clear. Several respondents discussed the problem they found finding the time to plan a new career and retrain or upskill. Many of these individuals had never been permanently employed by an organisation before, and had little

knowledge of how they would go about presenting themselves to an employer outside of the film industry.

Hilary, a production manager, with 12 years in the industry, talked about her desire to get out of the industry. She had wanted to leave film work for several years and was working with a personal coach, but had still not managed to take action:

> *I've been trying to work on my exit plan. I've been working on it for years, but now I've got serious about it and I started working with a personal coach. I found two things, I found that as soon as I nail what I think I want to go for, work rises up and it ends up not being just a 16 hour day it's an 18 or 20-hour day, which makes it almost physically and emotionally impossible to tackle something else.*

Ian, a freelance special effects technician in his early 50s was keen to look at furthering his education. Ian still enjoyed the lifestyle in film but was looking ahead to prepare for his eventual retirement from the industry. He found it impossible to commit to a course of study when work commitments needed to take first priority:

> *… it is very difficult to further your education because you can't book into, say a night school, because I could be called away to another country or another state. There are courses that I want to do but just can't do them. I can't put my name down on a piece of paper saying I'm going to start there and finish there, it just won't happen. If someone rings up I'm gone.*

After working in the film industry for 10-20 years many of the freelancers were tired of the fickle nature of the industry and the glamour associated with film had, for many of them, long since worn off. Hilary, a production manager in her mid 30s who has worked both in New Zealand and the US, has seen many young hopefuls come through and fail to succeed:

Yeah I see it in the States the young people … that are paid absolute shit and working unbelievable hours, getting no overtime. I watch them, they are in it for the credit or they are there sitting next to James Cameron and he's telling stories about 'Titanic'. They want to be a director and if they have his ear he might be willing to fund them – you know there is a lot of hope and fear wrapped up in breaking in and I think the ones that are the most ambitious are the youth. I'm 36 – I've seen people get to like 34 or 35, 36 and then after that too tired, priorities shift and it's not such a big deal anymore. Or you realise that whatever return you thought … is not going to happen.

Once the glamour and sparkle of the industry fades for these young hopefuls, they have to make a choice between carrying on in the industry or taking what skills and experience that they have gained and trying to market this to another employer. Donald, a designer engineer who has recently left the industry, sees his time in the industry as being a lot of fun. However, even though he was highly skilled, he found it very difficult to make a change into another line of work:

It is not a career – it's a job but it is very unlikely to take you anywhere. Yeah, it'll be fun, you'll have a good time and you can do it for five years or 10 years but at the end of that 10 years you don't have anything bankable that you can take to another profession. You don't have any qualifications and you haven't really gained anything. The skills are only applicable to the film industry seemingly. It takes a lot out for the amount that it gives back.

The lack of any form of career progression coupled with the long hours, intense nature of the work, and lack of job security took a heavy toll on many of the respondents. After 10-15 years in the industry with little or no change in their work status or monetary rewards, many had now realised that their long-time prospects in the industry were limited and had started to look at other options. Several of the respondents saw themselves as virtually unemployable outside the film industry. Some discussed the option of developing their own business as a way to make a break from the industry. Sam, a skilled special effects technician, had set up his own

business outside of the industry which he is hoping will eventually generate enough income so he can leave the industry altogether:

I suppose for me those were like the most stressful times of my life really and I think being in this industry has definitely been what has led me to setting up a business. It is just that financial stress.

Many of the respondents had the business skills and creative talents required to develop new businesses. However, the financial strains associated with the setup of a small business, coupled with the stress of film work, meant that the two did not often work well together. Several respondents had tried, often unsuccessfully, to develop their own businesses, while funding the venture from their film work. For many, film work once again took over and their businesses failed while they were tied up on a film contract.

Patrick, a highly successful art director with several international awards, has also looked for alternative work and found nothing that suited his skillset. He found it frustrating that he had the skills required for many jobs outside film but not the necessary qualifications or experience in the particular field. He also saw that generating their own business was in many respects the only option for many freelance contractors:

… you have got to generate it yourself, you can't just walk in even though you know that you've got skills. You've got a huge amount of skills, but you can't walk into something outside the film industry and expect to slot yourself in. People say go off and learn how to be a plumber or whatever. Well that's not where your passions are you see … you like film …

The lack of formal job standardisation in the film industry also proved to work against freelancers looking for employment outside the industry. Prospective employers found it difficult to relate many of the roles in the film industry to roles outside the industry, making it difficult for freelancers to be considered in a formal recruitment environment. Another important

point to consider is that, for many of this group, working in film allows them to fulfil their need for creativity. It can be a catch because it may provide the creative work they crave but may not provide the security and income that they require.

Some of these freelancers have, however, made a successful shift to other forms of work, often through using their negotiating skills, which they have carefully honed over the years of contract negotiation. Lionel, an experienced freelance actor and drama teacher in his late 50s, who has worked extensively in the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand sees that there are more alternative work options for film workers in the UK:

> *Yeah a lot of people do manage to make a switch into things like communications. Certainly in the UK, people switch into corporate communications or corporate audio and visual film production for big corporations but it hasn't taken off over here in the same way.*

Donald, a skilled designer engineer with 17 years experienced in the industry, has after months of searching, successfully taken on a job in industrial design and is very happy with the shift:

> *I get holiday pay and my taxes all paid for me. I get an office desk and a computer and I still get to design and build stuff which is nice, but I'm obliged to complete 37 hours per week, instead of the 50 odd. On the whole when you actually add it all up, I get paid an extra $17 per hour over what I was getting. So that is pretty good.*

It seems that for many of the freelancers in this industry getting out of the industry can prove almost as difficult as getting started in the industry in the first place. Many of the respondents were in the late 30s plus age group and came into the industry during its infancy in the early 1990s, learning their skills on the job as required. Therefore, many have little or no formal qualifications and after 15-20 years in the industry have developed highly industry-specific skills. Very few of the respondents had taken on any

training or formal qualifications over this time, due for the most part to the erratic lifestyle of the film industry. Some did talk about their desire to do so, but commented on how difficult, or impossible this was while they were still in the industry. The transition into another line of work was something that needed to be carefully planned, and could also mean a period of time without income or the need for support from a partner or family.

4.9   Conclusion

The film industry in New Zealand has developed a means of operation based heavily on contracted freelance labour. The small size of the industry in New Zealand makes it very difficult to sustain permanent employment. There is only employment for many of these people when a film is in production. New Zealand is not alone in this mode of operation; film production in the UK and the US is also project based.

