WOMEN PERFORMERS AS WORKERS:
GENDER IN RELATION TO ASPECTS OF INDUSTRIAL
RELATIONS IN THEATRE AND TELEVISION

Deborah Dean

Submitted for the degree of Ph.D. in Industrial and Business Studies
University of Warwick
Warwick Business School

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DECLARATION

I have built on work included in my M.A. dissertation to inform parts of the discussion of regulation and this is indicated in the text. Early empirical findings were given in a paper to the Gender, Work and Organization conference held at Keele University in 2001. I have made reference to a co-authored work published during the research period: it is used here to contribute to review of the literature relevant to the thesis. The rest sees light of day for the first time in these pages.

ABSTRACT

Performing has been a formally unsegregated occupation for almost 350 years and the achievement of status by its women workers is accepted and expected. However, existing quantitative data indicate that systemic gendered disparities exist in relation to access to work, pay and career longevity.

As this is an under-researched occupation the aims of the thesis are first, to map central aspects of the working realities of women performers working in subsidised theatre and terrestrial television in the UK and second, to explore perceptions of women performers' gendered disadvantage in relation to these aspects. These aims are pursued principally through analysis of semi-structured interview data. As part of the primary aims, the purchase of strategies of legal, social and individual regulation is examined in relation to gendered disadvantage. Consideration of data is structured by work on ideas of gender and the labour process; this work is itself addressed through examination of the woman performer's working experiences and the ways in which these are perceived by the main participants in these experiences.

The study finds effective gender segregation, even more finely segregated by overt classifications of age, appearance, race/ethnicity and status. These classifications, allocated by individual perception, are found to frame the working realities of women performers and result in both systemic advantage and, more commonly, disadvantage. The effects of these perceptions are enhanced by the distinctive characteristics of this occupational sector, its labour markets and labour processes. Analysis of these issues leads to discussion of two key suppositions: that women performers inevitably collude in the perpetuation of their own constraints and that the central work experiences of women performers are manifestations of their position as formal and informal proxies for women's experiences in wider society.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.D.: Artistic Director

[London Drama School 1]

CRE: Commission for Racial Equality

DaDA: Dance and Drama Awards

GOQ: Genuine occupational qualification

PACT: Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television

PIRS: Producers Industrial Relations Service

RRA: Race Relations Act 1976

SDA: Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Subrep: Subsidised repertory theatre

[Theatre 1]

[London Theatre]

TMA: Theatrical Management Association

Interviewee abbreviations:

A: Agent

CD: Casting director

D: Director

DS: Drama school

E: Equity

P: Performer

Pr: Producer

W: Writer

CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

this is not magic but Work
Bertolt Brecht, *The Curtains*

Performing is a formally unsegregated occupation of longstanding, where the

achievement of status by its women workers is accepted and expected. However,

existing quantitative data indicate that gendered disparities in key areas of

employment persist. In this thesis, through in-depth interviews with and observation

of women performers and people in the occupations that shape labour processes in

the entertainment sector, the experiences of these workers are examined.

Performing as work varies in type, encompassing (amongst other forms) singing

(cabaret, pop, opera, musical theatre), dancing (ballet, tap, contemporary dance,

musical theatre), stand-up comedy, clowning and mime work as well as acting in

theatre, television and radio. This study focuses on women performers acting in

subsidised repertory theatre and terrestrial television, as the two principal areas of

work for the majority of actor performers.

Performing, especially in its acting form, is spoken of as a profession, but it has none

of the recognised markers, such as compulsory qualifications or periods of

apprenticeship and there are no clear or generally definable career routes to navigate.

However, performing work possesses several identifiable general characteristics.

Work is largely short-term, casualised and unpredictable; performers are geographically dispersed with no long-term, fixed workplaces; their labour market is perpetually over-supplied and thus competitive (with a permanent unemployment level estimated at approximately 85%), although the work processes themselves are co-operative and highly interdependent. All of the above features are informed by worker and employer awareness of what one theatre manager has summarised as "the actors' drive to work at almost any cost" (Equity Journal June 1997: 12).

Notwithstanding the atypicality of this drive, the importance of any dissimilarities from more conventional occupations is seen to exist not so much in the work itself (which exhibits many common characteristics of the labour process) but in the beliefs and attitudes of workers and gatekeepers in this sector. These are understood in this study as emanating from a historical marginality (self- as well as societally-imposed) which positions performing as not 'real' work. This historical marginality applies both to society in broad terms and to academic consideration in particular and is discussed below. First, however, the term 'gender-integrated occupation', used above to describe performing work, is considered in order to frame the issues explored in the thesis.

Separations

As noted above, performing as an occupation for both men and women is of very longstanding. On 21st August 1660 the newly restored King Charles II signed a warrant to two of his courtiers, managers of companies of actors, that henceforth

only women should play women's parts, with the express intent that plays might prove "useful and instructive representations of human life" (Wilson 1958: 4). Thus performing work has a long history as a formally unsegregated occupation. However, this statement requires two caveats. The first is that the word 'long' is used as a relative term. In the course of history, 332 years is a small space of time and it must be remembered that women entered theatre (on an official basis) from a position of inequality. They were *joining*: more, they were being *permitted* to join. And from the start of this official integration the inequality of status was reflected structurally, in that women performers were usually paid less than the men and rarely achieved the privileged social status attained by some male actors (Nicholson 1993). The second caveat is that from the start the *content* of performing work has been largely segmented by gender; a factor that has remained constant, though neither universal nor unchallenged. Content of product largely determines job opportunities and the prevalence of intra-occupational segregation is a key issue that will be discussed through the study.

Some clarification of concepts is called for. Use of the phrase 'formally unsegregated occupation' refers to the fact that although women and men performers are largely (though not at all exclusively) only considered for sex-specific roles, the actual job itself is the same in essential dimensions. The skill requirements and physical locations are identical and it is labelled and perceived by both employers and workers as the same (non-ideologically sex-typed) work. Thus there is no apparent horizontal occupational segregation, i.e. over-representation in

different occupations, on the basis of gendered perceptions of skill specialities. Vertical segregation is a more mixed picture. Taking the definition of vertical segregation to be 'hierarchical distinctions within the same occupational category' (Crompton and Sanderson 1990:24; Hakim 1979) it can arguably be modified here to include the 'gatekeeper' categories who stand in the position of managers to performers in that, within the theatre and television sectors, they have power of recruitment, direction and control of aspects of the performer's labour process. Data show that there is still a marked concentration of men in the higher reaches of most branches of the arts and entertainment sector (European Expert Conference 1997; Mitchell, C. 2001). Most artistic directors of subsidised theatres are male (Contacts 2001) and despite the proliferation and in parts predominance of women in executive managerial and production positions in television, data from this study indicate that the gender composition of the ultimate decision-making posts is largely male (see also Swanson et al. 2000). The majority of casting directors are women (as will be seen in Chapter 3) and while there is less recent statistical data on the gender balance of theatre directors (Long 1994), interview data indicate that women directors are a still a minority. The same data indicate that an even larger majority of television directors are male, assertions supported by quantitative data: Swanson et al. (2000) note that in the late 1990s, over three-quarters of television directors were men (2000: 208). Some of the implications of these gendered concentrations will be considered in the following chapters; however as no direct research was undertaken on the recruitment and selection procedures of the gatekeeper

categories, these implications are presented only where they are perceived to be relevant by interviewees, with no explanatory links inferred.

The modification of the concept of vertical segregation can be extended further to the formally undifferentiated category of 'performers' themselves. Here, internal differentiation based on market- and experience-based hierarchical distinction stands as a substitute for conventional career markers. This again is a phenomenon with specific gendered characteristics and is developed in more detail in Chapter 2. Clearly, the relation of gender to the performing job is more complex and contradictory than is immediately apparent. Performing may be a formally (and often materially) unsegregated occupation but occupational segregation as it is generally understood is directly relevant to an occupation that represents the social world.

Anker's (1997) survey of international data indicates that the majority of men and women in the world work in 'male' or 'female' occupations and that there is considerable similarity all over the world in the types of occupation that are gender-stereotyped (see also Bradley 1989). The connection of work centring on the entertainment, questioning and representation of society to the external realities of occupational segregation is clear. A great deal of performing work is written as sex-specific and occupational segregation in the wider world is important to note for its effect on the parts available to women performers. The type and manner of these representations must be considered in conjunction with ideas relating to the most

persuasive of the theories Anker summarises in surveying explanations of occupational segregation, gender theories. These indicate that societies share tendencies to be premised on a socially-constructed attribution of gender characteristics and a male-centred attribution of value to sex differences (see e.g. Calás and Smircich 1996). I would, however, take issue with Anker's final rationale for the importance of ending segregation. This is essentially an economic argument for countries to make efficient use of their resources in an age of increasingly globalised competition. Bearing in mind the sex-specific nature of most performing work, such an argument could have no bearing on the position of women performers and yet they experience gendered disadvantage in a systemic way and, left to the final logic of such a rationale, would have no case to make for addressing these disadvantages. However, Anker's assertion that gender stereotypes and prejudices comprise part of the explanation for labour market inequalities (1997: 337; see also Hull and Umansky 1997; Marshall 1984) bears directly on the situation of women performers and this idea is addressed in discussion of sexual ideologies in Chapter 2 and through the research findings.

Having considered the central occupational characteristic (for present purposes) of performing work, the unusual place of the occupation itself and the relevance of this to its women workers, is now explored.

Marginality: development of an idea

As we have seen, from the very start of the reign of King Charles II a previously forbidden, public, visible working space became officially occupied by women. However, this space has been largely ignored by academic research in the areas one would expect to find examination of it. The classic account of early women's work, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (Clark 1919), has no mention of these literally dramatic changes in working opportunities for women and similarly, in Sheila Rowbotham's *Hidden from History* (1973), women performers remain just that (see also Alexander 1983; Hill 1989; Sharpe 1998). This is not to berate writers for not addressing every occupation ever undertaken by any women. However, it is arguable that performing work, being both publicly visible and contentious throughout its history, especially for women (Nicholson 1993), is an important locus of labour and status. The historical development of the oppositional, interlinked, construct of the 'public' and 'private' spheres in society is well-established as of critical importance in charting and channelling our attitudes towards sex and gender and thus the ordering of society (e.g. de Beauvoir 1949; Engels 1940). Women performers have been criss-crossing these boundaries in the most patent of ways from before the industrialisation of society and to overlook the work of this minority of women in consideration of the lives of the majority is arguably a loss in terms of understanding the development of gendered social relations and structures. Further, it indirectly supports the traditional view (part of the interlinked public/private construct) that the woman who displays herself and acts independently should not be included within the anonymous haven of a socially desirable life.

Society and marginality

Performing, referred to still in sixteenth-century language by many interviewees as being the life of 'vagabonds and gypsies', has always operated on the margins of society, albeit for historically differentiated reasons. However, the marginalisation of women actors has taken additional forms to that of men actors. As Davis (1991) has noted of women performers in the Victorian period, 'the actress and the prostitute were both objects of desire whose company was purchased through commercial exchange' (1991: 100). Where often the work seems to have been confused with the worker, resulting today in an often patronising attitude towards the professional actor (the 'luvvie'), the female performer has always had attributed the added layer of sexualisation ('as the actress said to the bishop') in keeping with the general association of women and the body (e.g. Grosz 1994; Brewis and Sinclair 2000; Nahoum-Grappe 1993). This attribution is arguably connected to the dominance of heterosexuality as sexual and social norm (e.g. Bourdieu's 'heteronormative' order (2001: 120)), in that the marginalised male performer, also doing atypical work centring on public display, has not been fetishised sexually in this way. Further and directly linked to this idea, the attribution of sexualisation can be related to biblical conceptions of women and the development of the religious in social life, as we now consider.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) Weber traces the development of modern capitalism in the West as inseparable from the developing influence of Puritanism, in particular, Calvinism. While consideration of the

ultimate soundness of Weber's central thesis is beyond the scope of this review, his identification of religion's connections with the economic and social development of society (see also Noon and Blyton 2002: 58) is important to this project's understanding of the experiences of the woman performer as worker. During Puritan rule in the English Interregnum of 1649-1660, the period immediately preceding the legitimising of professional women performers, all theatres were closed. This was a significant period in institutionalising the association of performers with a dangerous 'otherness', outside of purportedly religious, non-transgressive society. As Weber states: 'The theatre was obnoxious to the Puritans' (1930: 169), with their rigid distinction between the divine and the flesh. The roots of these attitudes are traceable at least to the Middle Ages, which were characterised by a veneration of virginity and suspicion and distrust of the body (Matthews Grieco 1993). This historical period also gives us a connection between the senses of 'work' and 'labour'. Williams (1976) tells us that 'Labour had a strong medieval sense of pain and toil; work, earlier…had also the strong sense of toil' (1976: 335). At an even earlier point, in the first few centuries after the birth of Jesus, the Christian church's relationship with the stage has been characterised as a war, 'particularly in the early days when the theatre represented the last entrenched camp of paganism' (Gilder 1931 cited in Wandor 1986: 21) and the Church's own theatrics, in the form of public religious services, excluded women even from speaking in prayer (Wandor 1986). Even those interested in religious freedom absorbed the ideas of 'the calling' and the virtue of ceaseless endeavour: John Locke warned that young men 'must not divert themselves with useless arts' (Rowbotham

1973: 3). Weber's encapsulation of the heart of the Puritan ethic, 'the earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life' (1930: 53) could have been formulated specifically against the theatre and its works. However, as the ordering of society's economic relations in a rational capitalist form metamorphosed from their spiritual roots (light cloak to iron cage), so the religious disapproval of performing has faded to a secularised reading where the performer is not vilified but effectively forgotten; is still outside the routine construction of 'worker'.

This construction of 'otherness' can be argued to have affected material aspects of the labour process, such as issues around pay, and is explored further in Chapter 6. It has also been to some degree 'internalised' by many performers, shaping perceptions of their work and of disadvantage. The contemporary form of this construction is reflected in the ways that performing has and has not been written about, as we shall now consider.

The academy and marginality

The lack of generally-contextualised historical discussion is echoed in studies of work and organisation, which have also rarely addressed this occupation *as* an occupation (Dean and Jones 2003). What academic work there is on performing has largely focused on quantitative research. This has included analyses of pay (King 1989; Thomas 1992, 1995), economic studies (Casey, Dunlop and Selwood 1996; Towse 1996; Creigh-Tyte and Thomas 2001) and examination of the distribution of

employment (O'Brien and Feist 1995; Feist 2001). There have been union or social

histories (Macleod 1981; Sanderson 1984; Davis 1991; Howe 1992; Richards 1993),

collections of interviews with performers (e.g. Todd 1984; Woddis 1991; Goodman

1996; Oddey 1999) and studies of gender and theory relating to theatre (Wandor

1986, 2001; Case 1988; Aston 1995; Goodman with de Gay 1998; Martin 1996).

While all of these studies recognise the importance of the 'material', of the woman

performer in specific social and economic conditions, their focus is not on her

position as worker *per se*. Recent concentration on industrial relations in the

entertainment industry has focused on the production or technical workers, including

Blair (2001) and Ursell (2000), although Ursell, unusually, does include performers

in her analysis of television workers' employment patterns. The most significant

exception, however, is Skirrow (1987), who directly raises issues around the actress

as worker in television production. Where the labour processes of performing have

been addressed elsewhere, it has largely been in report or descriptive form

(International Labour Organization 1992, 2000; Alvarado and Buscombe 1978;

Newby 1997; Kilborn 1997) or as one component in the mechanics of the arts and

entertainment sectors (Starkey, Barnatt and Tempest 2000; Brown and Hackett

1991; Selwood 2001).

Much work in media and cultural studies has focused on issues of representation, on

the ultimate product of the (usually) woman performer's labour processes and the

consumption of those representations (e.g. Mulvey 1975; Kaplan 1983; Rowe 1996;

Van Zoonen 1994; Hermes 1995), a focus replicated in organisation studies (e.g.

Brewis 1999). Aspects of such work have been criticised by Janus (1996) for insufficient attention to the social and political contexts of representations and Werner (1998) stresses the need to focus 'on the material conditions in which those representations appear' (1998: 111): however, while not directly addressing the women employed to embody these representations, work in these areas is critical in informing our understanding of the ways in which the work itself constructs the worker. There has been more relatively direct work addressing performers as workers in the United States (e.g. Moskow 1969; Friedman 1990; Gray and Seeber 1995; D'Acci 1994; Luere and Berger 1998) but in the UK, this highly visible occupation remains largely invisible in terms of qualitative academic analysis of central aspects of its contemporary industrial relations.

In broader terms, there has been recognition of the importance of analysis of the several dimensions of the production of culture, in du Gay and others' work on 'the circuit of culture' (1997; also du Gay et al. 1997; Hall, 1997; MacKay, 1997; Thompson, 1997; Woodward, 1997; see also Fine 2002). This circuit is said to involve five processes: representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation and du Gay et al. suggest that it is in the articulation of these processes that 'the beginnings of an explanation are to be found' (du Gay et al. 1997: 3). Examination of the work on the circuit of culture noted above has suggested that insufficient attention has been paid to the relations of production and in particular to their gendered nature and further, that analysing the processes separately obscures understanding of the integrated nature of the whole (Dean and Jones 2003). It is

argued that this study contributes towards an understanding of the integrated nature of the circuit of culture and an appreciation that it is the integration itself that is responsible for its reproduction.

Referring back to the discussion of the historical marginalising of performing and the conventional construction of worker, it is perhaps instructive that performing has remained unexamined in its most straightforward manifestation: as a job. While all of the above work is important in exploring aspects of the sectors in which performers work and of the effects of their work in a wider context, the cumulative effect is to treat the performer worker as a cipher, or passive tool and thus to continue a marginalisation stemming from particular ideological constructions.

The construction of this area as 'other' is (arguably predictably in view of the historical progression outlined above) commonly self- as well as externally-applied. Absences in the literature can be linked to interview data, which show that many women performers themselves do not regard their work *as* work. Acting – though always categorised as demanding, with long hours in often poor conditions – was frequently seen as "doing something I love, it's not really work." This is an attitude amongst performers that can be traced back at least as early as the nineteenth century (Dean 1998) and in 1926 a leader of (the performers' union) Equity's predecessor organisation, the Actors' Association, dismissed any notion of solidarity with the General Strike with a telling use of words: "Workers...have no right to interfere with the theatrical profession" (in Macleod 1981). Interview data in the present study

indicate that the self-image implicit in this opinion is still widespread, although not usually in the same political form, and has implications for understanding how perception affects performer labour processes, for instance in legitimising forms of disadvantage such as low pay or restricted access to work. It suggests, again, that the academic neglect of performing as labour has its roots in the social construction of the idea of what constitutes work in a capitalist society. In the immediate context however, it contributes to explanation of lack of study of performer as worker in the fields of industrial relations and in cultural and media studies.

The woman performer is largely absent from examination in the fields of industrial relations and studies of work and organisation. Certainly the dominant approaches in industrial relations research have not typically prioritised gendered perspectives of issues and have not traditionally addressed the public sphere, represented by the workplace, as connected to the private sphere, represented by the family and by identities such as gender and ethnicity (see e.g. Ackers 1999, 2002; Danieli 2003; Hansen 2002; Greene 2001; Wacjman 2000; Davies 1990). However, as Edwards (2003) notes, the danger in broadening an approach is 'that it loses all coherence' (2003: 38). The challenge must be, therefore, to broaden the approach to examination of industrial relations in such a way that it deepens rather than obscures our understanding through awareness. As Edwards also says in relation to understanding the importance of paid employment: the human resources of an employing organisation 'cannot be separated from the people in whom they exist' (2003: 5). By necessary extension, these people cannot be separated from who they

are, and who they 'are' is not always a given, but must be actively located. The subjectivities imposed or embraced by these people affect both structure and agency in the labour process, an issue that will be returned to in consideration of data.

In the standard conception of work it has been argued that jobs are treated as 'skilled' only to the extent that the workers involved occupy a sufficiently strategic place in the labour process and that 'the reality of skill is socially constructed and contested' (Sturdy, Knights and Willmott 1992: 4). This reality has been shown to be intrinsically gendered (e.g. Cockburn 1983; Acker 1989; Bradley 1999) and the traditional sexualisation of the actress compounds this marginalisation of the woman performer. Many writers have addressed issues surrounding sexuality at work in general, and noted that women are regarded as 'woman' (and thus, bodies) first and 'worker' second (e.g. Adkins 1995) and that 'a woman's perceived sexuality can 'blot out' all other characteristics. Thus, sex role interferes with and takes precedence over work role' (Gutek 1989: 61). This has clear implications for the woman performer, who not only has a historically sexualised dimension attributed to her job title, but whose work content frequently involves overt physical or sexual representation. These factors combine to devalue and further marginalise women's performing work, as it has come to do in more recent occupations, notably flight attendants (Hochschild 1983; Mills and Wilson 2001; Hancock and Tyler 2000). The lack of direct study of the performer as worker that has been noted here forms part of the rationale for the research aims of this project, to which we now turn.

Research aims and their contexts

Performing as an occupation is an under-researched area in academic terms and a marginalised occupation in broader discourses of work and this situation is reflected in the first research aim of this study, which is:

> To map central aspects of the working realities of women performers working in subsidised theatre and terrestrial television in the UK.

The second research aim is:

> To explore perceptions of women performer's gendered disadvantage in relation to these aspects.

Although articulated as distinct aims they are in fact interlinked, the supposition being that the perceptions of actors (here in its social science sense) are part of the construction of their realities (e.g. Giddens 1984, 1991; Kaspersen 2000; Bourdieu 1990;): as Lukács (1922) argued, 'reality is not, it becomes – and to become the participation of thought is needed.' (in Eagleton 1994: 180; see also Ost and Weinstein 1999: 28).   This has methodological consequences in research design, as will be explored further in Chapter 3. As part of the primary aims, and principally through analysis of interview data, I examine strategies of legal, social (i.e. union) and individual regulation in relation to gendered disadvantage and address theories of gender and the labour process in examination of the woman performer's working experiences and the ways in which they are perceived.

The first research aim of mapping aspects of the working realities of women performers focuses on access to work, pay and career longevity; categories selected in large part because of data showing the persistence of systemic gendered disadvantage in these areas (King 1989; Thomas 1992, 1995). These data are discussed further below as is the selection of categories for research.

'Access to work' in this casualised, short-term and highly individualised occupation is multi-layered and ongoing and the study concentrates on three areas. First, the most formal routes of occupational entry, the drama schools, are looked at in terms of the perceptions of those who select and train potential performer workers. There are many routes into performing and the drama schools offer one of the few fixed institutional points of access. They regulate entry and thus affect the composition of the occupation in general as well as offering all-important links to employers and employer-proxies. 'Employer-proxies' is a term used to indicate that while recruitment and selection into employment are to varying degrees in the gift of gatekeeper categories such as directors and producers, the performer's employer is actually the theatre board or the television production company or broadcaster. Second, the position of performer's agents as employer-proxies is examined and the perceptions of agents are explored in relation to both research aims. The performer agent occupies a position unfamiliar in most mainstream configurations of industrial relations; selecting the workers by whom they are paid and simultaneously being both gateway and barrier to work opportunities. Thus the agent is commonly pivotal to the central aspects of the performer labour process explored in this study. Third,

the performer is largely dependent on the existence and content of performance 'products' (plays and programmes) and the people and processes involved in the commissioning and creation of these products are considered. A central component of this third sub-category is the audition, the central and recurring experience of access. This was looked at both through interview and through observation and is explored in detail in Chapter 5.

The second aspect of working realities considered is **pay**, as a central element of all relations of employment. It is considered here specifically in its shifting role illuminating unusual aspects of performing as work, in motivation and in structure, and how these can be seen to affect gendered disadvantage. Interviewees' perceptions of pay's gendered variations are explored in Chapter 6 and the existing quantitative data is extended by the study's research findings in relation to the main locus of these disparities and explanations for their existence.

The third aspect, **career longevity**, is in fact an extension of the first, access to work and is considered in Chapter 6. It is allocated its own category because it exemplifies key themes surrounding gendered disadvantage in working as a woman performer (principally age and appearance), as well as enabling expansion of the previous examination of access and pay issues. As with the other aspects of work, it is explored through the perceptions of performers, employers and employer-proxies along a broad status spectrum.

These three facets of the working realities of women performers comprise many further distinct and overlapping forms, as well as forming only part of a longer list of other facets, such as the rehearsal process or relationships with co-workers in a casualised environment – in all too many to investigate with hope of achieving any depth of understanding. The dimensions listed above are key issues in general industrial relations research and were (directly and indirectly) signalled by the existing quantitative data as representing the main structural points of gendered disadvantage. In the absence of previous work charting the performing labour process I felt it important to follow an 'arc' of the woman performer's working realities. This selection of particular aspects is also related to the style of writing and reporting of data in the thesis, i.e. that it follows a narrative mode (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 249). This approach will be addressed again in Chapter 3.

The second research aim of exploring **perceptions of gendered disadvantage** takes the form of presentation and analysis of interview and observation data. Individual accounts of experiences and insights were sought in relation to the three aspects of working realities outlined above. This was in order to build a picture of the lived context of the statistics and so to attempt understanding of the existence and persistence of gendered disadvantage in performing work. An initial supposition was that exploring the perceptions of those directly involved would reveal the importance of strategies of individual regulation and the relative weakness of formally recognised strategies of legal and social regulation. The eventual conclusions were more mixed, particularly as, in this occupational area, emphasis

seems to be placed on the role of the individual affected in all three types of regulation.

The working realities and perceptions of disadvantage are examined in relation to the **regulatory strategies** and with regard to each, the distinctiveness of this occupation is understood as arising not so much from difference in kind as difference in degree. This is particularly apparent in the consideration of social regulation in the form of the actions and perceptions of lay activists and senior officials in Equity, the main performers' union (previously British Actors' Equity Association).

Strategies of social regulation

The standard issues surrounding union approaches to women workers regarding membership and bargaining agenda are not as directly applicable in this sector. Unlike most unions, Equity has never excluded women or sought to corral them into separate divisions (Hartmann 1979; Walby 1986; Hughes 1967). Women were prominent in the founding of the union in 1930 (Macleod 1981), a foundation which arose from the concern of successful workers (the stars) for the working conditions of the struggling majority. By this point, women performers were well-established in their atypical achievement of status and were able to wield power to ensure the establishment of the pre-entry closed shop (compulsory union membership) necessary to enforce minimum standards. Further, by the time Equity was formed women had been performing alongside men for 270 years and according to senior

officials, the union has always maintained an approximate 50:50 gender balance in membership. Certainly Equity, unlike many unions today, is not under pressure to specifically target women for recruitment (Simms et al. 2000; Liff 2003). The changing patterns of employment in the wider labour market and a concomitant rise, amongst other factors, in female-dominated service sector occupations (e.g. Cully et al 1999), which have been at the forefront of discussion of trade union renewal strategies (see e.g. Waddington and Whitston 1995), are not part of the pressures driving the Equity agenda. Since the ending of the pre-entry closed shop in 1990, Equity's membership has declined overall (although from a sharp decline between 1995 and 1996 it has seen a small rise in recent years: Equity Annual Reports 1995-2002) and recruitment and retention of members is important to the union. However it is largely targeting women and men doing the same, mostly poorly-paid, job and it is arguable that the structural factors (workers dispersed, casualised, individualised, competitive, self-motivated) which make organising in this sector a challenge generally, militate against gendered recruitment strategies. Equity's negotiation agenda is further shaped by such distinctive factors as agents' role in determining pay and the double-edged employment status of the performer worker. Actors are (usually) self-employed for tax purposes but are (generally) employees in terms of employment rights (employed on contracts of service) and National Insurance purposes (Inland Revenue 2003). These factors place the emphasis on ongoing negotiation of *minimum* terms and conditions at national level with employer associations in the various entertainment industry sectors. Further, Walton and McKersie's (1965) observation that pragmatism typically informs a negotiating

party's selection of objective, based on 'the best estimate about the other's resistance point' (1965:43) is seen to be unusually broadly appropriate, as the distinctive labour market conditions and occupational characteristics outlined above suggest that a union's room for manoeuvre in influencing both members and employers will be particularly restricted, a suggestion which seems to be supported by this study's findings. There has been considerable attention paid to the difficulties faced in mainstream sectors by trade unions and groups within trade unions in addressing discrimination in employment (e.g. Colling and Dickens 1989; Munro 2001). The emphasis in this study is on noting how the specific circumstances of the performance sectors affect and are affected by similar issues faced elsewhere.

An uncommon element informing the background to this conventional picture is the idea discussed above of performing as something apart from real work. This idea has had specific effects on the development and operation of Equity, with long-term internal power struggles between those who see the organisation more as a trade association (or, as a senior Equity official dryly summarised, "gentleman's club") and those who see it explicitly as a trade union (Dean 1998). In Chapter 6 this is discussed in more detail as helping shape the context within which decisions are made.

Strategies of legal regulation

The practical outcome of the dominant 'naturalistic' forms of performing work in the UK is that Equity's women members are usually working *explicitly* because they

are women and not because they are deemed to have particular labour characteristics because of their gender. Therefore legal regulation in its current forms is largely inadequate to the task of addressing the dimensions of disadvantage experienced peculiarly sharply by women performers. Use of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA) and the Race Relations Act 1976 (RRA), the traditional legal routes to redress, is problematic in the particular circumstances of performing as an occupation. In superficial outline, this is because there is rarely gender discrimination in recruitment or payment in the sense generally understood in mainstream sectors and as targeted in the legislative provisions. Further, both Acts contain specific exemptions for purposes of 'authenticity' in dramatic performance. As we shall see, the narrow letter of these exemptions is often not applicable but its spirit is applied liberally and the legislation remains unused in this area. Similarly, the provisions of the Equal Pay Act 1970 (as amended by the Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations 1983) are potentially applicable, but as with the SDA and RRA, some of the central criticisms of current anti-discrimination legislation - that it individualises the complaint and does little to tackle the position of a larger group or to address the structures reproducing discrimination (e.g. Hepple et al. 2000; Commission for Racial Equality 1998; Fredman 1997; Fredman and Spencer 2003) – are highlighted. Use of the anti-discrimination legislation and case law in this sector is found to be problematic, both in the reluctance of individuals to risk potentially negative consequences and regarding the issues to be addressed, including choice of product and opinion of appearance. The particular circumstances of performing as an occupation highlight the difficulties inherent in

the UK's conception of addressing inequalities, difficulties which make application

of regulatory strategies problematic across all employment sectors.

Strategies of individual regulation

As has been noted, performing work is highly individualised across many

dimensions. In the light of the immediate difficulties noted above in use of the

resources of legal and social influence, the research also focused on what this project

terms 'individual regulation'. This concept is intended to refer to capacity for and

use of strategies of resistance by exercise of labour market power or in the absence

of labour market power.

In a highly individualised occupation which is competitive, geographically dispersed

and with no fixed long-term workplaces, the potential importance of personal

approaches to regulating the central aspects of working realities is clear. Unlike the

established regulatory forms discussed above, these strategies had to be identified

through collection and analysis of data and then categorised as such.

Unsurprisingly, individual regulation was found to manifest itself in distinctly

variable, often contradictory, ways. However, particular patterns regarding

approach to the study's three aspects of work and perceptions of disadvantage

became apparent, broadly classifiable as resistance and adaptation.

The three regulatory strategies are described separately but are (in analysis as in the

working realities), connected. The already highly individualised figure of the

woman performer is further individualised by their operation in this occupational area. Consideration of all three types of strategy contributes to mapping the working realities of women performers and the perceptions of these realities that it is argued contribute to their structure and reproduction.

Some dimensions of disadvantage

It became apparent through the course of research that women and men performers alike experience low pay and restricted access to work based on general lack of demand as well as the institutionalised operation of individual judgements about age and appearance. However, it also became apparent that in general women performers are disadvantaged to a greater extent on each measure and it is here that the atypicality of their working realities becomes rather more mainstream.

Women workers in the wider labour market are almost invariably the more disadvantaged gender in any given employment sector and one of the major explanations for this is the pattern of occupational segregation addressed by many writers, including Hakim 1979, Cockburn 1983, Bradley 1989, Walby 1990, Barron and Norris 1976, Fredman 1997. There are very few occupational areas where men and women have done exactly the same job and within the same, very public, spaces, for several hundred years. Women performers' unusually long-standing breach of the public/private sphere has placed them in a particularly interesting area to explore, especially as, unlike the majority of women studied as workers (Walby 1986), their occupational development has involved a tradition of paid work, in an

area which did not see men organising against them (Hartmann 1979; Webbs 1913), where they were not subject to a marriage bar and where they were not formally occupationally segregated (Hakim 1979).

However, despite these unusual employment traditions, current work has shown that some conventional employment outcomes are still present. In 1994 Equity commissioned research into performers' work patterns in theatre and the electronic media. A survey of middle-range Equity members (performers working regularly but without 'star' status) was undertaken by Helen Thomas and the results published in 1995. This followed previous Equity-commissioned surveys into pay and employment across sectors (King 1989) and specifically in relation to mechanical media (Thomas 1992). All three surveys indicate systematic trends of gendered disparities in terms of number and status of roles, age in relation to access to these roles, career longevity and pay. Their Equity membership-specific work is supported by the broader findings of Swanson et al. (2000) who synthesis and review data from a number of sources. These include data from the major official sources of employment statistics, data held by professional organisations and trade unions and the findings of both quantitative and qualitative studies in the arts and cultural industries sub-sectors. One of the central overall findings is that 'male actors are offered more work than female actors.' (2000:199)

Quantitative data from the most recent and wide-ranging survey of performers (Thomas 1995) show that there is less work for women performers overall but that

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this is heavily mediated by age. Before the age of 40 there appears to be a generally equal number of roles, with men having more roles in electronic media (a ratio of 6:5), while women had more roles in theatre (a ratio of 3:2). Men had more lead roles across both sectors, an average ratio of 3:2, while women had more large support roles (3:2). Over 40, the picture shifts and men have more roles in general (10:7), the sector split being 9:6 in electronic media and 3:2 in theatre, the last statistic being an exact reversal of that for the under-40 performer (Thomas 1995: ix-xi). In relation to pay, Thomas's research indicates that there is a much smaller gendered pay gap in theatre (approximately 10%) than in television, a trend confirmed by interview findings. In television, the gap varied between approximately 20% and 35%. Across the economy as a whole, the equivalent 'global' statistic is that women working full-time earned 81% of the average full-time earnings of men in 2002 (Perfect and Hurrell 2003). The performer statistics are also affected by age and status factors and indeed are closely linked with the access issues to be considered in Chapters 4 and 5 and are considered more fully in Chapter 6. These survey results indicate the systemic nature of gendered disadvantage in an occupation that, as we have seen, has employed women and men to do the same work for far longer than most other occupations. The effective segregation that in fact informs this occupation is now considered.

Structure

Having established the general context of the study, we consider its organisation.
Chapter 2 focuses on the theoretical and empirical academic literature that justifies,
structures and is challenged by this project. Having reviewed again the absences in
consideration of performers, work in industrial relations and organisation studies is
examined for the positive contribution that it makes to an understanding of the
woman performer as worker. This includes the literature on segmented labour
markets, recruitment and on occupational segregation, in particular here sex
stereotyping, aesthetic labour and the gendering of the labour market. Mediatory
concepts of class, race/ethnicity and in particular patriarchy are considered as
descriptive and explanatory concepts. This is related to work done on gendered
ideology and an aspect of these debates, though not categorised as such, are ideas
around social and commodity fetishism. This is work which it is argued has
implications both for the products in which women performers appear and for the
women themselves in terms of access to work and career longevity. The ideas
around gender, ideology, commodification and structure/agency are linked to the
final section of the chapter where literature relevant to exploration of legislative,
union and individual regulatory strategies is examined. The central theme linking
this necessarily wide-ranging discussion of literature is the idea of woman as
difference and the connection of this to manifestations of subordination and
achievement.

In Chapter 3, the focus is on questions of why and how the central issues of this study have been addressed. The choices of research area and methodology are discussed as influenced by my ex-performer and feminist, critical standpoints. As part of addressing these issues I find my previous career as a performer had both positive and negative effects on my research. This was in terms of practical access issues and of the 'filtering' effect on data of my theoretical and ideological perspectives. I review the decision to focus specifically on women performers, centring on the issue of effective intra-occupational segregation. The choice of subsidised theatre and terrestrial television as the principal areas of work on which to focus research is explained in terms of their dominance as interdependent sites of training, labour supply and accretion of status. Generally, the research design and processes are considered within the theoretical frameworks that are used to justify them. Finally, omissions in the data are discussed to signal possible weakness in analysis and to raise broader questions as to the reasons for these gaps.

Chapter 4 starts to chart the working realities of women performer's lives by concentrating on initial stages in access to work. Routes into performing are looked at, focusing in particular on drama schools and the position of the agent. There is discussion of the less visible routes into the industry and the gendered effects of ostensibly neutral paths are considered. A picture is built of the overcrowded and multiply-segregated performer labour market, of the principal employment sectors and of interviewees' perceptions of this stage of the labour process, perceptions that are linked to the quantitative data and seen as produced by the mechanics of the

occupational sector itself in combination with a gendered understanding of its operation. Further, based on this chapter's discussion of access, the atypical achievement of status by women performers is argued to have remained atypical because of a particular form of 'feminisation' of performing work in general.

Chapter 5 highlights the pivotal role of the audition. This key selection experience, one which is repeated at regular intervals throughout a performer's career, is examined through the prism of the two main employment sectors, using data from interviews and from observation. The importance of the audition in understanding the woman performer's working life is looked at in several ways. One of these is in exploration of the stages prior to the audition and formal entry, i.e. the writing and commissioning processes in television and theatre and the place of gender and perceptions of gender in these processes. For workers whose job it is to represent us to ourselves, issues of age and appearance are also central and these are addressed in reference to self-selection and preparation for auditions. In an occupation openly segmented by gender, issues of age, appearance and the persistence of the conventional white male template of 'worker' are discussed.

The use and efficacy of the law and the union at this point of obtaining access to work are discussed, largely in terms of their lack of impact on the disadvantage experienced. The distinctive characteristics of this occupational sector are seen as reinforcing incapability and inaction. These institutional factors and the factors of perception discussed above are related to data involving individual regulation, where

regular instances of resistance were found. These findings open a space for looking

at the roots of the disadvantage recognised and at the blurred and arguably

misleading divisions between the inside and outside of the labour process, issues that

the audition process highlights in an overt and focused way. Overall, in its

identification of patterns of reproduction within all occupational structures and

groups considered, this chapter extends the discussion of ideas of gendered ideology

begun in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6 concludes the presentation of findings in discussion of women

performer's pay and career longevity. The lack of defined career paths discussed in

Chapter 4 is revisited in terms of the effects on pay and career longevity. Here is

where is seen most plainly the effects of the individualised and competitive aspects

of the occupation and there is consideration of the translation of perception (and thus

'agency') into practice (and thus 'structure'). The problems of informal, unstructured

routes are compounded by the purpose of the job, which is to 'be' women, but only

ones who are considered interesting. The employment effects of prevailing ideas of

gender examined in Chapter 5 in consideration of auditions and the process of

products are seen here at their most sharp.

The quantitative data is reviewed and there is discussion of the disparities in concern

and awareness of the issues, and the implications of these disparities for possibilities

of regulation. The accepted and expected potential for individual women performers

to achieve equal or superior status to men performers is considered. This is both as

an empirical phenomenon and in its paradoxical form as a potential restraint on

social and individual forms of regulation. The exploration of pay and career

longevity issues is seen as indicating the importance of ideas considered above of

performing 'as work,' in conjunction with gendered perceptions of social relations in

general.

Chapter 7 reviews the empirical data and discussion of theoretical frameworks and

draws together the issues that have been identified. Strongly gendered perceptions

continue within the operation of the entertainment sector itself, structuring the

working realities of women performers and resulting in both systemic advantage

and, more commonly, disadvantage. The effects of these gendered perceptions are

seen as enhanced by the particular characteristics of the occupational sector, its

labour market and labour processes. The awareness of and attitudes towards

disadvantage are examined in terms of meaning, causation, policy and the future,

including implications for further research arising from discussion of the issues and

standpoints taken. The findings in regard to the regulatory strategies and gendered

disadvantage are re-examined and are argued to suggest three suppositions. First

that, as mentioned above, discussion of issues of structure and agency in this

occupational context means that women performers largely inevitably collude in the

perpetuation of their own constraints. Second, that the principal industrial relations

experiences of women performers are manifestations of their position as formal and

informal proxies for women's experiences in wider society. These effects are

apparent principally in the restrictive consequences of the attribution of value to

gender and to physical type, effects that are in part gatekeeper-determined and in part self-defined. Third, that the atypical advantages experienced by women performers, largely in terms of the accepted achievement of status, has not affected wider society in the way that wider society affects the working realities of women performers. This is argued to be partly as a result of our conceptions of paid work as 'masculine' and that performing, with its emphasis on emotion and display, as well as its structurally-enforced dimensions of passivity, is implicitly viewed as 'feminine'.

To conclude, Althusser's (1971) conception of the labour process, while not focused on gender, is apposite: 'For the relations of production are first reproduced by the materiality of the processes of production and circulation. But it should not be forgotten that ideological relations are immediately present in these same processes.' (1971:141). In the following chapter, this and other ideas are explored in order to frame and enable the aims of the study.

CHAPTER 2   FRAMEWORKS

I have looked steadily around me
Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Introduction

This chapter will consider ideas relevant to analysis of the research aims of mapping the working realities of women performers and of exploring perceptions of gendered disadvantage. The central theme in establishing this analytical framework is ideas of gender and their manifestations. This theme has emerged from consideration of the structures of performing work itself, as I shall now explain.

As discussed in Chapter 1, unlike the development of most occupational sectors in Britain, performing has survived from the pre-industrial era as an occupation for both men and women, but the outside world impinges in the direct form of the gender-segregated content of performing products (ILO 1992). It is also present in the *de facto* forms of channelled segregation within the global category 'woman performer', explored in the study data and in literature relating to cultural representations, again as noted previously (e.g. Mulvey 1975; D'Acci 1994). Thus, although women and men performers do not work in an area of occupational segregation, they do, very largely, work within a sexual division of performance labour that operates as a social structure, structural that is 'to the extent that this allocation becomes a constraint on further practice' (Connell 1987: 99). The

dimensions of this sexual division are also multi-faceted, focusing not only on allocation by biological sex but also privileging one form of sexuality, heterosexuality, thus further structuring the distribution of performance labour. It is clear that it is aspects of the concept of gender itself, rather than secondary order concepts such as occupational segregation or market segmentation that must be the primary focus in this study and these aspects are explored in detail below. However, the emphasis on study of representation noted above, i.e. on the output of the woman performer's labour process, neglects the potential in study of the concept of gender through practice. To this end, the secondary order concepts of gender have relevance to consideration of the primary concept itself. Work on both tiers will be explored in order to establish the framework within which this study's research aims have been examined.

First, material aspects of ideas of gender are considered. This concentrates on work in the secondary tier in relation to labour markets and recruitment and selection. Then central ideas around gender as difference are introduced and the following sections focus on work on sexual ideologies and aspects of the idea of commodities and gender. The next section on individual strategies of regulation addresses the literature on ideology in relation to work on structure and agency. Examination of the formal regulatory strategies considers ideas relevant to the formulation and operation of these strategies in relation to gender and gendered ideologies. Finally, the main themes of this chapter are rehearsed and related to the themes of the project overall.

Ideas of gender: material expressions

Gendered production

Performing is not a sex-typed job: both sexes do it in similar numbers (as noted in Chapter 1 and below) and are accepted as doing it. Yet, in a qualitatively different but semantically interesting way, performers conform to a female stereotype in that their work activity is the 'production of people' identified by Murgatroyd (1985) as characterising much of women's labour as teachers, nurses, cleaners and so on (in Bradley 1989: 9). Performing is inherently *social* work, involved in representing and interrogating our relations with each other and might be expected to reflect the social order. For example, the theme of intra-occupational demarcation seen in Adkins' (1995) work in a leisure park and hotel, showed that the labour market differentiated along gender lines even when men and women were doing the same jobs, with women having to be 'attractive', and thus not only economically productive but also 'sexually productive' (1995: 147). Women judged insufficiently sexually productive (or, as Adkins quotes "too ugly", 1995: 106) were offered 'men's' work. Bearing in mind the general association of youth with attractiveness, connections with the segmented categories of women performers can already be seen in the data outlined in Chapter 1 showing the gendered concentration of work by age.

Adkins' (1995) work on sexuality and the labour market is particularly relevant to analysis of intra-occupational segregation amongst performers. Her study asks if

sexuality contributes to 'the sex-specific construction of women's labour and locate

women differently from men in relation to the labour market' (1995: 44). She shows

convincingly that it does and that gendered sexuality not only pervades and affects

the workplace but is key in structuring gendered labour relations within labour

markets themselves. In its allocation of jobs based very largely on biological sex

and/or gender the performing labour market illustrates this clearly, irrespective of

whether a particular role involves overt issues of sex and sexuality. By this

allocation the entertainment industry is continuously and explicitly structuring itself

around dominant ideas of gender and sexuality. Women performers are

demonstrating to us, through their work and through their labour processes, the

validity of Adkins' thesis. Gendered sexuality is inextricably bound up with the

production of 'men's economic and other advantages in the labour market' (1995:

151) and paradoxically, this is supported by women performers' systemic

advantages as well as systemic disadvantages, as is explored further below. As

Adkins argues: 'This gendering of production means that men and women…*are*

different sorts of workers. They do different sorts of work even when working

alongside each other' (1995: 148, emphasis original). The relationship of Adkins'

thesis to the working realities of women performers is close, although not

necessarily in the way formulated in her study of service workers. For instance,

Adkins points out that although heterosexuality can be shown to be connected to the

control and appropriation of women's labour, the study evidence does not support

the view that gender is always sexualized (1995: 157) and that the (gendered)

organisation of labour also often meant that men had greater access to labour market

resources and status or a particular allocation of type of labour (for instance in relation to domestic responsibilities). I would argue that a focused analysis of the working realities of women performers reveals that these are very largely structured by sexualisation in that the institutionalised position of heterosexuality in society, which Adkins argues contributes to the gendering of work relations, is inescapably omnipresent in the labour processes of women engaged in portraying aspects of that society. Connell (1987), whose work will be considered in greater depth in this chapter, summarises the position taken: 'To think of a gender structuring of production, not just a sexual division, allows a clearer recognition of differentiations within the work-force that have to do with sexual politics but which operate within the broad categories of sex.' (1987: 103)

Segmentation

While work around gendered ideologies is considered as providing greater insight into understanding the constraints experienced by women performers, aspects of labour market segmentation theories help analysis of the operation of intra-occupational segregation in performing. Labour market segmentation concepts imply relatively low wage rates in female-typed occupations because many women workers are 'overcrowded' into them, whereas there is less competition in male-typed occupations (e.g. Lewis 1996). These exist across a wider set of occupations and so receive relatively high rates of pay (e.g. Burchell and Rubery 1990). As noted in Chapter 1, there is a (variable but persistent) gendered pay gap between performers and there are fewer job opportunities for women than for men,

particularly after the age of approximately 40 (Thomas 1992, 1995; Cumberbatch et al. 1994; Communications Research Group 1999). Equity membership is divided approximately 50:50 by sex. The figure including non-unionised actors is closer to 60: 40 male/female (Swanson et al. 2000: 196). Both measures situate performing as an 'integrated' occupation comfortably within Hakim's (1993) definition of 25% to 55% women workers (1993: 296).

So men and women performers are not occupationally segregated in the traditional sense and there has been no historical trajectory of male performer protection of their territory or union exclusion or differential access to training and skills. However, following Burchell and Rubery (1990) it is certainly the case that individual differences between women performers in terms of skills, career orientation and so on are irrelevant in a broad sense in that they are (largely, not invariably) confined to a gendered segmented market which is then further segmented by 'type' (as will be discussed through the study). Ryan (1984) defines segmentation as '…the failure of the labour market to treat its participants even-handedly, in that it accords significantly different opportunities to otherwise comparable people.' (in Leontaridi 1998: 77). It is possible to relate this to a longer-established economic category: that women and men performers are effectively 'non-competing industrial groups' (Cairnes 1874 in Leontaridi 1998: 66) and that therefore 'competition will not bring into equality the rates of return on different forms of human capital investment' as suggested by neo-classical economics (1998: 67).

In her review of theory and evidence relating to segmented labour markets, Leontaridi (1998) notes that in the original formulations of segmentation theories, the focus was on industrial structure and variables such as unionisation and nature of product demand and size, leading focus away from the specific employment or establishment. Other studies moved on to examine the jobs themselves, occupational segmentation, as it was found that individual employers tended to segment their own workforce into 'good' and 'bad' jobs. Leontaridi says that both classical and segmentation models show that the labour market is segmented but that 'What still remains to be proven though is along what lines' (1998: 95). Therefore Leontaridi identifies labour mobility among sectors as the key issue for research and in particular the question 'are primary sector jobs rationed?' (1998: 93). This question is effectively addressed in this study in consideration of the realities and disadvantages of working as a woman performer in combination with work by Connell (1987), Pateman (1988) and Adkins (1995) (amongst others) on the gendered and sexualised production of labour markets, structures and processes. This combination of frameworks facilitates awareness that there are a number of forms of primary and secondary labour markets, all with varying types of segmentation and that, contra the emphasis of recent studies (Leontaridi 1998), industrial structures are very important. These, however, are mediated by individuals and within conscious boundaries of gender, age and appearance (including ethnicity), i.e. what can arguably be included within 'institutional rules and social influences' (1998: 95). Manifestations of these influences within industrial structures of performing work are now examined.

Ideas of gender: selection and differentiation

Adkins' (1995) work on intra-occupational segregation and its connections with the largely segmented work of women performers discussed above can be seen as connected to another area of research, 'aesthetic labour'. This term has been used by Warhurst, Nickson, Witz and Cullen (2000) in relation to interactive service work and is a concept used in addressing the work of women airline attendants (Hancock and Tyler 2000; Tyler and Abbott 1998). Warhurst et al.'s definition of the concept has direct resonance with the non-service occupation of performer:

> We define 'aesthetic labour' as a supply of 'embodied capacities and attributes' possessed by workers at the point of entry into employment. Employers then mobilise, develop and commodify these capacities and attributes through processes of recruitment, selection and training, transforming them into 'competencies' or 'skills' which are then aesthetically geared towards producing a 'style' of service encounter.
>
> (Warhurst et al. 2000: 4)

The requirements of aesthetic labour as formulated by Warhurst et al. are geared specifically towards service occupations and their interpretation of it is quite narrow. They cite Adkins (1995), for instance, as not overtly appreciating management's utilisation of workers' embodied competencies, whereas Adkins appears to address this issue at several points in her book (see especially Chapter 4), although without labelling them as constituting a distinct analytical category. The criteria specified for such labour by Warhurst et al. are arguably not confined to interactive service work but can be applied to women performers, where most such criteria have long

been part of the labour process, as indeed they have for men performers. The aspect

of commodification, in particular, is argued later in this chapter to be of specific

relevance to women performers.

In discussing their research findings, Warhurst et al. focused on the area of

recruitment and selection in interactive service work in Glasgow. They stressed as

significant the number of job adverts asking for enclosure of photographs, noting

that such a practice is frowned upon by the Employment Service 'due to possible

discriminatory practices' (2000: 11). In performing work the requirement for

photographs is universal and accepted as necessary by all parties, indicating the

unusual place overt discrimination based on appearance has in this area for both

women and men. Adnett (1988) defines discrimination as only occurring 'when

some superficial personal characteristic is used in an attempt to restrict an

individual's opportunity for economic or social advancement' (1988:134) and in that

sense, the operation of great swathes of the theatre and television sectors are

predicated on discrimination. As Dickens (2000a) points out 'Unfair discrimination

can be rational and efficient for an individual and the organization either because of

perceived cost advantages or in terms of control of the labour force' (2000a:159.).

In the entertainment industry such a calculation is widely held to be self-evident, if

perception of cost advantage is interpreted to include perception that discrimination

will result in the generation of surplus value through acquisition of larger audiences.

This indicates again the lack of distance between 'atypical' performing work and

mainstream sectors, particularly considered in conjunction with Harper's (2000)

work showing a link between physical attractiveness and pay premiums and that this link largely arises from general employer discrimination (see also French 2002). As the ILO (1992) has noted, the playwright or screenwriter is not the employer, and the director or producer of a play will not normally have any choice but to employ actors of the same sex as the characters they are to play – so clearly the discrimination discussed above cannot be understood as employment discrimination in the usual sense (1992:11).

Nevertheless, the concept of aesthetic labour in relation to performing work takes a slightly more convoluted path than the literature suggests it does in interactive service work. Employer requirements for particular looks manifest themselves at two specific points in the performer labour process: at recruitment (i.e. pre-employment), and at the 'sale' of the product (i.e. staging the play or shooting the programme). A performer worker is free to appear however s/he chooses during the middle part of the labour process, in rehearsal (a phase not addressed in this study). The employer supervision aspect, prominent in discussion of both aesthetic and emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) does not operate in the same continuous fashion, or indeed for the same reasons. Actors generally do not interact with the public when working: both parties are conspiring in an expectation of pretence, rather than in an expectation of a strange form of genuine feelings-to-order, as with interactive service work. Further, as most performers are self-employed businesses, supervision of appearance and the mobilisation and transformation of embodied competencies into use-value for the employer seems largely to be undertaken by

performers as individuals. Examination of this 'preparatory' work will be explored through the data in an attempt to further understanding of the idea of aesthetic labour and the connections between aesthetic labour and gendered ideologies in their manifestation in the woman performer are considered below. Here, it is related to issues raised in work on recruitment and selection.

Wood (1986) identifies part of the recruitment response to changing labour markets as use of 'being known to the company' (1986: 9; see also Collinson et al. 1990) as a selection criterion, an idea very common in performing recruitment processes. It is here that the role of the gatekeepers detailed in Chapter 3 must be looked at within the context of sexual ideology and recruitment. In relation to perceived disadvantage in representation, Ross Muir (1988) argues from the liberal standpoint of increasing the number of women in decision-making positions within the entertainment industry whereas Arthurs' (1994) more critical standpoint sees instead the reproduction of existing practices, a perspective taken in mainstream work by Cockburn (1991:73). Cockburn paints a slightly more complex picture, asserting that recruitment and promotion decisions are always made several steps above the level at which the appointment is to be made and that 'bigger men' decide these matters on the basis that they will not personally be affected by any advances made by women (1991: 64). This would appear to be particularly clear in the theatre and television sectors, where recruitment and selection of performers has no direct gendered implications for those in key production positions   Further, a distinctive feature of the 'being known' criterion in performing is that the performer employer

is not as interested in potential (Wood 1986: 5) as in immediate performance.

However this difference serves only to underline Wood's analysis of informal

selection methods as being largely fuelled not by ascriptive criteria, but as part of

management systems to help identify what is required and, crucially, to 'help them

discriminate between candidates' (1986: 10), a factor key in operating in the

dispersed, individualised performance sector. As Wright and Storey (1997) stress,

the processes of recruitment and selection are designed to discriminate between

people, that is their purpose. However, while mainstream labour markets wrestle

with issues to do with 'unfair' discrimination, the performer labour market continues

formally untroubled by such issues. It is here that we can see most clearly a

connection between the 'preparatory' aesthetic work discussed above and issues of

recruitment and selection, crucially mediated by ideologies of gender, discussed

below.

Ideas of gender: constructions of presence

As discussed above, issues of labour market segregation and segmentation have been

linked to wider and deeper structures of gendered ideology (e.g. Barrett 1985;

Reskin 1988; Green, Parkin and Hearn 2001). As the primary research aims involve

exploration of women performer's working realities and perceptions of their

disadvantage as a group, it is the construction of this group as a gender that will be

examined. It has been convincingly argued that gender itself is constructed always

in relation to other phenomena; it is a relation of difference (e.g. Wittig 1992:10;

Connell 1998; Mitchell, J. 2001). However, the approach taken here is not to look at

the constitution of the relation of difference but the effects of the relation of difference.

First, in exploration of the effects of the relation of difference it is necessary to clarify my understanding of the concepts most closely related to these issues. Principally, this involves engagement with the ideas around the existence and operation of a 'sex/gender system' (Rubin 1975) that has developed across historical periods and persists in defining and differentiating the female gender in ways perceived as largely favourable to the interests of the male gender (see also Oakley 1998: 143). Use of the term 'sex/gender system' at this point is not intended to indicate acceptance of a defined and delimited structure, as the study is informed by awareness that issues of sex and gender are mediated by other classifications, principally by class and race/ethnicity, mediations discussed below. There is further discussion of a 'system' relating to sex and gender below in relation to use of ideas of patriarchy. Here, it is interesting to note the unproblematised use of the word by a male television executive regarding perceived feminist issues in *Cagney and Lacey*, the ground-breaking (but always contested) American TV series about women police detectives (D'Acci 1994). D'Acci notes that interventions by network executives on specific representations of the officers as women, 'focused on differences that posed a threat to what one CBS programmer referred to as "the system"' (1994: 62). In this instance can be glimpsed a central absence constructing ideas of gender and presence: the invisible man. As noted by many others, the white heterosexual able-bodied male vanishes from our sight because he is ubiquitous; naturalised as person

and people and sexuality (e.g. Wittig 1992:60; Morgan 1981; Lester 2002). This key

absence is considered further below in discussion of sexual ideologies. It has

formed part of other categories of social analysis, which are now discussed.

Mediating constructions of presence: race/ethnicity and class

Concepts of race/ethnicity and class (or economic stratification) are arguably

inseparable from exploration of the realities of work (Mirza 1992; Dickens 1997;

Noon and Hoque 2000; Rosenfeld 1998; Marx 1976; Allen 1971) and in the current

context are used specifically in relation to particular dimensions. Race/ethnicity is

addressed in relation to the research aims, to a limited extent, in its role for ethnic

minority workers as communication of (further) 'difference' (e.g. Weekes 1997).

Mirza (1992) found gendered structures of disadvantage in society were 'further

complicated' by racism and that employment opportunities for young black women

were constrained by labour markets segregated by race and gender (1992: 191).

This states hooks's (1991) argument that systems of domination interlock,

specifically in relation to employment, and is empirically and theoretically built on

by a broader range of work mapping this interlocking in Lester's (2002) edited

collection. Here the treatment of a variety of marginalised identities by families,

prisons, law and cultural representation is considered and finds repeated resistance to

'threats' to dominant, naturalised identities. The conclusion to Mirza's (1992) study

is bald: 'Inequalities based on race, gender and class remain an integral feature of

this society in spite of its ideology of meritocracy.' (1997: 194). Discourses of

liberal meritocracy are particularly prominent in the television and theatre sectors,

amongst both workers and employers, and these conclusions will be considered through analysis of data.

The concept of class is an arguably more blurred analytical category in this area of work other than in its most fundamental (un-gendered) form as distinguishing the worker whose labour power is transformed into labour, which is then exploited in order to extract surplus-value (Marx 1976). The lack of clarity in use of class as an analytical tool in relation to the research aims is due in part to the lack of distinct career paths. For instance, access to higher education or vocational training is no guarantee of access to performing work. Of course, as an interesting social-class note, this also results in it being as likely to meet a performer who is a scion of a working-class mining family as one who is a scion of an aristocratic landowning family. However, the economic realities of class position are necessarily experienced in access to resources to survive in an occupation characterised by unpredictable employment contracts. Here gender is a mediatory factor, for example in conventional division of domestic responsibilities and the inadequacies of state policy and support or in the smaller number of 'female' parts available for a similar number of women and men performers. Further, consideration of class issues is interpreted here to include analysis of the commodity form and it is argued later in this chapter that this has particular significance for the working realities of the woman performer.

Class and gender are frequently addressed as distinct if interrelated analytical concepts, but this study does not attempt to resolve the contested issues around the validity of dualist analysis (Hartmann 1979; Walby 1986; Pollert 1996). This is because the research aims seek to chart largely unrecorded working realities and to explore perceptions of the gendered disadvantage that informs these realities; the aims do not include a search for causation but a search for meaning. With consideration of meaning there will be consideration of causal associations, but it is not necessary to establish a hierarchy of systems productive of realities and perceptions. Acker (1989) argues that 'The goal of a general and rigorous explanatory system is antithetical to a feminist project that must have room for many realities, including many manifestations of gender/class' (1989:200) and Cockburn (1991) implicitly agrees:

> From one empirical perspective one set of relations will be salient, from another a different set…In practice women continue to use the terms patriarchy, capitalism, sex, class and race, to describe our lives. We know it is the articulation of these sets of relations, the way they are lived and reproduced, we have to study and specify. (1991:8)

In this study, while gender has been foregrounded as site of examination and analytical framework, issues of class and ethnicity are also considered and seen as offering a more complete picture of working realities for the woman performer.

Mediating constructions of presence: uses of patriarchy

This study, focusing essentially on gathering and exploring perceptions, takes a predominantly historical materialist feminist approach (Calás and Smircich 1996; Cockburn 1983, 1991; Bourdieu 2001) in analysis of women performers and industrial relations, seeing historical development and economic and gender positioning as processual factors in shaping contemporary experience. To this end, two texts in particular provide a framework for mapping women performer's working realities and for exploring perceptions of gendered disadvantage in these realities. These are Connell's (1987) *Gender and Power* and Pateman's (1988) *The Sexual Contract*. Our starting point is Pateman's analysis of civil society as premised on 'conjugal right' and the subordination of women. Pateman's analysis encompasses consideration of class (in the employment contract) and, briefly, ethnicity (in 'the slave contract that legitimizes the rule of white over black.' 1988: 221), but her principal argument is that the freedoms of civil society have been based on a 'sexual contract', a generalised 'fraternal' sex-right of man over woman. An analysis based on Pateman's sexual contract thesis (as seen in Cockburn 1991) compels recognition that if a basic *premise* of society is domination of woman by man then from this flow certain consequences for this project in terms of analysis. These include the suppositions that the regulatory strategies can only ameliorate rather than transform and that routes to success premised on gender (as so clearly in performing) will mainly be within the parameters dictated by a social order predicated on domination and hierarchies (Pateman 1988; Connell 1987, 1998;

Cockburn 1983; Acker 1990; Walby 1997). To this end, we must consider use of ideas of 'patriarchy'.

This forbiddingly fundamentalist term has been criticised in its use as an explanatory theory (e.g. Barrett 1988; Pollert 1996; Bradley 1989; Ramazanoglu 1989). Indeed, the lack of a generally-agreed definition of the term alerts us to potential problems with its use as theory (Hartmann 1979; Ramazanoglu 1989; Walby 1990; Cockburn 1991). I shall adopt Cockburn's (1991) approach and summarise the idea of patriarchy as pointing to the persistent, society-wide structures and practices in and through which (hierarchies of) women are subordinated by (hierarchies of) men.

Two bases of criticism are first its lack of internal dynamics, addressed below, and second that there are obvious contradictions of it as overarching explanation of society: many men inhabit inferior employment positions; many women (now) inhabit superior employment positions. Here, what has been described as patriarchy's interaction with capitalism (thus class) results in a material defeat for purist notions of patriarchy as 'system' of male dominance. For example, in specific industrial relations terms, the primary/secondary labour markets ideas of Doeringer and Piore (1971) cannot be universally applied to gendered categories of worker (although a narrower conception has been argued: Barron and Norris 1976). This is particularly clear in the case of performer workers. Many women performers regularly achieve high status and financial reward while many men performers regularly experience the dominant performer career pattern of irregular employment

on unfavourable terms and conditions. These apparent contradictions are considered further through examination of the realities of women performer's experiences of the labour process. However it is argued here that Pateman's (1988) analysis of the development of civil society as predicated on the subordination of women is able to encompass and account for such apparent contradictions, particularly when taken in consideration with Connell's (1987) analysis of gender and power. If women performers are employed to 'be' 'women' and women are incorporated in the social contract (the basis for their participation in the employment contract) specifically as women (Pateman 1988: 142), then the inconsistencies and struggles for ascendancy apparent in any analysis of the history of societies (Connell 1987: 150-158), must inevitably be reflected in the working patterns of women and men performers. This is in part because, as Pateman argues (following Marx 1976), workers are not selling labour power but their bodies. The specific historical identification of woman with the body and the specific identification of the actress with the body and with sexuality noted in Chapter 1, implies differentiation in the realities of the performer labour process. Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity is predicated on the negation and subordination of other forms of masculinity (for example homosexual masculinities). Such a premise would support the development of differentiated hierarchies, giving rise to what Pateman, discussing the class phenomenon of the subordination of men as workers, calls the 'unfree master' (1988: 142).

Cockburn (1991) has described the term patriarchy as 'a popular shorthand for male dominance' (1991:8) and it is in this sense that it is often a more wieldy analytical

term than 'androcentric (male-centred)' (Smith 1998:311). Bradley (1989) in her study of sex-typing and work segregation, prefers the latter in discussion of contemporary capitalist societies, on cogent grounds, but also acknowledges the 'political and symbolic power' (1989:56) of 'patriarchy' and uses it for this reason. In later work, Bradley (1999) refines this usage, and the term 'patriarchal power' is used specifically to refer to 'the capacity of men to control women', while she uses 'gendered power' to refer to the capacity of either sex 'to control the behaviour of the other' (1999: 33). The continued struggle with use of language indicates the persistence of awareness of male dominance and in a sense I use 'patriarchy' for its political and symbolic power. Androcentric has a passive connotation whereas patriarchy, though arguably carrying too active a connotation, fits more closely the analytical needs of this project.

Thus I use the terms patriarchy and patriarchal interests, which I conceive of as ideologically based and materially realised (see e.g. Hearn 1999), to help understand complex or contradictory phenomena. For example, it is difficult to understand the non-sexualisation of the male actor as compared to the female actress (noted in Chapter 1) other than through a patriarchal lens – particularly in light of Connell's (1987) argument (noted above) that the patriarchal social order is dependent on the naturalising of heterosexuality and the suppression of homosexuality as threat to 'the credibility of a naturalized ideology of gender and a dichotomized sexual world.' (1987: 248). Further, focusing on the material rather than the cultural, class theories alone cannot explain why most women performers get most work before they are 40

and the term 'androcentric' cannot shed light on this either because of the sex-based

intra-occupational segregation of most performing work. There is no clear general

'men's' interest in this constriction of access to work. There is however a

discernible patriarchal impulse if this impulse is understood to represent the drive

towards dominion rather than a focus on gendered interest. Cockburn (1983) says

that 'sex/gender ideologies too are materially grounded, in economic and physical

conditions and in organisation. It is the very interaction between material

circumstances and ideological forces that makes any system so powerful and

enduring.' (1983:212). This is supported by applying the vertical segregation notion

of hierarchical distinction noted in Chapter 1, to the undifferentiated category of

'performers' themselves where we see that internal differentiation stands as a

substitute for conventional career markers. This can be construed as a variation of

what Crompton and Sanderson (1990) refer to as 'credentialist and patriarchal

exclusion within internal labour markets' (1990:35) in that women performers are

effectively denied the opportunity of acquiring 'credentials' (in performing terms,

experience/market value) by a sustained emphasis on androcentric products that is

difficult to explain other than in terms informed by ideas of patriarchy. There are

women at every strata of success as a performer; however there are proportionately

fewer of them at the higher levels and, as has been indicated, they are often paid less

than their male equivalents. It is the stratification within this job – interior

segregation - that results in difference. In the following chapters I will argue that

central industrial relations experiences of women performers carry traces of

ideological 'impulses' that can only be satisfactorily understood as patriarchal in this political/symbolic sense, in their discernible drive to contain, channel and stratify.

The problem lies in the theorising of this discernible drive and here we see the force of Pollert's (1996) argument about the lack of an 'intrinsic dynamic' (1996:643) in patriarchy. In this sense it is difficult to define patriarchy as a system (certainly not, as Pollert argues, in the same way as capitalism is defined as a system by Marx 1976); but is it necessary to define it in this way? Crompton and Sanderson (1990) for instance, wonder if the efforts to theorise patriarchy as a system is not due to 'an established tradition of class theorizing' (1990:19). This would lead to a misplaced confusion of epistemology with methodology. We see gender reproduced across all social situations without stable, essential intrinsic dynamics, or, as Moi (1991) phrases it, we see the 'immense variability of gender as a social factor' (in Gottfried 1998:457). If we treat the concept of patriarchy (of which, as Acker (1989) acknowledges, gender is constitutive), as an embedded though variable *feature* of our lives manifested in social relations and structures, we start to work towards resolution of the definable system dilemma. Though hard to theorise as an explanatory rather than descriptive concept, we are faced with the effective and observable effects of contemporary patriarchy; as Hearn (1999) puts it, 'the stubborn stability of men's structural power' (1999:164). We can see it but we don't know how it's done. This is argued as being identifiable in analysis of the working realities of women performers in this study, as will be drawn out in subsequent

chapters. In this way the study will contribute to exploring the existence and 'stubborn stability' of this power.

Ideas of gender: ideology

Here, however, we need to take account of Gottfried's (1998) warning that Pollert's emphasis on 'the close interrogation of social *process* not the juggling of empty categories' (1996: 645) can lead to analysis devolving into 'relativism and/or particularism. We end up debating details and forsaking larger structures.' (1998:455). Gottfried suggests that a 'theory of practice', based on the work of de Certeau (1994), Bourdieu (1995) and Gramsci (1978) is the way forward (1998:455; see also Danieli 2003). This relates to a key aspect of this project's research category of 'individual regulation', in that there is an emphasis on resistance and therefore on agency/structure and the visible. The work surveyed above has concentrated on ideas in analysis of the woman performer's labour process and in exploration of this particular field of powers and resistances (Bourdieu 1994) it is important to place the significance of ideas within our framework.

The concept of hegemony is asserted by Gottfried, drawing on Gramsci and on Williams (1976), to provide the element of dynamism required in notions of structure and agency (1998:459) and Connell's analysis complements this in his identification of the interaction of labour, power and cathexis in sexual ideology, the dynamic of which he argues is a struggle for hegemony (1987: 251). In this idea of shifting struggles for consent and engagement with desires and identities, of ideas as

potentially embedded in people's feelings and perceptions (Eagleton 2003), one can

see a plausible interrelation between structure (as reproduced in social practice) and

agency (as choice in practices) (see e.g. McNay 2000). Ideas on the form and

possibilities of structure and agency are considered in more detail in relation to

individual regulation below, but here we explore further theories that can be related

to the boundaries within which female performers work.

Connell's (1987) study of sexual ideology leads him to identify a naturalization

process that involves interpretation of gender relations in a particular way, as

stemming from 'natural facts'. This naturalization process involves several

dimensions, one of which is 'cognitive purification of the world of gender' (1987:

246). This involves, for our purposes, ideological representations of practices that

have been purged of their complex, indeterminate state and made over into neat and

tidy versions, often involving representations of romanticism and hegemonic

masculinity (which he cites partly in their theatrical and screen manifestations) in a

filtered dichotomization (1987: 248-9). Connell argues that this naturalization

process involves investing gender with fatality: in the division of labour 'a man's

responsibilities', 'woman's work', and in the realm of culture a sharper 'fatality of

cathexis' (p.290). In this instance this refers to the structured concentration of

psychic energy on heterosexuality as a single goal, as the 'natural' way. In the

performing labour process, these two examples of the social fatality of gender are

merged in a particularly visible way and considering this process through the prism

of the woman performer, we can see that this form of dichotomization has

implications for content of product (and thus access to work) on several levels. The first is quantitative, the basic numbers of roles available; the second is qualitative: content of piece, type of role and the way a role is interpreted either by the performer or the director. The third is a hybrid: the effect on writers' output of what they see being produced and the way that women performers see their working life, how they approach and prepare themselves for it. Thus, as discussed earlier in relation to a broader notion of societal reproduction of gender through practice, examination of the working realities of women performers indicates that it is in these rather than simply the visible performance product that we see reproduction of the gendered social order.

As indicated in the work done in cultural and media studies referred to above, the connection between sexual ideology and performers is regarded as close, women performers' roles having been seen as vehicles for the representation of 'difference' within mass culture (Williamson 1996; Robinson, Ankrah and Shaw 1991). Further, de Lauretis (1984), in her examination of Lotman's (1979) work on plot typology, asserts that the hero is always 'constructed as human being and as male; he is the active principle of culture, the establisher of distinction, the creator of differences. Female is what is not susceptible to transformation…she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos' (in Aston 1995: 40, emphasis added). This echoes Mulvey's (1975) work on narrative cinema and on the psychoanalytic concept of woman as 'tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning.' (in Mulvey 1989: 15). Again, reference to Pateman's (1988) work on the historical development of patriarchy is useful in

enhancing this point. Looking at early seventeenth century work asserting the naturalness of patriarchy, Pateman finds this assertion rooted in biblical fatherhood myth effectively declaring women to be 'procreatively and politically irrelevant…Women are merely empty vessels for the exercise of men's sexual and procreative power.' (1988: 87). Both these arguments are clearly connected to the long-term religious/societal marginalisation of the woman performer discussed in Chapter 1.

This connection between sexual ideology, performance and working realities, can also be seen as circular. Connell, drawing on Klein's (1971) work on identologists, attempts a general formulation of groups 'active in the making of sexual ideology,' a category he describes as akin to Gramsci's (1971) 'organic' intellectuals (1987: 255) and in which he includes playwrights, actors and actresses. Connell identifies the performer group as being part of the *articulation* of the gender order, alongside designers, film-makers, musicians and movement activists, and of all these categories as being the most heavily gender-marked (that is, group membership being defined by the sexual division of labour rather than by other structures). These aspects of the gender order are described as articulating the 'experiences, fantasies and perspectives characteristic of particular groups in gender relations' (p. 256) and can be related to Bourdieu's (2001) concept of 'symbolic domination', of which he sees women and homosexuals as principal victims (2001:ix).

Novelists are included in another category of identologist action, *theorization,* a category implying 'a degree of disconnection from daily practice and an effort at reflection and interpretation' (1987:256) and this category could of course potentially include writers for theatre and television. Both articulation and theorization are argued to emphasise the importance of identologists in any consideration of changes in general consciousness and thus culture, a related argument to Bourdieu's (1994) assertion that literary or artistic activity is 'a *field of forces*, but it is also a *field of struggles* tending to transform or conserve this field of forces.' (1994:51, emphasis original). Anker's (1997) identification of the importance of stereotypes in the maintenance of labour market inequalities (see also Mills and Wilson 2001; Harvard Law Review 1987: 2052), referred to in Chapter 1, can be related to these arguments and in this study will be connected to the idea that women performers inevitably perpetuate their own constraints and further, that they stand as both formal and informal proxies for women workers in general.

Any attempt at changes in general consciousness and culture with a strategy involving identologists would have to take account of a later point that Connell makes concerning calculation of interests and the large number of women who gain advantage 'through applying an emphasized femininity' (p. 285), a concept described as involving compliance to the dominance of heterosexual men as well as sexual receptivity in younger women and motherhood in relation to older women (p. 187). Clearly, many women performers achieve advantage in this way, whether it be simply earning a living in mainstream entertainment as a jobbing actor, or attaining a

high degree of individual regulation as a star through performing in roles constructed around 'emphasized femininity'. Star performers are generally made through success in the cultural mainstream where product choices are more limited (the point made with pessimistic passion by Adorno 1991) and, if mainstream culture is taken to represent dominant or hegemonic contemporary ideologies (as argued by Althusser 1971), Pateman (1988) would see that such success must inevitably be achieved within gendered structures that subordinate the female to the male (see also Irigaray 1985). Pateman discusses arguments that value has been attached to women (in subjugated form) from the very earliest stages of society, citing Zilboorg (1944) and Mill (1869), and that, for instance, the idea of the family originated not out of love but out of the drive for economic exploitation, enabling physically dominant men to extend this dominance 'beyond their immediate needs' (1988: 107). Thus the idea explored in this thesis that value is attributed directly to women performers as workers on the basis of particular dominant conceptions of gender, has a historical root. Pateman's central argument is that subordination, rather than arising from exploitation, is the relation that makes exploitation possible (p. 149). This argument can be related to the work of both Rich (1983) and MacKinnon (1982) in their close identification of the (hetero)sexual with the social, and, without necessarily subscribing to a definitive 'cause' theory of subordination, these arguments relate closely to the working situation of women performers. In particular, the 'heterosexual gender contract', argued by Parken (2001) as disguising the production of a specific 'social sexual economic relationship' (2001:1), is emphasised in the peculiarly visible work of women performers, as argued above in

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consideration of Adkins' (1995) thesis on the centrality of heterosexuality to the

structuring of gendered work relations. Related ideas focusing on heterosexuality

and the social contract developed by Wittig (1992:33) contribute to the identification

of patriarchal ideologies in the construction of women performers' working realities.

She argues that (in the continually adaptive ways of hegemonic ideologies (Gramsci

1971)), as divisions of domestic and waged labour have blurred, the emphasis on

woman as 'the category of sex', as 'sexual beings', has been increasingly prominent

in contemporary Western society (1992:7). This argument intersects with both

Connell's 'emphasised femininity' and Parken's 'heterosexual gender contract'.

This is incorporation as dominance and is analogous to the emergence of 'relatively

affluent…layers of the working class' as relatively incorporated within the dominant

economic class system (Eagleton 1989:171). It is observable in the labour

processes of women performers (as argued in more detail through the thesis),

although as consideration of Connell's 'emphasised femininity' in relation to

performing work indicates, perhaps incorporation as dominance is better framed as

'the contradictions of oppression' (Ramazanoglu 1989).

Commodities: ideas and material expressions

Intertwined with these ideas of gender and sexuality as structure is the concept of

fetishism in relation to commodities and social relations developed by Marx (1976).

In *Capital* Volume 1 Marx describes an essential component of the capitalist system

as the disguise of the social relations of the producers of commodities in the form of

a relation between objects. Marx characterises commodities, things with exchange-

value, as carrying embedded within them social relations between people but that they are seen as disconnected entities because they are 'the products of the labour of private individuals who work independently of each other...Since the producers do not come into social contact until they exchange the products of their labour, the specific social characteristics of their private labours appear only within this exchange' (1976: 165). Connected to this idea of fetishism of the products of labour is Marx's discussion of the king's place in feudal society: that 'one man is king only because other men stand in the relation of subjects to him. They, on the contrary, imagine that they are subjects because he is king', which Žižek (1989) calls the 'fetishistic misrecognition' of relations between people (in Böhm 2001:22). Althusser (1971), whose ideas will be considered further below, identified ideology as misrecognition (1971: 170) and in light of the discussion on ideology above, it is argued in this study that the position of women performers in the labour process is based on analogous fetishisms of their perceived attributes. Thus women performer's work, implicitly and explicitly, illustrates Irigaray's (1985) assertion that 'The economy of desire- of exchange -is man's business.' (1985:188). While Irigaray's work raises questions in the reader concerning arguable emphases on essentialism and victimhood, it is important to recognise the continuities in her work on commodities with Marx's position and the contribution of both to understanding the work of women performers.

The position of the star performer in our society most closely resembles that of Marx's king (a phenomenon that contributes to the operation of individual

regulation), but in more general terms it is observable in the peculiarly narrow tramlines within which women performers must operate. Women performers are employed to 'be' women. Of course men performers are employed to 'be' men, but the range of ways and types of being and doing is broader, more complex, and better rewarded in terms of pay, access to work and career longevity and thus women performers more clearly embody the 'social' fetishism underpinning the production of the performing commodity. Women performers illustrate the gender order (arguably itself a fetishised misrecognition) through their labour processes as well as serving, with all performers, as illustrations of some of the fundamental concepts inherent in the capitalist order. If it is believed that youth and particular configurations of bone structure are more desirable, they are more desirable – the king-as-king, or more appositely here the queen-as-queen. In performing work that means that the bearers of these markers acquire exchange-value (Marx 1976: 138) because employers believe that paying for the labour-power of these particular workers will result in the extraction of optimal amounts of surplus value from (ultimately) audiences (or advertisers, foreign television company or other part of the culture industry: Adorno 1991). Unlike the objectified appearance of most commodities, the performer worker's labour power is a constant presence and not only constitutive of the commodity, as Marx says is true of all commodities, but visibly constitutive. Therefore what Pateman (1988) describes as the 'political fiction' of labour power in the employment contract (1988:202) – that labour power can be separated from the body of the worker - is plainly revealed. The potential repercussions of the interrelation of these ideas, for instance in their implications for

strategies of legal regulation (a mechanism which centres on notions of contract),

will be developed in the following chapters: here, the theoretical context outlined

informs the following discussion of strategies of regulation.

Informal strategies: individual regulation and structure/agency

'Individual regulation' is understood in this study as capacity for and use of

strategies of resistance by exercise of labour market power or in the absence of

labour market power. In relation to an occupation overtly structured by gendered

classifications and in light of the material and theoretical expressions of gender we

have considered, it is important to consider aspects of ideology and regulation as

well as ideas of structure and agency.

Althusser (1971) identified 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (amongst which he

included radio, television and the arts) and saw them as functioning by ideology and

therefore also as the site of class struggle. This point was filtered through a gender

lens by de Lauretis (1987) and extended by her argument for the possibility of

agency at the level of everyday practice, an argument given vivid support by Foff

Paules (1991) in her study of waitresses at a New Jersey restaurant. De Lauretis sees

that micropolitical resistance to the prevailing gender order can exist 'in the margins

of hegemonic discourses' (1987: 18), a point made directly in relation to women and

representation in theatre by Case (1988: 132). If television and subsidised theatre

are categorised as ideological state apparatuses and hegemonic discourses are

regarded as necessarily identified with the state, then the resistance of women

performers, key identologists, can be seen as inhabiting margins of broad-based significance. As Gunter (1995) notes in analysing perceptions of gender role portrayal on television, 'Women talking about television may recognize that roles assigned to their gender in programmes, as indeed in real life, are often based on assumptions about their gender…Deviations by female characters in the direction of masculine qualities were acceptable because those qualities are valued.' (1995: 60, 61). Further, the main thrust of Althusser's (1971) dissection of ideology, which is that ideological apparatuses interpellate us as subjects in a mirror-structure of mutual multiple recognition on the understanding that 'everything will be all right' (1971: 169), is modified by Callinicos (1987). He argues that 'a particular ideology invites us to accept a particular kind of social identity…the individual has some choice as to *which* identity he or she will accept' (1987: 156; see also Kristeva 1981). This formulation goes some way towards addressing a key problem with Althusser's thesis, namely how does the subject recognise that s/he is being hailed? (Eagleton 1994: 217). It also allows space for possibilities of change, for a more positive understanding of historicity, than is allowed for in Althusser's stark investigation. The practical manifestation of ideological interpellations will be investigated through analysis of the research findings and in light of the discussion above of the historical construction of the gender order and the idea of the worker.

Callinicos concludes that structures determine the powers an agent has stemming from his or her place within the relations of production, calling these, explicitly following Olin Wright (1978), *structural capacities* (1987: 86-7, 235). Such a label

implicitly begs the existence of agency, and Callinicos elaborates on these structural

capacities by distinguishing them from resources – Giddens' 'media of power' - and

placing them as determinants of *access* to resources (1987: 236). Here we see the

connections of class and gender again: women performers have varying degrees of

structural capacities dependent largely on their 'success' within (often contested)

patriarchal ideological apparatuses and hence their acquisition of forms of market

value. However, it is open to any of these performers to elect to not earn money by

declining to represent a particular identity through their labour - pointing to the

possibilities of option and constriction in structuring women's employment (see e.g.

Crompton 1997) while also drawing attention to the significance of economic class

position. These issues will be explored through consideration of data.

The examination in this study of the social practices of women performers' working

realities, as perceived by the people involved, implicitly takes its focus from

Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration. Giddens uses the idea of the duality of

structure to refer to 'the way in which social activities regularly reconstitute the

circumstances that generated them in the first place' and asserts that structuration

theory 'is an attempt to provide the *conceptual means of analyzing* the often delicate

and subtle interlacings of reflexively organized action and institutional constraint.'

(1991: 204, emphasis added). Again, the search in this study is principally for

meaning rather than causation: without succumbing to relativity, to assert a

hierarchy of determinants is neither desirable nor useful. However, Connell (1987)

extends Giddens' original concepts to highlight the idea that 'practice can be

divergent or cyclical' (1987: 141), with corresponding implications for institutionalisation, and it is here that we see the space for individual regulation as conceived in this project. Connell's principal criticism of Giddens' theory, that it effectively ignores the (always) historical dimension of structural context (1987: 94), is also taken into account in this study's treatment of societal constructions of the woman performer and of work, as already indicated. This idea must, further, involve the struggles around the meaning and effects of ideology as explanatory concepts in relation to women performers' labour structures and processes. This acknowledges the importance of the use of sexual divisions and especially patriarchy as a form of framework in understanding these realities, while at the same time acknowledging the limitations of such a framework and the effects of other considerations. McNay (2000) emphasises the importance of avoiding determinist accounts of patriarchy in analysis of gender inequalities by highlighting the importance both of materialist factors and of the place of agency, of establishing 'links between attitudinal shifts and structural transformation' and that 'An act that may seem conformist, from a structural perspective, may in fact entail either a non-propositional content or high levels of self-consciousness, both of which may be indicative of slow but far-reaching cultural shifts.' (2000: 160). So a potential 'evidential' dimension of this study is indicated, in terms of examination of the working realities of front-line cultural workers and the perceptions of those involved in constructing those realities.

Formal strategies of regulation

Union regulation

Ideology, following Althusser (1971) above, is necessarily involved in the formal strategies of regulation as well. This idea is also explored in relation to legal regulation below. Here, we observe its construction and effects obliquely through consideration of the development of the union. Equity can be located within the literature on union typology, but sits uneasily between different categories. It was founded in 1930 by an elite (the 'stars', several of whom were women) out of concern for the poor working conditions of the struggling majority (Macleod 1981). As discussed in Chapter 1, a general consciousness of themselves as workers was notably absent amongst the members of the organisation out of which Equity grew. An examination of the historical development of that organisation reveals unusually close connections between actor-worker and actor-employer while at the same time illustrating the self-marginalisation noted in Chapter 1 (Macleod 1981; Sanderson 1984). At one time Sir Henry Irving, the famous actor-manager, was President concurrently both of the theatre employers' organisation the Theatrical Management Association (TMA, Equity's contemporary subsidised repertory theatre bargaining partner) and of Equity's forerunner, the Actors' Association. Irving's concurrent Presidencies illustrated the widespread belief amongst actors and managers of the time that 'they were not as other men...They were all just a band of artists...united in common loyalty to "the show" ' (Macleod 1981:73). This quintessentially unitarist perspective (Fox 1966) has persisted to a degree (Dean 1998) and complicates issues around perceiving and addressing women performers' specific disadvantages.

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From outside, it is possible to classify Equity as a closed craft union, although the limits of classification are clear when we note the lack of defining characteristics of a craft union, such as an apprenticeship system and a strong member consciousness of themselves as artisans (Turner 1962). However, Equity has always sought to control and restrict entry to its 'predominant' occupation and has traditionally focused on these areas rather than on the level of wages (1962: 43) and despite the absence of strict necessity to train, noted in Chapter 1, it can certainly be generally characterised as a closed craft union. While the usefulness of strict differentiation between union 'types' has been questioned by Winchester (1988), it is appropriate here to consider the tensions of classification in their relevance to contemporary operation. Despite the closed craft union label, in terms of the historical development of its lay government and the effects of this on generations of membership perception, it is probably as accurate to characterise Equity using Bain et al.'s (1973) description of professional associations as 'the craft unions of a different social group' (in Prandy et al. 1983: 5). Webb and Webb (1917) provide an interesting perspective in their argument that professional associations are like 'the more old-fashioned of the Trade Unions' in their methods, in terms of control of entry and disciplining of members (in Burchill and Seifert 1993: 5). They identify a 'Creative Impulse, or the desire to ... perfect the art of the vocation' and a 'Possessive Impulse' impelling acquisition of the maximum money and status that can be obtained for their services (1993: 6). As discussed above in relation to the rationality of discrimination for entertainment industry employers in recruitment and

selection, the potential for exploitation of the 'creative' and 'possessive' impulses of performer workers is clear.

This provides the background context to the demise in 1990 of Equity's foundational regulatory resource, the pre-entry closed shop, and suggests further complications for the union in terms of managing the content of collective bargaining negotiations, the principal mechanism of regulation open to the union. Demand-side structural factors, which it is argued above are sustained by gendered ideologies, are not readily affected by union pressure, if indeed such pressure is applied. As discrimination on the basis of gender in this sector is permitted (to an – unmonitored – extent) by law, there is arguably little room left for the union to act other than as a pressure group. This is so particularly as the union is representing self-employed businesses often in competition with one another. The situation is complicated by the fact that women performers regularly achieve equally as high status as men performers. This has implications for what Colling and Dickens (1998) refer to as the political process of interest definition (1998:405). If both women and men performers see a small but real potential to achieve unusual levels of material success through employment (Dean 1998) then the potential for the union to mobilise a collective definition of interest (Kelly 1998) - even if that collective is defined solely as women Equity members - must be affected in particular ways. Positive and negative arguments regarding this potential influence will be explored in Chapter 6, but implications for the content of bargaining agenda will be addressed here.

Colling and Dickens (1989) in examination of bargaining agendas, found, at various levels, that bargaining areas were confined to existing structures and that negotiation over equality issues was not common. They identified several reasons for this, amongst which were:

> lack of explicit or meaningful commitment to equality at national level within the union; absence of perception, understanding or commitment by union negotiators…bargaining taking place within an unfavourable company or industrial climate…and with an employer who does not perceive greater attention to women/equality issues as likely to address any labour market or other problems, or as desirable in its own right (1989: 49)

All of these factors are present to some degree in this sector, although some in variant forms as will be considered in Chapter 6. They are reinforced by the specific characteristics of performing as an occupation, as will be addressed in the following chapters.

Dickens (2000b) makes it clear that locations of power within unions, the ability of groups to 'shape agendas and pursue their concerns' are key in use of collective bargaining to address equality issues (2000b: 202) and here, a union's cultural context has been found to be important in influencing the absence or presence of support for women's group activities (Parker 2002: 38), thus access to power. This will be looked at through analysis of data in Chapter 6 in relation to Equity's Women's Committee. McBride (2001) sees this issue at a fundamental level, addressing the problem of whether liberal democratic organisations such as trade

unions can represent both individual and group interests, arguing that unions would need to develop more radical structures if they proposed to seriously address disparities of power between different interest constituencies. As has been considered in this chapter, work on hegemonic ideologies and naturalisation of dominant meanings of differentiation would suggest deep-rooted obstacles to such development.