Film production in New Zealand has, however, developed a culture which could be described as potentially exploitive of its freelance workers. The lure of film production attracts many young creative individuals eager to get a break in the industry. The film industry in New Zealand encourages these young freelancers in order to have a ready supply of freelancers to meet the industry needs for a flexible workforce.

The media also plays a role here with its portrayal of the industry in New Zealand. The headlines which we read in our papers and view on our television screens give the impression of a booming industry with New Zealand being described as a sought-after destination for international productions. This media attention has helped to raise the profile of the industry in New Zealand, attracting more young people into the industry.

The freelancers themselves are an integral part of this system and as such also play a part in maintaining the status quo. They are often in the very difficult situation of working in competition with, and negotiating for contracts with, friends and long-term work associates. Many of the respondents talked of the difficulty they found with this negotiation. These

factors, along with their freelance status, resulted in many freelancers not negotiating their rates as strongly as they would like. The length of time between film contracts also heavily impacts on the freelancers' bargaining power, with those who have not worked for extended periods of time being more likely to accept a lower rate to secure the work.

More than any other creative industry, the film industry brings with it a particular air of glamour and excitement. Many give their all just to be involved in some small way. The film industry can offer an exciting and challenging work environment for dedicated, creative people, and those who simply love film. It provides a rich a colourful work environment in which contract workers are exposed to a range of different tasks in the course of their working day. Life is never boring in this industry, change is constant, and workers must be fast-paced and efficient in order to keep up. For young people who feel that they have the stamina the film industry can provide a challenging and vibrant work experience, and provide some great tales to tell friends and family.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to examine how the structure of film production work in New Zealand impacted on the lives of a group of freelance production workers. The joys and the hardships associated with work in this creative industry, and the strain of freelance employment, contrast with the media images of glamour and extravagance. The discussion chapter will examine some of the key themes from the findings chapter in more depth and attempt to take a broader perspective on the implications of these findings, for both the individuals concerned and for the film industry.

This chapter is divided into seven sections. The first section discusses the emotional relationship which workers have with their work and the film industry in general. During the course of this research I was struck by the intensity and passion which many of the respondents brought to their work. Many held strong views on the industry. This intense love/hate relationship that many freelance film workers had with their work was a central theme in this thesis. This chapter will begin by examining this complex relationship that many of the respondents had with their work. The second section discusses social networks within the industry and examines the importance of interpersonal relationships and networks. Once again, these relationships are very complex and multifaceted and serve several different functions for the respondents. The notion of film production as a temporary total institution is introduced, with particular attention given to the temporal and physical isolation of film work which creates a hot-bed environment for creativity and the formation of intense but often short-lived personal relationships. The third section looks at the structural conditions, and labour market influences that constrain their ability to succeed in the industry. The fourth section examines the difficulty that many respondents faced with transition out of the industry and their need for assistance in this process is highlighted. In the fifth section the culture of the film industry in New Zealand is discussed, and the part it plays in maintaining the status quo with regard to working conditions is examined. The sixth section discusses the role of legislation and how it may be used to help improve the working

conditions of New Zealand freelance workers. Finally, in conclusion, the future of the industry in New Zealand is discussed, and some recommendations are made, on how the present working conditions experienced by film production freelancers could be improved.

5.1   *Personal challenges and rewards*

Many of the respondents in this study described working in film as an immensely rewarding experience, and at the same time, as being hugely challenging, stressful, and physically exhausting. They described an intense love/hate relationship with the industry, and with their work itself. I was struck by the difficulty many had in describing their feelings about their work. The complexity of this relationship was something that many of the respondents had not previously thought deeply about, and some were very willing to explore these feelings.

Those respondents who worked in creative roles seemed to feel this conflict more acutely, as the creative side of their work could bring immense personal satisfaction, but at the same time it could also be a painful and stressful experience. Their work was often a product of their own creativity, albeit under the direction of the film management and it could be a source of both extreme pleasure and pain. For many of the respondents the creative element of their work was directly tied into their sense of identity.

The intense and complex emotional relationship which many respondents had with their work does not seem to be adequately explained by the mainstream psychological literature on occupational stress (e.g. Cooper, Dewe, O'driscoll, & Brotheridge, 2002; Mackay, Cousins, Kelly, Lee, & McCaig, 2004). This literature usually involves some variant of either person/environment fit or transactional model of stress to suggest that psychological characteristics of the individual worker and characteristics of the work environment interact to create a nexus to which the individual worker is more or less suited. These models tend to be relatively schematic and seldom examine specific workplaces in close detail. In consequence, features of the psycho-social environment such as the intensely conflicted

love/hate relationship with the film industry described by many respondents' tend to be under-theorised within the conventional body organisational stress literature.

Those workers who were involved in less creative areas of film production, such as the production assistants, who carry out the myriad of administrative tasks, did also describe getting caught up in the intensity of the industry. Once again, many of the respondents found this relationship was not simple to explain. Many of these individuals who are not in creative roles themselves are either trying to gain access into creative roles, or have a passion or love of film. Being involved in such a glamorous industry can also provide a feeling of importance, or being special, even if their work is actually very mundane and ordinary. The film industry has a particularly high profile in New Zealand today, and appears exciting and glamorous to those outside the industry. Freelancers will often have interesting tales to tell, and insider information on high-profile celebrities. This boost to the ego that can come from being involved in the industry adds an important dimension to this work. It can provide some explanation as to why many of these workers, in the more mundane roles endure such hardships. The ultimate payoff for the insecurity, the long hours, and the often difficult working conditions comes when the film is released and they see their name in the credits, or they can tell the stories of the part they played in the film's creation. Film production is seen by many as a prestigious and glamorous industry to be involved in and for some, at least for a time, this is the only payback that is required.

Once a freelancer has become a part of the industry, it can be very difficult to get out. Psychologically they are tied to the highs and lows of contract work. While they are in work their identity is strong, they feel a strong sense of who they are both creatively and professionally. However, when they are in between contracts their self-esteem can plummet, and their identity is fragile at best. For many of the male freelancers, there is the added pressure of the male breadwinner status, which is removed from them when they are out of work. Their sense of self is closely tied to both

their work and to the provider role. The time between contracts for many is filled with anxiety as they seek the next work contract, both to renew their failing sense of self-worth and also to regain their breadwinner status in the family system. During this time depression is common and many will question their own ability to work in the industry again. Psychological insecurity, low self-esteem, and depression were common for many freelancers when between work contracts. However, the fragility of their work contracts meant that many remained in a constant state of anxiety and fear, which was never far from the surface, even while they were in work. The freelance structure of the industry means that workers can be replaced at any time with virtually no notice. There was, therefore, a constant pressure to perform at a top level or be replaced.