The importance that Dickens (2000b) attaches to the potential of collective bargaining to achieve progress on gender equality in the workplace hinges on several factors. One of these is the need of unions to gain strength through recruitment and retention of members in expanding sectors – typically women in part-time work and/or in the service sector. As has been discussed in Chapter 1, this is not either a need or indeed a possibility for Equity, which is largely (inevitably) confined to the same sectors as it was organising in in the 1950s. Dickens goes on to address the need for either trained and aware women negotiators or to have men negotiators who are committed and with access to expertise (2000b: 205) and this point can be related to the ability of a union to mobilise its workers. This is a fraught project in most employment situations and is particularly questionable in relation to Equity and its women members. Cockburn (1996) points to the heterogeneity of women's positions based on their class, race, age and so on and therefore that that women union members cannot be assumed to have homogeneous economic interests (in Dickens 2000b: 197). This lack of homogeneity is exacerbated by the structural characteristics of the women performer's occupational sector, where they are in

competition with other women of their own 'type', a type often based, *inter alia*, on those very categories of class, race and age. Thus patriarchal sexual ideologies are implicated not only in the gendered production of labour and segmented labour markets, but in constraining the capacity of the union to utilise its primary resource, its members, in resistance to the material outcomes of these ideologies. Again, the interplay of class and gender issues, familiar frictions in literature on unions, is illustrated in this area from an unfamiliar perspective.

In work on the ability of unions to achieve their goals (identification of these goals being a different if related issue), there has been increasing emphasis on the place of law (Dickens 1997; Dickens and Hall 2003; McCarthy 2000; McColgan 1994). Taking the contemporary importance of legal regulation of employment relationships in the UK as a given, the discussions have implicitly focused on struggles for control of the legislative agenda. There are differing perspectives on the place of legal regulation in relation to women and work and these are now considered.

Legal regulation

As Dickens (1992) notes, 'it is not unfavourable treatment of women which is outlawed by European and domestic law but less favourable treatment when compared with the treatment of a man similarly situated.' (1992: 127). The review of the performer labour market shows that they are usually not in direct competition with men but with other women and that it is the lived legacy of the patriarchal

structuring of society which disfavours women performers. This is not to say that

legal regulation, even as currently formulated, cannot be applied to the situation of

women performers, however it is clear that anti-discrimination legislation has as its

aim formal rather than substantive equality (Dickens 1997). Discussion below of the

efficacy of law in relation to disadvantage would suggest that this aim can be best

understood within the framework of the hegemonic ideologies explored in this

chapter.

It is arguable that legal regulation in its current forms is inadequate to the task of

addressing the dimensions of disadvantage experienced peculiarly sharply by

women performers. Equity's women members are usually working explicitly

because they are women and not because they are deemed to have particular labour

characteristics because of their gender. Therefore the disadvantages accruing to

women performers *en bloc* tend to centre on perception of appearance, age and

'type' considered from the perspective of what gatekeepers consider appropriate to

the character in the script. These are gendered, racialised perceptions of course and

are thus closely related to mainstream attribution of labour characteristics, an idea

marked above in consideration of ideologies and the gender order. Nevertheless, the

practical outcome of the structure of performing work is that use of the Sex

Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA) and the Race Relations Act 1976 (RRA) the

traditional legal routes to redress, is not generally appropriate. It is possible that the

provisions of the Equal Pay Act 1970 (as amended by the Equal Pay (Amendment)

Regulations 1983) are applicable, but here some of the central criticisms of anti-

discrimination legislation, that it individualises the complaint and does little to tackle the position of a larger group or to address the structures reproducing discrimination are seen most keenly (e.g. Hepple et al. 2000; Commission for Racial Equality 1998; Fredman 1997). Chapter 6 discusses these issues in more depth.

As noted in Chapter 1, women and ethnic minority performers are (partially but specifically) absented from key anti-discrimination legislation, a 'rational' exemption through which the coach and horses of hegemonic ideologies are regularly driven. Performer recruitment and selection processes are specifically exempted from the provisions of the SDA and RRA where there are requirements of 'authenticity'. Section 7 (2) (a) of the SDA states that being a man is a genuine occupational qualification for a job only where 'the essential nature of the job calls for a man for reasons of physiology (excluding physical strength or stamina) or, in dramatic performances or other entertainment, for reasons of authenticity, so that the essential nature of the job would be materially different if carried out by a woman'. However, this exemption, despite its potentially narrow interpretation, has not been challenged (for reasons looked at more closely through data analysis) and indeed seems to summarise a general 'realistic' attitude towards portrayal carrying particular implicit problems for women performers. As Belsey (1997) argues, the realist form 'by its very nature, leaves conventional ways of seeing intact, and hence tends to discourage critical scrutiny of reality' (in Barry 2002: 159). De Lauretis (1987) makes a related point, arguing that the idea of sexual differences has a 'conservative force limiting and working against the effort to rethink its very

representations' (1987: 17). The work considered above on sexual ideologies can be connected to these considerations, as we see here the effects of the relations of difference. The letter and (arguably circular) outcomes of the Acts leave women performers effectively without legal recognition of their systemic disadvantage and the principal pressure to adapt these processes seems to have come from social and cultural forces to do with growing awareness of gendered and racialised disparities, although other explanations, such as the 'environmental' influence of legislation (e.g. Smart 1989; Dickens 1992; Hepple 1992), will be considered.

In this study, gendered disadvantage and attitudes to gendered disadvantage are considered within the context of performing as a job. The dimensions of this disadvantage are located within the broad categories of access to work, pay and career longevity and are identified as including issues of appearance, age and race. In relation to appearance, there has been discussion of the realities of legal regulation of 'facial discrimination' (Harvard Law Review 1987: 2035) and of legal regulation of weight discrimination in recruitment, found to be more stringent in relation to women (Roehling 2002). Regarding age there are more concrete prospects: by December 2006 the UK is required, under the terms of Council Directive 2000/78/EC (the Framework Equality Directive) to have introduced legislation prohibiting age discrimination in employment. Again, and key to the performer situation, the Directive has been criticised for its absence of positive duties (Hepple 2003; see also Duncan 2003). Only the category of race is presently actively addressed by legal regulation, in the RRA. As with the SDA however, the

RRA contains a 'genuine occupational qualification' (GOQ) exemption in relation to 'authenticity' for the purpose of 'a dramatic performance or other entertainment' (RRA s.5 (2) (a)). This exemption survived the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, despite the proposals for change submitted to government by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) (1998). The proposals challenged 'the unjustifiable under representation of ethnic minorities in theatre, opera, cinema, television drama' and argued that the exemption should be restricted to cases where being of a particular racial group can be shown to be 'an essential defining feature' (1998: 25). Such a formulation, if reproduced in the SDA, could also enable action on gendered disadvantage in relation to access to work. This, however, is again to put the onus on the individual to challenge structures of discrimination. The difficulties and arguable inbuilt limitations of this method (Hepple and Szyszczak 1992) are again highlighted by the (generalised) defining characteristics of performing, including the drive to work, the highly personalised nature of the labour process, its competitive aspects and reliance on individual contacts. A radical alternative would be the imposition of a positive duty on employers to promote equality (Hepple 2003), thus challenging the uncontested operation of the 'authenticity' exceptions. However, the potential change in access to performing work that this suggests only emphasises the absence of intent to effect deep-seated change, an idea we now address in more detail.

There are conflicting views on the efficacy of using legal strategies to address questions of disadvantage. Smart (1989) sees law as a site of gendered power where

challenging legal discourse inevitably means also challenging 'naturalistic assumptions in masculinity' (1989: 87; see also Stang Dahl 1987; McGlynn 2000). Again, this echoes the discussion on the effects of 'realism' as a form, noted above, and indicates again the potential for use of patriarchal ideologies as an analytical framework. Smart goes on to argue that the challenge of naturalistic assumptions explains why law remains resistant to radicalism in feminism (and arguably by extension to issues of race and ethnicity) but can absorb 'outside' ideas when they are couched in terms of equality and equal opportunity. This can be related to arguments surrounding the creation of both the Race Relations Act 1976 and Article 119 (the principle of equal pay for work of equal value) in the Treaty of Rome 1957. Both these mechanisms of anti-discrimination are seen to have been part of processes of reconciliation of conflicting interests; the RRA was 'paid for' by the Immigration Act 1971 and the British Nationality Act 1981 (Hepple and Szyszczak 1992) and A. 119 was an attempt to limit economic leap-frogging amongst member states with different social policies (Deakin and Morris 1995). These two examples indicate the complex, politicised and often inherently contradictory nature of building mechanisms for addressing disadvantage and indicate the importance of issues of managing cultural change (Liff and Cameron 1997; Richards 2001). This last point can be taken in conjunction with Smart's (1989) argument that 'it is law's power to define and disqualify which should become the focus of feminist strategy rather than law reform as such' (1989:164), an argument that has particular resonance in relation to the GOQs and CRE (1998) proposals discussed above, and the notion, also discussed above, that broad rather than narrow concepts of

authenticity are assumed. Again, in these varied discussions can be seen traces of Althusser's (1971) identification of the connected rise of 'bourgeois' ideology and 'legal' ideology (both seen by Pateman (1988) as stemming from gendered subordination). To reiterate, the thrust of this review of literature has been to suggest the importance of ideas of gender in informing such assumptions.

In particular, Smart's assertion of the unpredictability of law reform is important in reminding us of the significance of context. Assessment of the value of legal regulation is often focused on the *ratio decidendi* of the individual case or terms of the statute. This may be embedded in discussion of the social environment, as for instance in the political imperatives of interest reconciliation discussed above. Or there may be emphasis on productive strategies, such as Stang Dahl's (1987) recommendation of legal sources for 'women's law…from below' (1987:61; see also Atkins 1992). What must not be overshadowed in evaluating legal regulation, and what is highlighted by the working realities of women performers (as seen for instance in the audition processes considered in Chapter 5), is the need to continually connect strategy to practice. As Smart puts it: 'legislation is in the hands of individuals and agencies far removed from the values and politics of the women's movement.' (1989:164). This must inform appreciation of the importance of the interrelation of union and legal strategies. McCarthy (2000), discussing what he termed 'the prospect of juridification' in industrial relations, saw law as currently the primary hope for trade unions in the struggle to affect the balance of power in work relationships. A related point was made by Syrett (1998) in his analysis of trade

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union's changing deployment of the language of 'rights' in relation to legal regulation through the Thatcher era. These last points are indirectly raised in consideration of the analysis of developments in European legislation by McCrudden (1998). He argues that in light of changes in approach to equality cases by the European Court of Justice, the onus in such areas will increasingly lie on member states to enact domestic legislation. I would suggest that this reading has important implications for UK trade unions and the long-established prioritising of collective bargaining over legal regulation (Phelps Brown 1959). The perceived shift away from judicial activism at European level may well challenge domestic trade unions to prioritise instigating and influencing law as a more central part of their strategies, thus supporting McCarthy's juridification thesis. As Lee (1986) concludes: 'The law affects us. We should aim to affect the law." (1986:3).

Frameworks

The central focus of this chapter has been on ideas of gender as difference and this theme has been traced through consideration of work in relation to primary and secondary order concepts of gender, to theories argued as relevant to these concepts and to the regulatory strategies. This thread establishes the analytical course taken to help achieve the research aims of the study.

The gendered intra-occupational segregation of performing work suggested this focus and exploration of literature in disparate areas indicates a patterning of differentiation and (thus) exploitation. Concepts of subordination as used by

Pateman (1988) in attempts to understand the bases of society – the emotional and material structures with which we all engage - were considered to closely frame a general picture of the working realities of women performers. In particular, Pateman's identification of women workers' inclusion in the employment contract specifically *as women*, is visibly represented in this occupational area. Therefore, a woman performer's 'production of people' necessitates close engagement with broader theories of how we constitute social relations in general and how these relations are sexualised, racialised and economically stratified - i.e., differentiated. In particular, ideas of patriarchy can show us how in this production of people, a particular conception of man (white, able-bodied, heterosexual) is taken as the default template of 'people'. This necessarily positions non-man conceptions as variations on a fundamental theme and would suggest that by taking work that situates women in established modes – by 'producing people' - women performers are inevitably colluding in the perpetuation of their own work constraints.

Difference need not necessarily result in subordination, but consideration of Connell's (1987) concept of the dynamic of sexual ideology as a struggle for hegemony places difference as central. This is both in the persistent reproduction of patriarchal forms (manifested as subordination of difference) and in manifestations of resistance and dominance of difference. Here, again, Connell's (1987) thoughts on divergent and cyclical practice help understanding of the concept of individual regulation, informed by Bourdieu's (1994) idea of the field of artistic activity as force of struggles. The interplay of ideology and hegemony is further elaborated in

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Žižek's (1994) identification of Laclau's (1977) (then) conclusion as 'that meaning does not inhere in elements of an ideology as such – these elements, rather, function as 'free-floating signifiers' whose meaning is fixed by the mode of their hegemonic articulation.' (1994: 12). Such a conclusion extends Althusser's (1971) argument that ideology is 'nothing but its functioning in the material forms of existence of that functioning' (1971: 160). This alerts us to the importance of political, economic and emotional context, which supports McNay's (2001) caution on the avoidance of determinism in accounting for gender inequalities and highlights the importance of close and subtle analysis of (reported) behaviour as both structure and agency. This caution is supported by a view of performers as strongly gender-marked identologists (Connell 1987), a perception which is in turn related to specific conceptions of social and commodity fetishism in relation to the woman performer worker. Here, the centrality of belief to the conduct of social relations is seen as helping understanding of the constitution of the performer labour process and product and in turn to be illustrated by them. These key ideas are also seen as enabling analytic engagement with formal strategies of regulation, as these strategies, while ultimately targeted at belief as manifested in collective structures and individual agency, are themselves informed by these ideas.

Centrally, ideas of and around concepts of gender as difference provide a context for consideration of the realities of the labour process for women employed to 'be' 'women'. This enables examination of the supposition that the central industrial relations experiences of women performers are manifestations of their position as

formal and informal proxies for women's experiences in wider society. The ways in

which consideration of these ideas was approached are now considered.

CHAPTER 3   METHODOLOGIES

the mixed, ambiguous nature of things, the charm of nuance and singularity, the difficulty of determinate judgements, the preciousness of the fleeting and fragile, the pathological shyness of truth.

Terry Eagleton, *The Gatekeeper*

Introduction

I am the product of my life (an early epistemological standpoint thus taken). Part of

that life has involved getting a law degree and then becoming a professional actor

and singer; I am now researching the working realities of women performers and,

inter alia, the effects of the law on these realities. Thus I am clearly saturated by

bias, partiality and subjectivity: my only escape is through awareness of my position

as a situated subject and ongoing attempts at rigorous self-reflexivity. Of course this

position takes as taken-for-granted the assumption that objectivity = good and

subjectivity = bad. These terms carry significant connotations, not the least of which

is the equation of objectivity with rationality and the equation of rationality with the

masculine, courtesy in the West notably of Aristotle and of biblical thought (e.g.

Fredman 1997), a framework alluded to in discussion of the influence of religion and

patriarchal thought in Chapter 1. The practical significance to industrial relations of

the development of philosophical and cultural thought can be illustrated by citing

from a study of a general trade union where a male full-time official was asked why

the union did not prioritise issues important to his female members. The official

answered that their needs simply weren't as important as male needs - after all,

women were made from Adam's Rib (Richards 1988). These are the stories we tell to make sense of our lives and thus contribute to the bases on which we make decisions and therefore it is necessary to consciously learn the lessons of the failings of what have come to be widely recognised as androcentric paradigms (e.g. Harding and Hintikka 1983; Morgan 1981) in particular in relation to an occupation that pivots around writing and around the stories we tell ourselves. A further practical example of this approach to life and work can be seen in Beynon's (1973) study of Ford workers where he found that 'In handling the present, men call upon the past for guidance. The lessons of the past are learned and handed on as stories' (1973: 75). This is a theme that Beynon has gone on to explore explicitly in relation to class, television and film, describing images as sustaining popular and political ideologies (Rowbotham and Beynon 2001: 25). This idea relates to the work of Connell (1987) considered in Chapter 2, in his identification of performers as identologists. In the present context, what is clear is that awareness of both the assumptions underlying interpretive research and of the social meanings understood by those involved in the research, is essential. In attempting to clarify my own position I will address both matters. First the methodological frameworks within which this study was conducted are considered.

Parameters: methodological frameworks

The research aims of this project discussed in Chapter 1 indicate my perspectives on central issues of ontology and epistemology, which I elaborate below. What I looked for dictated what methods I used and illustrate my beliefs about what can be

known and how it can be known and ultimately, what research and its findings can be used for other than simply functioning as part of a personal career process. Given the multiplicity of positions on epistemological and ontological issues, as an individual researcher one should aim to achieve a consistency of assumptions (Johnson and Duberley 2000) which entails for this researcher a consciousness of my own beliefs derived from my own habitus (or 'set of structuring dispositions', broadly listed above) and the relation of these to the outcomes of research (Bourdieu 1990: 53). I am aware of my own assumptions of 'multiple realities that are socially constructed – rather than the belief that there is a single, "objective" reality' (Yin 1993) and that these assumptions shaped my choice of semi-structured in-depth interview and observation of audition processes as primary research methods. These assumptions in turn stem from my position as a feminist, and thus critical, realist: 'what counts as knowledge must be grounded on experience' (Harding and Hintikka 1983: x; see also Eyerman 1981 in Gottfried 1998: 457).

Choice of method dictates what can be known: statistics alerted me to the pervasive nature of issues I believed existed, but only personal engagement with the people and situations represented quantitatively in earlier research (Thomas 1992, 1995) can offer insights into how and why these statistics exist. Quantitative methods in this area would provide answers, but if one is not asking the right questions then the answers must float uncommitted. Plato (1956) wrote in the *Meno* that 'True opinions are a fine thing...but they will not stay long. They run away from a man's mind, so they are not worth much until you tether them by working out the reason...Once they

are tied down, they become knowledge, and are stable' (1956: 154). True opinions were of course what I was seeking in exploring perceptions of disadvantage, however, whilst many would question any notion of the stability of knowledge let alone its conception in this form, Plato's distinction between two versions of reality illustrates the impetus behind the use of qualitative strategies in this research.

Bhaskar's (1989) ontological viewpoint, cited in Williams and May (1996), that 'social structures unlike natural structures only exist by virtue of the activities they govern and cannot be identified independently of them' (1996: 84), can be understood as not only differentiating between two types of science, social and physical/natural, but as implying a social scientific methodological premise: that one needs to attempt understanding of people and their activities in order to identify and make sense of the structures which they both create and are created by (Giddens 1991). Engagement with people's personal realities can start to uncover the particular processes or structures that inform these realities which in turn has implications for the 'institutionalised' aspects of this project. For example, Equity needs insight into its members views of their working realities to formulate meaningful policies (should of course it wish to do so). There are many truths and these may differ, but discovery and acknowledgement of the informed perspectives of the seldom-heard (or better, -listened to) can only aid the formulation of broader theories and plans of action at a more general level (Stang Dahl 1987; Harding and Hintikka 1979; Oakley 1981). Dilthey wrote of 'a community of life unities' and that 'Although the aim of interpretation is to understand objects and events as

manifestations of the lives of individuals, none of us are *just* individuals. We share

in a collective life and so are 'collective individuals', so to speak' (in Anderson,

Hughes and Sharrock 1986: 70).

This notion of life unities is developed in Schutz's argument that it is through the

use of typifications that we understand and attribute meaning to social action and

that these typifications are constructed from our personal biographies (in Burrell and

Morgan 1979). One is therefore caught in a hall of mirrors, as issues of

representation and reality assume a particular resonance in the context of researching

performing work. I as researcher interpret according to my own personally

constructed biography, as of course do my research 'subjects,' who through their

work are involved in constructing typifications which in turn influence the personal

construction of typifications in the society of which we are all already a part. Again,

this connects with the work on identologists and social and commodity fetishism

discussed in Chapter 2. So this potentially problematic methodological issue in fact

forms part of the subject matter of the thesis.

Implicit in the research aims of this study is a search for richness of data

contributing to *verstehen* of this particular world, a concept used most notably by

Weber (1949). Johnson and Duberley (2000) describe *verstehen* as the process that

enables the 'rightful aim of social science' namely, understanding the internal logic

of human action (2000: 34). As a process, it involves 'the interpretative

understanding of the meaning a set of actions has to an actor through some form of

contact with how they experience their experience.' (2000: 34, emphasis original).

This process leads to theory-building as opposed to theory-testing (Yin 1993), and

therefore statistical representativeness and generalisability were not useful concerns.

Both the size of my interview samples and the boundaries of my research aims

dictated that typicality was not an objective, but rather the presentation of 'material

from which theoretical principles may be inferred.' (Crompton and Sanderson 1990:

21).

I was looking to collect and explore perceptions of experience, thus I was looking

centrally for meaning, an approach which must rely on a claim to know other minds

(Williams and May 1996). Impossible as this might seem in its narrow formulation,

a Weberian presumption of a 'shared, rational faculty' (Williams and May 1996: 71)

allows us to modify the claim to *interpretation* of other minds and the emphasis

shifts to whether research findings have internal validity and result in a view of a

situation that is 'based on and consistent with detailed study of that situation'

(Schofield 1993: 202), thus establishing a legitimising rigour and an accessibility to

other researchers (Padgett 1998). The search for 'meaning' is not meant to indicate

an ahistorical or inflexibly poststructuralist approach. Identification of specific

causal factors in relation to each research question was not an objective; if it were,

the chosen strategies would have included equal numbers of women and men

performers, an issue addressed below. However I was hoping to establish and

explore, through relating working 'realities' to 'perception', *explanations* of

particular phenomena. Explanations can contain causality but need not: for

example, performers' perceptions of their prospects of career longevity may contribute to explanation of the persistence of particular career patterns while not being able to explain precisely why or how these patterns exist. Having established the general methodological approach taken in this project, we now look at the specifics of its form.

Parameters: why women?

In Chapter 2 the idea of the 'invisible man' was invoked as an absence that constructs the illusion of difference. The patriarchal and androcentric formations of succeeding gender orders have resulted in the disappearance of man into person, with the inevitable corollary of the appearance of woman as not-person or 'other'. Thus (contested) ideological oppression and historical development of the material bases of society have resulted in a particular construction of performing work, with performers very largely being assigned to represent their own gender and each worker tending to benefit or lose from the particular construction of gender and sexuality on offer at the time. Notwithstanding this internal or subsequent segmentation, performing work is a long-term formally unsegregated occupation and Hakim (1996) recommends that 'Integrated or mixed occupations, employing both men and women, seem to be of particular interest both from a theoretical and a policy perspective. Lessons for the future must surely be found most often in this minority group of occupations in the workforce' (1996: 214).

Women workers are usually the most disadvantaged in any sector and one of the principal causes of this disadvantage has been identified as occupational segregation (Hakim 1979; Cockburn 1983; Walby 1990; Barron and Norris 1991; Fredman 1997; Bradley 1989) making it potentially revealing to examine an area where systemic disadvantage has been identified 343 years after formal integration (Wilson 1958). The lack of previous study in this area influenced the decision to focus on the majority white, able-bodied grouping within the broad category women performers. 'Focus' in this context means that gender was the dimension concentrated on in interview and that questions about the influence of ethnicity on working realities were not asked of anybody except minority ethnic performers. It should be noted here that in the interviews with black women performers, issues of race and ethnicity were raised by them without my asking.

The terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' have both been problematised in use in social science research (see e.g. Grint 1998: 227) and the terms used in this study reflect current trends in this area and interviewees' use of language. The limitations in exploration of race and ethnicity issues were imposed by the broad construction of the research aims and by issues of access discussed later in the chapter. Within these limits two British minority ethnicities were engaged with, sometimes tangentially; black (specifically African-Caribbean) and South Asian. Again, issues of access were important here, but so was the relatively greater visibility of these performers in produced work, for instance as compared to East Asian ethnicities (a situation noted and explored by Cottle 1998).

A small group of men performers have been interviewed for this project, but usually in their alternative or subsequent 'gatekeeper' capacity. The decision to interview primarily women performers was taken principally for two reasons. First, the existing quantitative data (Thomas 1992, 1995; Towse 1996) and qualitative work in cultural and media studies (discussed in Chapter 2) had already signalled some of the persistent disadvantage experienced by women performers. I was not looking to repeat identification of the *existence* of disadvantage, which would necessarily have entailed comparative analysis. Knowing what had already been found as principal dimensions of disadvantage, I wanted to know how these dimensions were perceived by those experiencing them. This is not to say that research with men performers would not have been useful or interesting contributions to the research aims, it is to say that given the parameters of the research aims, it was not necessary.

This was in part due to the fact that fieldwork research, corroborated by my own knowledge of the industry, made it clear that women are very largely not considered to be in competition with men for work; not by themselves and not by the employers and employer-proxies. This formally unsegregated occupation is, as indicated above and in Chapters 1 and 2, deeply divided along gender lines. In an industry that regards itself as running on the decisions of individuals (as will become clear through consideration of data) perception is all. Therefore the perceptions that are of primary interest in establishing working realities and disadvantage are those of the people being affected and those doing the affecting. As well as not being considered to be (and thus not being) in competition with men

for work, it also became apparent that although women and men performers are judged within the same or similar categories, these categories differ in their parameters. A key example is good looks: the permissible spectrum for men is more varied than for women and operates across a much wider age range.

A further rationale for the decision not to undertake a comparative analysis of male and female experiences of the performing labour process was my semi-conscious conviction that it was necessary to first establish voices and experiences of this 'group' in their own right before moving on. There is no existing comparable work in this field and although comparative analysis in this area is important, I believe – fully consciously at the end of fieldwork - that first there is a need to listen to and engage with the experiences of women performers as they stand. This conviction illustrates my perspective as a feminist (Reinharz 1992) and the extent to which one's situatedness as a researcher determines research question, strategy and analysis. It also indicates the potential limitations of working within one's own paradigm. My keenness to tread a traditionally feminist route of listening to the lesser-heard meant that I was insufficiently rigorous in thinking about my taken-for-granted perspectives and only late in fieldwork did I recognise the heterosexist and class-biased assumptions of many of my questions. This stopped me investigating alternative lines of inquiry during the earlier stages of fieldwork and may have shut off responses from some interviewees. Clearly, considering the conceptual frameworks outlined in Chapter 2 as shaping this project, this represents key omissions in some of the data. However, the shock of this lens adjustment had the

advantage of alerting me to the realities of the standpoint theories that I had previously thought I understood and meant that the iterative process of analysis was renewed by close interrogation of existing interview data. It also conclusively and justly undermined any claims to what Eisner (1991) has referred to as the scholar's 'enlightened eye' (in Denzin 1997:32).

Parameters: analysis

However unenlightened, my scholar's eye was still the medium of interpretation of data. While I started from a position informed by my feminist, critical understandings of the social world and by the existing quantitative research relevant to my research aims, the methods I employed were 'inherently inductive' (Padgett 1998:2). I sought largely to generate contributions to theory from analysis of data embedded in, though not restricted to, my conceptual frameworks. The process of analysis was continuously iterative as, in Glaser and Strauss's (1967) formulation of the generation of theory, 'A single case can indicate a general conceptual category or property; a few more cases can confirm the indication' leading to 'a running theoretical discussion' (1967:30). However, my processes of analysis were not as reassuringly linear as this suggests and it required prolonged submersion in data (primarily transcripts of interviews and observations) and literature (empirical and theoretical) to become aware of the many layers of potential analysis. This inevitably resulted in methodological gaps in early fieldwork, leading to frustration at missed opportunities, but also acknowledgement of the disjointed realities of social science research.

I began with certain empirical and theoretical categories. The fieldwork categories were rooted in my empirical research aims, in that, taking women performers as a given group, I identified other occupations as key in terms of consideration of access and pay issues. Other categories were added as I became aware of their importance or potential value: for instance at the start of research I was only dimly aware of writers' agents and the place of 'development' in the television production hierarchy. All of these are considered below. The initial empirical categories of analysis stemmed from their relevance to exploration of what I considered to be central issues implicit and explicit within existing data. This perception was based on my previous professional experience and on initial review of literature relating to gender issues. The principal categories were access to work through formal and indirect routes including approach to and experience of auditions and relationship with agents; pay in terms of awareness and experience of disparities; experience and perceptions of career longevity and resistance to work perceived as stereotyped. There were also broad categories of 'law' and 'union' in which I was looking for awareness and/or experience of these strategies in relation to access, pay and career longevity. These central categories were supplemented by other issues such as the marginality of performing work and perception of what would improve the working lives of women performers. The theoretical categories used initially for analysis centred on sexual ideology, encompassing patriarchy and later in the research process, heterosexuality, and commodification, including issues around aesthetic labour that later developed into a category of self-selection. The category of self-awareness as identologist (and thus also with ideas of performing as work) emerged

from analysis of interview data. This last group of issues was analysed as interconnected in terms of ideas of structure/agency which in turn engaged with the issues around individual regulation.

Glaser and Strauss recommend working in non-traditional areas as a 'strategy for escaping the shackles of existing theory and contemporary emphasis' (1967:38). Such an approach could lead one simply to attempt substitution of meta-theories, but in modified form this recommendation has value. As the construction of the thesis is intended to indicate, the marginalised positions of performing and its women workers can illuminate traditional areas of study by their very lack of familiarity.

In discussion of research strategies, I describe my empirical approach to analysis. First I will briefly summarise the research categories and sites involved. 85 people were interviewed: 22 women performers; 5 agents; 7 casting directors; 6 directors; 7 people at 3 drama schools; 5 producers; 6 writers; 4 union officials; 5 people at the BBC; 4 people at [Theatre 1] and 4 people at [London Theatre]. I informally divided these occupations into performers and gatekeepers or employer-proxies. There was also a 'miscellaneous' category comprising 10 people outside of the primary occupational categories and research sites. Precise descriptions of the occupational and organisational categories selected and their relevance to the research aims are set out below. I observed 4 auditions, three in theatre and one in television. Finally I kept a research diary, recording events and impressions from mid-way through the first year of this project. This journal has been a useful *aide-*

mémoire, in particular in being able to trace thoughts and happenings in context rather than simply stand-alone records and analyses. What is recorded has not always been clearly related to the terms of the study but has been useful in charting and understanding (if only retrospectively) the ebb and flow of social science research. The principal methods of semi-structured interview and non-participant observation are discussed below.

Research sites

Charting the working realities of women performers is complex: they are all effectively self-employed businesses and work (often very intermittently) on short-term contracts for myriad numbers and types of employer. Therefore, it was necessary to identify the primary types of site in which they are likely to work, especially in the parts of the investigation focusing on 'gatekeepers' and employer-proxies (both for their perceptions and as part of identifying structural realities). The project looks at women performers working in television and theatre and within theatre largely the subsidised sector, principally for the following reasons. In 1999 Equity, the principal performer's union, commissioned a survey sampled from the whole membership which showed that actors' main source of work is television, comprising 46% of work done (Osborne Market Intelligence 1999). Regional theatre, the majority of which is subsidised repertory theatre ('subrep' as it is usually referred to), comprises the next biggest percentage, with 28%. West End theatre and Small Scale theatre, at 16% and 12% respectively are the next biggest sources of work, with fringe theatre, feature films, advertising, radio and Theatre in Education forming the next significant block at between 11% and 6%. Moreover,

as British actors mainly work (when they work) in television and theatre, they talk about both as constituting their working realities and seem to use their perceptions of differences and similarities between the sectors as points of reference for clarifying the meanings their work has for them. As one leading performer told me, "British actors are unusual in being able to work across several different media, often in one day". A performer may go from recording a television project to doing a radio voice-over to appearing in a theatre piece - in this occupation, with approximate 85% unemployment rates, a clear example of 'to them that hath, more shall be given'.   This is thus an early indication not simply of the sectoral mobility available within the entertainment industry, but indirectly of the pressures experienced as structure by those who attempt to perform for a living.

The extent of the dependence of the television sector labour market on its links with the theatre sector is indicated by the recommendation of the Cork Report (Arts Council 1986) of the introduction of a 1 per cent levy on the BBC and on commercial broadcasters to be invested in live theatre (Feist 2001). Feist (2001) also paints a non-economistic picture of performer mobility between the sectors, saying of subsidised theatre that: 'It offers younger artists essential opportunities to develop skills and experiences, particularly in the earlier part of their careers. They contribute to a well-developed pool of artists which the commercial and cultural industrial sectors can subsequently draw upon.' (2001:196). Feist also acknowledges that there is a lack of research on the forms this mobility takes. This is a related point to Leontaridi's (1998) identification of labour mobility between

sectors as a key research area in explanation of segmented markets, discussed in Chapter 2. Discussion of findings in Chapter 7 will contribute towards identifying relevant issues in such research.

Commercial theatre, i.e. West End and provincial commercial (Equity-defined as non-West End) theatre, exists as a 'for profit' entity. The producer company usually, though not exclusively, hires theatre buildings or spaces as and when required and stands or falls on recouping private investment through box office receipts. Subrep theatre is building-based and funded by grants from the government-funded Arts Council and its regional outposts as well as by generation of its own income, chiefly through box-office receipts. The subsidised theatre system has long been regarded as the principal training ground for British actors and until recently was the primary route into Equity membership (Equity Annual Report 1997, 2001). Although declining funding and dwindling audiences have reduced the size of this training area (see e.g. Peter Boyden Associates 2000), the statistics above demonstrate that it still comprises an important proportion of the working actor's professional life and, centrally for this research, the data show that directors and casting directors use it as a resource, a hunting ground for fresh talent to be used in both television and theatre. Television, with its increasing number of soap operas in various formats, is now providing more of a training or initial outlet and both it and theatre cross-fertilise each other. They are further intertwined in that experience in one sector impacts on bargaining capabilities in the other. Television exposure increases a performer's market value in theatre. Theatre exposure in the right piece

can gain entrée to the higher fees of the television world and lengthy theatre experience will often add a premium to a fee by contributing to assessment of that mysterious phenomenon, the performer's 'position in the industry'.

Performers are not formally part of the organisations they are paid by, although they are constitutive of them while they are working and therefore I looked at these organisations as entry points for interrogation of issues rather than as objects of study themselves. The other occupational categories interviewed, who are instrumental in structuring a performer's working life, are also frequently not part of organisations: for example agents and casting directors are usually self-employed businesses, and many producers are freelance, as are most writers. However, I did approach particular organisations for specific reasons. I went to Theatre 1 because I was aware of its respected reputation within the sector and because it was the closest of the local subsidised theatres. To increase my opportunities for access I decided to approach another, similar but larger, organisation and went to one of the two national-level companies in the country, [London Theatre]. I was also aware of the symbolic status of the biggest national companies [] in the potential performer career path and was interested in whether this status affected performer perceptions in relation to access and pay.

In television, I approached both the BBC and ITV Network Centre. Network Centre is the central division of the fifteen regional television companies and commissions programmes centrally on their behalf. It should be noted that fieldwork was conducted before the government gave permission, in October 2003, for the merger

of Granada and Carlton, effectively creating a single ITV company (only a very few small companies remain outside of the merged business). Despite repeated attempts via different routes, I was not able to interview any of the three senior executives at ITV Network Centre. This was very disappointing as in fieldwork it became clear that the people in these positions are perceived as wielding enormous power over the work opportunities of performers. However, the letters of refusal are interesting in themselves. The then director of programmes (the top job in the organisational hierarchy) and the controller of network drama stated that they could not see how their jobs impacted on the working realities of women performers. The head of network drama, while also stating that she believed her role in commissioning drama meant that her perspective was not useful, added: 'frankly, I'm not very committed to what are usually described as "women's issues".' In contrast, the Director-General of the BBC sanctioned access to the whole organisation. However the distinctions between intention, representation and reality were illustrated by the lack of access that this generous permission produced. With the relevant documentation passed on to ever-descending echelons within the BBC and frequent pleasant but inconclusive phone calls, nothing ever seemed to materialise. With the luck which every researcher needs, I mentioned this to a fellow PhD student. He put me in touch with a family friend, a recently-retired senior executive at the BBC. As well as an interview, she provided a list of high-level contacts at the BBC and the use of her name as entrée.

Research strategies: observation

In both television and theatre the audition is the principal method of entry to a particular job, which was the basis for the decision to observe auditions in each sector. These are publicly pivotal moments when labour power (housed appropriately) crosses over from the putative outside to the putative inside of the labour process. The audition's significance as a constantly recurring event where the worker is offering herself to be accepted or rejected on the most personal of terms, makes it an important environment in which to address issues of structure and agency in relation to recruitment as well as the interconnected issues of aesthetic labour and 'acceptability' and these are discussed in Chapter 5. The basic mechanics are usually these: a performer is requested to attend at a particular time and meets the director and, very often in television, producer(s), casting director, casting assistant and occasionally, writer. Generally however those in control of auditions are conscious of too many people being off-putting, as the performer is typically required to act on the spot. The performer performs a prepared speech and/or reads scenes from the actual script. Sometimes stylised movement will be involved, for example pretending to be a mole in an audition for *Wind in the Willows*. It can involve singing and dancing or it can simply involve talking generally about work done and thoughts about the particular piece. At television auditions it is now standard form for the audition to be recorded. These parts of the labour process will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

Observation: access

I found gaining access to auditions problematic to different degrees. I came up against a protective wariness on the part of many casting directors and directors I spoke to about observing the audition process. It would probably surprise many performers to realise the degree to which many of these key employer-proxy figures appreciate the peculiarly exposed nature of the process and are concerned about adding to the stress they understood the performer as experiencing by inviting in an 'outsider'. Some seemed to regard themselves as part of an almost familial type process. They would have known or met many of the actors who would be attending and with the others their reactions could be seen as implying that they saw themselves as involved in a relationship with them, however fleeting: that they were all on the same side, with the play being the thing. This of course echoes the self-conscious nineteenth-century attitude of actors being unlike other workers as defined by their 'loyalty to the show', noted in Chapter 1. This perception, another example of the construction of performing as not 'real' work, reappears in Chapter 6 in relation to performer pay. It is arguable that the difficulties experienced in gaining access, which were in part the result of gatekeeper protectiveness, are an indication of the positive aspects of the singular reliance on individual perception and whim in the entertainment industry.

Access to the theatre auditions proved the least difficult and I observed two auditions for [Theatre 1] and one for [London Theatre]. The [Theatre 1] auditions were for lead family members in a Christmas show scheduled to do a run and then

tour nationally (*[X]*) and for the part of [X] in '*A Midsummer Night's Dream'*. [X] is written as male and all the performers auditioning were male, however I took advantage of the (same-day) invitation on the novice researcher's premise that one does not refuse offers of access. While the observation data from this audition was not directly relevant to the research aims, it was useful in terms of contact with gatekeepers and in further exposure to the audition process. The [London Theatre] audition was for a lead woman's role in a classic repertoire staple, which I have decided not to identify as some of the data are sensitive. After the first audition at [Theatre 1] and the audition at [London Theatre] I tried to contact auditionees for interview but had no success with either, which was a disappointment in terms of completeness in the observation data, but does not leave a general gap as all of the performer interviewees had audition experience, many of them at [London Theatre].

After several false starts with arranging access to a television audition, once at the BBC and three times through independent television companies, I obtained permission to observe the casting of several characters, male and female, for the second series of the ITV production [X]. Again, this was through the offices of a friend then working as script-editor for the company making the series. While this produced the formal access required, I found that because I had established myself indirectly, the people running the audition had no direct relationship with me and there was not the clarity about what I was doing, or the trust I could possibly have had in other circumstances. There was a tendency at certain points for them to talk to each other too quietly for me to hear, which I felt was (possibly automatic, even

unconscious) cautiousness about speaking in front of an outsider. However, despite frustration at perceived gaps, the observation overall provided fascinating data which I would not otherwise have collected.

Observation: form and uses

The form observation of auditions took was overt and unobtrusive (Collins 1984 in Blaxter et al. 1996). The challenge of maintaining a position within particular research categories is illustrated later in consideration of standpoints. However, for all central purposes, I was firmly a non-participant observer. I sat at the back of the rooms and was not introduced to auditioning performers except for one audition at [Theatre 1] and by first name only at [London Theatre]. This is not to say that I was not observed in my turn by these performers. One of the recurrent notes was the way in which almost every performer I saw audition made eye contact and smiled at me, always on the way in and usually on the way out as well. I had a common impression at each site of the performers being 'on'; being pleasant to everyone as they are always walking into rooms not knowing exactly what any individual could potentially mean for them in the future.

Observation data was noted on the day in the periods when performers were not actually auditioning – inevitably briefly at the time and then fully when travelling home. I recorded physical details such as descriptions of rooms and clothes, as well as recording the order of events that occurred, the reactions of people to me, to the project and to each other. I noted verbatim comments where possible and as I

thought useful and where precise phrases escaped me, wrote approximations/summaries and labelled them as such. [London Theatre] audition observation took place over a two-hour period at [] in London in a [] rehearsal room with post-audition discussion in the casting director's office. The first [Theatre 1] audition, for *[X]*, was held at a rehearsal room hired from the London Bubble Theatre Company in Rotherhithe. It was the last set of auditions held over a three day period and the observation took place over a five-hour period, in the rehearsal room and in a pub at lunch with the director and producer. The second [Theatre 1] audition, for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, took place over a two-hour period in a rehearsal room in [] and in a [Theatre 1] foyer for post-audition gatekeeper discussions. The [X] television observation took place between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. in a meeting room at the offices of Yorkshire Television in Leeds.

I was looking for certain things in observation of auditions. As the main junction of the performer labour process the audition is the place where the more formal issues around access to work will be most visible. The less formal issues, including personal contact with gatekeepers and employer-proxies during the rehearsal process, would have required different research strategies beyond the scope of this project. I hoped that observation of and interaction with gatekeepers and employer-proxies before, during and after auditions would add to the insights on access obtained in interviews. I gathered direct data around perception through interview but felt that indirect data obtained by observation would add depth to this exploration by capturing any similarities or contradictions to emergent themes and

also to improve my own understanding of the interview data. The analytical course adopted, discussed in Chapter 2, in part framed and in part resulted from the empirical research. Incidents in observation brought issues to life in ways that made me see theory in practice as well as signalling the need to investigate other ideas in order to understand what I was seeing. I was already looking at theories of gender and patriarchy as I was aware of the largely segregated nature of the woman performer's labour processes. Therefore, in fieldwork I was looking for differentiation and conceptions of the potential worker along specifically gendered lines. I was not, however, aware of the depth and extent of the internal stratification of women performers as a labour market group and the data, especially observation data, drove the focus of the analytical framework. Suppositions on aesthetic labour for instance were revealed to be too one-dimensional prior to observation and indicated the need for a focus on sexuality and on self-preparation. Accordingly fieldwork and theoretical analysis were in iterative partnership.

There were two dominant themes to the television observation that should be noted. These were not determined by the context, but provided more general and very interesting insights into the working realities of women performers and the interconnections of these with mainstream society and mainstream labour markets.

At the television audition there were four gatekeeper/employer-proxies; director, producer, casting director and casting assistant. All were women and both the gatekeeper group and several of the performers commented on this as unusual. Two

of the women performers auditioning not only noted the situation (as did most of the men) but said how "nice it was for a change". The tone was set from the start of the day, when the director and producer started laughing about "so many women in one room" (a phrase repeated by several of the performers). It was treated lightly and jokily, but was obviously not common or would not have received so much attention. There was a consciousness amongst the gatekeepers of themselves as gendered and this was also apparent in a less direct way in the second recurring theme of the day. This was food and appearance. There were continual references to weight and food and all (except the assistant, who was not as involved in these discussions) seemed to share similar understandings about these subjects. There was acceptance that all wanted to stay (very) slim and talked and acted in terms of self-denial and 'virtue'. Chocolate was referred to, and eaten as, something obviously desirable but obviously to be resisted. Discussing the upcoming 15-week location shoot of the series, the producer and director talked about it in terms of weight-gain from eating at the location canteen wagon. Weight-loss was commented on positively and clothes sizes talked about. These individual perceptions of the desirability or otherwise of body shape seemed to be reflected in selection decisions: discussing the suitability of one middle-range woman performer, the gatekeepers referred primarily to the performer's choice of clothes. This was not in terms of the clothes themselves, but as common currency for gendered value judgements: "who comes in without tights on, especially when you've not got the best legs in the world". Thus there was a shared unarticulated assumption about what women (should) wear in certain situations and further, that if she had legs that did not

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conform to accepted dimensions of physical attractiveness, she should have worn something that disguised this fact. Again unspoken in these exchanges was the idea that women performers shared the gatekeepers' knowledge of gendered configurations of appearance and should abide by them to have realistic chances of access to work. The parallel (to 'official' work talk) food/appearance theme of the day was given a disorientating, ironic framework by the fact that the series being cast was about societal pressures to have a slim body. I took from this aspect of the observation the obvious resonance with the work briefly referred to in Chapter 2 on legal regulation and weight discrimination in recruitment, found to be particularly acute for women (Roehling 2002). This is related to the ideas noted in Chapter 1 concerning Edwards (2003) and the terrain of industrial relations, that the human resources of an organisation 'cannot be separated from the people in whom they exist' (2003: 5), and it was asserted that the subjectivities imposed or embraced affect both structure and agency in the labour process. We see this here, in its implications for the preparatory work of aesthetic labour and the role of performers as identologists articulating society's gender order, as well as illustrating Connell's (1987) use of 'gender regime' as an institution's micro-manifestation of definitions of femininities and masculinities (1987: 99). In all the auditions I observed overt blurring of the divisions between inside and outside the labour process; the person was the job in unusually specific ways. This line of thought was pursued in conduct and analysis of interviews and in Chapter 5 the two categories of data are discussed in terms of their common themes.