For many, especially the older freelancers, leaving the industry altogether was something which they constantly thought about doing. However, in many respects, leaving the industry would be failing, both creatively and professionally. For some, although they were exhausted from the years of both physical and psychological stress, their sense of self was so acutely tied into their work that it was virtually impossible for them to see themselves in any other form of work. And this goes for both creative and noncreative workers, many of whom were just as tied into the ego status that the industry provided.

For women working in film the personal difficulties of this work are even more intense. For certain roles in the industry, gaining access to work can prove more difficult for women, as access to the more lucrative contracts comes only to those who have the right contacts. Furthermore, due to the lack of formal human resources processes, there is no transparency in the hiring process, and women and other minority groups may be disadvantaged. This lack of transparency makes it possible to give contracts to less-qualified workers, to give lucrative contracts to friends or family, or to perpetuate biases or discrimination without any chance of being challenged for these decisions. This system, therefore, ensures that the sought after contracts will go to the contractors who are in favour and have

the right connections. Those who do not have these connections will often not be offered the work, no matter how qualified or experienced they may be. Despite the emphasis on professional networks, and personal connections, there is still reluctance by both men and women in this industry to see the industry as in any way biased when awarding contracts. There is a strong belief that contracts are won on merit and experience, despite personal experience to the contrary. The freelance contractors themselves seem unwilling to question this, and tend to focus on individualistic explanations for their failure to win contracts, often explaining it as a personal failing or random luck. As the freelancers' livelihood depends on these contracts they need to psychologically reconcile this incongruence. Therefore, by continuing to believe that they can win contracts with hard work and determination they are able to continue to function in this system, with what would otherwise be a psychologically irreconcilable situation. However, this failure to look at the structural conditions in the industry which bring about these problems, and the broader sociological explanations for their situation, keep the freelancers trapped in this vulnerable and insecure situation, and enables the industry to continue to function in this manner without challenge.

Women in film in New Zealand still work predominantly in production roles and also in the stereotypically female roles such as hair and makeup, and wardrobe. They also gain a strong sense of identity from their work, particularly those women who have worked hard to achieve important production roles and work long hours in order to maintain these positions. Many of these women have had to give up other sources of identity in order to achieve this. It is very difficult to work at this level and also take on the role of partner, wife, or mother and even maintaining personal friendships was described as very difficult by several of these women. In film industry circles the title of "film widows" was commonly used to describe these women who were seen as giving up their lives in order to succeed professionally. The demanding nature of their work meant that they had to give up their more feminine attributes and behave in more masculine ways to succeed. Many of these women gave up other sources of identity, as

women, and took on the persona of "film widow". Despite the sacrifice which many of these women made in order to succeed, the fragility of their relationship with the industry still remained. Several of the respondents expressed regret that they had invested so much of their personal time and energy into their careers, at the expense of their personal lives. Some were bitter, but the majority were philosophical and felt that they had made these decisions freely. The harsh reality, however, is that if they had not given so much of themselves to their work they would have long since been rejected by the industry.

5.2 Networks and interpersonal relationships

Temporary organisations, such as film production, which consistently face high levels of uncertainty, rely heavily on social networks and processes such as socialisation, reputation, and reciprocity in contrast to traditional hierarchical organisations which rely more heavily on formal management structures (Bechky, 2006). Film production is in many ways a unique environment, which operates in accordance with its own set of values and social norms. In this system the notion of reciprocity is of key importance.

The production of film is frequently a short-term project, commonly several weeks or months in duration, and the success of the film venture relies on production crews working interdependently and collaboratively from the beginning of the project. To achieve this, the film project is organised around tightly structured and enduring role structures. These role structures are carefully reproduced throughout the film production industry regardless of the size of the production. The organisation may therefore be newly formed, with a totally new mix of members; however, the tasks required of each individual member are carefully prescribed, so each worker knows the tasks required of that position, and can slot into the system from one production to the next.[13] Although the preference is to use well known and experienced crews, at times new groups of workers will be brought together on a production. This is becoming more common in New Zealand with the

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[13] See Appendix 6 for a diagram showing an example of how these roles are structured.

growth in both size and reputation of the New Zealand film industry in the global marketplace. New Zealand is gaining in popularity as a film-making destination and more overseas freelancers are looking towards New Zealand for either short-term contracts or for permanent relocation.

This tight hierarchical structure ensures that each member of the production team knows their role from the beginning of the project, with very little time required for training. This is imperative due to the high cost of running a production crew, especially while filming on set is taking place. One possible downside of this rigidity is that it may act as a barrier to innovation. In spite of the large amount of new technology which has been developed over the last 20 years in film production (e.g., digital technology) these rigid processes and the system remain virtually unchanged. Film production, for the most part, relies on tried and tested methods. Again there is a huge contradiction to be seen, as this industry which thrives on the innovative and imaginative operates beneath the surface along very conservative and traditional guidelines.

Freelance production workers operate within a complex system of interwoven relationships. These relationships with peers are paramount to the success of the freelance worker. Freelancers will often work together in loose teams, coming together on project after project. Their reputations and careers often become intertwined and this interdependence grows. Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) is a commonly used conceptual theory for understanding workplace behaviour and provides a simple explanation for this relationship as freelance workers build their reputations through close co-operation with their peers. However, within this complex project environment these team members are often in competition for the same projects, and they must work to maintain this difficult balance between interdependence and competition. Several of the respondents discussed this issue in depth; the complexity and contradictions of the system were very much apparent. These complex relationships between freelancers have developed over many years of interaction, with each party providing the other with necessary support and

advice, along with contacts and work contracts. These exchanges are entered into freely by both parties, neither expecting that the other will reciprocate, at least not immediately, but acting with the faith and belief that the favour will come back to them at some stage in the future.