Research strategies: interviews

The central advantage of in-depth interviewing is inherent within the outline of my ontological and epistemological position. The central disadvantage may be summarised, extending the hall of mirrors metaphor, as the converse of this advantage: an inevitably partial selection of views about phenomena involving tens of thousands of people. However, the impossibility of gaining in-depth views from this amount of people being a given, one must look to questions of sampling.

The fieldwork started with targets for quota sampling (Blaxter et al. 1998). I identified (from my previous incarnation as a professional performer) a list of occupational categories as necessary to talk to in establishing a picture of women performer's working realities. Within each category I aimed at an approximate number based on assessment of the resources – financial, physical and mental – available to a lone researcher on a limited budget. This industry being composed largely of individuals working on temporary short-term contracts within last-minute and changeable schedules, and most importantly, within interconnected networks of friends and ex-colleagues, the target groups were often inaccessible by random sampling (Yule and Kendall 1950). One particular group (ethnic minority performers) proved particularly difficult to reach by more detached methods and I had to resort to introductions from friends. It is possible that this group was more difficult to sample from because their smaller numbers within the industry (6% of Equity membership) meant that the general trawl through age and status categories to find random samples that I employed at the beginning could not pick up enough volunteers from a relatively small base.

Often the brick walls in fieldwork access were removed by personal contacts, either friends or through meeting at interview, highlighting recurring patterns of working relationships and the importance of connection to the swim of information in this industry. In previous research a performer told me that "the bottom line for everyone is will this bastard employ me again?" (Dean 1998:15) and it is the repetition and attempted repetition of working patterns with the same people that is of central importance to an understanding of the performer's labour process. Thus what became the dominant techniques in my fieldwork, snowball sampling and convenience sampling (Faugier and Sargent 1997; Padgett 1998:51), played out as a microcosmic version of the operation of this sector where the labour process revolves around word-of-mouth and individual contacts.

Research strategies: selection of interviewees

Explanation of terms and occupational categories selected for interview is necessary, as is explanation of the miscellaneous collection of people interviewed in more *ad hoc* categories. Owing to the way that I have used interview material in this thesis, based on the epistemological and ontological approaches outlined above, these explanations are given in some detail. First I address the central term in the study, performer.

I use the term performer to refer to people working as actors in theatre and television. While most women performers seemed to have no strong feelings and referred to themselves interchangeably as actress and actor, I found that some object to the term actress whereas others use it exclusively and object to being called actor.

On this basis, I largely use the term performer - which can include other professional artists such as singers - throughout the thesis, with occasional use of 'actors' as a collective noun. After the introduction of the occupational category I add an abbreviation which will then be used through the body of the study to place the identity of the interviewees when they are referred to or when they speak. This is in accordance with an increasingly common trend in industrial relations research, to allow 'the voices of those researched to come through within the text' (Greene 2001: 8; see also Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 253).

Women performers (P), at 22, formed the largest single group of interviewees. 'Women performers' is an inevitably generalised label that comprises many sub-divisions, including those of age, class, sexuality, physical characteristics and personal biography. However, position on the invisible ladder of the performing career being the marker that crosses all boundaries, I felt that divisions of work status were the most important basic categories and then within these I wanted to talk to minority ethnic performers as the most immediately visible of potential subdivisions within those categories. The other subdivisions mentioned above were addressed within the context of the interviews as they became pertinent.

My first approaches were via *The Spotlight* casting directory, a 75-year old institution in the British entertainment industry. A performer pays for entry into one of the directories, which buys a photograph with agent or personal contact details printed below as well as details of height and eye colour. These volumes of

photographs are separated into Actors and Actresses, within which are self-selected

categories of Leading (defined as professional experience of leading roles),

Character (over 45), Younger Character (30-45) and Young (under 30). There are

other volumes, such as Children and Stunt Performers, of no present relevance. The

Spotlight website enables one (if a subscriber) to search for performers either by

name or by combination of characteristics, including age, hair colour and weight. I

contacted 92 performers across all 4 categories and (in the main) wrote to them care

of their agents explaining my research and asking for an interview, offering

anonymity for all or any part of the discussion. Some of the performers I contacted

care of *Spotlight* and a few directly through a mutual contact.

At the outset I attempted to gain perspectives from within particular status

categories: leading or 'star' performers, middle-range performers, lower range

performers. These groupings are informal descriptions rather than sets performers

move in or out of in a readily defined way. They are striated more finely than I

suggest here and allocation to a particular category was based on my own

assessment (there being no official occupational categorisation), but their basics are

as follows. The first category of leading or star performers refers to people who

have name and status recognition inside and outside of the industry. They have

substantial levels of bargaining power and much greater access to work

opportunities than the majority of performers of their own 'type' (a classification

that will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). I interviewed 4 women in this category:

[ ]. Middle-range refers to those performers who work regularly (a significant factor

in an overcrowded, highly competitive labour market) and who are familiar faces to the public or who are well-known within the industry itself. In this category I interviewed 6 women: [ ] and one performer who wished to remain anonymous. To my outsider's ear, nothing this performer said could be construed as controversial and the gist of her perceptions were repeated many times over in other interviews. However, her awareness of the relative smallness of the performer's world was very keen. This was particularly apparent in discussion of agents, which, interestingly, was also a part of several other performer interviews where I was asked to turn off the tape recorder and not attribute comments. Middle-range performers would receive higher fees than the union-negotiated minima, but would not command the levels of fee available to stars or have access to their choice of jobs. A sub-set of the middle-range category is those performers who have achieved a level within the business through experience or exposure but who can be viewed as not belonging to the middle-range main set as their 'profile' is lower. This sub-set comprised 4 women: [ ].

Lower-range refers to those performers who do not work regularly, either because they are relatively new to the business or because they have not built up a position that makes them visible or desirable to the all-important gatekeepers. Within this set, I interviewed 8 women: [ ]. Their bargaining position in relation to pay is clearly the weakest of the three broad categories, and they would be more likely to work for minimum or just above minimum. The uncertain perimeters and porous quality of the three status groupings is indicated by the fact that all or any of the

women referred to could reasonably take issue with my choice of category for them and that by the time this thesis is submitted any of those in the lower range could be international stars.

There are many different routes into performing as a career and these will be addressed briefly in a later chapter. However the formal recognised route for actors is the **drama school (DS)**. Although there is no necessary connection between drama school training and entry to performing work (as in, say, law school training and entry to work as a solicitor) a proportion of these schools are validated by official recognition by the Department for Education and Employment and by Equity, which now offers automatic membership to accredited drama school graduates. As these schools are responsible for the selection and preparation of successive generations of performers it was important to obtain an insight into the views of their senior staff. The (effectively self-appointed) élite schools are members of the Conference of Drama Schools and I contacted 9 of the 19 members, again based largely on geographical proximity with one being my own old school. I contacted a further 3 schools which are not Conference members but again, are well-known and established. I was successful in obtaining interviews with 7 people at 3 drama schools, all Conference members. At [Drama School London 1] I interviewed [ ] and [ ]; at [Drama School London 2}, [ ]; at [Drama School 3], [ ].

Agents (A) are critical figures in the labour process of performing. Although agents are nominally working for the performer client, they are also key gatekeepers to

access to job opportunities, as well as being negotiator intermediaries between the worker and the employer, with concomitant implications for long-term bargaining relationships. A point to note is that (non-specialised) agents might have directors, designers and writers on their client list as well as performers.

The approach to agents was made through the addresses found in the *Spotlight*-produced annual handbook *Contacts*. I selected agents to approach using the *Contacts* 2001 directory, based on their membership of the Personal Managers' Association and on address. London is the key centre for the entertainment industry; the majority of Equity members live in and around there and despite the complaints I heard in fieldwork of the industry's geographical discrimination, I concentrated on the London area. This was both for its importance in the working lives of performers and for the practical reasons of proximity and accessibility. I wanted a selection of successful agents and therefore approached those I knew by reputation or based on a central London address. I also wanted less successful agents and so contacted those whose addresses put them on the geographical and therefore I assumed, industrial fringes. I contacted 42 agents and interviewed 5: [ ] are both established and successful agents with several leading performers as clients; [ ] is a relatively new agent, an ex-performer with a small client list of lower-range performers; [ ] is the agent for the [ ] Theatre School and [ ] is an agent at one of the major London companies representing writers. Many agents did not reply whilst others wrote to refuse because they assumed, despite my assurances, that I wanted them to talk about individual clients.

There is an informal hierarchy of agencies based on the importance of their client list. Generally, successful performers (those who are well-known to some degree and/or working regularly) are with 'name' agents, almost all of whom are based in London. These agencies have strong connections with key casting directors and producers and consequently will know earlier than most what projects are coming up and whether there are potential opportunities for any of their clients. Newer or less successful agents will subscribe to services that pass on project information for a fee or will sit on the phone every day ringing round casting agencies or any contacts they have. Performer's views of agents varied, some thinking of their agent as a close friend, others viewing them as a necessary evil; in either case it is usual for a performer to change their agent several times during a career, the reasons for which are discussed in Chapter 4.

Casting directors (CD) were variously described to me as "glorified secretaries" and "absolutely crucial". They largely work as individuals, although the big television companies have casting departments as do the largest theatres. Mostly however they are freelance and are retained by individual film or television companies on a project basis. It is unusual for a subrep theatre to retain a casting director for a particular play (unless the theatre is particularly large, as with [London Theatre]) and usually the person employed to direct the piece casts it. However, as has been noted, television forms the largest single area of work for most performers, and casting directors are therefore key figures in the labour process. I interviewed 7 casting directors and selected them for contact in much the same way as agents, by

mixture of addresses. I aimed for those clearly successfully established (implying substantial and probably varied experience) and those operating as lone operatives on the geographical/sectoral outer fringes. I interviewed the heads of casting of [London Theatre] and the BBC [ ] and tried to talk to casting directors at the main ITV companies, but with no success. The remaining casting directors interviewed work mainly across television and film [ ] while [ ] works with a foot in both camps and [ ], who was just starting out on her own, has come up through theatre and was at the time of interview working as an assistant casting director.

A casting director will read the script and form initial ideas of who could play each role. She (and it is usually a she: 155 of the 222 casting directors listed in *Contacts* 2001 having identifiably women's names and 26 having identifiably male names, a gender concentration discussed in Chapter 5) then talks to the director and producer(s) to find out their view of the roles. Her job involves suggesting performers who could embody these views as well as those she feels could bring a different slant to the role, and to send out casting breakdowns (synopses of the characters) to agents or to contact agents directly based on her knowledge of their client list. She arranges who is brought in for audition or interview and once the choice has been made (by the director and/or producer) she negotiates pay based on the allocated budget.   She is employed for her wide knowledge of what acting talent is around and therefore most casting directors spend a great deal of time going to theatre (mainstream and fringe), watching tapes of films and television programmes and attending drama school showcases.

The **director (D)** of a television or theatre piece is most usually a freelance worker employed for a particular project, although there are some who are attached to particular theatres, usually as Artistic Director, or A.D. as they are commonly known. The A.D. decides on the forthcoming season of plays and who will be employed to direct those he will not be directing himself (at the time of principal fieldwork of the 64 regional repertory theatre A.D.s, 11 were women, *Contacts* 2001: 295-299). The director might suggest a particular project and therefore be on board from the beginning, or might be chosen at a later point by those initiating the piece, as is common in television. The director is largely responsible for the vision and the tone of the piece and is always closely involved in casting if not solely responsible. A director will often have particular actors in mind for specific parts and if working with a casting director, will ask for those actors to be brought in for interview or given a direct offer. Of the 6 directors I spoke to, 4 worked mostly in theatre, 2 mostly in television. [ ] was, at the time of interview, the A.D. of [Theatre 1]; [ ] is a senior theatre director who has done a small amount of television; [ ] are freelance theatre directors; [ ] is a freelance television director; the late [ ] worked primarily for the BBC. I would have liked to talk to more television directors but even repeated approaches to the organisation Women in Film and Television proved unproductive.

The **producer (Pr)** is a more complicated category to describe. A producer in television can be responsible for the initial project idea and will be largely responsible for choice of key personnel such as director and casting director. Most

producers are responsible for the allocation of the project budget and it is part of the job to maintain close control over expenditure. Producers will vary as to the amount of creative input they have, but most will be involved in casting decisions and will often have the final word. The producer figure is not really a part of the subrep system although they exist as generators of projects in commercial theatre. I interviewed 7 producers: [ ] is a well-known commercial theatre producer who has also been a performer and has run a subsidised theatre; [ ] had been primarily involved in radio but had long-term senior executive experience at the BBC; [ ] is Associate Producer at [Theatre 1] and is mainly responsible for the theatre's work with the local community; [ ] are freelance television producers; [ ] (an opportunistic telephone interview based on a mutual contact) is the head of Granada Film and also produces in television.

Writers (W) are central to investigation of the research questions as they create the product that provides work opportunities for performers. I spoke to 6 writers, all again as a result of snowball sampling or direct introduction by a mutual contact. [ ] is a household name through her television work although she also writes for theatre; [ ] is a successful television writer; [ ] writes for both theatre and radio and has made lower-level forays into television; [ ] is working for the BBC in another capacity and has also had lower-level television experience as a writer; [ ] writes across several media and has had television work produced; [ ] writes for theatre.

Whilst working as a performer I was an activist within **Equity (E)**, sitting on its Northern Ireland Committee and acting as a delegate at annual representative conferences. I have retained my membership of Equity since ceasing to work as a performer in 1995 and had spent some time since researching the organisation itself for my M.A. dissertation. I believe that this helped me gain access to Equity and my requests for information and interviews were largely facilitated. I arranged to attend a meeting of the Women's Committee where I explained my research and listened to their comments. This committee had previously commissioned research into disparities in pay (Thomas 1992, 1995) and was planning to commission a study of the portrayal of women in the industry. I later wrote to the committee members individually and over the course of several months interviewed 5 of the 7 members. I interviewed several of the full-time officials at Equity's London headquarters: [ ].

Several of the people interviewed were outside of my initial categories but were contacted opportunistically or because it seemed that they might have an important or interesting perspective to offer. [ ] was then the Executive Director of [London Theatre]; [ ] is the General Manager of [Theatre 1]; [ ] are independent equality consultants; [ ] was [] of the television Producers Industrial Relations Service (PIRS, since renamed the Producers Rights Agency); [ ] is [] at the BBC [] and was previously Research and Parliamentary Officer for Equity; [ ] is the theatre critic of *The Guardian* and has been analysing theatre professionally for 30 years; [ ] is an ex-performer who works as an adviser to both [Drama School 3] and to *Spotlight*. I

also talked to a researcher within CEDAR (Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research) at Warwick University, who is examining the operation of the government-funded Dance and Drama Awards and to [ ] , then industrial officer of the Media, Arts and Entertainment Alliance, the Australian performer's trade union. Apart from being an old friend and thus proving accessible for interview, this officer is originally from Northern Ireland and worked for several years both as performer and stage manager within the British system. I interviewed three American performers, [ ], as noted above, as they were working or had previously worked in the British system and were able to offer informed outsider perspectives.

Interviews: form and uses

Interviews took a semi-structured form: a core set of questions for each occupational category that was pursued or deviated from as seemed appropriate at the time. Interview length ranged from one of 30 minutes to several of three hours, with the average interview taking 90 minutes. I usually used a tape-recorder, after requesting permission in the initial letter and confirming permission on the day. During some of the interviews the interviewee would ask for the machine to be turned off while they told me things they were anxious could not be attributed or on the understanding that that information was not to be used at all. Some of the interviews were unrecorded as I felt that the introduction of a tape machine would inhibit responses (for instance in some of the union interviews). Interviews were transcribed, coded according to my initial empirical and theoretical categories, then

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further coded in line with issues and themes introduced by data (as discussed above in relation to analysis).

In this study, interview and observation data are integrated with the description and analysis of working realities and disadvantage. There is regular inclusion of direct quotes, both from a position of principle (as noted earlier in the chapter) and also to enable a more direct appreciation of the ways in which the realities are perceived and constructed, to avoid blanket mediation through academic analysis. Inevitably, of course, the selection of quotes is biased by my own standpoint and the analytical frameworks chosen. Presentation of people's words within the text indicates the way in which I understood them and wish them to be understood. Having marked this familiar and unavoidable position, I also note that the views presented are, to the best of my understanding, representative or illustrative of repeated findings unless indicated specifically otherwise.

The use of interview and observation data in the construction of this text is clearly synecdochal, as indeed is the selection of elements of working realities and perception of disadvantage as the research aims of the project (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 248). Further, the presentation of data fits with the underlying approach of the text, which implicitly emphasises the narrative form. The selection of the particular aspects of the labour process, from access through pay to longevity, shows consciousness of the centrality of narrative to exploration of a relatively unexplored field. Narrative in the academic context has been identified as a

particular sort of vehicle: 'It furnishes meaning and reason to the reported events through contextual and processual presentations' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 249). Thus the 'arc' of aspects of employment relations chosen for study, as noted in Chapter 1; the form of presentation of data; the use of meta-narrative in both constructing and understanding the produced text. The elements are inter-related. My choice of data fragments for presentation implicitly argues that meta-narratives are capable of 'existence' and validity and that association between the data and the ideas is demonstrable. Explicitly, it is the elaboration of conceptual frameworks in Chapter 2 that provides the analytic structure within which a broadly narrative approach to study of an unfamiliar occupational area and use of data as synecdoche, has both relevance and robustness.

Research processes

Detours

At the start of this research project, I intended investigating issues relating to dignity at work. It seemed that an occupation which frequently involves the overt representation or exploration of sexuality would be interesting to analyse in terms of the way in which this affects the behaviour of workers and employers, especially in relation to issues of access to work and career longevity. However, I soon found that discussing this topic, focusing on harassment, was difficult. Interviewees were not keen even to discuss it in general terms as they were with other subjects. The few who did talk frankly were people I already knew, implying a requirement for a

level of trust to broach such a sensitive area. What I found, although limited, convinced me that there are issues to explore but that a specific research strategy would have to be designed to gain the confidence of interviewees, as indicated by the experience of Collinson and Collinson (1996).

Another key part of my initial research design was to compare the central industrial relations experiences of ordinary performers with leading performers or 'stars', within the concept of individual regulation. Individual regulation by stars suggested the generally rare example of the power balance in the worker/employer relationship tilted in the worker's favour. Stars represent profit to the funding sources and commissioning agents, which gives them individual access to relative control of the labour process. I had hoped that their experiences would illuminate the workings of the arts and entertainment industry in the three specified areas, in terms both of difference and similarity of treatment. However, most of the contemporary British star performers I contacted were either unwilling or unavailable to talk to me. I spoke to several leading performers who have been established names for some time, but the lack of current performers who are experiencing working life in a different framework from the majority means that I abandoned any ideas of a thorough-going comparative investigation and instead have used individual regulation as part of the general framework of analysis.

However, the perceived 'difference' of this area of work as a research topic discussed in Chapter 1 was highlighted indirectly by this category of leading

performers. Throughout the research period people (both in and outside of the academy) would almost always ask who I had interviewed, whether I had interviewed anyone famous. There was always a sense of anticipation, almost of excitement, before I answered. Clearly this is a passing note, but it indicated to me the potential for the individual performer worker to become part of the lives in a society and thus relates to the idea of the contribution of the performer to our construction of typifications. This in turn related to the ideas considered in Chapter 2 concerning gender orders, social and commodity fetishism, and the place of the performer worker in society.

Detours: data obscurities

There was less frustration and more curiosity provoked by the indistinctness of some data, especially regarding pay. My main priority here was to examine perceptions and attitudes relating to pay, taking the existing quantitative data as my framework. However, it was interesting to discover that obtaining access to straightforward current pay information is not a simple task. I will be addressing pay structures in detail in Chapter 6 but a basic rehearsal of the processes illustrates the research challenges as well as foreshadowing potential explanations for disparities.

Pay structures in the performing sector do not lend themselves to scrutiny. In most areas of television and theatre Equity negotiates national level contracts which set minimum payments within a structure of hours, performances and use-rights. It is then open to the performer, usually through an agent, to negotiate an increase from

this minimum level. The research showed that all parties regard these further negotiations as individualised and (therefore) private. Some expressed regret at this situation but there is general individual and institutional acceptance of the lack of transparency of pay levels.

Equity, which has commissioned surveys revealing the existence of gendered pay disparities, does not monitor pay although it receives copies of all subrep contracts. It does not receive copies of television contracts but it keeps a file on each production that uses an Equity agreement, with cast numbers and lists. Pay is also not monitored by any of the employer or employer-type bodies, such as the Arts Council or the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television (PACT), the association that covers 90% of film and television producers within the UK. [ ], then [] of PIRS, PACT's (since re-named) industrial relations service, said that he thought obtaining broad and reliable pay data would be "impossible…because each production is an entity in itself…It'll be all over the bloody place". He went on to stress that as extracting information from individual production records would involve the companies in extra cost in a strained financial climate, the possibilities would be slim for PIRS, let alone an individual researcher. Although this obstacle could be circumvented by a targeted research strategy, for the purposes of this study the lack of easily accessible information on pay is less a gap than a contribution to the research aim of investigating attitudes towards pay and has further implications for discussion of the persistence of gendered disparities. These issues will be addressed more fully in Chapter 6.

Standpoints and omissions

It is arguable that, as an ex –performer, I possessed an informed perspective that

may have led me to discover more or different things from a researcher new to the

nuances and particular indexicalities of this area of industry (Kondo 1990; Burrell

and Morgan 1979). Conversely, I am also aware of the dangers inherent in an

assumption of knowledge. It is possible that an interviewer who had had to ask for

explanations of basic categories, jargon and so on, might have elicited deeper, more

considered, or simply different opinions and that subsequent analysis of data would

have yielded different interpretations. However, conscious of the dictum that 'One

must find a way to make the familiar unfamiliar' (Ely et al. 1991 in Padgett 1998:

27), I did not volunteer my former status unless I felt it was useful or was directly

asked. Additionally, I left the industry in 1995, long enough ago to have

metamorphosed into an unusually well-informed outsider. At one point in fieldwork

however any aspirations to maintaining a mask as an 'objective researcher' were

jettisoned when I encountered suspicious resistance from a director whose audition I

was observing. I had obtained access through the producer and assumed,

mistakenly, the director's full, informed knowledge of my presence on the day. I

wanted a follow-up interview with this director and the prospects were looking

gloomy. The producer, director and I lunched together halfway through the audition

process and I sat in silence while they discussed the auditionees. The director

suddenly asked me, in a very direct and challenging way, what *my* opinion was. I

decided that if I said I was simply there to observe and maintained a particular

conception of researcher credibility, I would lose any chance of engaging with this

woman. So I replied with an equally direct, detailed summary of the performers

seen so far. The director seemed to agree with my assessment and from then on the

atmosphere altered subtly and my presence was accepted and she subsequently

agreed to be interviewed. This episode was partly a result (as became apparent in

the subsequent interview) of the gatekeeper 'protectiveness' found in relation to

audition access discussed above. It was also another demonstration of the

importance of (officially) unmonitored and unregulated individual perception in

determining access to work. The unofficial monitoring/regulation I perceived was a

product of individuals' own sense of responsibility and fairness within the confines

of gendered employability givens. These issues will be explored in following

chapters.

Apart from the (unknowable) potential negative effects on research of my ex-

performer position, there are further aspects of this project which could be seen as

serious flaws. It was argued above that there are sound reasons for the exclusion of

a comparable sample of men performers from my interviewee categories. While

these reasons are considered to be valid, it would have given a fuller picture to have

included such a sample. In particular, any contrasts in working realities and

perceptions of disadvantage (contrasts already signalled in survey data: Thomas

1991, 1995) would have served to delineate and highlight the position of women

performers.

The lack of current pay data is a weakness of the study and despite the interesting issues raised by this absence, discussed above, the research aims would have benefited from analysis of such data. Further difficulties in access, with reference to ethnic minority and star performers, have also been addressed above. The delicacies of fieldwork timing meant that, having been unsuccessful in obtaining access to drama school students at two of the three sites, I missed my one opportunity to do so at the third. I regret this as a lost chance to gain direct impressions of women immediately before becoming performer workers and thus any possibilities of exploring, for instance, the effects of experience of the working realities and of disadvantage on perception of the issues. I have already referred to my inability to obtain access to three key gatekeepers at ITV Network Centre and am aware that this has left a significant gap in tracing important aspects of access and career longevity. These absences contribute to a less thick description (Geertz 1973) and as my research aims included 'mapping' of women performers' working realities, the thinner the description the less useful or interesting a guide such a map becomes. The fieldwork omissions can also be related to potential criticism of the analytical foregrounding of gender over both class and ethnicity. Neither, however, is ignored. As was made clear in Chapter 2, relative salience (Cockburn 1991) is the conceptual approach of this study, as indeed it implicitly is of all social science research.

One of the most interesting (and surprising) aspects of the interview process was how often individual interviewees expressed support for what they perceived to be the emancipatory essence of my research. This was not restricted to performers:

assorted theatre and television executives, casting directors, agents and union

officials expressed, often forcefully, their hope that this study would help to bring

about change; a broader example of similar findings in earlier research (Thomas

1992). These expressions reiterated the perceptions I found of 'difference' (to

mainstream work) and 'awareness' that part of this difference was founded on

something uncontrollable: the position of women in society. They further reaffirmed

my conviction that the methods I used embody my beliefs about what can be known

and how it can be known and that praxis, where the insights of practice are reflected

in theory construction, enables us to attempt understanding of the social world

(Smart 1989). It is to the insights of practice that we now turn.

CHAPTER 4   STARTING

no one in their right mind would be an actor unless there is nothing else they want to do in their life. It's the most appalling life.

Patrick Mason, Artistic Director of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin,
From Maestro to Manager

Introduction

In this chapter I will begin to address access to work, the first element in the

mapping of women performers' working realities. Performers are in a continual

process of attempting to gain access to work, during jobs as well as between them.

Therefore the concept 'access to work' has several permutations and as such is

considered through most of the following chapters. The variation examined here is

that concerning routes into 'the business', as it is typically referred to. The primary

formal route is via the drama schools and their approach to entry selection is

considered. These findings are considered in conjunction with performer

perceptions which indicate operation of the schools is closely allied to perception of

performer labour markets, markets which, as we explore further here, often operate

through typification and stereotype. There is also discussion of the less visible

routes into the industry, the lack of defined paths through this occupational sector

and the implications of this for women performers. The occupational categories

detailed in Chapter 3 are then placed in context in an examination of the structures

of the subsidised theatre and terrestrial television sectors, placing particular

emphasis on the role of the agent - employee as employer-proxy - in connection with

access to work. The regulatory strategies outlined in Chapter 1 are considered within all of the above contexts. This chapter will thus start to trace the paths taken by women performers and establish the structural environment within which consideration of working realities and disadvantage can be explored.

Formal entry routes

There are approximately 290 individuals and institutions offering drama training in the U.K. (*Contacts* 2001), 19 of which are members of the Conference of Drama Schools (CDS). This is an organisation which is held to represent the elite in vocational drama training, and its stated aims include contributing to the maintenance and development of standards of such training as well as representing the interests of member institutions at regional, national, European and international levels (CDS 2001). Membership of the CDS is obtained by fulfilling procedural criteria, satisfaction of which results in an institution being put forward for election by existing Conference members. The criteria relate principally to level and duration of courses, professional experience of staff, professional experience of graduates and the application of 'stringent standards in the selection of students' (CDS 2001: 2), a criterion which operates in possibly unexpected ways, as the data will make clear below. Access to these schools is gained by an audition process and places are either self-funded or, in recent years, by allocation of a limited number of government-funded Dance and Drama Awards (DaDA).

The perception of most interviewees spoken to was that there are more female than male students at drama schools. This appears to be largely the case, but the situation is in fact rather more complex. All of the schools spoken to said that their primary concern was talent, but that because fewer men than women applied in the first instance, that they routinely accepted proportionally more men applicants than women applicants. The interesting question, why do fewer men apply in the first place, is one that must wait for further research. Here, a small digression can contextualise the discussion. The membership of Equity (approximately 37, 000 in total, Equity 2001: 63) stands at approximately 50:50 men and women, a state of affairs that has existed for as long as anyone can remember, according to Equity's communications secretary. Equity's membership comprises many types of cultural industry worker, from clowns to lighting designers, and the inclusion of ballet dancers inevitably weights the gender ratio. However, actors comprise the largest proportion of membership and it is clear that any difference between numbers of male and female actors is not significant for present purposes. Yet the apparent neutrality of a 50:50 split masks an anomaly at one remove: the gendering of entry into the business via the most institutionalised and widely recognised route, the drama school.

The only institution from which recent figures were obtained was [ ] but the interview data from all the schools confirm that these figures represent the typical model. For the 2000/2001 intake to [ ], 515 people were auditioned, of whom 374 were female (72.6%) and 141 were male (27.4%). Offers of places were made to

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167; 98 female (26% of female auditionees) and 69 male (40% of male auditionees).

There were eventually 106 entrants, 60 female (61.2% of females offered a place, 16.04% of female auditionees) and 46 male (67% of males offered a place, 32.6% of male auditionees). This pattern is reflected every year according to [ ] , respectively Dean and (then) Director of the School of Acting at [ ]. Thus a considerably higher percentage of a considerably smaller auditioning group enter [ ], as a result solely of their gender, a situation both the Dean and the Director said is replicated across the drama training sector: [ ] had previously worked as Director of Drama for the Arts Council and [ ] had moved to [ ] from another CDS institution, the [ ]. This assessment was borne out in interviews with the Principal of [], [ ] , as well as [ ] and [ ] of [Drama School 3]. [ ] (DS) said that "good men will choose a school" whereas good women probably will not because, comparatively, there are so many more of them. The [ ] estimate of entrants was that approximately half as many men as women applied and that more men did not turn up for audition. As the [ ] principal entry criterion was stated in interview to be "Do we think this person will work at the end of the course?" and all the drama schools acknowledged that there is more work and more higher status work available for men, it is clear that talent cannot be the only benchmark and that some women with greater potential will be denied access to training because of their gender. Helen Thomas (1995) noted this policy of accepting proportionately fewer women on the grounds that there are fewer jobs for them once they leave, and argued that 'this could seem like a self-fulfilling prophecy' (1995: 13). However, as unlike most mainstream careers there appears to be no proven, demonstrably regular association between training and access to work

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(Towse 1996; see also Baumann 2002) this cannot be an explanation of either cause or effect of gendered disparity in access to roles. This perspective is supported by the view of [ ] , then Executive Director of [ ]:

> One of the peculiarities I think, of being a performer is that it doesn't really matter how good you are by some external measure of you know, like are you a good lawyer. Well yeah, you can tick a lot of boxes about how good a lawyer you are and you can demonstrate your achievement. With performers, the box-ticking element of it is very marginal. I mean you go through the process of learning to be one, or a lot do, but you come out the other side and everybody's on an even keel, they've all gone through the process, and some may have achieved significantly against the criteria of their training institution than others. But once they're out there, the market is completely random.

This perception of the performer labour market as random is widespread. At one level of analysis, the lack of correlation between training and employment outcome (considered below), it is also justified. However, if considered specifically in gendered terms, it is not. The drama schools themselves recognise this and indeed, according to a significant minority of interviewees, reinforce it. [ ] (P) said there were "hints" at drama school that unless she lost weight she would find it difficult to get work and that in school productions "I was always 80 plus in M&S nylon print dresses. I came out thinking I were rubbish." This was similar to women's drama school experiences documented in Todd (1984:63). In the present research, [ ] (P) was one of several others who spontaneously (i.e. nobody was asked specific questions on the subject) echoed this story:

There was me and then there were 4 very pretty, sort of standardly pretty, girls who got all the leads. They would get all the ingénue parts. I meanwhile struggled with my weight, all through college…every character that was over 90, or you know, somebody's crazy aunt from Yugoslavia, they would put on a fat suit, black out my teeth, and I would play these parts. Which is an odd training for an 18 year old. You get out of school and they need a 90 year old woman, they're gonna get a 90 year old woman, they're not gonna put me in a fat suit. So I always felt, the whole thing about being a woman and not being commercially saleable at that age.

[ ] (DS) said that although all drama students "think they're going to be big stars", that "the women would be shocked if we were as candid with them as the real world would be. You know, in terms of their looks, their weight, what jobs are out there *for* them. I think they'd be shocked." [ ] (P) trained at drama school in California and found the approach more direct:

What it specialises in is, you know, size 8 blondes. Or size 8 brunettes. And not size 14 black girls with big noses. So I was told get a nose job, and all those kind of things. I had to lose about 3 stone so – the thing about drama school in America as opposed to drama school here is they set you up for the business, and it's actually a good thing. Because you don't come out of there with rose-coloured glasses on.

Direct market recognition of this kind was not apparent in discussion with either performers or drama school staff in relation to the U.K. There seems to be an emphasis on the craft, on the development of skills, and an acceptance of market criteria in indirect ways such as casting in-school shows. The influence of market criteria on the principal topic of access is now developed.

[ ] DS) said that the government strictures regarding the allocation of DaDA awards individual training funding – that they must be allocated purely on talent - do not in fact operate in this way. [ ] (DS) cited, much as [ ] (DS) had done, an 'employability factor' in deciding which applicants to admit. This is survival of the most likely to succeed: drama school training is expensive and the liberal approach to selection inevitably privileges existing demand categories. Even an undiluted allocation based on perception of talent at interview - though the stated aim of most drama schools - ignores the potentially disadvantaged position of those starting further back in the queue. It takes no account of class, in terms either of ability to pay or of previous access to training. Several of the people interviewed at drama schools recognised these facts and were frustrated by both the government funding criterion of talent and by their perception of their own inbuilt biases towards reproduction of white middle-class cultural forms. [ ] (DS) introduced an ethnicity dimension into the connection between employability and access to training: "a black candidate, if they're good, and if they're trainable, will get work", a view shared by all drama school interviewees. [ ] (DS) effectively corroborated this point but with an explicit gender element, when he stated baldly:

> If you're an Asian boy you need not be as talented as other boys to get on
> the course. And that goes for any course, RADA or whatever… and it used
> to be the same with Afro-Caribbean boys and still is. Afro-Caribbean boys
> *do* get offered chances at what might be seen as some of the more
> prestigious schools, on slightly different criteria to others because they are
> seen as marketable, and if we're cynical about it, as then doing something
> about their…part of what I refer as the black count. Which is what passes
> for ethnic monitoring…I mean we are not really talking about equality of

opportunity or equal opportunities, we are talking about a black count effectively.

This assertion in effect posits positive discrimination as a labour market response for the benefit of employer-proxy institutions and is noteworthy considered in light of Derrick Bell's (1992) arguments concerning civil rights strategies in the United States: that history shows that any progress made has essentially been achieved where there has been 'perceived self-interest for whites' (1992: 15; see also Hepple 1992: 28). However, the perceived current privileging of black and Asian men in performing work and (thus) in drama schools highlights the explicitly gendered dichotomising of the industry and echoes the doubly-oppressed position of minority ethnic women workers in the mainstream (Kirton and Greene 2000: 24; Campaign for Work 1991).

In relation to gender alone, the schools cited various issues in justifying their entrance policies. One of the main factors was said by [ ] (DS) to be about creating a more effective dynamic within a student group, as well as being more effective in terms of casting school productions. This was a point made by an academic researcher interviewed concerning data on the operation of the DaDA awards - that there are *tacit* admissions criteria, including:

> what is a suitable company or cast…Schools have been upfront about getting a particular mix of students they can use in plays – and if you're No. 3 curly red-headed person you may be surplus to requirements even though you may be more skilled.

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[ ] confirmed the practical results of this approach: "And we often have the conversation, well it is actually easier for men to get in". [ ] (DS) acknowledged the effect on access policies of schools' awareness of the attitudes of casting directors and agents. He said that if a school was to keep on presenting pieces with mainly women these employer-proxies would stop coming to the all-important end-of-year showcases: "you know they want to see something that seems to them to reflect roughly the sort of work that's on out there. They're very conservative." This perception of conservatism was reiterated by a senior casting director and also illustrated the circularity of the pressure drama schools perceived as emanating from the gatekeepers: [ ], head of casting at the BBC said that often casting directors wanted to give agents "a bit of an imagination pill. You know, you put a breakdown out for a solicitor, 40, you can bet your life that 95% of the suggestions will be middle-class white males."   As figures demonstrate that the actual gender balance amongst solicitors is approximately 60: 40 male/female (The Law Society 2001: 4) we arguably see here the material effects of Bourdieu's (2001) 'symbolic domination' referred to in Chapter 2, in the patriarchal association of authority with the masculine. Further, the disparity between portrayal and reality is a telling time-lag illustrating Cockburn's (1983) point that it is the interaction between ideologies and material circumstances that 'makes any system so powerful and enduring.' (1983:212). Thus, the illogical limitation of access for women performers to portrayal of solicitors is an example of what was argued in Chapter 2 to be the trace of patriarchal ideological impulses.

There is another, more narrowly materially based, aspect to external pressures on drama school admissions policies. [ ] (DS) said that schools are judged increasingly stringently on student destinations, an approach he sees as promoted by those schools within the CDS with the 'best' graduate destinations. He took for granted gendered disparities in access to work and found this approach narrow and discriminatory: "There's also a question of what is a good graduate destination… because, if you train as many women as you train men, your graduate destinations are going to be worse." In relation to this, he went on to raise an issue also mentioned at other schools, saying that they could improve their destinations by accepting women "who look a certain way, *or even* men who look a certain way", indicating the 'common sense' perception that women and men performers operate within the same restrictions but to differing degrees. There was a tension evident in many of the interviews between awareness (and regret) of the specific sexualising of women and acceptance of what were perceived to be rigid employment realities. At [ ], [ ] said that they do not take appearance into account although she was aware that some schools do – "all chiselled cheekbones and blonde hair". [ ] at [ ] said he had been to a production at [ ], another member of the CDS: "all the actresses were blonde and thin…the entire cast looked like Steps." He said that the show had been part of [ ] musical theatre course and [ ] (DS) made a similar point about [ ] own musical theatre course:

> well I think it's sort of self-fulfilling…I notice with the people who
> audition, you don't get many plain girls come and audition…nothing to do
> with us at all, you know…I mean that's an exaggeration but on the whole,
> they tend to be quite good-looking girls, on the whole.

This idea of self-selection is one that will be pursued in discussion of the next variation of access to work, entry to the labour process, in Chapter 5. Here, both [ ] at [ ] and [ ] at [ ] acknowledged again the correlation between labour market demands and drama school supply. [ ] thought that their musical theatre course took more account of people's looks in terms of "employability" and [ ] said that the musical theatre market "wants slender, blonde, five eight women with good legs" but that at [ ] they had always taken in applicants based on talent or potential for training, not looks: "And I think it's illegal, actually, to discriminate beyond that." Of course, discrimination based on perception of appearance is not illegal, although such an approach has been argued for (Harvard Law Review 1987). However, the vague perception that it is illegal is an interesting contribution to arguments that the law has an important part to play in influencing the *environment* in which decisions are considered and taken, as much as determining the legality or otherwise of the decisions themselves. This frames law as a 'conditioning force' as well as a 'controlling force' (Hepple 1992:28; see also Dickens 1992: 108; Smart 1989). The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 prohibits discrimination in admissions to educational institutions and applies to drama schools by virtue of the allocation of DaDA awards (SDA s.24 (2) (b)). However, the provisions of the Act have not been utilised in this area, a surprising situation considering that drama school admissions policies, which appear to be directly discriminatory, seem to be something of an open secret. The schools do not perceive themselves as being discriminatory in the popular sense of the word. They see their proportionate preference for male students as an inevitable response to matching supply to demand. This economically neo-classical approach

to an occupation marginalised as something other than real work is a reminder of the capitalist boundaries within which women performers both struggle and achieve.

The possibilities of union regulation here are of course limited, not least in view of the fact that the principal supply-side ground for drama school discrimination – over-supply of women applicants for the gendered demands of the performer labour market – is a situation replicated to a lesser degree in the performer labour market as a whole. That is, there is over-supply of both men and women performers for the employment demands of the entertainment industry. The union would be keen to see such a situation disappear in order to fulfil its primary regulatory function of negotiating minimum terms and conditions of employment. Indeed, [ ] (DS) notes that Equity (under its previous name, the British Actors' Equity Association) was initially antagonistic to the growth of new and newly full-time drama schools in the 1950s and 1960s, not wanting them to train new actors who would compete for work: "Equity didn't want drama schools. That's the truth of it…they took them because they had to." As Ruth Towse (1996) notes, artists' trade unions Europe-wide have been faced with competing claims in concern for the status of the current generation of artists in opposition to 'the social goal of equality of opportunity' (1996: 34). Now, faced with the removal of its previous defining characteristic, the pre-entry closed shop, and the consequent internal structural and cultural shifts (Dean 1998), Equity is eager to have regular access to drama schools to persuade students of the value of union membership.

Informal entry routes and regulation

Drama school places being both limited and expensive (the class connotations of which are clear), many would-be performers find other ways of gaining access to recognised work. There are alternative routes into what is often called 'the profession'. Indeed, it seems to be a point of honour amongst many performers to insist upon professional status, possibly to distinguish themselves from others doing what seem to be similar things – amateur performers, or indeed anyone who sings in the shower or speaks in front of others who watch. The alternative routes invalidate such claims in any technical sense. Training as a performer is held to be desirable but is not either mandatory or essential. Qualifications of various kinds are often acquired – actors as a group are generally educated to a higher degree than the population as a whole, with 51% of women and 41% of men in the middle-range performer bracket holding first degrees (Thomas 1995). However, these qualifications are unnecessary and therefore irrelevant. Acting is a skill that is regarded as assessable only by demonstration ([ ] (A): "you wouldn't take on anybody without actually seeing their work") or possibly indicated by employment record. It cannot be represented by 'an elaborate screening device' such as a degree (Towse 1996: 30). And in any case, as will be seen more clearly in subsequent chapters, access to performing work is often based on criteria other than acting skills, such as age, appearance and public visibility.

The Employment Act 1990 ended the operation of pre-entry closed shops and with it went, as one interviewee argued, the performer's "badge of professionalism".

Equity's control and restriction of entry to its 'predominant' occupation, and its concentration on those areas rather than on the level of wages (Turner 1962: 43), which had made it straightforward to categorise Equity as a closed craft union (Dean 1998) could not be maintained, making the technical label 'professional' even more uncertain. While there is no longer any legally-supported compulsion to join Equity, the aura of professionalism associated with possession of an Equity card lingers and many still do join. As [] , then chief executive of PIRS, acknowledged: "Equity would still have, in membership, the vast majority of U.K. artists". It is difficult to assess this claim accurately, as Equity's [*official post*] accepts: "it's very very difficult to put any realistic estimate on penetration." The entry criteria have relaxed considerably, and now all that is required is that the performer is 'currently working professionally in the field of entertainment' (Equity website).

There is much regret amongst performers about the ending of the closed shop; however there is also acknowledgement of the unorthodox effects of the policy. [ ] (P): "it forced the kids to do, some pretty nasty things. Like you could get your Equity card by working in a strip show, for so many weeks, you know…and that was very dodgy." The situation seems to have remained dodgy, with, for instance, a proliferation of advertisements for work in lap-dancing clubs in *The Stage* (the weekly trade paper for the theatre and television sectors). Such advertisements underline the traditional association of actress and body discussed in Chapter 2. There are also regular advertisements for unpaid acting work (largely live stage work, occasionally in film) in locations around the country. Even if entry to Equity

is not the goal, these 'fringe' jobs are still seen as possible ways to get a foothold in a notoriously overcrowded labour market and crucially, to be seen and taken on by an agent. They are also of course ways to earn a living while trying to find the way in. The advertisements in *The Stage* can include schools tours, pantomimes, profit-share productions, as well as jobs in the big musical shows and, as noted, lap-dancing clubs. They rarely if ever carry advertisements for acting jobs in subrep or in television. There are ways of finding out about potential job opportunities other than *The Stage*, for instance the Professional Casting Report is a long-established weekly subscription circular breakdown of current and future projects, giving short descriptions of the parts available. There are also websites giving casting information to subscribers. The common problem with these publicly available information sources is that by the time they are read they are usually either out-of-date or the gatekeepers concerned have already approached their own contacts. Most work opportunities, especially the most prestigious and well-paid work, are not advertised at all and is accessible only through an agent or through the work grapevine. In an industry notable for its permanently high levels of unemployment, the work grapevine is an unstable source: extremely important for those in work, silent for the out of work majority.