The relationship between freelancers and the production company is also a complex one. The production company employs freelance producers, who hire the freelance production crew required to make the film. As freelancers these producers also operate in the same network environment as other freelance crew. These freelancer producers often have to negotiate contracts with long-term friends and associates. In this role they are required to negotiate hard on behalf of the film production to get the best available workers at the lowest possible rate. The power during this negotiation process generally lies with the film production management. Trust, therefore, plays a very important part in this initial contracting arrangement. Freelancers are often in a situation where they will be forced to lower their rates in order to secure work, and they need to trust that they are being offered a fair rate in relation to their peers. This formation of the psychological contract between the freelancer and the production department is a complex process, based only partly on these initial discussions. It is also heavily influenced by a sense of reciprocity between the two parties involved in the negotiation and also by the contractor's past contract rate. Once the terms and conditions of the contract are agreed upon, the freelancer relies on social referents when deciding whether their contract is fair and equitable. This perception of the employment conditions of their peers heavily influences their view of their own contract (Ho, 2005). Equity theory has been used to explain how individuals respond to feelings of inequity (Heslin, 2003). In this situation, equity theory would maintain that freelancers will strive to maintain outcome and input ratios as equal to that of their peers. Furthermore, they would respond to a perception of inequity through lowering their outputs or trying to secure higher outcomes. However, in this tenuous, interdependent environment freelancers must maintain high levels of output despite any feelings on inequity, as their future reputations and livelihood depend upon it. Therefore, the structure of

the film industry and strict unspoken rules of conduct direct how the freelancers react to these conditions. However, these feelings of inequity, and/or breach of psychological contract, can compound over time, and the freelancer can build up a level of resentment and distrust for the film production staff. At the same time they are acutely aware that if they wish to remain in the industry they must play by these rules and accept that on occasions their situation may be less than equitable.

The film industry runs on these complex network structures which are heavily controlled by social norms which direct the behaviours of the freelancers with a strict code of unspoken rules. Many of the respondents in this study attempted to explain this system, but had trouble explaining the complexity. There were conflicting comments made by many about this system. The issue of reciprocity was taken very seriously by all respondents who considered that "favours" were both the way to get ahead and to stay ahead in this industry. Favours are seen to work well at all levels amongst freelancers and production staff, however several respondents also cautioned that favours should not always be expected in return.

Film production involves long, often unsocial hours of work. In addition to this, when on location, film crews can be physically isolated from friends and family. There are few options for socialising outside of the crew themselves, which can blur the lines between work and social activity. In addition to this the interdependence of the work environment means that freelancers work very closely together, and often in total isolation from outside influences. To further add to the intensity of this situation, film work is usually kept strictly confidential, and workers must sign confidentiality agreements during the contracting process. This separation from their usual support mechanisms of friends and family means that workers can become very vulnerable. This setting creates the right environment for close relationships to form between workers. Work colleagues are often the only support available through personal and work-related problems. These intense relationships, however, do not often translate back into life once the film production is finished.

The dislocation that the workers go through from their normal existence also makes them susceptible to abuse. Within this closed environment workers are under immense social pressure to conform to the prevailing status quo. In order to get the film completed on schedule workers are sometimes required to work unreasonably long hours and sometimes under harsh conditions that they would not normally tolerate. An analogy can be drawn between this isolated and strictly socially controlled environment of film and Goffman's (1961) work with total institutions. The production of film can be described as a temporary total institution (Bechky, 2006; Goffman, 1961), in which the members are isolated in a working environment with strong social pressures which control the participants' behaviour, to meet the needs of the film production. Goffman (1961, p.xiii) described total institutions as being "places of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life". Unlike the inmates of the prisons and hospitals that Goffman described, film production workers are willing participants who work diligently in order to build their reputation in the social network. They become intensely involved in their work to the exclusion of all other interests. This can cause problems when the production ends and they must return home to families and friends, just as is the case with inmates of total institutions such as prisons and hospitals; they may feel that they have lost touch or are out of step with their normal life. They have been encased in an environment which has provided all their daily needs, working to strictly regimented routines, with no control of their daily routine. Once they return to their normal lives and need to make decisions for themselves again it can be a difficult period of adjustment. They have been cloistered in a highly pressured, exciting workplace for sometimes several months and the adjustment required to fit back into normal life places strain and tension on families and relationships that have had to function without them. Sometimes this pressure can be too great and broken relationships are common.

5.3 Labour market constraints

Job insecurity is a constant feature of employment in the film industry. In order to address these issues, it is necessary to look beyond the effects of job insecurity on the individual, and examine the fundamental power imbalance that exists within this contracting arrangement (Scott, 2004). Many freelance contractors value the variety and challenge of contract work. They work hard to establish and build networks and their success is largely due to their ability to build effective networks. However, their success is also constrained by market forces within this system. The availability of work contracts, and other competing freelancers, heavily influences their success or failure. The structure of the industry places the worker in a position of extreme vulnerability, which influences their ability to negotiable their contract rates. There is a less than even playing field on which this negotiation takes place, with the production department holding the more powerful position. The film production staff have information on the availability of alternative freelancers, and other contract work opportunities that currently exist. They are also aware of the current rates that are being paid to other freelancers, and they are in a position to exploit the vulnerable position of the contractor, and push for the lowest possible rate. The freelance workers must engage in a delicate balancing act within this tight network system, in order to maintain their reputation, and future work prospects, and this factor further limits their willingness to push for higher rates or better working conditions. The structure of the system and the freelancers' individualistic approach to negotiation, further hinder them from any form of collective bargaining which might bring about improved conditions. This lack of collaboration when it comes to contract negotiation is an interesting feature of the social system, when viewed against the collaborative nature of their working lives. The tight labour market and the intense competition for contracts between freelancers ensure that the film production management retain the more powerful position and inhibit the freelancers from working more collaboratively when negotiating their contract rates. Contract negotiation can be an anxious and fearful time for freelancers, and production managers will often play one freelancer against another during negotiation to further cut their rates. Under these conditions

freelancers will keep information on contracts and rates to themselves and will often not share this information with others, until they have been confirmed a contract start date. It is once they have started on a contract and find out what others are being paid that they can realise they could have negotiated a better rate.

The film industry is well known for the skewed distribution of its workers with only a select minority gaining the majority of the contracts (Bechky, 2006). This boundaryless career is in reality bounded by their ability to build and maintain their networks and reputations, and also by these labour market forces (Pringle & Mallon, 2003). Career advancement in this system occurs for these workers by gaining more prestigious contracts, rather than within a single organisation. That is, freelancers are always looking towards the next project, which may provide an improvement both in pay and in job title. Advancement of this kind is achieved with the next contract. It very seldom occurs within the same contract, although contractors will often fulfil several different roles during the course of a film contract. Career advancement, when it does occur, is tenuous at best, as freelancers often take whatever projects they can get; one project may be seen as a step up, whereas the next one may be a step down. This lack of career path within the industry is something which several respondents discussed at length. It was a fact that they were unaware of when they started out. Contracting work does not generally bring with it a steady career progression and many respondents held the same job title today as they had when they started out in the industry, in some cases 15 years previously.

5.4 *Career transition*

The film industry was described by several of the respondents as a "young man's game" and as freelancers age, maintaining this lifestyle can be very difficult. Thought needs to be given to what happens to these freelance workers as they age. Where can their experience and the skills gained in the film industry be utilised in employment in later life? Retirement for many in New Zealand society is stretching out to 65–70 years of age and in some sectors even beyond this. The notion of retirement itself and what it

means for the individual is changing on a global scale, with government policies in many countries encouraging older workers to stay in the workforce longer (Zappala, Depolo, Fraccaroli, Guglielmi, & Sarchielli, 2008).

After 20 or 30 years in this industry at age 50 plus, many of the freelancers found that the physically demanding working hours and the pressure of meeting deadlines was having an impact on their health and that they were ready for a slower pace. It is questionable whether many of these freelancers could keep working in the film industry, even if they still wanted to do so, and with no pension available until 65 years of age the future looks fairly bleak. The majority of those respondents interviewed did not currently have any superannuation schemes or other insurance schemes to help with funding their retirement. Many poured any additional funds that they had into tools or equipment required on the job, as in many cases, especially on smaller productions, they were expected to provide their own equipment.

There is a need to assist these older workers in transiting out of the industry. Many of these individuals have never had a job interview, do not have résumés, and do not have any idea of what kind of alternative work they may be suited for, or even what is available outside of the industry. Many require help with processes such as putting together a résumé, interview skills, budgeting advice, and career counselling. Counselling services are also important to give assistance and advice to freelancers and their families during this transition period as they psychologically detach from an industry which has played such a major role in their lives. Union groups such as The New Zealand Film and Video Technicians Guild[14] could assist with providing a referral service for their members. Some government funding may also be a way to help these self-employed freelancers to transit into suitable full-time employment rather than allowing their skills and experience to be wasted.

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[14] http://www.nztecho.com/index.php?pageID=14

5.5   *Culture of the industry*

The film industry in New Zealand has developed a means of operation based heavily on contracted freelance labour. The small size of the industry in New Zealand makes it very difficult to sustain permanent employment. There is only employment for many of these workers when there is a film in production. New Zealand is not alone in this mode of operation; film production in the UK and the US is also project-based.

Film production in New Zealand has, however, developed a culture which could be described as exploitive of its freelance workers. The lure of film production attracts many young creative individuals eager to get a break in the industry. The film industry in New Zealand does in many instances encourage this behaviour and makes use of these young freelancers who are willing to work long hours, often for free.

The media also plays a role here with its portrayal of the industry in New Zealand. The headlines which we read in our papers and view on our television screens give the impression of a booming industry, with New Zealand being described as a sought-after destination for international productions. This media hype has helped to raise the profile of the industry in New Zealand, attracting more young people into the industry. This constant stream of young hopefuls is described as "fresh meat" by the older, seasoned freelancers as they watch them giving their time and energy on multimillion dollar projects for free. The media, therefore, serves the interests of the film producers and production companies by portraying the glamorous side of the industry, while discounting the reality of the hard work involved in much of the film production process.

The film industry in New Zealand needs to develop a culture which values its workers, especially when we consider that their employment is so tenuous. These workers need to be treated with respect as valued and integral parts of the film production process, rather than as expendable cogs which can be replaced. The problem here is with defining what and

who is the film industry in New Zealand. Films produced in New Zealand are either funded by New Zealand Film grants, private funds, or from offshore investors, the majority of which comes from the US. A further complication lies in the fact that the film industry consists of short-term production companies established purely to produce one film then disestablished at the end. It could be argued that there is no continuity from one production to another, so therefore culture change is next to impossible.

The freelancers themselves also play a part in maintaining the status quo. They came into a social system which was heavily controlled by strict rules directing their behaviour. In order to succeed they needed to develop a single-minded commitment to gaining film contracts, and monetary rewards became less important. Freelancers are therefore, socialised into an environment where poor working conditions and inconsistent remuneration are conditions of employment which they must accept. In order for these working conditions to improve, it is necessary to ensure that all freelance workers, no matter how inexperienced, are paid a fair and equitable remuneration.

In the small arena that is film in New Zealand, production after production are managed and run by the same people. There is evidence to suggest that organisational memory can be translated from project to project through the close collaboration of project team members over time (Ferriani, Corrado, & Boschetti 2005). Therefore, it is fair to argue that this handful of individuals could be instrumental in bringing about change in the industry. The question then is who it serves for the status quo to be maintained and who does it disadvantage. The current situation certainly does not appear to be working to the benefit of the freelance worker.

The production of film on an international scale is a multibillion dollar business which is controlled by the top studios and investors. The inequality of life for film workers is an international problem, with top stars being paid exorbitant sums of money while at the other end of the scale contract film workers are struggling to maintain a living. This kind of power imbalance

and inequity is seen in many other industries; however, the extremes seen in the film industry do appear to be greater, or at least more public than those in other industries.

In New Zealand the film industry is run on similar lines to the US, albeit on a smaller scale. Power and prestige in the industry are held very tightly amongst a few key individuals, and access to the industry must be made through these individuals. The structure of the industry which has been described in detail earlier in this thesis is in many respects responsible for this phenomenon. Freelance contractors are very small players in the larger scheme of film production which is for the most part driven by the large offshore production companies. In order to improve the working conditions for freelancers in New Zealand a major paradigm shift is necessary in the thinking of those in control of the production process.

More than any other creative industry, the film industry brings with it a particular air of glamour and excitement. Many give their all just to be involved in some small way, at least in the beginning. The film industry producers and directors are in a position to exploit these individuals, knowing full well that there is little real chance that they will be able to make a sustainable living in the industry.

5.6 Role of legislation

Legislation is one means through which changes can be brought about in the film industry. The extensive use of contractors on open-ended contracts is common practice in the industry and legislation may be the only means through which to bring about change in this industry.

Due to the fickle nature of film production, predicting an end date of a project or a freelancer's role in a project is very difficult. Contracts are issued without end dates predominantly so that production companies will not be held liable to pay out freelancers to the contracted date if production should end prematurely. It also allows flexibility at the end of the production if the contractors are needed for longer than initially anticipated.

This practice seems to work very well for the production companies, but not so well for the freelancers. The system of "pencilling in" and "booking" is common practice in the film industry. However, many respondents discussed how this process was currently being abused by film production heads. The lack of adequate planning on the part of many film producers had a flow-on effect for many freelancers. On many of the larger, high-profile film productions in recent years, it appears that "pencilling in" and "booking" are one and the same and freelancers are not generally entitled to any compensation if a production fails to go ahead.