Clearly all potential performers, female and male, operate within the same detached, uninformed periphery, but the simple logistics of more females chasing fewer 'female' parts (the intra-occupational segregation that will be addressed more fully in subsequent chapters) mean that again, gaining access to the first rung of the

invisible performing career ladder is more difficult for women. Further, as noted above by [ ] (P) and the adverts in *The Stage*, gaining access is potentially more likely to involve sexualised opportunities. The combination of sheer force of numbers and the demand for entertainment based around the categorisation of women as bodies makes it more likely that female hopefuls will take lower-status work that reduces their chances of attracting an agent to view their work.

Gatekeeper as employee and employer-proxy

Access to work necessitates access to information in the theatre and television sectors, which comprise hundreds of different employers and employer-proxies working within an industry that is essentially single project-based. What is being made, when, and by whom? Agents were regarded by most interviewees as the vital lifeline to knowledge of upcoming projects and thus lifeline to access.

As the International Labour Organisation (1992) has noted, entertainment industry agencies 'Although in theory engaged or employed by the performers, their role in practice, if not in law, was almost that of an employer, in terms of the power and influence that they exercised.' (1992:14). Agents are retained by performers to seek out appropriate work opportunities, i.e. auditions, for roles in the performer's 'category'; to negotiate payment and conditions if the performer is offered the job; to mediate and resolve issues that may arise between the employer and the performer during the working period. It is possible for an individual performer to do all these things and it is possible for a union to do (variations of) the last two, but in most cases it is an agent who does them. Many performers feel themselves unable to

negotiate financial terms. They are aware that agents have better overall knowledge of current rates and conditions across the industry but there is also a strong element of embarrassment at bargaining over money as well as a consciousness of their own desire to do the job and also to work again for the particular employer. The agent seems to be used as a de-personalising mechanism in an intensely personal labour process and most though not all of the performers interviewed felt that they could not navigate the industry properly without an agent.

Therefore agents are the key conduits between aspirant worker and potential employer. They occupy an unusual place in the performing labour process in that they select people to take on as clients in a working relationship that can last for weeks or decades. The agent seeks out appropriate job opportunities for the performer, attempts to get her seen for those opportunities at audition and if the performer gets the job, the agent takes a percentage of the fee paid for that job, a fee which the agent negotiates. If the client is a successful, 'name' performer, the role becomes more about fielding offers and advising on career direction. The agent will also typically deal with any work-related issues that arise for the performer for the duration of the job. The agent therefore is hired by the performer to perform certain services, but until the performer has become successful (as measured by offers of work) the performer is competing against other performers to attract the agent to perform these services for them. To complicate this picture, performers do change agents, most several times in a career. As one agent laughed, "actors are *always* looking for agents." [ ] , an ex-performer who works as an adviser to both [ ] and to

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the *Spotlight* casting directory said that 'people ring me up and say I want to change my agent – and I say you don't want to change your agent, you want a job'; illustrating the emotional investment in the belief that the agent is the primary route to access to work. One middle-range performer summarised the dominant view amongst the performers interviewed: "changing my agent the last time was one of the most difficult things I have ever done in my life, it was like breaking up a relationship. Extraordinarily hard. And on the one hand, as many people say, it's like changing deckchairs on the Titanic, and on the other hand it's an incredibly fundamental relationship." Variations on this view were found frequently across all performer interviews and were implicitly accepted by the then minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, in response to lobbying on the revisions to the Employment Agencies Act 1973. The minister 'privately acknowledged that entertainment agents operate in a way that is unique among employment agencies' (Ritchie, 2001: 1).

A successful agent may well have several stars on the client list as well as middle-range and unknowns, and it is a common complaint amongst lower-range performers that their agent neglects to put them up for auditions for which they would be suitable, as the agent's income is already assured. The distinction from a more familiar general employment agency in mainstream sectors is the continuous and prolonged nature of the relationship and in particular, the personalised aspects. [ ] (A), a successful and long-established agent with many star names as clients, said that an agent's job can be "as far-ranging as a father-confessor, or a social worker"

and [ ] (A) said of her women performer clients that "Because there are so many women artists…I always found it was my job to actually make them as confident as they possibly could be. So that they'd always stand a chance. Just give them time and encouragement and support."

The status of an agent was regarded by most interviewees as crucial in delivering access to relationships with other gatekeepers, such as directors, casting directors, producers and commissioning executives. For instance, [ ] the *Spotlight* and [ ] adviser said that he often cautioned performers against moving to particular agents "because you're trading down." The gatekeeper relationships deliver earlier access to information on projects as well as increasing a performer's chance of being invited for audition or simply being seen by these gatekeepers, as agents will try to bring directors and casting directors to watch the performer at work. From interview data, it seems difficult to over-emphasise the importance of these relationships. Less-established agents have to rely on different means, for instance by buying information collated from different sources, as noted in Chapter 3. [ ] (A), a full-time agent for 5 years, none of whose clients are leading performers, said that she saw it as her job to try and make the agency more known and respected, thus increasing the chances of established gatekeepers approaching her early on in the production process. She said that part of this process was through establishing relationships with (relatively lowly) casting assistants who are then promoted into bigger jobs; highlighting again the importance of networks of individual contacts.

Again, as with performers, there are few easily quantifiable markers of an agent's achievement of status. [ ] saw the process as amorphous: "Coming up with the goods and word-of-mouth." [ ] (A) narrowed this down to "trust". He said that the relationships agents have with casting directors and producers and so on are much longer-term than the project-based relationships performers have: "actors will say *anything* to get *that* job at *that* time. Whereas an agent talking to either a casting director or a producer or a director, will want to promote a longer-lasting relationship and so will be a bit more honest. A lot more honest, when discussing various people." This analysis was repeated by [ ] (CD), who said she dealt with agents who do not "waste your time and throw people at you who are just ridiculous…there are certain agents I wouldn't dream of ringing because they – it's just an end-of-the-pier quality that a few of them have." Hyman (1989) has said that the position of a union official (another worker representative) entails awareness that any event happens within the context of an ongoing bargaining relationship with the employer. It is plausible therefore to see the agent as weighing interests other than the individual performer client's in any negotiation. This is clearest in relation to pay, where it is likely to impact most closely on a woman performer, as everyone in the industry is aware of the relative lack of choice available to women. There is clear potential here for the entrenchment of traditional working practices in that as these long-term relationships continue, both parties grow to know the other's expectations and preconceptions and are possibly content to fulfil these. This is an aspect that has particular employment implications in an occupational sector multiply segmented along lines of gender, race/ethnicity, age, appearance and status.

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Agents do vary as individuals according to the interview data however and some agents are seen to push at the boundaries of employer preconceptions, a subject explored in more depth in Chapter 5.

Agents have general, informal 'categories' that they fill, not dissimilar to the policies of drama schools summarised above by the DaDA researcher as 'No. 3 curly red-head'. For performers who have a drive to express their unique individual talents, the clinical assessment of [ ] (A) might come as something of a shock:

> I have categories I have to fill…Basically, the sort of parts I can put them up for. As well as that I need quite specific people, you know, older men and women and hate to say it, but large and ugly. If they're male sort of bruiser, thug, criminal type look. I need young mums. I need categories like girls who are suitable for mums but for professional women as well.

Implicit within this shopping list are two ideas: first, that the common mainstream perception of performing work as creative and glamorous is often misplaced; second, that gatekeepers formally trade in stereotypes. Again, as with the drama schools, talent was stated by all the agents interviewed to be the decisive factor. This factor though was acknowledged to be constrained by the fact that "there is a lot of talent out there" ([ ], A); labour market requirements for a multiplicity of 'types'; and, less visibly, by considerations of potential earning-power. [ ] (A) said that her client list was split 50:50 along gender lines which she regarded as unusual: "because actually, it's normally about a third/two-thirds I would say because you know…the money isn't really in the women."

The categories seem to be based around age groups, with subdivisions within them. [ ] (A) for instance, said that if she were asked for "attractive woman, 20 to 26, I might have three that would fit into that". What was understood by 'attractive' was largely treated as a given by interviewees, a shared understanding of what fits such a description. This subdivision within subdivision carries certain meanings. A request for a performer framed in these terms is not related to age for reasons other than its connection to the term 'attractive'; an example of the linguistic concept of signification (Holdcroft 1991), with direct employment implications. As Itzin and Phillipson (1995) found in their study of gendered ageism: "'Age is always linked to male perceptions of women. There is always a sex stereotype for the age a woman is'" (1995: 85). In the shared understanding found in interviews, the assumption of heterosexuality in definitions of attractiveness was universal, exemplifying the dominance of patriarchal perspectives on sexuality and gender. These issues are explored further in consideration of audition processes in Chapter 5. In that chapter we will also look at the instances of resistance, both from agents and performers, to patriarchal realisations of signification.

Before this stage of engagement with the gendered attribution of value to performers, the agent/client relationship must first be established. We can see here, within the superficially unsegmented structures of employment, outlines of the possibilities of disadvantage of being a performer who is a woman. Related to this is *where* agents look for new clients (covering similar ground to casting directors for new workers). They go to the theatre and watch television, shadowing the working

patterns of performers. Essentially, as all in the industry recognise, each job is a potential shop-window and audition for another job, which is why differential access to number and type of roles is important at all stages. They will go (or send assistants) to the established drama schools' showcase productions and as noted above, such productions can often reflect the dimensions of imbalance found outside. As discussed, several performers talked about appearance determining their casting within drama schools and a related perception of commodification was echoed in [ ]'s (P) experience of meeting a prospective new agent: "Come back to me when you know what you are. What are you, are you classical or are you modern, with that '70s hair – get it cut short." Both [ ] (P) and [ ] (P) were part of a significant minority of performers who felt that agents were actually not the primary path to access to work but were useful fixed points of contact with employers and useful for negotiations because, as [ ] (P) said simply "you don't know what the rates are." This division of knowledge in relation to pay is addressed in some detail in Chapter 6. We now address the actual shape of the sectors within which performers and gatekeepers negotiate access.

The subsidised theatre sector

As noted above, Thomas (1995) has found that women performers are more likely to obtain work in theatre than in television; indeed, under 40 that they are slightly more likely than men to obtain work in theatre. Most performers said that theatre was where they were most satisfied in work, that it was the most testing and fulfilling medium to work in. The subsidised theatre sector, which is primarily the building-

based subreps, has traditionally been seen as the actor's training ground, based on a relatively fast turnover of varied productions, from Shakespeare to farce. The subsidised sector is unofficially divided into two: the national companies (the Royal Shakespeare Company, The National Theatre and arguably the Royal Court Theatre) on one side and the producing regional theatres outside London as well as some theatres in the greater London area (O'Hagan and Neligan 2001). The subreps are maintained by government-funded Arts Council England grants and box-office income and actors will be hired for particular shows or be 'through-cast' for a certain number of productions. The sector has shrunk over the last 20 years as funding has declined in real terms, with fewer theatres (Dean 1998: 41) and 'artistic salaries' as a proportion of subrep budgets declining from 19% to 16% and the number of 'actor weeks' in regional subrep declining by 21% between 1983 and 1993 (Arts Council 1996: iv; see also Peter Boyden Associates 2000). In this context, questions were put to interviewees about any consequent effects on choice of repertoire, crucial in relation to possibilities of access to work. [ ], then Executive Director of the [ ], said that public funding had specific effects, in that those funds are limited and there is a practical limit (number of seats) to how much more income they are able to generate through their own efforts, a point echoed by [ ] , General Manager of the [ ] Theatre. Therefore, [ ] said, "we have to have some sense of some of what we do being commercially viable in order to provide support for the things which might not be or definitely won't be. So, it drives the repertoire to a limited but significant extent." And in response to a question as to whether the

decline in funding has led to a reliance on classics which invariably have fewer roles for women:

> That's perfectly true. Absolutely true. I mean one of the things which is and remains significant, about the differential between the way that women are employed as performers and the way that men are employed, is precisely that, that there are more roles for men. That the corpus of work that is available is still heavily weighted, in the three centuries before the twentieth century and the first half of the twentieth century also didn't generate that many roles for women, so really in order to get a serious re-balancing you'd have to be concentrating on work written since 1945, let's say, and of that a very significant proportion is still written predominantly for men, even by women, sometimes…And there's no doubt that until recently, and this may be changing, but until recently, the perception has been that if you are strapped financially, the thing to do is fall back on what audiences know.

The view of financial constraint resulting in reliance on classics or on 'safe', familiar work is substantiated by Arts Council research reports, the 'Cork Report' (Arts Council)1986 and *The Next Stage* (2000), a response to the Boyden Report on English regional producing theatres (Peter Boyden Associates 2000). Theatres in this category vary in their approach to funding issues and the [ ] Theatre in [ ] attempts to balance the books as well as fulfil their artistic responsibilities by operating half as a producing house and half as a receiving house. The [] is subsidised locally by [ ] city council as well as centrally by Arts Council England (at that time through its regional outpost, the [ ] Arts Board). [ ] the general manager explained that the city council put a lot of weight on getting in touring productions with star names to draw large audiences and build the city's profile. The [ ] Arts

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Board put more emphasis on the produced work, in particular the work done with the local community, local theatre companies and educational work. Balancing these expectations was part of the process of putting together a season of work:

> And as the nature of public funding has changed over the years, you know we went through a long period of Conservative freeze and cutbacks that reduced the value of the grant which has then had to be made up by earning more income, from other sources. So, it's kind of made us more business-like, it's made us more aware of the competitive nature of running an organisation like this.

[ ], the then artistic director (A.D.) of the [ ], said that he was aware of the inequality of number and size of parts, particularly in the classics, and that it was still an issue, although there seemed to be a "gradual drifting towards more balanced representation". As a playwright himself, [ ] said that he tried to be fair in terms of gender balance, but that sometimes the content dictated the balance, as in the example he cited of a current production based on Coventry's 1970s pop bands (principally male). This of course raises issues to do with commissioning choices. [ ], Head of [ ] at the BBC, who was a theatre director and had run her own well-established new writing theatre company, [ ], had firm views on these issues, when asked about the perception (common to most interviewees) of theatre as being more 'equal' than television:

> Well I think no, theatres are hierarchical places actually, they are definitely that. And when I worked at the [ ], what was interesting when I was associate director and I was running the studio and I kept seeing the main stage stuff and thinking, why is that? And then I realised the person choosing plays was male, the board was predominantly male, and therefore

most of the plays that were on stage were by blokes. So I kind of worked to change that. What theatres are is they are driven, usually, by one person which is the artistic director, and most artistic directors are male. Therefore that will affect the outcome. But there's no reason why it shouldn't be more even, but it's not.

This opinion was indirectly echoed by other gatekeepers although largely not raised by performers. [ ], an agent at one of the top writers' agencies, contrasting the constraints faced in commissioning pieces for television and for theatre, said that the process in theatre was very much writer- or ideas-driven and that: "if it interests the person who's commissioning you then you can go ahead and do that." [ ] at the [ ] said of the then A.D.: "If you're [ ], then what you are most interested in is the classical repertoire, and in particular the work of William Shakespeare, because, you know, that's where he grew up." These points will be explored further in Chapter 5 as the importance of repertoire is not only in an immediate material sense in relation to access to work, but also that drama is argued to have a role to play as 'agent of social disruption and change' (O'Hagan and Neligan 2001: 219; Weil 1995). This argument has an honourable pedigree (e.g. Brecht 1964; Boal 1974; Artaud 1989; Nkrumah 2000) and in counterpoint to his dissection of culture industries referred to in Chapter 2 (Adorno 1991), Adorno also believed 'that art itself can be resistance; it bears in itself the potential of 'freedom'' (Böhm 2001: 28). Variations of this argument were encountered many times in interview, principally with performers and directors, although a minority of writers felt the same way. Most talked of the creative social possibilities offered by theatre in general terms, but [ ] (P) offered a

specific example of an approach supported by academic research in the area

(Mabala and Allen 2002):

> At the moment I'm working on a project about FGM, female genital
> mutilation…and you know, you have the right actors together and you have
> the right thing and you all feel the same way about the work you're doing,
> you're not just there just doing a job…I think theatre can change people's
> opinions, it can…influence the way people relate to each other, the way
> people think…It has actually changed the law in Nigeria, the piece that I'm
> involved in. FGM, female genital mutilation is something that happens in
> like, lots of African communities. The director I'm working with started a
> project over there, to [take into] local communities…it's traditional, people
> just do it without thinking about why they're doing it…Theatre can make
> them look at different ways, open their eyes, the way they think about
> certain things. Make them think for themselves. Especially women, and
> they did. They decided to change, you know, the tradition that they were
> doing for a long time. A law's been passed and it's now illegal in a state in
> Nigeria. I hope, we're hoping, something we're trying to take worldwide.
> It has an effect, and when it does that you're like *yess*.

The terrestrial television sector

In keeping with its dominant place in national culture and its incomparably larger

access to resources, the structures of the television sector and the processes of its

products require more detail to outline that those of subrep theatre. Broadly, the

terrestrial television sector is divided between public service broadcasting,

represented largely by the BBC and in hybrid form Channel 4, and commercial

broadcasting, represented by the independent television companies, collectively

known as ITV. Production of programmes at the BBC used to be exclusively in-

house but since the Broadcasting Act 1990 the corporation is now required to commission a minimum 25% of its output from independent producers, as are the ITV companies. This has increased the number of potential employers of performers, although the competition for work from the broadcasters has not encouraged a climate of innovation in content (Ursell 2000a), a situation analogous to theatre's perceived reliance on classics and the familiar to sustain audiences, with the implications for women performers that have been discussed. This deregulated climate has been exacerbated by technological advances that have led to newcomers to the audio-visual market with digital, satellite and cable facilities, splitting the market for advertisers (themselves operating within an industry recession in the first few years after the Act was passed, Ursell 2000b). This has reduced the principal revenue stream of ITV and resulted in a demand for programmes that will deliver audiences: 'In the heartlands of the popular, innovation is tolerated to the extent it will construct a new market for the product.' (Wayne 1994: 60). The political, regulatory and competitive changes of the 1980s and 1990s had similar effects on the BBC (King 2001), as exemplified by the introduction of 'Producer's Choice', an internal marketplace strategy which promoted cost considerations above creative considerations (Ursell 2000a). There are continuing debates over the current direction of the BBC, some of which are touched on in relation to the research aims in Chapters 5 and 6. There was however a more general sense that television broadcasters were now under particular pressures (both internally and externally generated) to deliver sizeable audiences. The general perception was that this had direct effects (via for instance increased use of audience focus groups) on access to

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work in terms of status categories employed and at what rate of pay; again issues considered for their implications for women performers in Chapters 5 and 6.

Drama and situation comedy programmes are the primary sources of television work for actors and it is their processes that will be looked at in the following chapters. Advertisements are financially important but will not be focused on directly, as firstly most performers do not regard them as acting work and secondly, they involve a separate set of employers only tangentially involved in the sector. However, this tangential involvement seems to be becoming less peripheral. Amongst interviewees, particularly performers, there was an (often resigned) acceptance of the perceived requirements of television and awareness that this was somehow increasingly driven by the fragmentation of the sector and the changing demands for audiences. The links were occasionally made explicit in interview. [ ] (W), a successful television writer, articulated the concerns of those who saw clear connections:

> Sponsors on ITV shows already have an influence on the length of the piece…I know one thing that was picture-locked [finished with all processes and ready for broadcast] and the sponsors decided that actually they wanted to run their sponsorship thing both sides of each ad. break. Which meant they had to lose 4 minutes [of the piece], after it was picture-locked, just a phenomenal amount of work. So I don't think it's a massive step from that to saying, because advertising revenue is being squeezed at ITV, the role of sponsors is going to become more and more important. Because they're going to have to start putting money into the programme, into the budget, it seems to me. And once they've got money in the

budget…Nestlé are hardly going to be sponsoring something that exposes a scandal about powdered milk, you know, at its crudest, are they?

We see perception here of particular influences on the mass, and thus potentially lucrative, medium of television, itself identified by Adorno (1991) as 'their master's voice' (1991: 86).

There are several ways a programme can come to the screen and I will outline two of the main routes, in their most simple form and in relation only to the objectives of this study. An independent company or producer might pitch a programme idea or script to the broadcaster (in the person of a departmental head or commissioning executive) and this is then commissioned, the broadcaster paying for most if not all of the production costs. Alternatively, particularly within the BBC, a broadcaster (again, departmental head or commissioning executive) will itself commission a script from a writer. There are fluctuating pressures pushing demand for 'types' of work one way or another. [ ], recently-retired senior BBC executive, said that projects sometimes originate "at the highest strategic level". She said that "the word would go out – we need a costume drama. Or, if it was coming up to Charter renewal, a modern drama." At lower levels, [ ] said that there would be "producers second-guessing controllers and trying to push the envelope". The envelope consists of resource, ratings and content pressures and the producer's part in structuring labour processes and disadvantage will be examined more closely in Chapter 5. A number of interviewees across all occupational categories confirmed [ ]'s assessment of the importance of the 'highest levels' in affecting television output. It became

clear that there are a few people at the top of both the BBC and ITV Network Centre who are perceived as wielding great power in choosing which projects are made. Their roles and the perception of these will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

An executive producer will be assigned whose role is largely managerial; overseeing the work, making financial decisions. The producer, often in association with the department head, will choose the director and, if outside the BBC, the casting director. There will often be other producers involved, for instance a line-producer who is on set and responsible for the daily decisions. Once the core team is assembled, there are casting discussions and if particular performers are desired, their agents are contacted. If not, and for all the smaller parts, casting breakdowns are sent out to particular agents and audition sessions are arranged. Once cast, the piece is rehearsed, shot and edited. It goes to post-production (e.g. adding the production credits), and is then allocated a broadcast slot.

There are key moments for the performer in these processes. Clearly the role of the writer is crucial and this role is intimately linked with questions of who is paying the writer and for what purposes. The number of different gatekeepers involved from first thought to final broadcast also has implications for perceptions of disadvantage. These factors are further explored in Chapter 5. For the present, the key moments for the performer start with the writer. The writer creates the roles in the first instance and then, often, the script is worked on with a script editor and the roles may change or develop. The allocation of these roles is a process usually confined

to the director, casting director and producer, although the writer may be involved in certain situations, for instance where the writer has established status or where there is a close working relationship with the producer. For the lead roles, increasingly television executives look to performers who they feel will deliver audiences. As several people commented, a star can 'green-light' a project, i.e. the attachment to a proposal of a star name will usually result in resources for it being allocated by the key executives. The relatively few names in this dimension of industrial power included (at time of fieldwork) David Jason, the late John Thaw, Ross Kemp, Robson Green, Amanda Burton and Sarah Lancashire. This is a situation that has specific effects on issues of access, pay and longevity and will be considered in Chapters 5 and 6.

Review

The primary route to access to work, the drama schools, discriminate on the basis of gender. This is in relation to access to the school and it seems from interview data, often in relation to experience gained during training. This happens without interference by either the main industry union, which seeks out students for membership, or through legal regulation which as we have noted, could be utilised. There are socially plausible and economically irrefutable arguments to be made for the schools' access policies. It seems however, that this accommodation to the market is further gendered during the training process, with stereotypical and heterosexist imposition common in the form of allocation of parts. This is a theme

that cannot be developed further owing to the lack of very contemporary data, but raises issues consistent with patterns seen in the industry itself.

In fact, the baton is picked up almost immediately by agents, as seen in discussion of their allocation of categories to clients, individual attitudes reported by performers, and the economic necessity of market compliance. There are frequent examples of agent resistance to dominant access patterns and these will be considered in Chapters 5 and 6. Here, the agent's place in performers' ongoing attempts at access to work has been put into its industrial context. This is a context dominated in many occupational areas by access through individual relationships or 'informal labour market governance' (Baumann 2002:27; see also Blair 2001b; Dex et al. 2000). The phrase 'it's who you know' runs spoken and unspoken through the sector's basic discourses and as has been noted in this chapter, 'being known' to employers and employer-proxies is central to performing labour processes as indeed it can be in mainstream recruitment as noted in Chapter 2 (Wood 1986; Collinson et al. 1990). The key aspect of gendered access to opportunities to work (by selection as a client) would appear from consideration of the agent's occupational structures to be unaffected by formal strategies of regulation. At this point in the continual fight for access, the individual performer has little ability to influence whether or not she is taken on as a client. However, she always retains the possibility of ending the relationship, a possibility frequently fulfilled, as we have seen.

The structures of the subsidised theatre and terrestrial television sectors and the passage of products (plays and programmes) within them have been broadly sketched. Considering both from a class perspective (in relation to their markets), it seems that the pressures arising from lack of financial resources in one sector and abundance in the other, contribute to similar results in terms of gendered experiences of access to work. Thus particular economic structures, while having important immediate connections to the realities of access for women performers, are clearly insufficient for more than a superficial understanding of these realities. More thorough understanding through patriarchal constructions of gender, discussed in Chapter 2, have been considered in setting out the background context and initial routes of entry to performing work and will be elaborated through the study. Commenting on the consistently greater number of women than men at drama schools (a fact noted by most interviewees) [ ] (A) indirectly addressed an important issue in the connection between the constructions of gender and the construction of performing work: "If a little girl goes to ballet class that's fine - when a boy does it they make a film out of it. So it starts really early." The association of performance with the female gender is connected to the association constructed between women and body, display and sexualisation discussed in Chapter 2. It is arguable that there are other associations analogous to this in the construction of performance as work and the implications for this of the confined status of successful women performers. 'Confined' is used here in a particular way. That is, I argue that the marginality to society of performing work, in part because of its non-'masculine' concern with displays of bodies and emotions, has enabled an atypical but very visible situation

(the long-term acceptance and expectation of achievement by its women workers), to leave the employment mainstream all but untouched. It is arguable, further, that the lack of mandatory training or professional qualifications that has been noted also contributes to this perception. Tracing the interrelation of milieux in establishing the gender order, Connell (1987) argues that the structure/ practice of 'professionalism' is a clear example:

> The combination of theoretical knowledge with technical expertise is central to a profession's claim to competence and to a monopoly of practice. This has been constructed historically as a form of masculinity: emotionally flat, centred on a specialized skill, insistence on professional esteem and technically based dominance over other workers, and requiring for its highest (specialist) development the complete freedom from childcare and domestic work provided by having wives and maids to do it. The masculine character of professionalism has been supported by the simplest possible mechanism, the exclusion of women. (1987: 181)

The long-term unsegregated status of performing work and the absence of compulsory qualifications for entry or advancement combine to reinforce an impression of it as not-masculine, therefore peripheral and, in this specific way, uninfluential.

Performing work, employing both women and men to represent both women and men, is cast as 'feminine' by ideas of gender on the outside. On the inside, it is structured as 'feminised' work in its atypical employment structures. In an interview in Todd (1984) the performer Harriet Walter says that "All actors are in a

way the female in the relationship: they have to wait to be asked, invited, keep all

they've got inside them until it's required." (1984:23).

CHAPTER 5   DOING

You are being examined for your usefulness in an industry that wants to make money through your efforts.

Robert Cohen, *Acting Professionally: Raw Facts About Careers in Acting*

Introduction

This chapter continues to map the working realities of the woman performer's life by focusing on the structural axis of these realities, the audition. The concept of access to work outlined in the previous chapter, that of a continual, integral practice rather than a specific 'moment' in the labour process, is here examined in its most recognisable form. The audition, where a performer meets potential employers and acts (sings/dances) as requested in pursuit of a particular role, is one of the most well-known, indeed mythologised, aspects of a performer's working life and is the central pivot around which issues of access discussed in the previous chapter revolve.

The general form of the audition process is established to provide a guide for the discussion, followed by exploration of the processes leading to arrangement of and attendance at television and subrep auditions, with particular emphasis on the role of the writer in the pre-audition stage. The next section addresses performer and gatekeeper perceptions of the audition process. These centre on the issues identified as arising from apparent disadvantage in access to number and type of roles,

including the parts played by gatekeepers and ideas around age and appearance. The issues of age and appearance are seen by all involved as crucial and it is argued that therefore they are, directly translating the ideological to the material. However, it is further found that ideologically-mediated self-selection is also a factor in disadvantage in access to work. The perceptions are reviewed in conjunction with the audition observation data noted in Chapter 3 and are discussed as key factors in the *operation* of this part of the labour process and framed as stemming from gendered ideologies and the structural practices that animate these ideologies. This supposition is informed by awareness that within the context of a superficially integrated occupation men performers work within the same restrictions but with different boundaries. The supposition is further informed by the advantages open to and experienced by many women performers in comparison with most mainstream women workers, advantages which are argued as being also shaped by the employment effects of patriarchal conceptions of gender and as suggested previously, to the marginal position occupied by performing as an occupation.

The use and efficacy of the three regulatory strategies at this point of access to work are discussed. In relation to legal and union regulation, this is largely in terms of their inadequacy in relation to the disadvantage experienced, seen as connected to the distinctive characteristics of this occupational sector. These include a smaller number of 'female' roles being chased by a greater number of women, the majority of whom display the performer's uncommon drive to work, characteristics which are seen as reinforcing incapacity and inaction. These institutional factors and the

factors of perception discussed above are related to data involving the third category of strategy, individual regulation. This is explored within the status categories identified in Chapter 3, and instances of individual resistance are examined in relation to the actual and potential influence of all three approaches. The general data findings open a space for looking at the roots of the disadvantage recognised and at the indistinct boundaries of structure and agency, between inside and outside the labour process; issues that the audition process highlights in an overt and focused way.

Formal entry practices and preparatory processes/contexts

As discussed in Chapter 4, a key part of the ongoing performer labour process is gaining access to auditions and this will be addressed below. First we will establish to what exactly access is being sought.

In subrep theatre, a performer will usually audition either on the stage itself or in a rehearsal room and commonly only the director will be present. In larger organisations such as [London Theatre], a casting director will also be present. The content of an audition will vary from production to production and according to director preference, but generally the performer is given a portion of the play's text to prepare (sent by the casting director through the agent) or is asked to sight-read from the play, in both cases with the director reading in the other part(s). It used to be standard practice for a performer to perform her own prepared text and this still happens, although less frequently. Television auditions typically involve more

people in the room (which is often a room at the production company or broadcaster offices), usually at least director, producer and casting director, and these auditions are almost invariably videotaped as well. There will be initial discussion of the script and character and then either the casting director or assistant will sit behind a camcorder set up on a tripod and film the performer reading/performing the script with the director or producer's voice reading off-camera. In both television and theatre auditions, the director will often make suggestions of different emphases or motivations and ask for further readings. Occasionally the director, having seen the performance, will ask the performer to read for a different part as well and in that case, the performer is usually offered a few minutes on her own to prepare the new piece of text. The performer auditions, is thanked, leaves. In some cases the performer will be offered expenses for attending the audition, but there is no union agreement and expenses remain a possibility rather than a probability in most cases. In most subreps and television auditions, after all auditionees have been seen and discussions have been had (all of which may take anything from an hour to several months), the performer or her agent is contacted and an offer is made. On the lower rungs of the industry ladder there is usually no contact if the performer has been unsuccessful.

This description of typical audition structures cannot convey the particular distinctive demands of its processes. A performer may have to turn up, introduce herself to strangers and then portray a nervous breakdown, an illicit seduction, or a murderous rage: in other words call up and use emotion for the purpose of

employment, although with crucial differences from the concept of emotional labour as it has been traditionally conceived (Hochschild 1983; Callaghan and Thompson 2002), as indicated in Chapter 2. The key aspects of supervision in the sense understood in this literature are not present. Indeed, in the [London Theatre] audition observed, a woman performer was required to break down and cry in the scene chosen for the audition within ten minutes of walking through the door. She did this with extraordinary conviction and the director's response, implicitly acknowledging the emotional labour being deployed while at the same time needing to make selection decisions about the quality of this emotional labour, was "Can you bear to do it again?"

The performer does not generally interact directly with the consumer of play or television programme and the employer in this instance is not looking for a particular response from the customer other than a general approval or engagement with the product. However, at the same time and as the gatekeepers made apparent at both [Theatre 1] auditions, the performer is being judged on a sense of herself: will she be easy and/or stimulating to work with? Are there any personality issues that can be spotted at this stage, in relation to working with cast or director? In theatre there is the notion of 'a company', a cast whole that should integrate as well as possible. There may also be a tour involved which puts particular strains and requirements on compatibility. These considerations have been categorised as 'functionally non-specific criteria of selection which invoke unquantifiable and typically moral judgements about the personal characteristics of applicants.' (Jewson

and Mason 1986: 44). Such 'acceptability criteria' (*ibid*.) are argued by Jewson and Mason to form some part of all selection decisions in employment: in the personalised and highly interdependent work of performance, they were cited regularly by interviewees as key to access. In television there is the added dimension of speed and cost: will this performer be able to deliver what is required (assessable by performance and reception to direction) in a short space of very expensive time? The third dimension is appearance, which includes age and ethnicity as well as 'look' *per se*. The importance of each of these dimensions fluctuates according to several factors, including medium, piece and individual gatekeepers and will be examined in detail below. To extend this necessarily bald description of the audition process and to give a sense of the ways in which auditions are perceived, I will cite the experience of a poacher turned gamekeeper. When interviewed, [ ] (P) was working as Arts Development Officer for [London borough] Council and regarded herself as having all but left the business. She had worked for years as a performer and had also made a very serious attempt to establish a national black theatre company. Part of this attempt involved her in auditioning black performers for the prospective company:

> I remember the first time we auditioned, I was incredibly uncomfortable. And we had booked the large hall in the centre where we were based and it wasn't quite ready so we auditioned the first actress in our office which was large but, you know, still an office. And she just, she went into her monologue and then she did the excerpt, they all had to do a classical piece a modern piece, a piece of choreographed dance and an unaccompanied song. And she did it all. And I was sitting there thinking my god. Actors are the bravest people in the world...We just strip it all off, to *strangers*.

> Do you know what I mean? To strangers who more than likely are going
> to reject us.

One of the specific observations [ ] made about this process was what she discovered to be a "yearning" amongst black performers to do good work with other black actors on a consistent basis. Many of the performers auditioned did work regularly as jobbing actors (these, as noted above, largely male),

> But they rarely got to work with each other. So they would be the one, or
> two, at, you know, at Stratford, or the couple in the National Theatre
> company. So that they were rarely able to work together as a company,
> they were always the odd one or two.

This observation is supported by the perception of Nicholas Kent, the A.D. of London's Tricycle Theatre, of a crisis in British black theatre founded on the racism of British theatre as a whole (Billington 2000). There were other, gender-specific issues that came out of [ ]'s experience with attempting to establish a national black theatre company. She said that black men performers were now working regularly whereas black women were desperate…Black men are actually working quite well…But women really struggle. They really struggle."

Here we see another dimension to the realities for the performer worker of the interrelation of drama school access policies and labour market requirements discussed in Chapter 4. As Cockburn (1991) has pointed out, in an extension of Pateman's (1988) thesis that women are incorporated into the employment contract as women not as 'workers',

the buyer of labour power is never indifferent to ethnicity or skin colour. The purchase of labour power is not only a contract for the use of mental and manual skills at the lowest possible wage…it is also a purchase of the services of a certain *kind of person*, someone with a perceived social status (it may be high or low), certain cultural attachments and certain looks, to all of which ethnicity and skin colour are germane.

(1991:174, emphasis original).

The implications of this idea are explored further below in discussion of effective appearance criteria for access.

Gates and gatekeepers

As several performers noted, unless a star performer is involved the actors are usually the last to become involved in a production. It is therefore necessary to look at the processes that culminate in the audition that looks for performers to bring characters to life. These characters are created (conventionally) by writers; either self-initiated or in response to a commission from the theatre or television employer. Almost every interviewee across all occupational categories stressed that the issues of performer gender disadvantage were rooted in what was written and that the primary answer to redress of this advantage lay with writers. The journey from writer to audition and engagement of actor is key to the construction of the labour processes of the woman performer.

Theatre

As noted in Chapter 4, in subrep theatre the choice of 'season' – which plays are to be produced over the coming year – is primarily the responsibility of an individual, the artistic director (A.D.). A writer hoping to have a play performed at a particular subrep needs to have the script read and approved by the A.D. As with the other 'creative' occupations in this sector, writers will frequently be represented by a specialist agent whose job it is to try and secure the A.D.'s attention for the piece and/or to negotiate terms. Established writers may be commissioned or informal contact made through existing relationships. A gendered aspect to this was introduced in passing by [ ] (W) when I interviewed her at the subrep West Yorkshire Playhouse: "If I wanted a theatre commission, well probably my natural instinct would be to come here, because Jude Kelly is a woman, she likes my work, [], I've got an audience here…it's personal to me." Shades are raised here of the liberal strategy of increasing the numbers of women in key positions discussed in Chapter 2; this gendered 'identification' in gatekeeper relationships appeared in other guises and is examined later on in the chapter in consideration of perceptions of gender and sexuality issues during the audition itself.

The A.D.'s control over choices that are crucial to shaping patterns of access for performers highlights the point made by Castañer and Campos (2002) that artistic organisations are comparable to some non-profit organisations such as hospitals and educational institutions, in that given the semi-professional nature of 'artistic employees' (not however a given to performers, as discussed in Chapter 4), the A.D.

wields 'a high degree of decision-making power in the areas of programming and artists' recruitment, compensation and promotion' (2002: 41). This individual's choices will be subject to scrutiny by his or her employer body, the theatre Board of Management, all of whom are unpaid but who make the senior theatre appointments and who must approve artistic and managerial policy (Quine 1998). These boards usually comprise a mixed selection of theatrically-interested individuals (though frequently not theatre professionals) and are often drawn from the familiar ranks (in the UK voluntary sector) of 'the great and the good' of the local area, a varying proportion of whom will be local government nominees (Quine 1998). The relationship between A.D. and board will vary from theatre to theatre and anecdotal data suggest interference with an A.D.'s selection of plays is not unusual, but in both of this study's research sites such involvement was not perceived as an issue. The other potential constraints come from the subrep funding bodies, the principal body being (government- and National Lottery-funded) Arts Council England or prior to April 2002 its proxies, one of the Regional Arts Boards. Funding bodies will send representatives to attend board meetings but the limited data in this study indicate that there is not direct intervention in choice of season, but rather funding is agreed for a specific period of time within the framework of support for the theatre's current artistic policy (principally the remit of the AD). The effect of the principal funding bodies on choice of season will instead be felt indirectly, in the long-term decline of subsidy discussed in Chapter 4, resulting in a corresponding decline in commitment to experimenting with (financially risky) new writing by newer writers in studio spaces: 'They therefore tend to turn to the more established writers." (Peter Boyden

Associates 2000a:15). Financial pressures are also seen to have specifically gendered effects by Werner (1998), who argues that the flight to safe territory these pressures impel reinforces a situation where there is severe under-representation of women playwrights (1998: 111; see also Long 1994: 107). The other main income stream, paid attendance, has also declined (by approximately 13%) since the mid-1980s (Feist 1997: 255). Occasionally, individual shows might be directly financially supported by a private business sponsor (there is frequent indirect support in the form of borrowed props) but again, there is no evidence to suggest involvement with the choice of piece or its cast. Talking about the perceived contrast with the growing influence of advertising sponsors in television processes (a point addressed more fully below), the writer [ ] said: "You know, Bailey's may well sponsor a play at the National, but I doubt that Bailey's chief executive comes down and gives a script note." These financial factors not only have a perceived effect of biasing repertoire to classics and the familiar (Quine 1998; Arts Council 2000) but also in constraining choice of play by cast size. In conjunction with the data on the gender ratio of writers and the perceived effect of gender on what is written, findings considered below, this would appear only to further constrain the opportunities for access to work for the woman performer.

However, the majority of interviewees talked, unprompted, about their perceptions of the greater depth of theatre writing in contrast to the majority of television writing; the greater opportunities to hear the writer's voice and hear it saying unfamiliar things. These perceptions imply a potentially less restricted *range* of

roles available to women performers working in theatre rather than in television. [ ] (A), talking about her writer clients' experiences in television, summarised interviewees' shared consciousness of difference in theatre:

> Nervous script editors or a new producer will sort of go oh my god, that first draft just isn't what we expected you're fired, I'm bringing in someone else to do it. You would never get that in theatre. The playwright is the motivating force behind theatre…in television you are so likely to get the sack from your own show, unless you're a Jimmy McGovern, or an Alan Bleasdale, or an Andrew Davies.

As noted in Chapter 3, the majority of A.D.s are male. While not attempting to argue that there is a clear causal relationship between gender and artistic policy, it must be noted this was perceived as an influence by several interviewees, principally gatekeepers rather than performers. For instance, as noted in Chapter 4 the Head of New Writing at the BBC, once a theatre director herself, felt that there was a direct connection between gender of the A.D. and choice of season, a connection that largely disadvantaged women. Another view, representative in spirit if not detail of several other interviewees, was given by [ ], theatre critic of *The Guardian*. He thought that, while "men run 90% of the big buildings", there has been a sea-change in the treatment of gender. He said that he had written "a lament" for lack of women dramatists in 1971 and had had a large response from women saying that they had written plays but that they could not "break into the system". The biggest change he perceived is that there are now many more produced women dramatists, a fact he attributed in part to the effect on society of feminist movements, a view that suggests the importance of the maintenance and disruption of dominant ideologies in the

production of structural practices, as indicated by Althusser in his sketch of the formation of 'ideological State apparatuses' (1971: 148). The idea is framed in an empirically apposite way by Connell (1987): 'Most of the cultural politics of gender…Its field of action is the possibilities that open up in particular milieux and institutions: the curriculum changes possible in a particular school, the repertory possible in a particular theatre and so on.' (1987: 252). The continuous interaction of ideological and material factors is further illustrated here when we note the studies considered above indicating links between reduced theatre funding and a conservative reliance on existing, largely male-authored work. However, the extant conditions are only a part of the picture. Interview data reviewed below in consideration of writers suggest that individual perception, possibly because of its very individuality and thus lack of knowledge of 'structures', creates a space for agency to affect these ideologically-mediated material structures.

Once the plays are chosen, the A.D. will decide who to engage as director on those plays he is not directing himself. As noted in Chapter 1, interview findings across all the occupational categories indicate that women theatre directors are a minority, findings which corroborate existing survey data (Long 1994). Although Long's work shows increases in the numbers both of women A.D.s and women theatre directors between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, Werner (1998) summarises the survey data as showing that 'theatre work is a male activity…the typical theatre production is a male-authored play directed by a man, for a male artistic director, with male board members giving their approval' (1998: 109). Most significantly,

Werner notes that the increased numbers of women directors have been directing plays 'from the male canon' and there has not been an increase in the production of work by female playwrights (1998: 111).

Choice of director has implications not simply for the style and interpretation of the piece but also for potential employment opportunities. All directors in theatre and television have their own networks and contacts with performers and in regard to unknown quantities they have what the head of casting at [London Theatre] called the director's own "taste". All casting directors emphasised that the composition of that taste covered what the director considered to be talent; what was 'right' for their vision of that role; how they thought an audience would respond to the performer in the role. There were further issues raised in interview about director taste in regard to appearance, and these are addressed in consideration of observation data.

Television

The more diverse structures of the television sector and programme commissioning were looked at in Chapter 4 and what is apparent is that in television there are many more people involved in the process that transforms a script into a production. This fact was held to have different consequences by interviewees. In stark contrast to the relatively intimate relationship in theatre between writer and principal gatekeeper (the A.D.), in television a potential script must be read and approved at several levels within and between production company and broadcaster. The apparent game of musical chairs that characterises senior level employment in television (*The*

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Stage, *passim*) is a further complication for aspirant writers. Several writers

commented on the frustration of having a script rejected that had initially been

approved, based on a change in personnel near the top of the commissioning tree.

As interpretation of commissioning policy will inevitably differ from individual to

individual, changes of personnel compound the obstacles of increased

bureaucratisation. An alternative interpretation is that if the A.D. as single

gatekeeper is not sympathetic to the work then it will not be produced at that theatre,

whereas it is possible to argue that the myriad layers in television that so frustrate

the writers interviewed could be seen as positive: more eyes, more opportunities.

However, as a senior BBC executive said:

> Television has got *so* many people think they own a part of it. And if you're
> an independent, you've then got your own executive producer and series
> producer and the head of your independent, you've also got the BBC
> executive producers as well putting their oar in. I mean some of these stories
> you read are not made up. About how long it takes anything to be
> commissioned, about how long it takes something to be made, about people,
> as I say, having no say.

A senior casting director supported this view. She had just said (in common with

most interviewees) that the preponderance of men writers was the main problem for

women performers, but then went on to qualify this judgement: "it's to do with what

material turns *into*. Again you've got the financers and the producers who want to

make the project who say well it's drama let's keep it being a man." Part of this is

arguably due to a perception found amongst certain television executives that,

largely, "women will watch what men watch" but not vice versa. An intriguing

connection to this observation was found in interview with [ ] (DS, P, D) who said

that a friend of his was a star of BBC1's *EastEnders* and that the male stars of the

programme will be paid a lot more money for opening a nightclub (a common spin-

off from high-status performing work) than a female star. The explanation given

was that it was to do with box-office numbers:

> If you've got a man opening a nightclub then all the girls will want to go
> and see the man and they'll drag their boyfriends along as well, for the
> night out. So you get more people going to the nightclub. If a woman is
> opening a nightclub, the blokes will go to see the woman but they won't
> take their girlfriends with them. So there are less people turning up.

The smooth interactions of capitalism and patriarchal constructions of gender

relations are clear in this example, as are the disadvantaging effects of these

constructions on the careers of women performers. Further, we see a vivid snapshot

of women performers as informal proxies for women's positions and identities in

wider society. This outlines gendered limitations of individual regulation in an

occupation where working realities effectively pivot on social relations constructed

around patriarchally-centred values.