An example of an area where conditions have improved through legislation is in the area of health and safety. There has been a significant improvement in health and safety standards in the film industry over the last 10 years. These changes have been brought about mostly due to a tightening of regulations and monitoring of these regulations by Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) representatives, enforcing the Health & Safety in Employment Act 1992 and its subsequent amendment in 2002.[15] The majority of the respondents talked about how these improvements were a good thing for the industry, although they had taken some time to be generally accepted. The cost of providing important safety equipment to contractors was at one stage seen as too expensive and unnecessarily increasing the cost of film production. At this time it was believed that these added regulations would make the costs of film production too expensive for overseas producers. These costs are now considered to be part of the cost of film production in New Zealand.

The situation for freelancers working in Australia was raised by several of the respondents. They discussed in detail how their Australian counterparts were better off than workers in New Zealand doing the same job. In Australia, fringe benefits which include holiday pay, sick-leave, and superannuation benefits are paid to freelancers. In comparison to their Australian counterparts many New Zealand freelancers felt that they were

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[15] Health & Safety in Employment Act 1992; Health & Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002.

undervalued by the industry in this country and many felt strongly that the industry should make these benefits available to New Zealand workers.

Often in industries where practices and behaviours are ingrained, it takes enforced legislation to bring about a change in thinking and a change in behaviour on behalf of those responsible for policy making. Many other New Zealand industries have had to adjust to enforced safety regulations, and other health and safety requirements to protect their workers, which are now an accepted part of operating a business in New Zealand. To bring about change in the New Zealand film industry, it may also be necessary to enforce some legislative changes to protect the rights of these vulnerable workers.

5.7   Conclusion: Future of the industry in New Zealand

The film industry provides a fascinating arena of study for the organisational psychologist. In some respects the New Zealand film industry still operates outside of the constraints under which other New Zealand businesses operate. It is a complex industry full of contradiction and extremes. High-profile and highly paid international stars work alongside new recruits working for free, in an atmosphere of camaraderie and creativity. Yet despite the extreme conditions and lack of benefits young people flock to work in this industry, either to simply rub shoulders with the rich and famous, or with the dream of some day making a name for themselves in the industry.

When I began work on this thesis at the beginning of 2007, the future looked bright for the New Zealand film industry. The media image that prevailed at this time, of the booming New Zealand film industry, struck me as inconsistent with the reality of life for many freelance production workers. During the last two years whilst I have been writing this thesis things have changed. The global recession which we are heading into could bring about a serious decline in the amount of film production work available in New Zealand.

The film industry in Wellington has grown, in many respects, out of the hard work and dedication of a few key individuals. Many of those who were involved in film, in the early 1990s, when the industry in Wellington began to gain momentum, are still in the industry today. They have some great stories to tell, and many still have an intense passion for this industry.

Peter Jackson's meteoric rise to fame following the "Lord of the Rings Trilogy" has had a profound effect on the industry in New Zealand. It has seen the industry flooded with young hopefuls seeking fame and recognition, willing to work for little or no money. Industry long-timers now have to compete with these less experienced, but younger and hungrier freelance contractors. Jones and Pringle (2008) have called this the "Peter Jackson Effect", which has not only increased the numbers of new freelancers coming into the labour market, but has also raised the expectations of both the new and seasoned freelancers. The size and impact of Peter Jackson's global success feeds the hopes and dreams of young film makers and creative production crews alike, and encourages them to continue to endure the poor working conditions in the hope of future success.

At the core of the problem faced by freelance production workers are the structural issues in the industry, which constrict their ability to gain entry and maintain work. Freelance contract work is tenuous by nature; however, these issues place further pressures on the freelance contractor. In New Zealand, freelance contracts without end dates are common practice, and this can further increase the workers' sense of insecurity. It also removes any liability on behalf of the film production company to pay compensation when a film is cancelled or ends earlier than anticipated. There are several recent examples of projects which have collapsed, leaving production crews without any compensation. The Charles Upham movie[16] about the life of the double Victoria Cross holder was in full production in June 2008 with large numbers of production crew contracted around the country. By the end of

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[16] See http://www.stuff.co.nz/4743522a1860.html?source_email

July the production company had gone into liquidation leaving the production crew without work, and without payment for several months of work. October 2008 also saw the delay of the new Peter Jackson / Steven Spielberg big budget "Tintin"[17] film, due to financial disagreements between the US-based backers, Universal Pictures and Paramount Pictures. Finally, production work on the big-budget US backed movie "Kingdom Come" came to a halt in late November 2008, when the production crew was laid off, with the expectation the production would begin again in January. In early December, rumours in the industry spread doubt whether the production would in fact begin again after Christmas. It appears that the tightening of the US monetary system is having an impact on these productions in New Zealand and the outlook for the next 12 months is looking particularly bleak.

The protection of New Zealand production workers from the effects of these high-level international financial negotiations needs to be provided. One way to do this would be through stronger unionisation of film production labour, and also through legislation to ensure that workers' contracts contain end dates. Compensation also needs to be built into freelance contracts to ensure that if a production is cancelled the workers will receive fair compensation. This cost needs to be factored into the cost of film making from the beginning of the project.

As it stands the New Zealand film industry is losing many highly skilled and experienced people every year. Some are moving to Australia or other international destinations, where they feel they can earn a steadier income; others are looking at getting out of the industry altogether. The cost of constantly training new recruits is enormous. Even though the majority will be working for free, there is still a huge cost involved in time and costly mistakes. However, the structure of the industry conceals this cost, as each film is produced by a newly created production company, with a new mix of freelancers and new financiers. In the long term this loss of institutional

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[17] See http://www.stuff.co.nz/4725940a1860.html

knowledge for the industry as a whole will have an impact on the quality of films made in this country. The New Zealand film industry has an enviable reputation on the world stage, brought about by a combination of hard work and creative talent. Our film production workers are known by US production crews as "Mexicans with cell-phones" because they work so cheaply. As we approach more difficult times ahead for the film industry globally, now more than ever, New Zealand needs to be known for the quality and creativity of our film production work, rather than as a cheap source of labour.

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APPENDIX 1

***An exploratory study of the experiences of freelance production
workers in the film industry in
New Zealand***

INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

My name is Lorraine Rowlands and I am carrying out a study which aims to explore the experiences of freelance production workers in the film industry in New Zealand. I am undertaking this research as partial fulfilment of the requirements of a Masters Degree with Massey University.