The structural complexities and constraints on the practices of creativity underline

similarities with mainstream industrial sectors and further, these processes must be

set within the context of legislative change, technological development and decline

of advertising revenue indicated in Chapter 4. These have contributed to an altered

economic and industrial relations climate generally within the television sector

(Ursell 2000a, 2000b; Dex and Sheppard 1999) and the pressures have had particular

consequences for the working realities of women performers. Drama is the most expensive genre of television programme to produce and there is direct pressure within the ITV network to produce programmes that attract a significant proportion of the 'audience share' (percentage of available audience) in order to attract advertising revenue in and around the programmes. As the advertising market changes, there is pressure to produce particular programmes that will attract a pre-defined segment of the potential viewing population (defined by age, gender and socio-economic group) to fulfil the specific needs of high-spending advertisers (*The Observer* 2nd March 2003). The BBC has responded to the structural changes in its sector by attempting to position itself as a competitor to the commercial channels rather than as an alternative (see e.g. Ursell 2000b). The result of this, according to almost all performer interviewees, has been a perceived reduction in the production of drama and, according to the majority of all interviewees, a tendency seen most explicitly in ITV to cast familiar, often star, performers. This phenomenon will be addressed at points below, but firstly it is necessary to look more closely at the writer working within these structures.

Writers and the structures of theatre and television

All interviewees who were asked the question responded immediately with one of two statistics for the gender ratio of produced writers both in theatre and television, 80:20 or 75:25 men to women, and an agent at a major writer's agency said that their client list was one-third women and two-thirds men. These perceived ratios were, however, interpreted in differing ways. [ ] (W) said, in effect, that a simple content

analysis of programming demonstrates the bias towards work by men of commissioning executives and that one could name the handful of women writers who were produced regularly. Certainly several other interviewees across the occupational categories independently named the same group of produced women writers, possibly supporting such an interpretation; however other data offer another perspective. Interviewees who were or had been involved with actual selection of scripts, independently offered that the (approximated) 80: 20 statistic was closely reflected in the proportion of *submitted* scripts. One television producer was very specific:

> When I was at Pebble Mill [BBC Birmingham studios]…we had a huge slush pile which was unsolicited scripts. And there was the most *extraordinary* ratio of something like 1 to 10 would be written by a woman. And that was, there was no prejudice there was nothing, that was just simply who wrote scripts and sent them in unsolicited and the chances of any them - I mean the chances of any of them getting made were minimal anyway, the chances of one getting made by a female writer, absolutely miniscule…You can't attribute it all to prejudice against female type areas, all the rest of it, because right back at the start there are far fewer women electing to compete as writers. And I really don't know what that's to do with.

If this is so, then perceptions of gender discrimination in choice of script would appear to be unfounded and the questions to be asked include the obvious one of why far fewer women than men attempt to write for theatre and television (the situation is different in radio, where the BBC Radio 4 commissioning editor of drama and entertainment said that the medium has always attracted "a vast number

of women writers"). In an echo of the critic [ ]'s observations in respect of theatre, several television executive interviewees said that there were more and more women 'coming through' and putting themselves forward for writing jobs, and thus that the process of change in gender balance was gradually moving forward. This liberal-framed perception of change was challenged by [ ] (W): "I actively try and bring on other female writers. All the time. I'm working with three at the moment. Because I think to myself if I don't who will. Into TV. I think in theatre they get a slightly better deal, it's still not great in theatre but I mean in television it's appalling. The statistics are appalling I think." An interesting point to note here is that almost all of the writers (and some aspiring writers amongst the performers) were primarily focused on producing work for television, despite their acknowledgement that theatre offered more creative freedom. The reason was the same: the larger 'reach' of television. All had something they wanted to say, some had ambitions to affect society, and all realised that despite its attractions, theatre would only ever offer a few hundred minds to influence. These perceptions can be seen as connected to Wittig's (1992) argument that 'A text by a minority writer is effective only if it succeeds in making the minority point of view universal.' (1992: xi) and suggests a consciousness of the 'theorization' dimension of identologist action discussed in Chapter 2 (Connell 1987:256).

When asked why she thought that women writers had more access in theatre, [ ]'s response was one echoed by other interviewees in relation to other dimensions of access (greater creative freedom, more opportunities for women performers): that it was because there was less money in theatre. [ ] (P) put this regularly expressed

view passionately, specifically here in discussion of the work of black theatre companies:

> And I think that, you know theatre doesn't make loads of money [so] one of the things it shouldn't *have* to be is safe, you know? That's what happens when millions of pounds is being risked on what you do. When it's a few hundred a few thousand or even a few hundred thousand *that's* when you're supposed to be able to take risks and do stuff that is challenging and enlightening and those two things don't have to exclude being entertaining as well.

This is in direct contrast to the work considered above positing a link between reduced funding and under-representation of women playwrights and indicates that *perception* of the theatre as poorer and therefore more open and accessible enables a space for individual agency to affect change within a framework that is, at a macro-level, disadvantageously structured.

Various interviewees offered explanations as to why, in both media, fewer women than men submitted work, such as women lack self-belief and that they are not as single-minded as men. A more pragmatically-based contribution to possible explanation of the gender imbalance in submissions was indirectly supplied by several non-performer interviewees who said that many writers try to reproduce what they see being commissioned. This was a tendency perceived to have been exacerbated by the increased fragmentation and competition in the broadcasting sector and supported by similar conclusions in relation to the development processes of independent television production companies (Newby 1997). [ ] (W), a theatre

and television writer with a casting background and with a marked sense of societal constructions of gender and sexuality, acknowledged the realities of access: "But I've learnt that actually when you're starting out, you absolutely have to think about your audience…You have to look at what's on TV. You have to look at who's doing the commissioning, and what they want." Writers' self-censoring accommodation to organisational aims has been explored in examination of *Cagney and Lacey* (D'Acci 1994). In an episode where the dilemma concerns Cagney's unexpected pregnancy, D'Acci records that the (explicitly feminist) writers anticipated that the television network would not permit abortion as a solution and therefore did not even consider writing this as an option for the character.

This view was implicitly supported by [ ] (CD) who works principally in television:

> You know even on one level our business is very broad-minded…and yet, we're still very very very, you know, in our early days of maturity when it comes to reflecting our world. Reflecting women in important roles within industry within politics within - we have plenty of writers, but, for one reason or another people are not commissioning things which lead women.

These assessments must be considered in the light of a common observation from performer interviewees that more women were needed in the highest industry positions both in television and theatre to effect change. For example, [ ] (P):

> It will make a difference when the women are at the very top…When I was a director at the RSC there hadn't been a woman director there for 10 years. And it was really difficult to break through the kind of, men's fear, of having a woman…it's true but these male, white, university types, took over for a long time, in the RSC and the National. You know, led by Trevor and,

Trevor Nunn and Peter Hall. Brilliant, brilliant. But they chose male directors, mainly.

[ ] (P, Pr) took a historical view of the position of women gatekeepers and production of work in the television sector, tracing the gradual erosion of barriers to the current situation and supporting the work of Wacjman (1999) in relation to women managers in corporate situation:

Now where are we? Now we're at a very awkward stage, where the danger is, there was a woman in Fleet Street who was the first woman editor of a national paper, and she was, I would say, *utterly* ruthless…And it was almost as if in order to prove that she could do the job, she had to be tougher, she mustn't show any sentimental softness, she had to outdo the men in all their most, if you like masculine traits. And you've got Dawn Airey [then Director of Programmes at Channel 5]…she's created Channel 5, which she proudly says is based on the 3 Fs, films, football and you know the rest. And I think it's a completely meretricious waste of a new channel. I see no exciting new departure, the nearest thing they can claim is that they perch their newscaster on the end of a desk. And I wonder how much of that is due to Dawn Airey deciding that she could be ruthless and uncaring and she doesn't mind what people say and two fingers to the world and she's gonna get the ratings, you know, and lowest common denominator…So we're at that stage now, I think the next stage is going to be the exciting one.

The majority perspective of performers on this issue is shared by a traditional liberal feminist approach, which argues that what is needed to improve the lot of women working in theatre and in television is more women in executive positions (e.g. Ross Muir 1988; Hyem 1987) and is a perspective shared by Tunstall (in Marris and Thornham 1996). The liberal viewpoint, which neglects the integrated, systemic

nature of structure and strategy, has been criticised by, amongst others, Arthurs (1994) in her discussion of women in television. She stresses the embeddedness of individual workers in a society stratified along divisions of gender, ethnicity and class and that therefore 'More women in the industry is not enough: there need to be more women with a politicized understanding of the ways in which women's subordination is currently reproduced and with the will to change it' (1994: 100). The pertinence of this view is supported by the quote cited above from [ ] on senior women managers. Support for this contention was also provided by the response to my request for interview from the woman who is Head of Drama at ITV Network Centre, detailed in Chapter 3, and in the opinions of a senior (female) BBC executive:

> I probably, when push comes to shove, would prefer to create a part for a man than a woman, develop a part for a man because I think for me, you know, it's sexier, the audience is more likely to go with it. Men like watching other men, because they think they're kind of heroes, and women like watching men…I think men want to be in power. And women want them to be in power. And women want to be looked after. In their, you know, we're talking about their down-time their entertainment you know, their fantasies their dreams, their whatever.

A common performer viewpoint on this area was expressed forcefully by [ ] (P) in response to a questioning about what attracted her to audition for particular roles: "I have problems finding women [in scripts] to identify with – they're all running around after men. There seems to be a fear of showing strong women on telly unless she's a tart. I always go up for those. It's always one extreme or the other. Need to

send writers on a study of females." An earlier generation of women performers

expressed similar views (Todd 1984; Goodman 1996), adding empirically-

experienced weight to the work of de Lauretis (1984) and Mulvey (1975) on the

woman in narrative considered in Chapter 2. The leading performer Harriet Walter,

discussing some leading men performers, said that they were always developing and

were not predictable and that "There aren't that many equivalent women, because

the demands of their parts are so much less…too often a woman's part is simply

about, for instance, providing a hero who's in trouble with tension at home." (in

Todd 1984:14). Far fewer of the gatekeepers expressed the situation in such direct

terms. The agents as a group were the most vocally aware, although with acceptance

rather than frustration.

An interesting addition to this issue was [ ]'s [] declaration that when head of BBC

radio drama she had kept the department to a self-imposed quota of 10% of script

submissions being "by black or Asian writers". This policy does not seem to have

been adopted either in BBC television or in any 'mainstreaming' sense: [ ], a black

performer who had worked as a BBC script editor, said that a challenge to an

EastEnders producer as to why there were so few fully-rounded black characters on

BBC drama was met with the response that they did not receive that many scripts

from black writers. Again, this begs questions raised by discussion of women

writers in theatre and television: does it take a female or black writer to put female

or black characters centre-stage; in other words do gender and ethnicity significantly

mediate creativity, and secondly, whether a liberal merit-based policy of

evolutionary development can effect deep-seated change. The perception of the great majority of performers was yes to both. As a coda, [ ] said that she had followed up the producer's explanation by asking how he *knew* whether the writer of a submitted script was black or Asian. While this point can be understood as simply indicating that the BBC does not actively discriminate, it raises a particular gender issue that two of the three women writers I spoke to raised. Both had at some point considered submitting work under a male or gender-neutral pseudonym, the implication being that in their experience there was resistance to work identified with women. To this end, I questioned writers, commissioning executives and agents on the issue of whether in their perception the gender and ethnicity of a writer determines what and who they write about. The general response was that they did (to inevitably varying degrees), a factor which would seem to support the conclusions of the two women writers above. An indirectly supportive point was made by [ ] (W) talking about a television script he was then writing and the early discussions he was having about it with the executives involved:

> We're counting up the characters, say there were six characters, and it's something like four men and two women. And I said, well why don't we make this man a woman. And they said, oh well that's a good idea, that's great, that's fine. So I went away, and all I did was change the name. That's all I did. Gave them the script back and they said, you've written this woman brilliantly, because she's *like* the other character, but she's so different. And she's strong and she's funny. And all I'd done was change the name.

The television executives saw what they wanted and expected to see, a particularly neat example of Lukács' (1922) assertion (in Eagleton 1994, noted in Chapter 1) that perception constructs reality and one that extends consideration of the effects of gendered ideologies on the decisions and processes affecting the woman performer's working realities.

In television, a frequent pattern is that the writer will provide thumb-nail sketches giving a sense of the characters for the producers to work from (and later to be sent out as casting breakdowns to agents and information services) and in the case of a series they will work from a 'bible', a document that defines what the piece is about, the environment in which it takes place, and how it proceeds over a given number of episodes. [ ] (Pr) gave an example which also touches on the position of the casting director, explored further below:

> Person A is a policeman in a rural environment, with a happy family, wife, 2.4 children, and an Alfa Mondeo and you'll go Ah! I know who fits into that environment…you might think that is Martin Clunes, or Neil Dudgeon, or Hugh Laurie…all of which are different styles of actor, they bring different types of performance to the table, they have different experience to bring to the table… Casting director comes in, not much further down that process and goes, you really should consider such and such, and it's like well they've only ever done comedy, and I really don't like what they do in comedy and they went yes, but if you'd have been at the National or the RSC four years ago, you'd have noticed this phenomenal performance where they did this. So they're bringing another level of expertise to the table, which, from their point of view should be, any actor or actress you could see, they should have got an opinion of.

All of the casting directors interviewed said that as they first read a script they note down actor's names by potential parts, underlining the realities of networking and gatekeeping that structure this sector. It is clear that, as with choice of director in both theatre and television, choice of casting director has employment implications for performers. Casting directors will have reputations for different skills; possibly their contacts with stars, possibly their perceived empathy with particular styles of piece. In the case of the auditions observed for the ITV series [X], it was clear that choice of casting director was influenced by previous working relationships with the writer who unusually was also executive producer. However, according to the script editor of both series of [X] the initial premise agreed between the casting director, writer and other producers that it should be an ensemble piece with no well-known faces was a short-lived creative aspiration: "Network Centre then required that there were about 4 to 6 named, known names that should be cast in it." As noted in Chapter 3, ITV Network Centre (which was established in response to the requirements of the Broadcasting Act 1990) is responsible for scheduling and commissioning programmes centrally on behalf of the fifteen regional television companies. Interview data revealed that the general perception of both performers and gatekeepers is that the senior executives at Network Centre and the BBC equivalents are regarded as wielding great power over the employment opportunities of performers. There was also what seemed to be a related general perception that the last ten years have seen an increasing reliance on the belief that use of star performers will attract the oft-quoted "bums on seats", a perception with direct relevance to stars' 'green-lighting' of productions discussed in Chapter 4. This

approach is seen as emanating principally from Network Centre, with the BBC

increasingly following suit, and is seen by performers and agents as having several

implications. The first is that it makes it much harder for unknown performers to

achieve access which would lead to increased status and thus enhanced access and

career longevity: the more limited opportunities for access to work and to higher

status work for women performers clarifies the gendered nature of this implication.

Secondly, the approach reduces available budget for distribution as wages to the rest

of the cast, resulting in either the employment of lower-range performers in parts

that would have employed middle-range performers, or reduced payment to middle-

range performers willing to accept such a reduction. Both of these points were made

forcibly by several middle-range performers, all of the agents, and were noted by

union officials as part of the bargaining landscape. The increased difficulties for

women performers in sustaining a career and thus greater exposure to the effects of

reduced payments are considered in Chapter 6. The manipulation of the performer

labour market in this way was an issue raised in every occupational category

interviewed for this study. [ ] (A):

> And the Network Centre, there are probably about four or five people
> ultimately that make decisions about what programmes are going to be
> made and who's going to be in them. And they have to be network-
> approved. Even down to casting directors, have to be network-approved.
> Directors have to be network-approved. Actors have to be network-
> approved. And it's really down to ultimately I'd say about 5 people. It's a
> *very* very difficult market and that's with the independents so that's like,
> Carlton, Yorkshire, Granada. And it depends on whether or not individual
> producers get on with Nick Elliott [Controller of Network Drama] or Jenny
> Reeks [Head of Network Drama] or David Liddiment [then Director of

Programmes], at the Network Centre. That they get their project, passed or not. In the BBC it's not as scary but they still have to have, they still do names. So you will have noticed that Amanda Burton would head everything. I mean like for instance when Lesley [Dunlop], was offered *Where The Heart Is*, it was *only* after the Network Centre had approved her. You know Michelle Buck from United [Productions] would have rung up Nick Elliott from the Network Centre and said listen, if you want us to make another series, you know, Sarah Lancashire's leaving, how do you feel about Lesley Dunlop. And they'd go oh yeah we love Lesley Dunlop, that's fine. If it was somebody that they didn't know, but was an equally as good actor, wouldn't stand a chance.

This last point was supported by the middle-range performer [ ]:

It's a very fickle business because I've had things written for me and ended up not doing them, you know, had someone else being put in. As you say I'm just below sort of being, you know a name or whatever so people can write things for me but the top men at the BBC'll go no…we want someone with a higher profile you can't have her…So that's deeply frustrating, to have had that happen.

The possibility that this was an individual's understandably jaundiced interpretation of a particular business decision is undermined by this acknowledgement from a senior BBC executive: "The Controller will decide they want to have a - you know Peter Salmon [then Controller of BBC One] was telling people who he wanted to be in some of the shows, he would commission this only if you could get Paul Nicholls for example, that young pretty boy from *EastEnders*. Or only if it could be a vehicle for Amanda Redman or something." [ ] (CD) also pinpointed the senior posts in

television as increasingly interventionist in casting, while also stressing that the attraction of stars for employers was spreading in the theatre sector as well:

> Well I think theatre obviously it's financial, how many more bums on seats they could get. In television, it's the central controllers it's the network centres who literally you know, demand, send you, fax you a list of names, they want to see. I just recently cast something about George VI. And I got this, list. Which included an actor, who is well-known, who is 28, broad Lancashire lad. To play George VI. And you just say this is a joke, this is ridiculous. You're up against this all the time. All the time you get, you literally- all they care about is, you know, if someone's been in *EastEnders*, or is a name, you know the Robson Green effect.

The issue of gender and star performers has particular significance in terms of access and career longevity for older women performers, seen in the context of the reduced number of roles available to them (as noted in Chapter 2), as the smaller number of roles will be 'colonised' by established performers. This issue will be revisited in Chapter 6. The preparatory contexts and processes of the work having been established, the next section will address the preparatory processes and conduct of the audition itself.

The entry process

A central observation about the place of the audition in the performing labour process is its constant recurrence and its often individually personal nature in terms of content and assessment. In an overcrowded labour market with a greater number of women pursuing a smaller number of 'women's roles', the audition is seen almost as part of the work itself, part of the ongoing attempts at access through being seen

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by different gatekeepers or simply as attempts to remain in the 'flow' of the industry. This is a generalisation and level of experience or status achieved within the industry will obviously affect attitudes to the audition process. This is in turn tied to the concept of self-selection, a theme that ran through many of the performer interviews and one that at times sharply illustrated the arguments surrounding the influence of gendered ideologies on this labour process.

Performers were asked whether they went to auditions dressed to some extent 'as' the character they were auditioning for. This was in order to explore the idea that the people involved in the production of culture, including performers (an occupation described as central to the construction of the gender order as discussed in Chapter 2), draw on shared typifications, thus presenting and perpetuating through the work and through preparation for work aspects of hegemonic constructions of gender and sexuality. While attitudes varied as to dressing in that way for auditions, all treated the concept as a common, institutionalised part of the labour process that all sides were aware of but rarely mentioned to each other. A minority of performers explicitly resisted the implications of dressing for an audition, apparently from a desire to retain a feeling of control in a situation (selection from a permanently overcrowded labour market) that they felt left them with little power. The main point of the question was to establish whether there was an assumption that all sides had similar conceptions of roles described in particular way and if so, what this suggested for the working realities, the disadvantage noted, and for perceptions regarding both.

Gates: casting

One of the reasons performers 'dressed' for auditions was the underlying
assumption, expressed regularly in interview, that casting directors "have no
imagination" and, implicitly, are looking for people who suggest or embody aspects
of the fictional character, rather than actors with skills of transformation or
invention. The view was not expressed in relation to directors casting for theatre;
here the analogous concern was expressed in relation to being put up by one's agent
for previously-played types of role, a point made particularly strongly by higher-
range performers. Their apparent greater power in the employment relationship in
terms of access, longevity and pay was felt to be constricted by outside perception of
'them' (i.e. conflation of worker and parts played) and required ongoing efforts,
including changes of agent, to resist categorisation and thus restriction of access. [ ]
(P):

> Usually you change because you feel that the agent no longer sees you…
> I've usually changed when I've gone to a different stage, you know when I
> was a juvenile I was with one and then I got a bit older and I'd realised that
> they couldn't see the change in me and weren't - because you have to be
> re-sold at every stage. Because I mean, even, particularly if you're an
> established actress because people still think of you playing those roles and
> you have to have an agent who says no no she's not like that now, she's
> older and she can play a different range of roles. Or, sell you for
> something that they don't expect you to be able to do.

These comments highlight the accepted 'commodification' aspect of the performer
career, as well as illustrating Pateman's (1988) description of the employment

contract's 'political fiction' of the separation of labour power from the body of the worker (1988:202). This point was further exemplified at the auditions for [X]. Here, I was told that one of the main female characters in the series was to be played by a leading (and therefore expensive) performer whose previous work had been in complete contrast to the [X] role. The performer had lobbied for the part and was so intent on playing it (partly as a means of changing her public image and therefore future work access), that her agent had said she would do the job for no pay. Whether or not such an unusual arrangement (at that level) was made, its introduction as a possibility highlights several issues around access. The issues it raises in regard to performing work and pay are considered in Chapter 6. Most performers stressed the importance of their relationship with their agent in determining what auditions they were sent for. The ones who were most enthusiastic about their agent were the ones who said that the agent would put them forward for auditions which they were not stereotypically 'right' for in appearance, [ ] (P) for instance: "I'm lucky again with my agent she's very imaginative, so yes she will put me up for parts that say so and so is a big girl, like [ ] in [X]. But she will also put me up for parts that don't say that. But what happens is that not everybody is as imaginative as her."

The critical attitude towards casting directors was expressed not only by performers, in whom it could be interpreted as a construct to cope with rejection, but also by other gatekeeper occupations such as producers and agents. In discussion of the

allocation of non-gender- or ethnically-specific roles, [ ] (Pr) summarised a general attitude:

> I mean, they have an inordinate amount of responsibility with this, because now having a casting director is virtually custom and practice in the majority of television drama in this country. It would be quite unusual not to have one. So they also have a responsibility for presenting alternatives at the meetings. And for whatever reason that doesn't necessarily happen…you're presented with what they think you want, or what they think you can get past the broadcaster, and it tends to be sort of less open-minded, which is again the system's fault probably more than theirs, in most cases. But it still it's a sort of pre-emptive, self-censoring given, whatever you want to call it.

The idea of getting something 'past' other gatekeepers was seen in Chapter 4 in discussion of product processes in television in relation to the BBC and producers' approach to controllers. There was an alternative (minority) viewpoint that supports [ ]'s supposition and which can be summarised by [ ] (A) in response to the suggestion that casting directors lack imagination: "Yes. But also some casting directors will have no power, I mean it does depend. Or even the established ones will be working with some directors who, the famous phrase is, have their own ideas." A more bleak perspective was given by another middle-range performer: "Women casting directors have so much control but they use it in a very narrow way. I suppose they're frightened. It seems to be an industry run on fear. Frightened of getting a bad reputation, frightened of opening your mouth in case it gets round." These perceptions, when considered in light of the gendered concentration in casting noted in Chapter 3, put another contradictory cast on the general response to issues of disadvantage, that what was needed was more women.

Both theatre and television auditions placed emphasis on the appearance, perception of sexuality and what was called 'essence', of the individual performer, as will be explored further in relation to embodiment and selection. This was usually related directly to the requirements of the role although was also used in relation to determining what the performer would be like to work with or simply as general comment. Here, the interconnections between workers and gatekeepers in this area could be seen in a particular way. The 'who you know' aspect of access to work was noted in Chapter 2 and this structural element was very plain in all the observations as I heard time and again that people had worked together or knew someone who had worked with the person and so on. However, what became clear was another dimension and one arguably related to the industry's 'unitarist' perspectives addressed above and in Chapter 2: gatekeepers and employer-proxies talked almost as if they were part of the continual journey of a performer's life and career (the two were largely discussed as the same thing). There seemed to be a taken-for-granted awareness that, to some extent, they were involved with the people they kept meeting and had yet to meet. The images and patterns of language used suggested a metaphorical escalator travelling unpredictably up and down, with gatekeepers closely observing performers' positions on this escalator. There were many instances of this but the most startling was in the television audition. A young woman performer, previously cast by the casting director, had given a very impressive reading and been very friendly and animated during the interview. Afterwards there was enthusiastic discussion about her clear abilities, although

doubts about suitability for the particular job. Moving on to discussion of the types of role she had been playing, where the character often suffered violence, the casting director (who knew the performer only from auditions) said "It's in her. People sense something in her." She added sombrely "I wouldn't be surprised to hear one day that she'd killed herself." The tone of these statements was not gossipy or salacious and seemed to be made (and received) as variants on the continuous assessments of performer/person that were part of the selection process. Indeed, there seemed to be an acceptance (across the observations) that it was part of a casting director's skills to assess performers as people in this way. This was closely allied to judgements about appearance, in terms of representing a particular 'type' to convey particular information. For instance, in the above example, the performer, despite an exceptional reading of the scene (noted by everyone present) was denied a part because of her age. The role they wanted to give her (because of her talent) was for a shop assistant in a scene with one of the middle-aged central women characters. However, the director said that if it was played by a young actress "it would interfere with the scene going on with the two women". The unspoken consensus was that unrelated types of information would be conveyed by appearance that would interfere with the audience's reception of the narrative. This issue was raised by other interviewees and is discussed further below in consideration of individual regulation.

Gates: embodiment and selection

Across the observations in both sectors, performers and gatekeepers talked to each other during interviews in terms of stereotypes and shared typifications (as discussed above), both of people and situations. Directors used these to convey their idea of the character and performers used them to convey their understanding of the direction or to convey their own conception of the part. For example, "the sort of Leeds girl who goes out without her coat on" was given and received as guidance with amusement and understanding. Using the person of the actor to 'suggest' aspects of the character portrayed was clearly important and there was very direct consideration of perception of the performer's sexuality, as will be discussed below.

The constantly reiterated emphasis on essence and appearance seen in the observations was at odds with some of the interview data. Most (not all) of the gatekeepers interviewed, casting directors, agents, producers, directors, stressed that talent was the most important criterion in determining access to work. I believe these assertions were, for the majority, sincere. Indeed I saw a couple of performers rejected on this ground despite 'looking the part'. However, the experience of the observations led me to focus on the embedded nature of our assumptions, and in particular about gender and the presentation of gender and sexuality. Acting talent was demanded, but gatekeepers wanted to keep searching for it until they found it in an appropriate package which would convey unspoken, *understood* ideas. And here, the place of unmonitored individual gatekeeper perception was clearly crucial to a performer's chance of access to work. A succinct example was the discussion after

[London Theatre] audition, when the casting director told me that the director "just goes on his instinct."

[ ] (A), in response to being asked to rate the importance of appearance in terms of an actor being able to work: "I'm afraid it's vital. They don't have to be all pretty, but they have to fit in with the idea the casting director or director have come up with and they put in the casting brief." Again, the importance of constructed typifications and individual perception is key. The majority of interviewees emphasised that the situation differed in auditions for theatre work; they perceived a prioritised requirement for talent or experience over appearance. However, there was a minority view; [ ] (A) regarded theatre as "pretty strict in terms of image, look" and this opinion was given credence by observation and other interview data, [ ] (P) amongst other performers perceiving that theatre was increasingly cast from television and influenced by television's frames of reference. [ ] (D) expressed the essence of the casting process in a way that indicates directly the influence of shared stereotypes on the performer's access to work. Interviewed after my observation of her auditions for [Theatre 1], she summarised the employer-proxy attitude to appearance: "Does she read as a mother figure?", a selection requirement that a performer cannot control for by acquisition of qualifications, skills or experience. There was more data from observation of the [London Theatre] auditions and further, it introduces a related premise. A repeated theme in many interviews - producers and agents as well as casting directors - was that a key part of what separated stars from other performers was charisma, a 'presence' that had a sexual

element to it. [ ] (CD) summed up this phenomenon in relation to all performers: "a lot of the time you're casting because you want to be in that person's presence." And she, as with many other gatekeepers in all categories, felt that this involved a sexual subtext even if the role or piece itself did not have specifically sexual overtones. For instance, [ ] (DS, P, D) characterised casting as having "a lot of sex involved. I don't mean that in a casting couch way. I mean I think there's a lot of sex involved anyway in what makes people want to watch other people."   The problematic nature of this element in selection was highlighted during [London Theatre] auditions. In discussion of the suitability of one of the actresses after her audition (which had comprised her sitting in a chair and reading a scene across a table with the director reading the other parts) the director said that he "found her sexuality very masculine" and that "she was a bit dykey". This was said not as an aside but as a serious contribution to the discussion with the casting director of the performer's suitability for the role. Another performer who was later recalled for a second audition was also discussed in physical terms ("bizarre-looking, but we can do something with her hair and make-up"). Both women were very experienced (upper) middle-range performers and the incidents highlight the way that performing labour processes illustrate wider issues of sexuality at work - as noted in Chapter 2 that women are seen primarily as 'woman' before they are seen as 'worker' (e.g. Adkins 1995; Gutek 1989). Further, it highlights the way in which particular constructions of gender and of sexuality become fetishised in the performing labour process and bring a less familiar dimension to Marx's (1976) conceptualisation of commodities. Marx described commodities as the disguise of the social relations of

the producers of commodities (things with exchange-value) in the form of a relation between objects. Thus social relations between people are both disguised by the commodity-object and embedded within it. It was argued in Chapter 2 that in aspects of the working realities and disadvantages experienced by women performers we see the social relations of a society dominated by patriarchal constructions of gender and sexuality. [ ]'s (P) perceptions of the effects of hegemonic constructions of sexuality on her working realities further illustrate the embedded quality of these social relations in commodity form:

> Gay women in acting, we have a hard time, much more so than a guy would… people have an idea of what they think a gay person is supposed to look like as well you know… I do know women that it does stop them getting cast in certain roles, the love interest or something like that.

These perceptions also give form to what Parken (2001) argues is the 'heterosexual gender contract' in employment (2001: 13), as noted in Chapter 2. Parken presents the potential dilemma for the lesbian worker of 'doing the double day' in terms of producing a heterosexually gendered presentation of self, and dealing with the consequent conflicts of 'not taking themselves to work' (Parken 2001:11). There is potential for lesbian performer workers of doing a triple day, representing a heterosexually gendered presentation of self as self *and* through work content, compounding the consequent conflict by sustaining dominant ideologies in the 'production of people' (Murgatroyd 1985 in Bradley 1989: 9) as argued in Chapter 2. Parken asks: 'When are employees contracted to perform lesbian or gay gendered sexuality through their employment contracts?' (2001:3) and in the vast majority of

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employment sectors the answer would be never. Here, performing work does (very)

occasionally offer such an opportunity. However as we have seen, such work is

against the tide of both the majority of produced work and the structures of access

that feed the work. These issues can be related to the 'gendered identification' point

raised by [ ] (W), noted above, in that several performers, when asked if there was a

difference in auditioning for male or female directors, contextualised their answers

by stressing that an unspoken element of the audition/interview is mutual

assessment: will we get on? Some of the performers were clear about the class

connotations of this aspect of individual regulation, in that the fundamental

economic disparities of position inevitably weighted the respective importance of

these assessments. Some performers felt individual personality was the key factor;

most, while sometimes entering an 'individual personality' caveat, felt that although

there was no obvious difference in *treatment*, they themselves responded differently.

Firstly, as noted in Chapter 3 in discussion of 'themes' of the television observation

data, the presence of women was always felt to be significant or noteworthy in some

way. Secondly, the (hetero)sexual element of gender divisions was stressed.

Several performers mentioned that if it was a male director/producer there was a

flirtatious element to an interview. Not that there was an overt expectation of this

but that the performers felt that it formed an almost inevitable part of the process.

[ ]:

> There is a flirtiness that happens in auditions…I don't think it's a
> conscious thing, I don't think - you know full-blown consciousness oh
> yeah flirting now. But it's there…It's there when you're sort of chatting to
> them or whatever, you know, you have a chat with them before you read.

It's sort of there. But I think it's also about the way they see you I suppose. I'm actually gay…I don't know whether sometimes they actually like the fact that I'm gay. So they like flirting with me.

A middle-range performer also stressed (positively) the circumscribed flirting aspect of auditions and only later in the interview refined her position:

When you are meeting a woman, I am unconsciously aware of the fact that I don't have to work so hard to present the, what might be the product that they are requiring. This Channel 4 thing I did recently was all women, woman producer, woman director and a woman casting director. And I did dress myself according to how I thought the woman might be…but once I got in there I talked on a total level playing field, to coin a phrase, with women on an equal basis. I was able to be funnier, bawdier, more honest perhaps than I might have been if it's a bunch of men. Because I think that I would subconsciously assume that the men had an assumption themselves, about what this woman might be.

[ ] (P), a performer in her late 30s, implicitly acknowledged the relational, patriarchal/heterosexual constructions of gender in the audition process: "If they're male you're kind of aware that they're always going to – part of it's going to be to do with your attractiveness. The parts I *used* to go for anyway. Now I suppose it will be more mothers and professional women." The self-selection motif also reappears in this assessment. The perspectives of these women were repeated many times by performers, both in relation specifically to auditions and more generally. [ ] (P) recalled initial difficulties with some women performers in her work as a director, "Because they didn't know how to relate to me". She said that eventually,

after discussions with these performers, she could summarise the ambivalence in their terms:

> There is an undertone of flirtiness with my male director. I'm trying to please him, he's either daddy or my boyfriend. Not really, but you know, in my mind's eye I know where I am, I do that and he says well done and clap clap clap and I feel oh great, that man likes me. And I don't know where I am with you, I don't know how I'm pleasing you or how I relate to you.

These thoughts and findings on embodiment and selection place the findings on issues of self-selection. All the performers talked of their particular 'categories', in terms of age, status and 'type'(e.g. the 'best friend' rather than lead ingénue) and about the transition between categories and therefore which auditions they saw as being open to them. These findings echo the writers' perceptions above of the need to replicate existing work in order to be employed. A performer interviewee said that she had lost four stone quite recently and was trying to convince herself to go for work she had never gone for before: "if it said 'Karen, 20s, attractive', I'd just ignore it". Here, relevance of lack of a need for formal qualifications in order to act (notwithstanding the patent skill and experience demonstrated by most performers) is clear. What is also clear is that what partly fills the vacuum are perceptions of *social* qualifications; generalised, shared conceptions of 'acceptability' as 'types' of gender and 'types' of (hetero)sexuality. The practical necessity for such consideration has been reinforced by interview findings with several women casting directors and producers. The producers talked (laughingly) about having to tell male directors and producers that they were not "casting your fantasies". One went on to

say that, "actually, often we are, of course". There was a similar reaction from a senior woman casting director, who acknowledged that "Casting can be very subjective, you have to be quite careful. And I often say I am not here for the delectation of your loins actually."

[ ] (A), in response to a question as to whether she advised her women clients to lose weight or alter their appearance:

> I grew up in the feminist movement and sometimes I try and catch myself and see if it's absolutely necessary but yes I do. I have a client, incredibly beautiful actress but she has a hard, spiky look and that's not so commercially viable. I told her to grow her hair and she will double her castings, but the work won't be the interesting stuff she wants.

This directly addresses the issue of a necessary accommodation to the patriarchal values of the mainstream performing sector in order to survive economically and maintain access to work. The dimension of ethnicity as part of these values was provided by [ ] (A):

> When I was being put up for television stuff it was all the oh god you know you're a bit big for telly really. And you're not a big girl so you can't really play big girls. And you're a bit too well-spoken to play, you know, black girls, because of course you don't exist do you. And people who were really honest would say look, I'm going to be straight with you, you're a bit too dark to play the sort of, you know mixed-race mistress-type character. You're a bit too light for you know the hard girls kind of thing. And I wouldn't say that my problems were because I was black but I would say they were of a different quality.

These experiences echo and support hooks's (1991) perception that 'racism has created an aesthetic that wounds us, a way of thinking about beauty that hurts…In that space of shadows we long for an aesthetic of blackness – strange and oppositional.' (1991: 113).

There is little reliable quantitative data on overall minority ethnic performer access to theatre roles available at a national level, for instance none of the Equity-commissioned research examined has distinguished findings by ethnicity. However, the difficulties of access for both women and men performers are starting to be publicised, most notably in the Eclipse Report (Brown et al. 2001), a report on a working conference subtitled 'Developing strategies to combat racism in theatre'. There has been more work done on this issue in the television sector (see, e.g., Bourne 2001 for a selective survey). However, the available data is not distinguished specifically by gendered participation in television drama, but by appearances across all categories of television output (Hargrave 2002). The ungendered figure for percentage of minority ethnic performers with a speaking role in drama is approximately 7% (Communications Research Group 1999). Over all television output, the trend by gender was as follows: 'six out of ten minority ethnic participants were male and four out of ten female, which compares favourably with the overall television population, where around two-thirds are male (68%) and one-third (32%) female.' (Hargrave 2002: 103). There was a wider disparity in regard to age, as 40% of minority ethnic males were under 30 (against 22% white males) and 52% of minority ethnic females were under 30 (as against 34% white females)

(*ibid.*). These statistics, informed by interview data, suggest that the minority ethnic woman performer occupies a similar position in relation to minority ethnic male performers and to white women performers: they operate within the same strictures but are disadvantaged to a greater degree. [ ] (P):

> There are just so few good roles written for women full stop. Very few roles written specifically for black women. And very few casting directors and directors are enlightened enough to understand that a woman is a woman and unless there is some sort of family connection it doesn't matter whether she's black or she's white… but I mean when you're starting from a place where there aren't many fantastic roles for women then you know, I mean you start whittling down and down and down, you know, it starts to become tougher.

A connection between [ ]'s awareness and the earlier findings on writers and gatekeepers is suggested by a recent review of the position of black and Asian women writers and directors, a central aspect of which is expressed by Pat Cumper, a Jamaican-born playwright: "I wanted to write black female characters, and that's an automatic no-no. Most theatres think you can't get an audience for plays with black women in the lead. The response to most of my scripts was, 'It's really well written, but we can't put it on.'" (Kolawole 2003). Thus, as with the broad project of this study, focus on a particular component of intra-occupational segregation highlights the importance of difference, of distance from the invisible man. And despite the widespread perception of performing work as atypical and peripheral, the conventional standard template of the white able-bodied male worker pertains here as well. From the existing statistical data as well as interview data reviewed in this

study there seem to be increasingly positive employment effects for minority ethnic men performers from the 'white gaze' (Bird 1999). However, it seems that minority ethnic women performers do not benefit in the same way from either lens. This points to another characteristic this 'peripheral' sector shares with the mainstream, that gendered structures of disadvantage in society are, as discussed in Chapter 2, 'further complicated' by issues of race and ethnicity (Mirza 1992: 191; hooks 1991) and that labour markets for most minority ethnic women workers are doubly segregated. The working realities of minority ethnic women performers seem to embody segmentation and illustrate Kirton and Greene's (2000) point in review of literature theorising segmentation of labour markets that 'While the particular discourses of sexism and racism can be separated, the experiences of the groups affected are interconnected.' (2000: 61).

Performing also demonstrates the unspoken expectation of heterosexuality as part of the patriarchal construction of 'worker'. While the same conditions of labour oversupply and appearance- and age-based discrimination apply to men and women, majority and minority ethnic, performers, the further away from the template a performer worker is, the more harshly these constrictions are experienced (see e.g. hooks 1992, 2000). Accordingly, for the minority ethnic woman performer, the employment effects of the 'male gaze' identified by Mulvey (1975) are supplemented by the 'white gaze'. And both are mediated, as we have seen, through a 'heterosexual gender contract' that structures society and entails the 'doing' of heterosexual gender in jobs (Parken 2001:13; Rich 1980; Pateman 1988).

Further, it adds another dimension to work on aesthetic labour (see Warhurst et al. 2000; Witz et al. 2003). In addition to broadening the sectoral occupational categories traditionally looked at in this area, it is also of interest in that the processes are overt and accepted as existing by all parties. It is arguable that performing as a site of study of aesthetic labour has not been addressed as it is assumed that acting work is similar to modelling work, where physical characteristics are the official and primary requirement. This is to confuse the message with the medium and it is apparent that, certainly in the eyes of performers, physical appearance is not inherently or necessarily part of the work as with modelling, but is to do with choices made which have established the structures and practices. These choices, manifested in aspects of the work of women performers, would not seem to be amenable to formal regulation, considered more fully below.

Warhurst et al. (2000) say that the key issue in considering aesthetic labour is that workers in new forms of interactive service work are asked to inhabit jobs in new ways and that this is important because of the growing size and importance of the service sector. It must therefore be of interest to consider such issues where they are an established part of the labour process and where there is a remarkably 'whole' example of the concept. This is in that performing work is necessarily about the whole range of human embodiment (in terms of physicality) to facilitate the needs of the employer. The concept focuses on issues of appearance that have been identified as part of general labour processes already (e.g. Harper 2000; Chiu and Babcock 2002; French 2002). It arguably exemplifies performing labour processes

as central rather than marginal to the study of work in that it makes explicit what is going on in less overt ways elsewhere. Gender, age, height, bone structure and weight are rewarded/marginalised/used explicitly in performing work whereas it is subliminal, unacknowledged, denied in other areas of employment. This overtness is largely due to the absence of effective regulatory strategies in this occupational sector and the primacy of unmonitored individual inclinations which shape the employment process in terms of masculinities and femininities. However, the dominance of informal and unmonitored recruitment and selection processes being given, it must be noted that its reverse would not necessarily be a panacea for disadvantages experienced by women performers. Jewson and Mason (1986) propose that 'There is no necessary relationship between formalisation and rational-legal modes of discrimination' (1986:58). Further, that attempts to exercise control over the labour process and labour markets, to which they argue recruitment processes are central, 'may entail an intention to discriminate on grounds of sex and race' (1986:59). This argument is supported by Dickens's (2000a) assessment of the business case for discrimination, as considered in Chapter 2.

Individual regulation

Given the findings on routes to access, performers were asked, in less academically-specific language, about resistance in relation to the process of obtaining access to work. There were several examples, differing in content, all centred on a negative premise. The instances of resistance involved refusing offers of auditions for particular roles or took the form of leaving a particular job in protest at the depiction

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of a character. Several (gatekeeper) interviewees commented, when discussing

questions of imbalance of power, that an actor's power lay in the ability to say no.

In a permanently overcrowded labour market, with a greater number of women

pursuing a smaller number of roles open or perceived as open (a distinction without

a practical difference) to them, such a power remains largely hypothetical.

Therefore the instances of resistance are interesting examples of agency exercised

without any significant degree of what Callinicos (1987) calls structural capacities,

or determinants of access to resources. [ ] (P): "I got asked to play this part in *Bad*

Girls, which was a, basically she was very fat…mentally kind of disturbed. And,

very, very, stereotypical oh let's get the fat nutter part, you know. It was described

to me over the phone and I just thought oh no." [ ] (P) had a similar experience: "I

turned down a film part because the character was fat and a target, and I didn't want

young girls going to the cinema and saying so that's fat is it." This suggests a self-

perception of the performer as identologist as identified by Connell (1987) discussed

above in Chapter 2 and also can be seen as variant manifestations of Wittig's (1992)

'runaway' thesis. In development of her ideas of the social contract and its

formulation as heterosexual contract, Wittig concludes that 'only by running away

from their class can women achieve the social contract (that is, a new one), even if

they have to do it like the fugitive serfs, one by one…If ultimately we are denied a

new social order, which therefore can exist only in words, I will find it in myself.'

(1992:45). This individual 'running away' from gendered typifications, the rejection

of work in a competitive labour market, is one with a high price. There is the loss of

immediate income but also the loss of potential access to future work, either through

display or through gatekeeper networks. As has been discussed, both are crucial to maintaining access and thus, indirectly, to increasing capacity for individual regulation. Of course, the emphasis here is on the word 'individual' and absenting oneself from consideration for work has no discernible effect on the continuing forms of that work where there is continuous labour over-supply. However, if individual consciousness of concerns with such constructions appears at different points in the labour process, then the potential for a more widespread alteration in the gender regime becomes visible. [ ], a television script-editor, worked on the pre-production, shooting and editing of a television series with a woman writer:

> The male editor said that he would never cut together a [scene] and show an actress in an unflattering light…and I do remember having a discussion about, you wanted to be close to the female character at one point, and there was no close-up and we said can we not cut from that to a close-up of that character because we want to be with them at that moment, and he said well we haven't done that because the footage that we've got is not showing them in a flattering light. And the reaction to that was, well that's completely irrelevant, it's actually about going with that emotional journey. Which I found very interesting because his whole background was very much *James Bond*, very much old-school, he was a very sexist man, who pinched people's bottoms, young girls' bottoms on the production team, and would hug you in a really kind of inappropriate way, when you kind of greet him and left him.

We see here the confusion of woman performer with 'woman': both open to manipulation within boundaries established by patriarchal conceptions of gender. We also see attempts to resist these conceptions and here, because of the different structural capacities of the occupations involved, the resistance/regulation did not

involve individual absence or loss. Case (1988) would classify the above as a

'psychosemiotic' strategy, potentially revolutionary in that

> in the late twentieth century the mode of production which is central to the
> oppression of many peoples lies within the ghettoes of signs and codes. In
> the age of television…the production of signs creates the sense of what a
> person is, rather than reflects it (in the traditional mimetic order)…Modes
> of discourse and representation may replace the Molotov cocktail. (1988:
> 132).

None of the interviewees who mentioned stories of this kind displayed

consciousness of their actions as in any sense political or indeed strategic, and

unplanned/unintended incremental change is by definition difficult to track.

However, in these (almost necessarily) isolated instances we see straightforward

examples of de Lauretis's (1987) micropolitical resistance in the margins of

hegemonic discourses referred to in Chapter 2. The peculiar constraint in this

occupational area is that gendered hegemonic discourses are called on at several

levels. Firstly in the processes of creation of the play or programme (with their

particular formulations of 'realism' as discussed in Chapter 2); secondly in self-

perception (seen in self-selection for and conduct during auditions), thirdly in

official recruitment and selection processes.

The barriers to change are captured by the frank assessment of [ ] (Pr) who

throughout the interview was overtly aware of societal constructions of gender and

ethnicity:

I think there's a really interesting cross-over between reality and fiction

here in that, if you have a minor part in a very plot-driven drama and it's a

businessman, everyone thinks fine, he's a businessman, with his attaché-

case, all the rest of it, fine. They don't speculate any further than that, he is

what he is. If you've got a female business - person, a businesswoman,

you can't accept it in the same way, you think is she frigid, is she

ambitious, does she have kids, if she has kids how does she manage - you

know, all of that baggage which kicks in, whether you like it or not.

I observed similar unspoken assumptions in the television audition, where no

women were being auditioned for the roles of 'Waiter', 'Hotel Manager' or

'Photographer', a gendering of the recruitment process which went unremarked.

From observation of the day's work it seemed that it was also unconscious.

However, I did not pursue this supposition as I was unable to do follow-up

interviews with the gatekeepers concerned and therefore these assumptions went

unexplored. In both examples it is arguable that we see the invisible man-as-person

seen in Chapter 2 to be part of the construction of the woman performer's working

realities and disadvantages.

Notwithstanding these constructions of presence, the achievement of high and

highly-rewarded status by women performer workers – perceived as an

unremarkable event both within and outside of the industry – is a complicating

factor, as will be examined more closely in Chapter 6. The employment effects of

patriarchal constructions of gender can offer individual rewards in performance of

Connell's (1987) 'emphasized femininity' (1987: 285) noted in Chapter 2. While

achievement of status and reward as a woman performer is by no means necessarily tied to such specific 'performance', the data considered above indicate the general processes of a gendered (and racialised) attribution of value.

Legal and union regulation

The consideration of audition processes above leads to the presumption that there is very little in the content and (especially) procedures of current legal strategies of regulation that could affect the woman performer's working realities. As discussed in Chapter 2, current legislation aimed at tackling employment discrimination is not applied in this occupation and further is not *applicable to* much of findings of disadvantage in the data on access to performing work. In particular, legislation is not constructed so as to prohibit the exercise of 'taste' in relation to the production of a necessarily individualised creative project or to promote the use of work of writers on specific themes. However, women performers are particularly exposed in terms of access to opportunities by acceptance of the principles underlying the 'genuine occupational qualification' exemption for 'authenticity' (GOQ) in s.7 of the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) 1975. Most performers are unaware of this exemption but a senior union official acknowledged that "the GOQ exemption is still there and we've never tested it", a situation explained by findings below and in Chapter 6. 'Race' is one of the few heads of disadvantage experienced by women performers that is addressed by legislation, in the Race Relations Act 1976 (RRA). However, as noted in Chapter 2, the RRA also contains a GOQ for 'authenticity' (RRA, s.5 (2) (a)) and, despite the attempt by the Commission for Racial Equity to

restrict this exemption prior to the passage of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to cases where race or ethnicity was an 'essential defining feature' (1998: 25), the exemption remains. It should be noted however, that section 7 of the Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003 adds to the GOQ exemption in the RRA 1976. The wording goes further than the SDA or RRA. Section.7 requires an insertion 'after section 4 of the 1976 Act'; viz. not only that a particular race/ethnicity is 'a genuine and determining occupational requirement' (s.4 (2) (a)) but that it is 'proportionate' to apply the requirement (s.4 (2) (b)) and that 'the employer is not satisfied, and in all the circumstances it is reasonable for him not to be satisfied, that the person meets it' (s.4 (c) (ii)). Such a provision invites testing in this occupational area, but the familiar obstacles (including the distinctive characteristics of performing work noted in Chapter 1) remain.

The perspectives discussed in Chapter 2 arguing that, essentially, law is a site of gendered (and racialised) power and that attempts to use it to effect radical, re-structuring change will be ineffectual, have resonance in consideration of the data reviewed in this chapter. In relation specifically to the GOQ exemptions: what force should this potential exemption have in an area where it is acceptable to have all-male or all-female Shakespeare casts, or where black actors play historically white kings or where the leading black performer Josette Simon is employed to play Marilyn Monroe (the critic [ ]'s example of the relative progressiveness of theatre casting)? These examples would suggest that there is no *consistent, necessary* set of circumstances of authenticity. In which case the situation must be that it is always

down to the individual style of the piece or the preferences of individual gatekeepers. The implications of this for legal regulation in this area have not been addressed by legislators or union.

It is notable that the actors' representative organisation, Equity, did not make similar representations to those made by the Commission for Racial Equality before the drafting of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The union awareness of the exemption and of its own inaction in challenging the exemption illustrates the taken-for-granted consciousness that proactive individual challenge (as expected by the legislation) is an unrealistic expectation in this sector. The position of women performers as workers highlights a criticism of anti-discrimination legislation noted in Chapter 2, that in individualising the complaint it cannot fundamentally affect the continued reproduction of discrimination and disadvantage. However, the perspectives discussed in that chapter, that union and legal regulation must interact to stimulate change, seem in this instance to be wide of the mark. [ ], formerly Equity's Research and Parliamentary officer, [] said that Equity would have a Parliamentary lobby event once a year, as well as occasional meetings with ministers and that "The 'face' thing", i.e. having stars present, was important but also double-edged in that there was also a perception of "the 'whingeing luvvie' thing". Again, we see the marginalisation of this occupation, this time in an area (involving national-level worker representatives and national-level legislators) identified by academic research as potentially key to affecting the balance of power in employment relationships (McCarthy 2000; McCrudden 1998). However, it is clear

that Equity perceives political (thus ultimately legislative) lobbying as important and it is arguable that this is in part due to awareness of the collective bargaining difficulties it faces. The tensions inherent in different conceptions of Equity's typology were discussed in Chapter 2, in particular the potential exploitation of the union's 'creative' and 'possessive' impulses. These tensions are informed in this instance by the effective sexual division of performance labour and the greater women performer over-supply that we have explored in this chapter. These factors contribute to realisation of Colling and Dickens' (1989) analysis of bargaining situations where equality issues were unlikely to feature on the agenda.

The idea of positive discrimination in redressing disadvantage is not one that has ever found favour in the English legal system. The system has however shown itself vulnerable to sustained pressure from interested groups in society; arguably the only way original equality legislation, in the form of the universal franchise, came to pass. This must therefore open a space for the intervention of the women performer's representative body, Equity. However, union regulation in this area is noticeable by its absence. The union does not consider it to be part of its remit to demand increased or changed representation in relation to gender and ethnicity. It has negotiated 'best efforts' clauses in contracts with employers but these clauses are not monitored by the union. This appears to be the result of two mutually reinforcing factors. The union is not financially robust and regards its core concerns as involving negotiation and policing of non-specific minimum terms and conditions. The second factor is lack of desire. This was presented by different

interviewees in one of two ways: either as a general principle related to the primary concepts of 'talent' and freedom of artistic expression; or alternatively as a lack of interest in gender-specific member interests, an opinion expressed by a senior union official and by some members of the Women's Committee. However, both [ ] (P) and [ ] (P) of this committee also noted that most members would agree that it was not the place of the union to interfere in what is perceived to be an artistic process. The interview findings from other performers overwhelmingly corroborated this view.

These patterns appear to be repeated with regard to pay and longevity issues and are addressed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Review

We have seen the structure and structural effects of the effective sexual division of performance labour very clearly in the points of access considered in this chapter. There are patterns to be discerned from consideration of the data on audition processes. The idea that writers reproduce what they see commissioned is applicable to performers and self-selection and dressing for auditions – i.e. they see what gets cast and with whom. Similarly, agents sending clients up for parts implicitly followed the same process. [ ] (A) said that in preparing clients for auditions "you look at the director, what they've done before". These data, in conjunction with the interview data from gatekeepers on increased use of focus groups in the television sector noted in Chapter 4, indicate another aspect of

reproduction. The majority of focus groups apparently prefer the familiar, including familiar performers. There seems therefore to be an entire sector of occupational groups revolving their labour processes around reproducing what they perceive to be the desires of other groups; this is compounded by the technical requirements of both theatre and television (related to lack of time and resources) which seem to promote re-employment of performers who have worked with the gatekeepers before. This idea of reproduction and the repetition of the new is explored further in Chapter 7 in discussion of the ideas that women performers inevitably collude in the perpetuation of their own constraints and, in their reproduction of 'women', act as proxies for women in general.

This chapter has noted explicit and implicit perceptions of Chapter 2's discussion of the 'articulation' and 'theorization' aspects of Connell's (1987) identology thesis in relation to performers and writers as well as perspectives on Althusser's (1971) and de Lauretis's (1987) conceptions of maintenance, transmission and resistance to hegemonic ideologies. This has been illustrated by empirical manifestations of patriarchal hegemony, for example in the data acknowledging the institutionalised importance of a woman performer's age and physical appearance in gaining access to work. The possibilities of agency in this structural manifestation or, following Connell, 'gender regime' (1987:99), were signalled by the conflicting data on some performers' attitudes towards accepting conventionally stereotyped work.

The consideration of data has further offered support to Bourdieu's (1994) conception of artistic activity as both a field of forces and of struggles transforming/conserving this field. The transformatory potential in this field is, as we have seen from different perspectives across all the occupational categories, constrained by what Connell summarises as 'the lion in the path…the calculus of interests' (1987: 285). This has been in relation to general ideas of women and of ethnicity in product and labour processes. The patterns and issues noted in this chapter can be seen to recur in the vital areas of pay and career longevity, where they are explored in the next chapter's consideration of these areas.

CHAPTER 6   STAYING

women act, but not always in circumstances of their choosing.
Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*

Introduction

The realities of primary points of access having been mapped, this chapter addresses

central aspects of the labour process itself: issues of pay and career longevity. The

exploration of the issues of access in the preceding chapters has indicated the lack of

defined career paths and the gendered employment dimensions of this lack can be

seen at their sharpest in consideration of women performers' relative career

longevity.   Problems of lack of definition extend to pay, which is arguably both a

consequence and a contributory cause of the unstructured routes through the

performing sector.

The issues of and around pay and access in the form of career longevity are complex

and closely interrelated. Therefore the structure of this chapter differs in some

respects from earlier chapters. Performer pay is explained and examined at points in

parallel with career longevity and the shared effects of the structural aspects of

performing work are discussed. These include the common aspects such as the

work's individualised, casualised and geographically dispersed characteristics, as

well as the imbalance in labour supply and demand that impacts disproportionately

on women performers. The potential for women to achieve unusual (and unusually

accepted) levels of status and reward is also considered. All issues are discussed within their theatre and television contexts concurrently rather than consecutively.

A key difference between the two dimensions of career longevity and pay is found to lie in the difference in performer awareness and concern. The relative perceptions and prioritisation of these issues are explored in terms of their practical manifestations and consequences in terms of the regulatory strategies. In keeping with the shift in approach in this chapter, strategies of individual regulation are considered throughout while, shadowing the parallel consideration of pay and career longevity, the formal strategies of regulation are addressed in combination, reflecting their perceived empirical and theoretical interrelation. Aspects of the regulatory strategies in relation to pay and career longevity are introduced here in order to contextualise later discussion.

Equity has no coherent strategy or apparent will to address pay inequalities or, to a lesser extent, longevity issues, a situation which is examined in relation to union awareness of the sensitivities of members in an occupation where reputation is crucial and where there is usually a peculiarly strong desire to work in this particular area. The union is well aware that performers will frequently work for little or nothing and that often the first group to require persuasion that there is a grievance that must be addressed is the performer workers themselves (Dean 1998). However, the data also indicate other more conventional factors to do with, again, the

structural characteristics of the sector, bargaining agenda, bargaining relationships and perception of role.

The individualised nature of negotiations above minima would suggest that the union utilise the law in this area; however Equity has not done so, again it seems largely because of the particular pressures on performers. However, another reason given by the union and reiterated by many interviewees, was that equal pay legislation cannot be applied to performing work as to more conventional areas of work because of its subjective nature and fine gradations of status. While acknowledging the debates around UK equal pay legislation and pay systems, this perspective is found to be misplaced. Again, by framing acting work as not measurable or rationally structured, performing is seen as not a typical, thus implicitly male, way of working (as discussed towards the end of Chapter 4). Here it is argued that the gender lens that continually shapes access in this occupational area continues to operate, but in a less direct and perceptible form.

Individual regulation in relation to pay and career longevity presents a mixed picture, with accrual of market value key to managing the power disparities so clear in the performer/employer relationship. However, the ostensibly gender-neutral mechanism of market value is subject to an observed rule of capitalism, which can be phrased as 'what sells is sold' and the market value attaching to the individual worker in this context is usually based on specifically gendered constructions of social and economic value. Therefore the performer is vulnerable to the same

measurements in terms of continued access to power in the labour process. In this instance can be seen most clearly Marx's (1976) concept of 'the fetishism of the commodity' (1976: 163) whereby the true constituent properties of a commodity, that is the social relations between people, are objectified as 'the products of labour themselves' (1976: 165). Thus by virtue of *belief*, an essentially arbitrary assignation of use- and exchange-values acquires practical importance in the everyday lives of workers. And in the case of women performer workers the basis of their labour market experiences/value in the social relations between men and between men and women, can be drawn out in consideration of the gendered patterns of difference that become increasingly apparent over time.

Remuneration

As noted in Chapter 3, there is little routinely available pay information for this occupation and an almost complete absence of pay data organised by gender. As Swanson et al. (2000) note, official statistics do not record data on the income of the self-employed (2000: 200). Equity (which commissioned the quantitative research by Thomas 1992, 1995 cited in this study) does not monitor pay and the great majority of interviewees, across all occupations, felt that the lack of transparency in performer pay was justified by its individual character. The circularity of this argument was not perceived as relevant, but will be addressed later in the chapter. However, the survey data from the two studies conducted by Thomas is supported by the interview data from union, employers and performers presented here, as well as the secondary information culled from reports of high-profile gendered pay

negotiations such as the case of the television programme *Men Behaving Badly*, which will be addressed below.

In discussing the distinctions drawn between intrinsic and extrinsic reward in compensation for work, Kessler (2000) cites Bloom and Milkovich's (1992) definition of remuneration as a 'bundle of returns offered in exchange for a cluster of employee contributions.' (2000: 264). This lack of specificity neatly fits discussion of performer remuneration, as it must encompass such possibilities as the absence of money and the proxy indicators (to self and others) of occupational progress.

Pay occupies a shifting, unstable and very particular position in this sector. Employer objectives with regard to the mass of performers are centred principally on recruitment and with regard to women performers, an (even more) oversupplied labour market reinforces general wage constraint factors such as the performer's drive to work. Statistics from an Equity-commissioned survey indicate the peculiarities of considering one's principal occupation to be that of performer: in 1998-1999 21.4% of actor members of Equity earned nothing from acting and 43.1% earned under £5k (Osborne Market Intelligence 1999). Only an unspecified proportion of the next percentage category of 8.5% earned something approaching the national average, falling into the category £10k to £20k, with 6.1% in the very broad category of £20k to £50k (Osborne Market Intelligence 1999). 3.1% earned over £100k, illustrating the assessment of the International Labour Organisation that

> In few occupations is the dispersion of earnings so great as in the
> performing arts…It is clear that performers' incomes are lower than those

of comparable occupational groups and indeed lower than full-time
employees in general'
(ILO 1992: 45, 47).

This assessment is reiterated by Towse (1996), Creigh-Tyte and Thomas (2002) and
Caves (2000). Further, a survey of Europe-wide studies on the 'cultural labour
market' found the consensus of reports was that 'artists are highly qualified but on
average their income is very low and the situation of women artists is even worse
than that of their male counterparts.' (Employment and European Social Fund 2001).
The general assessment was less formally echoed by several interviewees, the
general tone captured by [ ] (A), an agent who had been a performer:

No other business is as unfair. It's the only business where hard work
doesn't pay off. Immediately I started working really hard for my
company, I started to get the results, I doubled the auditions in the first 6
months. Because hard work pays - if I was going to do a hundred phone
calls a day I'm going to get X number of auditions from that. But as an
actor, you just don't get the same returns. But there's that constant carrot
of *tomorrow* I could be earning thousands.

Against such a background, it is already apparent that central issues in assessing
women performer's pay will differ at points from mainstream occupations. Again,
difficulties in accessing data referred to above can arguably be in part attributed to
what this study found was pay's role as proxy-barometer of career progression. This
runs parallel to pay's generally ambiguous position in that performer labour
processes are informed by a very particular drive to work. In this sense (pay as

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irrelevant to the employment contract) it can be argued that performing is actually not 'real' or certainly conventional, work.

The meanings, functions and theories of pay, debated issues in the mainstream (see e.g. Wootton 1964; Gintis 1987; Rubery 1997), take on further complexities in this area and must be explored in order to grasp the operation of gendered pay disparities in performing. 'It is only by recognizing that wages serve multiple functions and contain multiple meanings that we can grasp the complexity of wage-setting processes' (Mutari et al. 2001: 23). First, to contextualise discussion of perceptions of pay, the basic wage-setting frameworks will be set out.

Wage structures and determinants

In the subsidised repertory sector and in the terrestrial television sector, there are minimum terms agreed at national level between the employer bodies and Equity. Then to guide the setting of middle-range performer pay, there are Middle Range Salary Levels (MRSLs) in subrep theatres. The MRSL system agreed between Equity and the Theatrical Management Association (TMA) sets targets for salaries above the minimum rate and theatres are placed in one of three grades, according to size and financial position, with different salary targets in each grade, starting at £10 per week above the minimum (Equity/TMA Agreement 2003). In television there are also agreements for secondary usage of a performer's work, for example if programmes are repeated by the same broadcaster or sold on to others. This (highly complex and contested) area of secondary payments is one of the distinguishing

characteristics of performer remuneration (Gray and Seeber 1996), but the issues are not directly relevant in this context. What gender implications there are will be drawn out in more general consideration of access and acquisition of status.

There are variations on all of these basic pay structures and of course stars stand to one side of system and variants, being less easily substitutable and thus possessing greatly increased bargaining power (Towse 1996). The BBC for example operates a policy whereby a performer's pay is increased according to the number of contracts issued to that performer, up to a particular ceiling for the area of work (with 'special highs' and 'special lows' negotiable for work outside of the established pattern). This system, clearly based on a notion of fairness in rewarding the worker's acquisition of experience, must also accommodate conflicting objectives of cost consideration and maintenance of differentials and as Drucker (1951) has argued, as the primary aim of any enterprise is the production of goods, it is inevitably constrained by its economic targets and thus the interests of its workers are ultimately always secondary (in Fox 1966). The performer's vulnerability in a situation of labour over-supply is clear and was indicated indirectly by [ ] (DS, P), talking about a period of regular work for the BBC:

> So my pay scale went up, 3 years running…it reached a point where, actually, the only way they could justify booking me was if I was going to play a thumping great lead. Because I was too expensive. So I got priced out of the market for a few years. So then I had a fallow period.

This example illustrates Sisson and Marginson's (1995) argument that the manager as agent of capital is 'obliged by the "laws" of the market to treat the workforce as a factor of production.' Efficiency is thus vital, and 'it is therefore extended to "not for profit" organisations' (1995: 95). This point is drawn out by consideration of another common type of performer wage system, this time in theatre. Some subrep theatres offer only a 'company wage', where every member of the cast is paid the same amount per week. This conventionally uncommon arrangement seems from interview data to be rooted in the subrep sector's chronic funding and income struggles. However, both justification and acceptance of it centre explicitly on notions of democracy and equality, arguably linked to the unitarist concept (Fox 1966) of the overriding importance of 'the show' referred to in Chapter 2. [ ], General Manager of [Theatre 1]:

> I'm afraid we keep it terribly simple, we pay everybody the same. Everybody the same, regardless of age, experience, part they're playing. It's a company rate, it's the ethos of this place. Everybody does it for the same and it makes it very easy because the deals are non-negotiable…I know quite a lot of subreps do it. And where you pitch your company rate, where you are in the pecking order you know I mean we do 315, Watford is paying 280 and there'll be other places who are probably doing the minimum which is round about 165 quid. And then there are the Birminghams who are probably paying 500. We've done that I guess 8, 9 years…mainly because it does make it very easy. You know you don't get bogged down in haggling you don't end up, you know, people trying to screw an extra five quid out of you. It's, and it is an expression of the ethos of the way in which we *work* you know. We said right you, now we're here to create a play and everybody's as important as everybody else. You know, this isn't a place you come and trumpet your ego or swan

around like, you know, as the star of the piece. Everybody comes and they get paid the same.

Thus there is no possibility of gendered disparities, but equally there is no possibility of a middle-aged woman performer who is disadvantaged in access to work opportunities (as will be explored further below), redressing the balance in reward of longer-term development of skill and experience and thus helping to sustain career longevity.

It should also be noted that in this manifestation of a theatrical egalitarian ethos in a company rate, it is only the performers who are on a 'company' wage: the director is paid a privately negotiated fee and the crew are each on their regular contractual wage. Most performers seemed to accept this situation, seeing it principally from the perspective of whether or not they could afford to take theatre work. Some embraced the professed rationale of equality, albeit in a rather stoical way. A middle-range performer with a track record of theatre and television leading roles articulated this strand of opinion:

> It does get a little bit irksome when you have more experience and you're doing far far more than the young thing that's just come in fresh from drama school, who's on the same wage as you who doesn't know diddly-squat yet. But I might be told that that's mean, and we do have the opportunity here in this profession to have that kind of egalitarianism therefore it should be pursued, and by and large it's not caused a problem. It's actually made for a very even-handed status quo within a rehearsal room, within a production. And any kind of imbalance has nullity rather than affording status.

Another middle-range performer's reaction similarly expressed the common, implicitly contradictory, reaction to this type of wage-setting:

> And it was a company wage, but there were two 30-something actors…who had young children and we were acting in Derby and one lived in Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire and one lived in Lancaster and they wanted to get home to see their kids on a Sunday and Monday morning, and they couldn't afford to come out for a meal. So I felt, I remember that hitting me thinking this isn't fair, you know. And I know ethically it's right to have a company wage, but I felt sorry for these guys…But I mean Derby Rep is, you know, Derby Playhouse is just a medium rep and they haven't got any money.

So there is awareness of the practical basis of the company wage (i.e. lack of money in subrep theatre) but a parallel acceptance of ideas that their work is about the *product*, and that it differs from other forms of product-making in its capacity for cooperative work forms, which takes precedence over the primary components of that product, i.e. individual performers. The examples above represent a majority view from performers, largely seeing themselves as creative workers making career decisions based on love of the work and the affordability of doing specific jobs. This results in peculiarly unitarist approaches to performing work and to attitudes towards pay and access issues, with inevitably complex implications for strategies of regulation. [ ] (P) vividly expressed what has been categorised as the concept of 'psychic income' (e.g. Towse 1996; Menger 1999; Baines and Wheelock 2001):

> But you're doing it because you really really love it and you believe in it. And I don't mind about that too much in a way. As long as it's possible to, I sort of think in a way it's rather a wonderful thing that theatre isn't paid so much because there are very few things left in life that are done for

passion, by people who are doing something because they really really really believe in it. I think in a way, the fact that it's so badly paid sort of - I don't think it's such a bad thing, I suppose is what I mean. It means that you do it because you really want to do it.

This was a commonly-held attitude in its most general sense, although lack of pay in itself was not usually regarded as inherently positive. However it was certainly not an isolated opinion, as [ ] (P) makes plain: "There's this sort of grey area that if you're doing a play and you're this artist, you're sort of pretending you're not being paid at all." These examples draw out the practical implications of the ideas of performing as 'not real work' addressed in Chapter 2. However, performers are mostly employed either on the minimum terms or on terms above these minima negotiated by them or their agents. After a successful interview an offer of work is made and a figure suggested either for weekly payment or as a single fee. This figure is based on the limitations of the production budget and an assessment (often shaped by negotiation) of the individual performer's status. This is usually decided by the casting director or producer in television and the production manager or administrator in subrep. There are many components of this assessment, to which external 'market' value is central but which include perceptions of longevity and *internal* (to the business) status, as made clear by [ ] of [London Theatre] in explaining how decisions are made as to where to place a performer in the range between [London Theatre's] minimum and maximum rate:

It's a combination of things. It certainly is experience. It is weight of responsibility in the play or plays that you're taking on. It's to an extent, pulling power, that's to say, you know obviously if we were employing

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Helen Mirren or Alan Rickman as we have in the past, we wouldn't be bothering to argue with them about whether they would be on the top salary of course they would. But there will be people paid the same amount as them who wouldn't have the same degree of status in the world outside, but who do have the same degree of status in the world inside.

Similar considerations appeared to apply in television, where the standard form of negotiation was set out by [ ] (CD). She highlights the similar assessment issues as well as the instability and unpredictability of performer wage-setting processes in that the pay follows the individual rather than the job itself:

Because I will know, I will look at a script and go okay the role of the doctor has only got 2 scenes therefore that will dictate an actor of lower status, it's not going to cost an awful lot. Or if you see a fabulous cameo and you think we could get Michael Gambon in that for 3 days and that will cost me, this amount of money. You will go to the agent and you will ask for appropriate quotes. You will say, on a similar budgeted film, what do they get. Because you don't want to insult an actor but also you also need to know, to then be able to turn to the producer and say, we cannot afford them…Sometimes they can go off and get the money and that's fine, you know you just have to reflect their status within the industry. Unless it's officially, if it's low-budget and everybody is on the same level. So people do take a pay-cut. It's quite a difficult one because again there's no ladder to climb, you know. Like with anything else one progresses.

All of the employers and employer-proxies interviewed denied taking gender into account in negotiating pay. They stressed that the key variables were status within the industry and market value. This last was almost invariably expressed as the capacity to attract 'bums on seats'; either literally in theatre or figuratively in

television, in the form of percentage of 'share' of the potential viewing audience at that time, a point refined by [ ] (A):

> Talking about a bums on seats factor, what makes somebody more famous than somebody else is not just based on one showing. That's on, you know, over a period of time if they consistently get a very good audience share, then you can start to seriously bump up an actor's price.

However in further discussion of their assertions that status rather than gender was the key element in shaping approaches to negotiation, all concurred that access to acquisition of status was shaped by gender and that the supply and demand imbalance for women performers was an important factor. [ ] (A):

> If there is sex difference then it's a subliminal thing, 'Where shall I pitch this?' It must be less problem with women turning the work down because you know that the woman is more likely to go yes she's free yes she's available yes she'd love to do it.

Status, in various forms, is therefore regarded across all occupational categories as the principal determinant in pay-setting. While interviewees recognised that acquisition of status was constrained by factors not related to the individual, the majority saw status once acquired in precisely that way, as adhering to the individual and operating in a neutral manner. The notion of neutrality is challenged in the following section.

Gendered patterns

Quantitative data reveal the systemic nature of gendered disparities in the outcomes of wage negotiations. These disparities are highlighted by looking at the experience of middle-range performers, who work regularly in supporting and/or lead roles and who would usually not work for (gender-neutral) minimum rates. Thomas (1995) found that women middle-range performers consistently earn less than men performers in the same career bracket. The overall differences are less than the national average differences: in television women earned 91% of men's average daily earnings and in subrep women earned 92% of men's average daily earnings (1995: 32). A minority of performers across all status categories actually work at the Equity-negotiated minimum in suprep (Dean 1998) and the disparities appear to be less marked in this sector, based on Thomas's work and on interview data from all occupational categories in this study. However in electronic media (with television as the largest employment sector), the larger the role the greater the discrepancy. Women in large support roles earned 83% of men's average daily fee, while women in lead roles earned 66% of men's average daily fee (1995: 35). This is a figure more akin to the national-level difference between hourly earnings of women part-time workers and men full-time workers, currently approximately 59% (Perfect and Hurrell 2003), but without such explanatory differentials as occupational segregation or access to bonus payments. Further, the pay gap between the middle-aged woman performer and her male contemporaries widens across all sizes of role and whereas her work opportunities decline as she ages, the work opportunities of her ageing male contemporaries increase (Thomas 1995: 41). This

helps to explain the finding that the average age of men performers is between 40

and 49 years, while the average age for women performers is between 30 and 39

years (Thomas 1995: 10). There are no longitudinal studies following the course of

performers' careers and therefore the causal link suggested tentatively above is

based on analysis of the interview findings with performers still, largely, working.

The differences in pay can be broken down in relation to sectoral, age and career

longevity dimensions. For example, the negative position is reversed in theatre for

women and men under 40 years of age. Here, women had proportionally more roles

and earned 17% more on a daily basis, although it must be noted that these figures

include the commercial theatre sector as well as the subrep sector. In television

(where as noted in Chapter 3 performers find the bulk of their employment), men

had proportionally more roles and earned 15% more than women on a daily basis

(Thomas 1995: 38). Over the age of 40, men had proportionally more roles in both

theatre and television: in theatre women earned 9% less than men on a daily basis

and in television women earned 21% less (1995: 40). While the figures indicate that

a woman performer's income does not significantly decline in absolute terms as she

ages, it is clear that men performers maintain a continuous presence in performing

work, whereas women's performing opportunities are concentrated in the period

before the age of 40 (Thomas 1992, 1995; Cumberbatch et al. 1994;

Communications Research Group 1999). Therefore, if a woman can maintain her

presence in the industry, she can still negotiate approximately the same level of

income as she had under 40. The practicalities of this are indicated by [ ] (CD):

It is part of the equation that one needs to, you know, if someone's been doing it for 30 years, that needs to be recognised…if somebody came out of drama school and was playing 10 lines and there was a woman in her fifties playing 10 lines, I would pay the woman in her fifties more. I think that's only right, in a way.

Meanings and functions of pay

The key parts of wage functions for performers seem to vary according to age and experience and sector. Pay often seems only to function at its most basic level, as the means to enable labour to subsist and reproduce itself (Marx 1976), while at other times pay operates almost at a metaphysical level in that it is the (unknowable) *potential* for access to unusually large wages that gives performer pay a version of the motivating function identified in mainstream wage structures. This perception is examined more closely below in consideration of the 'pot of gold' thesis.

The approach to pay-setting personified above by [ ] (CD) – individualised to the employer, personalised to the employee and thus to an extent arbitrary – can be seen again in the contrast between the widespread belief, particularly amongst performers, that "as soon as you do telly, it puts you on a different strata" ([ ] (P)) and the attitude of one of the most influential employer-proxies, [ ] (CD) of [London Theatre], who said that when it came to negotiating pay "TV exposure counts for something but not all. We are a bit snobby. We like people to have their theatre experience." These examples can be contextualised within Rubery's (1997) argument that wage theories have 'underplayed conflict and contradictions and the scope for discretionary, random or opportunistic decisions' (1997: 337). She goes

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on to stress the function of wages not only as a 'price' of labour power but as a mechanism of conferring social position, with consequent social meaning for the worker. This function is presented as important principally in its connection to notions of 'fairness' and thus implications for morale and motivation. Such considerations are not generally applicable to the performer workforce, owing to high levels of self-motivation and the short-term nature of most jobs. Here, the social meaning function is more closely allied to the wage price function in that the lack of a clear career structure increases the importance of the wage as an indicator, both to the individual and to the employer, of internal occupational status. The third model of wages as key to extracting effort from the worker once in the job is also not generally applicable, owing to the competitive nature of the occupation and the vagaries of access addressed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Thus there is clear potential for first, individualising pay issues. There are minimal transaction costs for the employer owing to union-agreed frameworks and there is the controlling factor of a continual gendered labour oversupply mediated by the employer-proxy agent, as will be discussed below. Second, there is potential for institutionalising discretionary behaviour such as that represented by [ ] (CD) above in his perception of 'fairness' in relation to age and experience. Rubery sees this possibility as 'facilitated by the continuing diminution of knowledge about actual pay levels' (1997:358) and this argument is supported by interview data from the performing sector where regular exchange of pay information between performers is constrained by cultural inhibitions and, again, by the function of pay as status

indicator. The theatre critic [ ] thought that it occupied a uniquely sensitive position in performer's lives: "Actors will talk about anything in interviews but never about what they're being paid." [ ] (P) used a word that recurred a few times: "That's the whole sort of *taboo* - you don't say "well 'ow much are you on then?" Actors won't talk about their wage. For fear of probably having less status, I don't know. But that could be, you know I'm thought less of, so I won't tell you what I'm earning." [ ] (P) supported this view:

> No, people certainly do not sit around and start discussing how much - and I tell you also why it's because usually there's been a haggle with your agent and the company over like, 30 quid. It's as simple as that, the difference between 400 and 430 pounds a week and that 30 pounds means that someone is really important or someone is really not important…and I think that's why people protect themselves by not talking about it.

[ ] (P), an interviewee keenly aware of the importance of union regulation, was one of many others who said that they were unaware of any disparity in pay and that: "One doesn't ask what anyone else is earning. One hopes people are earning decent amounts." [ ] (P), one of the very few interviewees aware of the research into gendered pay disparities, was also aware of the practices supporting this structure: "But you know one of the worst things in this profession is people will not discuss it. It's a kind of unsaid thing that you do not discuss your money with other people." This was not a universal perception as is considered in discussion of individual strategies of regulation below.

Occupational effects

It seems that gendered pay differentials are based at root on exploitation of a segment of the labour market's weaker bargaining position, ameliorated or entrenched by agents as employer-proxies. The basis of this bargaining position is differentiated access to similar-status work, which is itself rooted in societal constructions of gendered relationships. The continued operation of gendered pay structures is facilitated by the individualised, casualised and competitive characteristics of performing work, reinforced by the ideology of 'the play's the thing' (*Hamlet*, II:II); personal expectations shaped by pre-existing frameworks and crucially, the drive to work. [ ], then Executive Director of [London Theatre], and previously also a casting director, was clear about the effects of this drive:

> Of course it's quite corrupting of good employment practice, funnily enough. Because if you know that people will tolerate an enormous amount because they're so committed to what they do, the temptation of an employer to exploit that is very hard to resist…there are still plenty of employers of performers who are unscrupulous, to a degree. Who know that they can be because for every one they employ there are five who are waiting to take the job. At least five. Fifty, in some cases. So it's still a very, very vulnerable and potentially corrupt and exploiting sector, because of that very thing.

This assessment was repeated again and again by people in all categories. The agents, perhaps unsurprisingly, were particularly blunt. [ ] (A): "It's like they'd almost pay to do it. [It's] used all the time by employers. Equity's minimum contracts are essential for actors. Then it's up to me to bump it up. There are whole film companies set up on the basis of actors working for nothing." [ ]'s perception

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was vindicated most explicitly by [ ] (P): "I love theatre, and I will do, when I get the withdrawal symptoms, I will do a play at the Riverside for no money…the last time I did that it actually cost me 600 quid, you know, I realised I missed 10 days teaching." [ ] (A) echoed [ ], but with a more pragmatic tone:

> [It] puts the employer, the end-user as it were, in a very strong position. Because A, he's got a lot of people that are after the job that he's got. And B, they'll all do it for nothing pretty much…you've got this huge amount of women looking for work, and fewer, much fewer parts for them to play. So there's always greater competition and if somebody tries to hold out for what they consider themselves to be worth and the producer can't afford it or rather doesn't want to pay it, then there'll be other actresses that will jump at the chance.

The performer perspective (from the middle-range) can be summarised in [ ]'s (P) analysis of the developments in her approach to the labour process:

> I think I still had that, oh I must be grateful for any job that comes my way attitude. And I think, although I had had that little bit of a triumph with the National I still felt and I've only very recently got rid of this feeling, just felt the sensation of being grateful for work that's offered. And that you don't want to rock the boat, and that, oh if you ask for more money, ooh, you might upset someone, they might withdraw the offer, and there was that at the back of my mind for a long time.

Again we see that while women and men performers do not operate within different strictures, women suffer disproportionately because of the aggravated imbalance in supply and demand, an imbalance that is predicated upon gender. Here the intersection between issues of access, pay and career longevity was expressed very

simply by [ ] (Pr): "We've already established, women have a shelf-life. So you'd

rather work for slightly less money on something high profile and maintain your

shelf-life, than not work at all. That's a given in any industry but it's more

noticeable in ours."

The perception of most interviewees across the occupational categories is that the

last few years have seen an increase in high profile and highly paid female

performers in television, with particular performers (Amanda Burton, Sarah

Lancashire, Pauline Quirke and Michelle Collins) regularly cited. A few of the

performers and most agents and casting directors attributed this largely to the de-

regulation of the broadcasting industry resulting in increased competition between

broadcasters and their subsequent pursuit of known quantities. This includes

performers proven to be popular with a mass audience and which further takes

account both of the growing importance of soap opera ratings to broadcasters and

the noted centrality to this genre of women characters (Communications Research

Group 1999:101). A new development has been the 'golden handcuffs' contracts

offered to star performers, initially by ITV and then the BBC. These deals tie the

performers to a broadcaster for a high fee for a specified period. Prior to 2000, these

deals had been exclusively offered to men performers, most notably David Jason,

Robson Green, Ross Kemp and the late John Thaw. In 2000 Sarah Lancashire

signed a two-year contract with ITV worth a reputed £1.3m, reportedly after

Lancashire made a public allegation of sexism against the broadcasters in their

restricted focus on male actors for exclusivity deals (Ogle 2000). These negotiations

were led on ITV's side by Nick Elliott, ITV's Controller of Drama. Responding to my request for an interview to discuss women performers as workers, being (as the request stated) one of the most important people in the industry in terms of shaping what we see on our screens and thus work for performers, Mr. Elliott wrote that

> I really would be hopeless at answering serious questions about the entertainment industry. I'm really only concerned with making creative decisions and only work with producers and writers. I am not involved in casting. I am afraid I cannot do an interview.

The interest in this reply lies in its similarity to the responses from Mr. Elliott's colleagues Jenny Reeks and David Liddiment (noted above, Chapter 3) and the possibilities raised that those who are making the big decisions that shape access and longevity for performer workers (as discussed in Chapter 5) are unaware of their own roles and influence, or are uninterested in examination of their roles and influence, or are keen that their roles and influence go unexamined - all positions that have generally negative implications for the future direction of access and longevity issues.

At the pay and status echelon below this example, for instance, is the widely publicised case of the successful BBC television programme *Men Behaving Badly* (e.g. Equity Journal September 1996). This programme was a situation comedy, the situation being the inter-relationships of two men and two women. The women performers, Caroline Quentin and Lesley Ash, discovered that they were being paid £25,000 less per series than the two men, Martin Clunes and Neil Morrissey. The

women were supported in their claim for parity by the men and the situation was resolved. However, [   ], this resolution did not produce equal pay as has been widely assumed, not least by other women performers interviewed for this project, but rather an *increase* in pay. It would appear that the notion of artistic egalitarianism noted above, which is held to justify the 'company wage' policy of many subreps, is firmly sector-specific.

The specifics of sector have further effects. The structural changes in the television sector noted in Chapter 4 were perceived by most interviewees as very important in affecting the employment of performers in relation to access and to pay. The decision to employ particular performers on terms such as those outlined above was seen as being driven by classic business imperatives, a perception supported by academic research in this sector (Ursell 2000b; Dex and Sheppard 1999). [ ] of [London Theatre] on the television companies:

> You know, these organisations are businesses. They're fundamentally operating on a profit-driven basis. And they have shareholders, and they have a whole drive towards profitability, which is very straightforwardly comparable to all sorts of other business organisations. But that has affected I think the way in which people are employed, very distinctly. And it certainly has affected the way that the BBC has positioned itself as a public service broadcaster, in relation to the product that's coming out of the other companies.

This type of programming has led to lead performer pay taking a greater proportion of the project budget which in turn has been seen as leading to less pay for middle-

range performers (this as we have noted being a particular problem for women). [ ] (CD), discussing the fact given amongst interviewees that stars take up increasing proportions of television programme budgets, estimated this proportion at anywhere between 60% and 80%. It should be noted however that [ ] (Pr), a former senior member of the BBC executive, was clear in interview that in television "the big cost is the studio or the location not the individual fees." These contradictory opinions suggests hat there are issues to be explored in the future in relation to television executives manipulation of the general performer labour market in the interests of cost control. [ ] (E) expanded on the implications of the 'name' phenomenon, saying that in order to get something commissioned by the ITV network "you have to have a name behind it and that name commands higher fees and therefore takes up more of the programme budget and therefore other artists' fees are going down - performers who would have been on mid-range fees are now going towards minimum." The implication of these data is that the gendered age status of women performers directly impacts on their class position, exacerbating their exploitation as labour at the point of production.

These issues link to another important factor in assessing perceptions of performer pay, which is the 'pot of gold' thesis argued for by several interviewees (though never related to themselves by performers). [ ], then [] of the television Producer's Industrial Relations Service:

> There's also this sort of almost sort of Walter Mitty type collective feeling amongst the Equity membership that you know, one day will come the golden opportunity…There's this pot of gold idea that you know, okay it

might mean I get slightly less on 9 out of the next 10 productions, but the tenth one, that's the one! That's the one that's gonna be, the next *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. That's gonna keep me in my old age. It's the equivalent of buying a lottery ticket every week isn't it? Actually probably got more chance of winning the lottery.

This over-estimation of the likelihood of 'very large prizes' is discussed by Creigh-Tyte and Thomas (2001: 273) and largely dismissed as an explanation for performer labour over-supply. However the pot of gold thesis, which clearly is part of affecting/structuring the realities of women performer's working lives in relation to pay negotiation as well as access issues, is of course based on observed and repeated examples. [ ] (P) charted the journey over the rainbow:

> My status has changed. As it turns out I'm on this show in America called [ ] which is getting a great deal of press. And that has changed things dramatically insofar as how much I'm able to ask for, financially or otherwise…I mean I have been dirt poor for most of the years that I've been alive, frankly…All of a sudden I've got more money than that…[money] has never been a huge motivating factor in my life. My agents are trying to change this about me obviously, because if I make more money, they make more money…I get emails from my agents, you've been offered this thing, you're making this much, I'm like – overwhelmed. It's really incredible, I mean, disgusting in another way, because I'm the same actress that graduated 15 years ago…but suddenly I'm this, I'm sought after, people are throwing money at me and companies are sending me their products, and on some level…it sort of infuriates me for the [ ] that lived 10 years ago, wandering the streets of Manhattan, eating my restaurant food that I worked at, just to - you know all that stuff. And now that I can finally afford dog food, I have every company in the world sending me bags and boxes of dog food and I think you know at least

find another actress who's struggling right now and give them the goddamn dog food, because I coulda used it then, and now I don't need it quite so much…All I wanted was to be able to stop waitressing, which I did for 15 years. I just wanted to be able to make enough money to not have to do a job outside of acting. I wanted it to be all that I did.

Therefore status, whether this be of the 'bums on seats' market value variety or 'insider' type based on body of work, is also the factor key to the *positive* side of gendered pay issues. The achievement by women performers of equal and often superior status to men is accepted and expected as a natural feature of this occupation. In relation to pay, [ ] (P) gave two unequivocal examples:

I mean Judi Dench would get more than anybody in any cast she was in. There's no *way* that any man would get as much as Judi. I mean even if it was through a percentage or, and the same with Maggie Smith. You would find that *nobody* would be getting as much as Maggie in the show she was in. Nobody.

Ironically, however, this very 'naturalness' seems to be part of what reinforces disparities, in that a common performer perception is that if women *can* achieve this success then the business must necessarily operate in a fundamentally egalitarian way. Thus individual agency, in the form of perception of equality, perpetuates structure, in the form of generalised inequality, recalling Connell's (1987) conception of cyclical practice discussed in Chapter 2. The key aspects of interviewees' perceptions of pay issues are now considered in the light of this discussion of remuneration.