Researcher's information
Name: Lorraine Rowlands
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Supervisor's information
Name: Jocelyn Handy BSc(Hons) *Lanc.,* MSc *Birm.,* PhD *Lanc*
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Participants

Freelance production workers are a varied and diverse group including, for example; animators, art and design, costume, make-up and hairdressing, set crafts, special effects, model-makers, and technical roles. For this study I am looking for individuals who are currently or have recently been working as freelancers in these, or any other related areas.

I would like to hear from anyone who works as a freelancer in this industry and is interested in telling me about their experiences.

Project procedures

If you agree to take part in this research I will interview you and ask you about your experiences working in the film industry. I will be asking

questions such as how you got starting working in the industry, what in your view are the rewards and the disadvantages of your work, how important is networking, and what you see for the future of the industry in New Zealand. The interview will be taped and should take about an hour.

Protecting your confidentiality

I will transcribe the interview tapes personally and pseudonyms will be used in the finished report so that individuals will not be recognised from this information. The titles of films or projects will also be disguised where this may lead to individuals being recognised. In the event that the research results are published I will take care to ensure that individual participants cannot be identified from this report.

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:
• decline to answer any particular question
• withdraw from the study (specify timeframe)
• ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
• provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher
• be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded
• ask for the audio/video tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Project contacts

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Ethics & Equity), telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

APPENDIX 2

An exploratory study of the experiences of freelance production workers in the film industry in New Zealand

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I wish/do not wish to have my tapes returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: **Date:**

....

Full Name – printed

....

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

Starting out in the film industry

Tell me about how you got started working in the film industry.

What appealed to you about this type of work initially?

Has your feeling about this changed in any way?

Probe – personal contacts, etc.

Training and development

What form has your training for your work in the film industry taken? E.g. formal course of training, on the job training, apprenticeship or internship.

How do you stay up to date with current developments in your area of expertise?

Do you currently have any plans to undertake training in the future? If so, why?

Importance of networks

In what ways do you see personal / professional networks as being important in this industry?

Did you or do you currently have a mentor – someone who helped you get started in the industry?

Have you mentored or helped others to get started in the industry?

Rewards of the job

What are the factors that keep you working in this industry? E.g. financial rewards, intrinsic job satisfaction, artistic/creative satisfaction, flexibility of work.

Disadvantages of the job

On the flipside of this, what do you see as the disadvantages of working in this industry? E.g. financial rewards, working conditions, lack of medical /super benefits, no paid leave.

Working conditions

How does the project-based nature of work in the film industry affect you?

What do you do to fill in the gaps between film work? Both to meet financial commitments and also to keep yourself occupied.

Other things to consider – effect of long working hours, conditions of work including health and safety issues, general working environment, e.g. working on set or in workshop type environment.

Work-Life balance

How has your work impacted your family and personal relationships?

What about other areas of your life such as sport, hobbies, interests, or artistic work.

How do your partner/ children, family feel about your work?

Social relationships

Do you find that you socialise with the people you are working with on a particular film?

Are these friendships / relationships sustained once the film is finished?

Have you developed any long-term friendships/relationships from individuals you have worked with in the industry?

Gender

Do you think that it's different for women/men working in this industry? How do you think it differs?

Can you think of any instances where the fact that you are male/female has had an effect on your career / home life etc?

Young people entering the industry

How has the training of young people changed since you have been in the industry?

How does a young person starting out develop the skills required?

Would you recommend the film industry as a career for young people looking for a direction? What advice would you have for them?

Careers

Have job expectations that you had starting out in this industry been met?

What career challenges or goals do you have ahead of you?

Would you make the same choice to work in this industry again, knowing what you know today about the industry?

Future

How do you see the future of the film industry in New Zealand developing over the next few years?

How do you think these developments will affect you personally?

With the recent media attention on the film industry in New Zealand do you think that the sort of people entering this work is changing? If so, how is it changing?

APPENDIX 4

An exploratory study of the experiences of freelance production workers in the film industry in Wellington, New Zealand.

SUMMARY FOR RESPONDENTS

I wish to thank all the wonderful people who gave their valuable time to participate in this research; those who were interviewed for this study and all the others who gave their assistance and advice during this project. Your open and frank discussions of the industry and your own personal experiences have been invaluable.

The aim
The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of freelance production workers in the film industry in New Zealand, and to examine how the structure of the film industry affects their lives.

Summary findings
Getting started
Getting started in the industry was for many people a chance event often involving personal connections. However, once given that first opportunity it was up to the individual to prove that they had the talent, determination and stamina to work in the industry. You also have to be prepared to work for free or very low wages, sometimes in harsh conditions for very long hours while you are trying to make a name for yourself. For some though, in the early days at least, the excitement of the industry and the creative rewards outshone the poor working conditions.

Project-based employment and financial insecurity
Project-based employment and the financial insecurity that accompanies this kind of working relationship was discussed at length by all those interviewed. For many it was the feature of this work which they dislike the most and many struggled at times with financial hardship. The inability to plan for the future and lack of security was often cited as a reason for looking for alternative work outside of the industry.

Social relationships in the film industry
Many of those interviewed talked about the sense of family that was a part of working in the film industry. Along with this came a form of collective creativity which came from the opportunity to work with like-minded people in a highly creative environment. The challenge involved with creating or developing something unique and new was also important. Social relationships and the establishment of strong networks were seen as very important by all those interviewed.

The addictive workplace
Many of those interviewed described an intense love/hate relationship with the industry. Several of those interviewed saw working in film as an addiction, either from the sense of getting a creative high out of the work, or more simply the anticipation and excitement of working on that next big project. The erratic

and fast-paced lifestyle was attractive to many in the early days of their careers, but as they aged and their priorities changed many found the intensity of the lifestyle difficult to maintain.

Work-life balance

Work-life balance was described as being an either/or situation – when you're working there is no time for life outside of work, when you are not working you are worried about where the next job is coming from. Some used the down time between film projects to start their own creative projects while others found it difficult to use this time constructively due to the worry about future work prospects. For many, rest, catching up on long overdue sleep, and recovering from weeks or months of gruelling work was essential. Many of those interviewed talked about the strain these factors placed on their families and their close personal relationships.

Gender

There were mixed views amongst those interviewed regarding the differences for men and women working in film. Many viewed film as being a predominantly male-dominated industry. Pay disparity and the difficulties of maintaining work in the industry with young children were issues which the women interviewed discussed as being particularly concerning. Some female participants considered it was very difficult, if not impossible, to have a family and work in the industry. Many of the women described the production side of the industry as being a tough environment where a woman had to be totally committed to the job in order to succeed.

Getting out

Many of those interviewed talked about leaving the industry, and about what comes after working in the film industry. The uncertainty which comes with the freelance lifestyle was cited by many as a reason for looking for work outside of the industry. However, some also talked about how difficult they were finding it to make a move. Due to the long hours worked, many found it difficult to find the time to plan a move out of the industry or to undertake any study. Many also found it difficult to take their skills and talents and market these to other employers outside of the industry. Getting out can be for some almost as difficult as getting in.

Further information

If you would like to have your interview tapes returned or copies of your interview transcripts then please do not hesitate to get in touch and I will ensure that they are provided.

If you have any comments on this research, would like more details on the findings, or would like to discuss any aspects please feel free to give me a call or email.

Thanks again.

Lorraine Rowlands   wildideas@xtra.co.nz   (027) 4403078

APPENDIX 5

DESCRIPTION OF FREELANCE FILM INDUSTRY ROLES

Example of film industry freelance job titles	
Title	**Brief overview of role**
Art Department	
Art Department Assistant	• Entry level position into the film industry art department. Duties as directed by department head.
Art Director	• Formulate basic layout design and approach, and specify material details. Confer with creative, art, copy-writing, or production department heads to discuss requirements and presentation concepts, and to coordinate creative activities. Work with creative directors to develop design solutions.
Artist	• Use materials such as pens and ink, watercolors, charcoal, oil to create artwork as directed by department head.
Designer	• Prepare sketches of ideas, detailed drawings, illustrations, artwork, or blueprints, using drafting instruments, paints and brushes, or computer-aided design equipment. Direct and coordinate the fabrication of models or samples and the drafting of working drawings and specification sheets from sketches. • Research production specifications, costs, production materials, and manufacturing methods, and provide cost estimates and itemised production requirements.
Properties Assistant	• Entry level position into the film industry art department. Source and purchase objects required in accordance with budget.
Runner	• Entry level position into the film industry. Position in which to learn all aspects of the film production process and prove oneself before gaining a more specialised role. Will often work across departments.
Sculptor	• Use physical materials such as wood, stone, clay to design and create objects as directed by head of department.
Direction	
Assistant Director	• Study and research scripts to determine how they should be directed. Choose settings and locations for films and determine how scenes will be shot in these settings. • Supervise and coordinate the work of camera, lighting, design, and sound crew members. Cut and edit film or tape to integrate component parts into desired sequences. As required and in conjunction with the director.
Personal Assistant	• General duties expected with any Personal Assistant role. However, PA to Film Director expected to take on more personal duties for film directors, therefore can be a widely divergent role depending on what the individual director requires.
Hair & Make-up	
Hair / Make-up	• Create hair and make-up styles on actors in accordance with concepts developed by head of department. Can also include wig making, fitting and maintenance of hair pieces, and make-up special effects.
Prosthetics Supervisor	• Prepare sketches of ideas, detailed drawings, illustrations, artwork, or blueprints, using drafting instruments, paints and brushes, or computer-aided design equipment. Direct and coordinate the production of samples as required. • Research production specifications, costs, production materials, and manufacturing methods as necessary. • Supervise the production, application, and final look of prosthetics.
Production	
Line Producer	• Coordinate the activities of writers, directors, managers, and other

	• personnel throughout the production process. • Monitor post-production processes in order to ensure accurate completion of all details. • Perform management activities such as budgeting, scheduling, planning, and marketing. • Determine production size, content, and budget, establishing details such as production schedules and management policies.
Production Manager	• Coordinate the activities of writers, directors, managers, and other personnel throughout the production process. • Monitor post-production processes in order to ensure accurate completion of all details. • Perform management activities such as budgeting, scheduling, planning, and marketing. • Determine production size, content, and budget, establishing details such as production schedules and management policies. • Write and submit proposals to bid on contracts for projects.
Physical Effects	
Design Engineer	• Prepare sketches of ideas, detailed drawings, illustrations, artwork, or blueprints, using drafting instruments, paints and brushes, or computer-aided design equipment. Create prototype models as required.
Model-Maker	• Design and create physical objectives using a variety of methods, materials, and tools. Often involves creating unique or prototype models.
Special Effects Supervisor (Physical effects)	• Create special effects as required by artistic directors. • Design and develop innovative ways of creating physical realistic effects for film production, e.g. explosions, smoke.
Talent	
Actor	• Study and rehearse roles from scripts in order to interpret, learn and memorise lines, stunts, and cues as directed. Work closely with directors, other actors, and playwrights to find the interpretation most suited to the role.
Casting Supervisor	• Review performer information such as photos, résumés, voice tapes, videos, and union membership, in order to decide whom to audition for parts. • Read scripts and confer with producers in order to determine the types and numbers of performers required for a given production. Select performers for roles or submit lists of suitable performers to producers or directors for final selection.
Transport	
Transport Coordinator	• Coordinate and plan transport needs for film set activities, including delivery of materials, goods, and transportation of actors to and from set.

The descriptions given in this table are general descriptions used in the industry. However, with each new production team that is brought together roles and titles are often changed to suit both the budget and the size of the production. The purpose of providing these descriptions is to give the reader a broad overview of the types of work included under the particular job title.

APPENDIX 6

EXAMPLE FILM SET ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Director			Producer			Director of Photograph	
Roles at top level are fluid and move across the production as necessary							
Location Manager	**Unit Production Manager**	**1st Assistant Director**	**Art Director**	**Special Effects**	**1st Assistant Camera**	**Production Designer**	
Assistant Location Manager	Production Office Coordinator	2nd Assistant Director	Assistant Art Director	Special Effects Coordinator	2nd Assistant Camera	Property Manager	Wardrobe Supervisor
	Assistant Production Coordinator	2nd 2nd Assistant Director	Designers	Special Effects Technicians	2nd 2nd Assistant Camera	Property Assistant	Set Dresser
			Model Makers	Special Effects Technicians		Property Assistant	Set Dresser
Production Assistant	Production Assistant	Production Assistant	Production Assistant	Production Assistant	Production Assistant	Production Assistant	Production Assistant

Production Assistants

Several will be assigned to each area, but often also work in a fluid way moving across the different areas as required.

This chart provides a snapshot only of some of the roles on a film production set. Many areas are not covered. These roles vary between films depending on the film genre (e.g. a fantasy epic could require an extensive art department, digital effects, physical effects, and prosthetics and make-up departments. The purpose of this chart is to demonstrate the hierarchical structure of film set management.