Perception of disparities

Performers know that they have no guarantee of working regularly in their chosen occupation and subsidise themselves in other ways as a matter of course, as both interview and survey data show (Osborne Market Intelligence 2000). The performers also very largely relied on their agents to oversee pay. Most assumed that the agent would go for as much as the employer was prepared to give and therefore that any differentials would be due to employer perceptions of an individual's market value or experience. That this is not an unproblematic assumption is indicated by Thomas's (1995) finding that although roughly half of both men and women middle-range performers had experienced being paid less than someone in an equivalent role in the same production, only 9% of men and 3% of women stated that their agent had told them they were being paid less, whereas 71% of men and 88% of women had found out through colleagues (1995:50). Analysis of the interview data from agents, producers and commissioning executives confirm that the assumption is only partially accurate specifically in relation to television work (the main source of work and income for UK performers as noted in Chapter 3) and that gender is often the key variable in the wage-setting process. [ ] and [ ], independent television producers both previously with the BBC for many years, while confirming the general trend to base pay allocation on "The amount of influence the character has within the piece", also made explicit what was alluded to in more guarded terms by other interviewees. [ ] (Pr):

> If you take a one-off as an example, cos it's probably easiest to work out, there is going to be somebody that is the lead, that is high-profile, and they, by virtue of being the lead, will earn more. If the question you aren't going

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to ask is, do men earn more than women in that scenario, the answer is yes…I think agents don't necessarily ask for fees on a par with male fees, at that level. And we're hardly going to pay for something we don't have to.

[ ] made it clear that agents' actions are structured by broader influences:

> I think that occasionally, although not always, when you do the budget, the broadcaster will look at if it's a male or a female lead and that will dictate what they agree you can do with your budget. Broadcasters tend to look at your budget and go, okay this is the percentage of that budget that is crew, this is the percentage of what we see on the screen, of which your leading character is a percentage of that. They're not going to want to over-pay their leading ladies, and also there are so few leading ladies currently in the industry that are in a strong position, that it's in their interest to keep that down. If all of a sudden you add 20% to their fee, and then they want to work with them every year that's going to cost you 20% on all your projects. So I mean, in a quite mercenary financial respect, it is not in anybody's interest to talk anybody's pay up…And also women are quite vulnerable. Because there are so few leads, it is very hard to stick your neck above the parapet and go I am not doing it unless it is that particular number. Because you know there is always somebody else, and you know if it's female they're more likely to take that cut.

Classic employer pay objectives of cost control are apparent in this analysis and the gendered nature of performer labour oversupply clearly forms part of employer considerations in relation to recruitment costs. That this is not as detached a process as it might appear is apparent in the issues of programming content in theatre and television discussed in Chapter 5. That it is also not a consistent process has been seen in consideration of *advantage* above.

[ ] (Pr) went on to estimate that in her negotiating experience the gender differential in pay for male and female lead roles was approximately 25%. Her assessments are interesting in that there is no extant data on comparative performer pay at the highest status levels. Thomas's (1992, 1995) quantitative work was restricted to middle-range performers and this study is concentrated on exploring *perceptions* of pay issues. To this end, numerous leading women performers were approached, but I was not able to secure interviews with those perceived as occupying the highest earning levels.

Most of the performers interviewed were unaware of systemic gendered disparities in pay, an unsurprising finding considering the individualised nature of pay negotiations within overtly gender-neutral status frameworks. When these were drawn to their attention, most reacted with polite lack of interest. Analysis of the interview data indicates that this attitude is due to a combination of factors. First, while pay was perceived as important in its subsistence function, this seemed to be a 'tactical' perception to be deployed according to circumstance and it appeared to come a distant second in importance to questions of access and longevity. Second, there was a view that most performer pay is generally low (minimal in theatre and declining in television), implying a perception that they are not 'losing out' to any *significant* degree. Third, the individualising of the pay negotiation process, underpinned by the competitive, casualised and dispersed structural characteristics of the occupation itself, creates a sense of isolation and vulnerability. This last factor is arguably also part of the creation and maintenance of the disparities and of

the continued lack of awareness itself, sustained by the lack of exchange of information amongst performers themselves. While the issues are interconnected to some extent, as has been argued, attitudes towards issues of career longevity were often different to those around pay.

Career longevity

Patterns of pay are linked to issues of gendered career longevity. First and most clearly, the difficulties in sustaining a career posed by there being less work potentially available to women performers over 40, are compounded by the relatively low pay in theatre and the declining levels of pay available to middle- and lower-range performers in television. Second, interview data suggest awareness of a negative aspect of the achievement of status by women performers: that those women who do achieve a particular level are the workers who are first choice to fill the smaller number of 'over-40' roles. [ ] (P): "But the nature of the game is if you haven't become an Alison Steadman [leading performer] by that age...You know I don't come into the equation, unhappily." Leading performers themselves are aware of and also subject to this equation, as [ ] (P) made clear:

> There's a lot of women in the same category as me and if they ask for Eileen Atkins or something and she can't do it, then it'll probably come on to me and [] will phone up - my agent - and say, what about [ ], you know, I mean that's how it operates…And I'm lucky, I mean I do keep working and at the moment I'm having a wonderful stage of very stimulating and exciting work. But I have friends who are every bit as talented as me who haven't worked for ages and ages and ages and are going mad with frustration…and they are having to start making a living another way.

This colonisation by a well-established minority of the smaller number of roles available to women in middle-age is a snapshot of the general core/periphery labour markets that seem to obtain in performing work. As we have seen, and as a generalisation, most performers will work for what they can get, as all negotiating partners are aware of the competitive and oversupplied characteristics of the occupation. Terms and conditions are usually not generous, with Equity's recognition and bargaining influence diminishing in an increasingly fragmented product market and increased use across all sectors of non-Equity contracts. Interview data suggest that even in the bastion of Equity strength and recognition, subrep theatre (Dean 1998), managements will occasionally try (occasionally successfully) to use the poor bargaining power of lower-range performers to their own financial advantage (predictably, following Sisson and Marginson (1995) above). At the 'core', such a situation does not usually arise. [ ] (P):

> What I will say to my agent is, if I'm in, like I'm about to do a telly where everybody is equal parts, you know there's 6 of us and it's a kind of shared thing. And I say just make sure that I'm not getting less than anybody else. You know I don't know what everybody's getting, but I'm going to be getting as much the top guy is otherwise I won't do it. I'm not going to discuss, you know sort of negotiate it. And I'm in the position to do that.

The ideologically mediated nature of the age-based core/periphery market for women performers and the limitations of such individual regulation are highlighted most sharply by one example. Discussing the gendered ageism of casting processes several interviewees mentioned an instance, seemingly well-known inside the industry, of [*deleted as interviewee named*].

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Career longevity: childcare issues

Part of the problem of establishing a position in this 'core' category of women

performers is the issue of children and childcare. This is in terms both of the

logistical and financial implications in an occupation that often involves travel and

night work and of the implications of a career break within the work patterns we

have reviewed. [ ] (Pr) and [ ] (Pr) expressed the realities most succinctly, giving an

example of a particular successful middle-range performer:

> []: And she was off work, pregnant, now has a baby. This business is fickle I
> mean again, women performers as workers, purely in business terms, as her
> agent, that's not easy to negotiate if you're trying to pursue a career path.
> []: It's hard to hold on to any profile, quite honestly, in the space of a year.
> Let alone maintain one and enhance it. And that's true, I think, of any
> industry. You know, if you took a year out in law, or medicine, or teaching,
> you know, it's getting back in at your level is what you're hoping for.
> []: But I think what is significant in the industry we're discussing now is that
> your time of maximum flourishment career-wise, for a woman, you know, is
> 20 to 40… because actually women are only considered interesting up to
> when they're 40. I mean there's a huge generalisation, but you know what I
> mean, and within that (*laugh*) they've got to manage child-bearing and
> rearing, it's surprising women have careers at all, in performing.

Most performers seemed to feel that having children made working as a performer

more difficult and that it was hardest for a woman performer in that the majority of

domestic responsibilities were undertaken by women. The issues of pay in the two

sectors become relevant. [ ] (P) was determined to prove that having children would

not be the end of her career and said that it had not affected it in terms of amount of

work but that it had in terms of reward, both material and emotional, as much of her work involved moving around the country:

> I feel nearly every job is trying to prove that I can do it…Every job since I
> had kids has cost me a fortune because I have to get appropriate
> accommodation. I can't afford theatre work unless I take the kids with me.
> Fortunately I've had back-up from friends and family to look after them in
> the evenings, because I couldn't afford childcare *and* living
> accommodation.

These difficulties were acknowledged by some employers, even if they felt themselves unable to resolve them. [ ] of [Theatre 1]:

> I mean we pay a company rate of £315, subsistence is 82 so effectively they
> get 400 quid in their wage packet, you know plus odds and ends, overtime
> and all of that but basically it's 400 quid. And on top of that you know, then
> off that they've got to live away from home *as well* as living at home. You
> can understand why people look at that and say can I actually afford to work
> outside London, if that's the case.

The issues of childcare provision are of course complex and potentially involve many parties, including the state. However, the general perceptions from non-performer categories, including union officials, were that childcare was a necessarily individualised issue. This was affirmed by [ ] (Pr) at [Theatre 1]: 'I think actors…I think more often than not, you know, people want to work don't they, they will…do everything they can to somehow make it work.' Another employer perspective was provided by [ ] (Pr):

> They're currently doing a new series of *Cold Feet*, Helen Baxendale is actually
> pregnant, her character in the series *can't* be pregnant. Again, men don't do

that. Men don't get pregnant halfway through your series…she's pregnant before she starts the job, that's a different insurance implication altogether. Because an insurer could, on paper, refuse to insure. Because you are technically at a risk. You know, we do work 16, 17, 18 hours a day, six days a week. That is not a conventional living…Now, people work around it, there are ways of scheduling around it, there are ways of hiding bumps and things like that. But the bottom line is, it's something that women bring to the table that men don't…the reality is not that easy. If halfway through filming your six-part series, you have a scan and get told you've got 2 months of bed rest, then what are you going to do? Cos it's not a given that you're covered on insurance, and if you're a leading person, they aren't re-casting you either…And then all of a sudden all those bright-eyed opinions we all have shift slightly.

Of course in almost every case (at higher levels of the cast list) it is highly unlikely that a man would be substituted for a pregnant woman. The issues therefore differ in this respect to those found in the mainstream in respect of employer attitudes towards the employment of women. It is not the potential for pregnancy of women in general that will disadvantage women performers, not as an employee *category*. Pregnancy will disadvantage individuals at particular times in their careers and is for once a dimension of disadvantage that applies only to women performers. Here, perhaps ironically, the gender lens is less useful than the class lens. This situation, while constituting women performer workers as a separate class fragment from men performer workers, is nevertheless clearly explicable within the production conditions of this sector of the cultural industry. Again, though, it is arguable that the two frameworks cannot be neatly separated. [ ] (W) said that despite having written a new series of ITV drama [ ] with a storyline based on the previous series

storyline of a character having a baby, she re-wrote the storyline to reflect the performer's real-life pregnancy:

> We'd literally just done this storyline about her having a baby, and she was pregnant, you know, I thought oh shit the timing and I thought, no, she can be pregnant again. That's the story. The story is she's just had a baby, and she goes to the doctor - given me my story - goes to the doctor cos she's not losing any weight after she's had the baby, and she comes back she's pregnant again. So that was our story. So she went I can't believe it, I can't believe my good luck. So I wrote the story round her and for her. And that's the way that actors and writers can work together…And I'd already written the lines and I thought no sod it I'm gonna…But you know, I think it should be a bit like that, it's organic isn't it, it's nothing unnatural.

Despite this example of flexibility in gatekeeper attitude, many performers confirmed that childcare responsibilities affected their career choices. [ ] (P) said that when she started working as a performer in her early 20s "I was never out of work. Did telly, did theatre, because I was young. And that continued until I had my first child at 30. I did some telly in the gap between the kids but because I had them so close together, I was 34 before could do a long run and I limited myself by not looking for work outside of things close to home." [ ] went on to say that she has not worked regularly in theatre or television since that break in her career and is currently looking to re-qualify and change occupation, embodying the idea of the narrower window of opportunity available to women discussed above. [ ] (P) said that all the women contemporaries she started out with have left the business. "It's a lot more difficult for women to leave to go on tour than a man. Unless women are earning a *lot* of money, there's financial pressure to stay. Plus there are guilt

pressures more on women than men." This perception seemed to be common amongst performers, and was echoed particularly closely by [ ] (P):

> When I started, I worked a lot in theatre, I toured a lot. I like working in theatre. After that, I was on my own with my son for a long time, and so I stayed in London really cos it was just too difficult…So I mostly worked in television after that…So that decision to stay in London really made a big difference, it meant there was a lot less work available to me.

[ ] is a long-term member of Equity's Women's Committee and talked about a piece of research they had done looking at the effects on performer careers of having children:

> Some women answered - you know, how's it changed your career having children - just said it ended it. And it does, for a lot of women. One man said he was a much better actor since he'd had children (*laugh*) fuller person and everything. But there aren't the same problems and one thing I have noticed, when I've worked on television and I've talked to other actresses about it, if somebody needs time off to go and collect their child, they never say it's for that. Because you're thought to be inefficient or less reliable and maybe we shouldn't employ that person.

In turn, [ ] (P) echoed this last point: "In all the years, I have never ever said my child is ill. I've always lied because I don't want it written down by my name. But you're playing into their hands. In principle, it's right. But in practice it doesn't work." [ ] said that recently she had worked in a company with a male performer who had said that he would not available for a company call because of a childcare commitment and that the reaction from those in authority had been a mixture of impressed and unusually accommodating. This reading was repeated by [ ] (A),

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talking about the different reactions to two of her performer clients, a married couple, when they had a baby. She said that the man was perceived as having a family to support and that as a result his career had improved, with casting people saying he was now ready to move up into more mature roles, whereas the woman's career had declined, with nobody asking about her availability any more.

> I can actually argue for more money for him now. He's getting more, she's getting fewer auditions. Men are perceived as not having to choose. You can use all these things in your line of negotiations where with Sam his partner it's more, well if she has a job, she'd be expected to stay with the kid. But professionals in this profession, the majority would say, excuse me, your priority is to be on that stage. That old thing of the show must go on. Especially in theatre. It's not just a job.

These reactions indicate both the particular unitarist ethos that permeates the industry and a superficially surprising embrace of the 'breadwinner model' (Crompton 1997) in a sector marginalised because of its unconventional work patterns and content.   They are less surprising if considered from a class perspective in the light of traditional patterns of supply and demand. Employers and their proxies *can* react in this way, because continual oversupply of women performers informs their responses. Further, employers and their proxies *do* react in this way because they are 'in ideology', in Althusser's (1971: 162) sense. This ideology is, as first discussed in Chapter 2, gendered, which can be seen most acutely in this occupational sector and specifically in consideration of the woman performer as ageing worker. In [ ] (A) experience of gatekeeper reactions to her clients we see

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possibly the sharpest example yet of the effects of patriarchal conceptions of gender on structuring working realities and disadvantages for women performers.

Career longevity: ageing

Along these lines, the majority of interviewees felt that in terms of career *longevity*, as opposed to early material success, it was preferable to be what several described as a 'character actress'. The use of this phrase is particularly telling in that it begs questions such as, what other sort of actor is there and what are actors employed for? In the popular sense, the phrase is used to denote a performer who is not regarded, or cast, as (aspirationally) attractive, and does of course apply to men performers as well. However, data show that women performers are regarded (by themselves as well as employers) as occupying a more specific range of what is acceptable as 'attractive' and occupying this range for a much shorter time. [ ] (A) saw this process in very clear terms:

> With women, unless you're a character actress, if you're a character actress then your longevity is likely to be that much greater. Whereas, if you are an ingénue let's say, a beautiful leading woman, leading lady, or started off as an ingénue and then going in to leading lady capacity, you then have the ageing process to cope with. And you see all kinds of attempts to hold back time. But going back again to women yes they do try to, if they are recognised as being, you know, glamour actresses, you know, love interests – I hate that term love interest but often, you know it is the case that it's a man's film and they need a woman and that woman comes in as love interest…even though it's a leading role. But for them, reaching 35 or 40 is a difficult time for them because at some point they have to cross over. They have to cross over from leading lady into character lady. Whereas a

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man, his kind of longevity is that much longer. I mean he can be a leading man into his 50s and 60s.

[ ]'s assessment begs two questions key to understanding the working realities of women performer's lives. First, it is implicit in his summary that it is, at best, *easier* for a woman to become a leading performer (thus more likely to maintain access to work and pay as she ages) if she has attained the early benefits of regular exposure in ingénue roles which are constructed around (commonly shared) ideas of female desirability. The two equality consultants interviewed for this study saw this as relevant to sustaining disadvantaged career patterns: [ ] summarised this as "In fact it's ultimately self-perpetuating because once you've had that work and you're plugged into the net, then you start to become more skilled and experienced and a better actor who happens to be good-looking and, you know you're laughing aren't you." Second, there was no consciousness that 'the love interest' could be anything other than in relation to a man. Love and relationships in performing work were (implicitly and explicitly) taken by the overwhelming majority of interviewees to be heterosexual, again implying the fundamental importance to performing labour processes of hegemonic constructions of gender and sexuality.

[ ] (A) agreed with [ ]'s assessment, seeing it from the perspective of a worker and in this way underscoring the difficulty of establishing a beginning and end to this labour process and thus its value in clarifying the social realities embedded in the objectified products of any labour process:

Women artists are, neurotic. A lot of them are neurotic. I mean understandably, especially when they get to a certain age and you know, they're not playing the young kind of juves any more they're suddenly getting older and they're then the mothers. You know it's hard to sort of see yourself, *literally* you see yourself changing (*gestured towards television*), quite difficult I think.

[ ]'s perception of difficulty for performers was echoed by [ ] (P):

There is massive pressure on you about appearance really… as there is on women anyway in society, and you're not sure if you mind because you're not getting work, or you'd mind anyway. I mean there is abnormal amount of attention given to appearance. And you'll notice that most women who act on television are quite good-looking…and it's not necessarily true of all the men you see. But it's quite damaging I think to people, for women to spend their whole lives thinking even more about their appearance than they would anywhere in society

Sontag's (1978) analysis of ageing frames these perceptions: 'there is a double standard about aging that denounces women with special severity' (1978: 73). She effectively traces this denunciation to the determinedly *relational* construction of gender that shapes women and men's experiences of life/ realities of self: 'the depression about aging, which may not be set off by any real event in a woman's life, but is a recurrent state of 'possession' of her imagination, ordained by society – that is, ordained by the way this society limits how women feel free to imagine themselves.' (1978: 76). The limitation of the imagination in an occupation that harvests the imagination has consequences that are particularly visible.

Several performers talked about a 'transition period', seeing it as negative in that the majority realised that work opportunities declined with age but treating it as something that was largely beyond their control. Those who explicitly regarded it as discriminatory did so in terms of the position of women generally and as an inevitable result of living in a society structured along particular gendered lines. [ ] (P) put this view eloquently: "So it might be as simple as you know, the struggle we've had forever and ever, of just men's voices being heard more often because they're heard more often." Where the gap was related to the labour process itself, it was always framed as a problem of lack of women writers. Although here again however the specific nature of performing work mediated these opinions. Most of the interviewees who raised the point about women writers also stressed that they did not feel scripts should or could be produced to fit a particular social/political agenda and that it was an individual writer must be left alone to create whatever s/he wanted. A small minority denied that there need be any transition period, in terms of a decline in work opportunities. [ ] (P) said that it "might be my naïvety" but that "I just think, the world is peopled with people of all ages and art reflects the real world and so therefore there are going to be - [although] it's unlikely that there's gonna be, a lead role for a woman in her, you know, who's 56 or something." A contradiction can be seen in the juxtaposition of the belief that 'art reflects the real world' with the acknowledgement that 'art' will only rarely be produced with a 56 year old woman at its centre. Of course, if a woman can maintain a presence in the industry through the lean 'period' (variously estimated by interviewees at between 15 and 25 years) then regular work can be available. The late [ ] (P), a long-term

member of Equity's Women's Committee and the Equity Council and in her 70s at the time of our interview, said that the last seven or eight years "have been the best-paying part of my career – about £20,000 at my highest." However the problems of stereotypical representation were still apparent: "I've spent so much time playing dear old grannies and I said to my agent fuck off and get me a nasty old granny."

The complexity and interconnectedness of women performers' experiences of pay and career longevity are apparent and this position is reflected in a focused consideration of the strategies of regulation.

Strategies of regulation

[], General Secretary of Equity, said that part of the difficulty in addressing the problems of members was that there was "no such thing as an average performer"; that the career path and experiences of each were necessarily individualised and unpredictable. While this is undeniable it is not the whole truth of the matter or there would not be systematic trends assessable by both quantitative and qualitative data. Where it applies most pertinently is in consideration of strategies to *affect* those trends. In union terms, the individualised nature of their member's work patterns makes problematic Equity's capacity to organise and mobilise interest and resistance (Kelly 1998; Heery 2002). Certainly data show that senior union officials, whilst perceiving gendered disadvantage, do not perceive the union's interests as lying in addressing this disadvantage other than in a relatively *ad hoc* way.

Equity as a union has as its primary concern the establishment and maintenance of minimum terms and conditions of employment in a variety of workplaces, from pubs to the BBC. These terms and conditions, set out in national-level collective agreements with employer associations, are used by individuals, commonly through an agent, as a base from which to negotiate an improved fee for the job. Thus, according to officials interviewed for this study, Equity sees no role for itself in tackling what research (Thomas 1992, 1995; ILO 1992) reveals to be gendered disparities in pay occurring above the minimum levels. The dominant official view in Equity sees its place as ensuring that performer members with little bargaining power (i.e. the overwhelming majority) have a respectable floor of terms and conditions and that anything negotiated above this floor or outside of strictly delineated labour process boundaries, is a private matter between worker and employer. This is because it is, as [ ] (E) observed, a union of individuals of wildly fluctuating levels of training, experience, aims and objectives, all of whom are essentially self-employed businesses. Of course, as has been seen, most of these individuals are in competition with those other members most like themselves. These factors are complicated further by the 'drive to work' and the personalised nature of the process itself, which (generally) encourage a desire to please and an attendant reluctance to make waves. [ ] (E): "Our members won't go public – you get lots of stories with members phoning up but then saying they won't make a fuss…If someone gets a bad reputation in this business they don't work again." [ ] (E) had a similar view:

> Our members will often do things against their better judgement because
> the show must go on or because they trust the director. I know this goes on

in other industries but performers don't have the protection of someone in other occupations. If they're employed for a year you can't sack them and the process must be transparent and so on, but where you're working for a day and there are all the other pressures…It's a small world – you can't disappear... Plus it's much more about *before* you get the job …You have to impress so many people all the time. Can't do it once. You have to do it all the time.   If you had statutory rights you'd feel much more powerful – if an employer couldn't just dismiss you or treat you badly.   And what can Equity do, we can only get money.

This perception of legislation as the appropriate remedy was based on [ ]'s practical experience of the difficulties faced by a union operating in a dispersed, casualised labour market, where the numerical and financial strength drawn from the existence of a pre-entry closed shop (McCarthy 1964) could no longer be relied on. [ ] went on to state a position very familiar to trade unions in all sectors: "Equity's survival very much depends on recruitment and retention and concentrating on the bread and butter issues."

Definition of what constitutes bread and butter issues is of course key to understanding a union's bargaining agenda. Equity's Women's Committee, an elected, national-level lay committee serviced by a union officer, has attempted over the years to address issues, in particular of representation, which affect issues of access, pay and career longevity. [ ] (E) said that, largely due to internal pressure from the Women's Committee, an 'equality clause' in national agreements had first been negotiated in 1991 but that "All we got out of it from employers was – yes would not discriminate on basis of X, would monitor the clause from time to time,

and their criteria would be to cast on the basis of ability and nothing else." [ ] said that Equity has never monitored the clauses (none of which cover pay equality or childcare issues), largely due to resources but also that addressing equal opportunities "is problematic within Equity". [ ] gave as an example the servicing of the union's four equality committees by officials "all with, shall we say, different levels of time to give". [ ] went on to say that the Women's Committee had been through a period of trying to get Equity to negotiate crèche facilities, "but Equity *couldn't*…If you want a career, if you want a family, you find a way." [ ] at [London Theatre] gave an insight into the difficulties Equity would face in such negotiations, although she said that she was not aware that this was an issue Equity had specifically raised with [London Theatre]. However she added that the issue had "come up intermittently, over the ten years that I've been here" but that [London Theatre's] position was a question of cost: "It's never been a high enough priority to set aside the resources that would be required, which would be considerable… And of course it would be expensive for us, because for it to be useful it would have to be operating from 8 o'clock in the morning until midnight."

The obstacles posed for union action by employer resources and the particular working conditions of its members are clear. However, interview data also suggest that despite Equity's unusually gender-integrated roots (noted in Chapter 1) and operation within an arguably 'feminised' occupation (discussed in Chapter 4), the Women's Committee does not inhabit a location of power within the union (Dickens 2000b). There are several possible explanations for this, all, in the absence of

targeted research, necessarily provisional. First, Parker (2002) suggests that pursuit of 'longer' equality ideas necessitates, amongst other things, close cooperation with 'non-gender' equality bodies in the union (2002: 41). The interview data suggest that Equity's equality committees display a degree of protectionism and that, in the words of a senior official, there is "a refusal to make common cause." Second, official union perceptions of the core interests of the general member (elsewhere often synonymous with men) are focused on ameliorating non-gendered freelance characteristics. Third, interview data indicate a widespread, if mostly implicit, association of the position of women performers with the position of women in society. The position of 'women in society' (a moving target) is not obviously open to manipulation by the actions of a small, occupationally-based trade union. This arguably compromises perception of the feasibility of the Women's Committee agenda and thus its occupation of a location of power within Equity.

[ ] (E) said that Equity had negotiated "fantastic" equality clauses but confirmed the absence of monitoring of these clauses: "I've never seen any reports on it. I think it's probably not happening…I think the employers have got a commitment in our agreements to do it and I think we're not holding them to it." This was confirmed by [ ] (Pr) and [ ] (P), longstanding member of Equity's Women's Committee, and was not clearly explainable. [ ] said (in relation to pay) that "There is no system of monitoring in place although they have records of every contract. They don't see that as their role to interfere with negotiation. And I think they should." [ ] (E) was

also unable to explain lack of action, although he indicated a consciousness of lack of strength in bargaining power:

> I don't know why. I would guess that, we are so busy, you know I mean…I don't know why. It may be that we just, it's one extra thing that we can't take on. You know, if the employers say yes we're going to monitor and don't, you know, then you have to start thinking about what sanctions, what pressures you can put on them to do it.

There are several issues relevant to the working realities of women performers to be drawn out from this position. First, we see the difficulties implicit in equality bargaining where there is no clear 'business case' logic to exploit (Colling and Dickens 1998). The key data here are the continual labour oversupply, the common assumption in television that 'women will watch what men watch' and that in theatre audiences are seen to be more likely to pay to see familiar work - perceptions of demand factors discussed in Chapter 4. Second, there are issues raised by the talk of 'sanctions', namely the definition and mobilisation of interest of members. These issues will be explored further below. Third, a perception that monitoring is key to stimulating change. This is a perception common in mainstream environments as well but criticised by, amongst others, Hepple et al. (2000) as producing a focus on 'regulatory compliance rather than the positive action which is needed to change organisational policies and behaviour.' (2000: 70). Fourth, issues prior to the collective bargaining stage around internal union perception of equality as a priority. Here, as noted in Chapter 2, several of the conditions identified by Colling and Dickens (1989) as likely to impede equality bargaining are present, namely

lack of meaningful commitment to equality at national level with the
union…women not pushing for action or having their interests
disregarded…bargaining taking place within an unfavourable industrial
economic climate…an employer who does not perceive greater attention to
women/equality issues as likely to address any labour market or other
problems, or as desirable in its own right.
(1989: 49).

The absence of employer advantage in addressing equality issues has been indicated
above. Taking the 'unfavourable industrial economic climate' factor next: in earlier
chapters the respective decline in funding and advertising revenue of subreps and
independent television has been addressed; Colling and Dickens's analysis of the
effect on a union in this situation is supported by McColgan's (1994) argument that
a recessionary climate will pressure a union to concentrate on general issues
affecting the workforce as a whole.

The 'lack of meaningful commitment to equality at national level' is present as
noted in review of data, but must be qualified in the case of Equity. It is arguable
from interview data that there is both awareness of and sympathy for the
disadvantaged position of women performers (approximately 50% of membership)
amongst senior officials at Equity; the traditionally negative environment where
there is limited or recent membership by women workers cannot flourish in a union
which was co-founded by women and has always had prominent women members.
However, this also means that Equity has little recruitment motivation to establish a
meaningful gendered equality agenda in that women have always and probably will

always enter the acting profession in droves and a significant percentage of these will join the union. Unless the union could both negotiate industry-wide contracts guaranteeing equality of access and pay at all levels and simultaneously re-introduce the closed shop, gendered recruitment strategies would appear to have little to offer the union.

However, it is important not to overlook the fact that Equity has been formally active in promoting some dimensions of an equality agenda within the trade union movement itself, as in its longstanding advocacy for equality of treatment within the union movement in regard to sexuality. It has also made serious moves towards improving employment opportunities for performers with disabilities, although again, as part of an overall lobbying process rather than through bargaining structures. Interview data show that senior officials are proud of the union's achievements in this area and it is arguable that this indicates that there is no stereotypical resistance to parity of conditions for non-male, non-white, non-able-bodied, non-heterosexual members. Indeed that there is a sense of what Dickens (1997) refers to as union as 'a movement as well as an organisation' (1997: 288). However, what the data also indicate is that there is a parallel acceptance of the status quo, arguably shaped by official's perceptions of their scope for practical action (Hyman 1989).

The possible 'women…having their interests disregarded' situation has been touched on above in relation to Equity's Women's Committee. And in examination

of the 'women not pushing for action' factor, it is apparent from the data that there is little awareness of gendered pay disparities amongst the membership and the perception of gendered ageism (amongst both members and officials) in access to work is that it is not a situation over which the union has any possibility of influence. [ ] (E) identified problems for women performers in the *number* of roles available because of the choices made about what type of drama we want and the *content* of those roles, an issue he said he has publicly spoken of as "batty grannies and sex kittens and there's a real gap in between of credible, powerful female roles that are neither of those things." Folllowing Itzin and Phillipson (1995) this can be seen as the gendered ageism that produces 'double jeopardy' for women at work (1995: 81). However, [ ] (E) acknowledged that the implication of this statement (that these were falsely narrow opportunities that could be altered) was a remote possibility. When asked what could actually change career opportunities for women performers he said "Beats me." He went on to say

> Quite frankly and honestly we're talking about major social changes, we're not talking about something which necessarily the entertainment industry can do itself. I've never believed that the entertainment industry has a special role to lead. However much we wish for change, I don't think we can say to the entertainment industry you are uniquely responsible for leading this change so you have to show life not as it is but as we would wish it to be.

This analysis effectively represents performing work as a mirror, although as we have seen that image would often be more apt with the word 'fairground' in front of it. However it also explicitly acknowledges the link between the working realities of women performer's lives and the position of women in society itself, a position

repeated by several interviewees including [ ], the theatre critic: "There can't be plays about the dilemmas of a woman company director unless there *are* women company directors" and [ ] (P) who, when asked what would improve the lot of the woman performer, thought this a "hard question to answer" because

> it's sort of what would improve the lot of the *woman* not just the woman actor…Stuff that's going on in society is bound to, and does, reflect what goes on in the business of acting. And I sort of think the two are probably interchangeable. Until it changes in society it's probably not going to change here.

In less elemental terms, senior union officers did seem more likely to consider forms of external change as the best way to redress disadvantage, by putting the onus on to members and employers. This was apparent in a few ways. Firstly, when asked how Equity used the research that it commissioned, [ ] (E) replied "We report them. In the Equity Journal. We encourage external, media sources to report them. And we distribute them widely to decision-makers. So, you know, directors, politicians, arts councils, local authorities, so on and so forth…We then knock on doors as it were, or rather what we hope is, that that will create opportunities that we can use.' Secondly, Equity's four equality committees (Women's Committee, African, Caribbean, Oriental and Asian Committee, Disability Committee and Sexuality Committee) and Equity staff produced a Guide to Equality in 2002. This guide identifies potential issues in the workplace, summarises the legislation on discrimination and equal pay and sets out Equity's policies and agreements on equality issues with employers. The overall message in the booklet is that members should report instances of unequal treatment to the union to enable the union to

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gather information with which to press employers. The section on equal pay is explicit in its presentation of pay issues as exceptionally difficult to address in this area of work and refers only briefly ('there are still problems for women') to Equity's own research on gendered pay disparities. It talks about the legislation, although largely in terms of the difficulty in utilising it and reiterates the importance of the agent in obtaining equality in pay. There are arguably two motivating factors explaining the approach of this guide. The first is Equity's experience of its only previous attempt to address pay disparities directly. [ ] (P) said that the Women's Committee had wanted to bring a case under the Equal Pay Act 1970 but that the plan was frustrated because of the particular characteristics of the performing sector, including the importance of individual reputation and relationship with gatekeepers:

> We were going to do a test case but it would have to be a lot of people at once. We didn't want to have one person doing it, because they're so vulnerable and might never work again. But we didn't do that in fact. In my experience, when I've pointed out the huge differences in pay with men and women, people are very surprised…But actually we couldn't find enough women willing to do it…[They said] it's hard to prove, don't want to draw attention to yourself in case you never work again.

The second reason seems to be the consensus of opinion on the distinctiveness of performing work. In 1996 the Equity Journal reported that the Head of Operations and Policy at the Equal Opportunities Commission 'admits that comparing work of equal value in the performing arts in order to bring an action against an employer would be extremely difficult.' (1996: 15) Almost all interviewees, including most performers, agreed with this assessment, citing the subjective nature of the work. [ ],

former Equity Research and Parliamentary Officer and [], echoed [ ]'s (E) classification of the non-average performer: "How do you compare? Each performer is unique. Any schema to classify pay will be so full of caveats and qualifications." The performers tended to see it in particularly personal terms, citing effort and talent and effectively denying the possibility of an externally quantifiable valuation of performing work. [ ] (P):

> It's terribly hard to define. Because you've got personal skill involved too. The actress might be an infinitely better actress than the actor's an actor. And those things would cloud - it would be *so hard* to define their, you know someone might put much more into a role, which on the page is less, you know it's really hard to - they'd have to look at the original text and it's very hard to get it cut and dried really. Cos you can't just count lines, words on a page, or audience response you know, do you use the clapometer?!

The general underlying approach was that the job and the person could not be disentangled and that, in [ ]'s (Pr) phrase, relative value in performing work was "not tangible" because there were so many different types of 'worth', generally categorisable into internal and external reputation and size and/or importance of role. The key point that [ ] made was that these types of worth might not be equally 'fair' but that they were equally "*valid* in the media." This perceived inseparability of specific individual and job seemed to be because that is the way the business is perceived as operating, i.e. most were 'reading back' from a result to a cause. A small minority of interviewees saw things differently. [ ] (CD) of [London Theatre] said that an assessment of equal value was always possible: "I do feel it's measurable because I do it all the time." The perception of independent pay experts

was also different. [ ] and [ ] were clear that the *structural* characteristics of the occupation operated to influence individual agency by mitigating against both awareness and inclination to challenge disparities, in their opinion "to a greater extent even than in ICI or BT or the government." They echoed [ ]'s (E) observation that the sector is small, interdependent and comprised of a succession of temporary jobs with a relatively small number of employers: "And often, in other sectors, women bring cases when they are leaving an organisation. Whereas when you're in the acting profession, you're in it aren't you? Not like you're with one employer for 10 years and you can go somewhere else… it's a heck of an individual risk for someone to do it."

Both consultants were of the opinion that if legislation were to be used, it would be more appropriate to use the 'like work' provisions of the Equal Pay Act 1970 s.1 (4) rather than the equal value provisions in the 1983 amendment and thus that the key determinant of disparities would be a 'genuine material difference' (s.1 (3)) rather than differences in some dimension of 'value' of jobs. What constitutes a genuine material difference is largely dependent on judicial interpretation and the precept embodied in [ ]'s (Pr) assertion above that leading women are paid less because they (or their agents) ask for less, has been unequivocally rejected by the courts as an acceptable defence for unequal pay. This was the decision in *Clay Cross (Quarry Services) Ltd* v *Fletcher* [1979]. However, subsequent case law has suggested that 'market forces' are an acceptable justification for employers paying unequal pay for like work (*Rainey* v *Greater Glasgow Health Board* [1987]) and that it can be

acceptable for a man to be paid *more* than the going rate based on market arguments, rather than that the woman is paid *less*. This muddies the waters in relation to performers but in the absence of a test case it is difficult to see more clearly, other than to note continued elevation of class above gender in judicial assessment of 'equity'. This in turn lends support to the analysis in Chapter 2 of the circuitous routes towards equality taken by the legislative process.

The potential difficulties facing a performer plaintiff bringing an equal pay case was largely attributed by the consultants *not* to unmeasurable subjective valuations, 'artistic' as opposed to 'industrial' work forms or even disparities in market value, but to the potentially damaging results for the individual's future access to work. Their focus therefore shifted away from legislative remedies towards effecting attitudinal change through raising awareness of issues amongst both workers and employers (a view supported by the arguments of, e.g., Liff and Cameron 1997; Richards 2001). They were aware however of the difficulties posed by operating out of a specific organisational context, and the lack of clear business benefits to press home to employers. They recognised the difficulties faced by Equity in organising freelance workers and that their priority would usually have to be the establishing and maintenance of floors of terms and conditions. However they, as many other interviewees, saw an important role for Equity in facilitating *individual* regulation, by publicising the issues both to members and to employers, in effect to attempt to educate rather than bargain. This relates also to possibilities of change in gendered career longevity which could be produced by 'environmental' change (e.g. Smart

1989; Dickens 1992: 108; Hepple 1992), facilitated by impending anti-age discrimination legislation noted in Chapter 2.

A senior Equity official said that "expectations" framed most pay negotiations and that (referring to employers) "you get away with what you get away with". This gives force to mobilisation or attitudinal change perspectives: [ ] (DS) argued that Equity's action here should be to "politicise the women' and [ ] (E) supported this argument by concluding that "If anything happens it will be down to members, individuals, active women". However, Offe and Wiesenthal (1985), examining issues of collective action, argued that workers faced more difficulties in identifying their 'real interests' than capitalists, as there was 'no equivalent to profit on the workers' side' (in Kelly 1998: 8). Thus workers must 'construct definitions of interest through debate inside their own organisations' (*ibid*.). The keys to maintaining such organisations are cited as continued willingness to pay union dues and being prepared to act collectively. Here the particular structures of performing work – individualised, competitive, geographically dispersed without fixed workplaces – militate against both of these factors (Dean 1998). Usefully however in this empirical context, Kelly directs attention away from bargaining structures and institutions towards the 'social processes of industrial relations' (1998:38), highlighting the importance of different concepts (such as injustice and attribution) in moulding workers' definition of their interests. There is though an implicit emphasis on groups of workers at established workplaces and the importance of activists as agents of change regarding both workers and the union. Waddington

(2003) also concludes that union social and political influence is likely to be dependent on an organising model approach, itself largely dependent on *workplace* activity. Performing is an occupation not only structurally divided but informed by a drive to do particular work that may exist only temporarily and where individual gatekeeper contacts are vital. The difficulties of establishing and sustaining a collective definition of interest in this situation are clear and the implications of these analyses for Equity and specifically here its women members, are unpromising.

It should be noted that Kelly's (1998) analysis cannot incorporate sufficiently the differing, necessarily inconsistent perceptions of interest of women performers, founded as they are on the invisible ladder of the performer career. This ladder both pre-dates and is sustained by the capitalist conception of work; and women performers, in their finely striated informal categories, illustrate the doctrine of 'divide and rule'. Their micro-plight can be further understood in consideration of Hepple et al.'s (2000) survey of international work on the gender pay gap, which found that 'Women traditionally did best in systems with not only a high level of collective bargaining but a centralised bargaining or pay awards system.' (2000: 14). This view is supported by Gregory's (1999) analysis of the impact of sex equality law: 'Without security of employment, women are less likely to know their rights to equal treatment or be in a position to act on this knowledge. In the case of equal pay, the shift from national collective agreements to localised pay negotiation and the proliferation of individualised payment systems made it increasingly difficult for

women to access the information which would provide the basis for a claim.' (1999: 99). The disadvantages of a mix of national-level minimum terms agreements with highly personalised individual negotiations in a competitive labour market are apparent.

However, the doctrine of divide and rule has never been realised in an absolute sense and the room for agency in negotiating passage through the shifting sands of performer pay is plain. Instances of individual regulation in relation to pay and access are apparent in leading performers' insistence on parity or ability to command a premium and their greater and more prolonged access to work opportunities. There are few if any examples of lower-range performer's resistance in relation to pay issues – the possibility of individual regulatory strategies in this area being undermined by the permanent labour oversupply and the drive to work. One of the few instances encountered in research was described by [ ] (P) in discussion of pay and status:

> Some people don't talk about [pay]…but I just think that, to me that's one other way of them keeping the pay down, keeping us down or having something over us. I'm like, if we talked about it more then, cos sometimes they say oh no we haven't got the money to give you and then you find out later well actually they did have the money because they've given that person that money so how could they afford to give it to them? So, to me it's like if you talk about it then it's something that's out in the open so you can negotiate more. You know, sometimes [it's] talked about it within a company and somebody's said, oh I'm getting this, and they could go back and demand more, ask for more then they could get more, it's fair. You

think well, if they can give it to you, why didn't they just give it to you in the first place? Cos you never asked.

However, exploration of the data relating to the lived realities of women performer's lives does not encourage optimism. It seems that not talking about pay operates as a social structure, in that it 'becomes a constraint on further practice' (Connell 1987: 99), helping to keep pay levels down and the balance of advantage on the employer's side. Social action has been interpreted as a direct result of the structure of the objective situation (Fox 1966), but if social structures (necessarily neither fixed nor immutable) are seen in Connell's terms as constraints on practice, then their capacity to constrain must be affected by the individual's *perception* of them and how she defines herself and her situation or position (Hyman 1989). This opens up the possibility for the union to engage in a process of interest definition and mobilisation. However, the widespread discourses of performing work being 'other' also affect this and other possibilities of regulation. They reinforce perpetuation of pay and access disparities if the women affected accept and internalise this idea – again part of an arguably gendered ideology that constructs 'work' as distanced from self (and thus measurable). ''Creation is the work of gifted individuals' (EC, 1998: 3) but if such individuals are to make a living via the labour market, then society must attach a value to their activities.' (Creigh-Tyte and Thomas 2001: 271).

Review

In her analysis of the employment contract, Pateman (1988) notes that 'Marx

stresses that the worker can only gain his livelihood if he works for nothing for a

certain time for the capitalist (i.e. the latter expropriates surplus value).' (1988: 149).

Pateman diverges from Marx's analysis of the causes and consequences of this

central point; this becomes relevant below. Here the focus is on the letter of Marx's

conclusions, as performers, who frequently work for low or no pay (often effectively

paying to work), labour in an unusually pure example of Marx's analysis of

capitalism. And women performers are more likely to occupy this position and to

occupy it more often. Marx (1976) says that there are two periods to the labour

process, the first part where the worker

> produces only the value of his labour-power, i.e., the value of his means of
> subsistence…During the second period of the labour process, that in which
> his labour is no longer necessary labour…he creates no value for himself.
> He creates surplus-value which, for the capitalist, has all the charms of
> something created out of nothing.' (1976: 324, 325).

In this occupational context, this economic reality is mediated and justified through

particular ideological constructs. Performers (the black performers interviewed

being significant exceptions) generally view the profession as a socially liberal

meritocracy and *perceptions* seem to be key in *structuring* the issues of pay and

career longevity by dissipating resistance through acceptance of (in one performer's

words) "the vagaries of the profession". This seems to summarise an internalised

idea of the 'otherness' of the work conflated with freedom of creative expression

and finally, a de-gendered 'market value' justification. The thread connecting these

ideas was the recognition (implicit or explicit, but common to all) that performing

work by its nature is inseparable from the social relations that constitute society.

The empirical data on gendered pay disparities and limitation of career longevity,

seen within an analytical framework that was both suggested and corroborated by

these findings, go to support Pateman's variation from Marx: that rather than

subordination arising from/forming part of exploitation, subordination is the relation

that makes exploitation possible (1988: 149).

In the final chapter, the issues surrounding gender and aspects of the industrial

relations of performing work and the ideas used to discuss them through this study

are re-considered.

CHAPTER 7   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

To be a woman is to be an actress.
Susan Sontag, *An Ageing Population*

Introduction

This study has set out to map the working realities of women performers in relation to access to work, pay and career longevity. Gendered disadvantage in relation to all three categories had been indicated by existing quantitative data and having established the structures of the categories, perceptions of this gendered disadvantage were explored in an attempt to understand and account for the working experiences. As part of these central aims, approaches relevant to addressing or restraining disadvantage were addressed. Three types of approach were examined: formal strategies of legal and social regulation and informal strategies of individual regulation (defined as capacity for and use of strategies of resistance). All were examined to see what purchase they have in an occupational sector with several distinctive characteristics. Centrally, these characteristics include two interrelated points: the (un-gendered) widespread and atypical drive to work, and the continuous and extreme labour over-supply which was found to be universally acknowledged as particularly acute for women performers. Both formal and informal strategies were found to be compromised in their use and effectiveness, by their own limitations as well as by specific occupational characteristics.

In keeping with the narrative approach of this thesis addressed in Chapters 1 and 3 and the synthesis approach of Chapter 6, the empirical findings on working realities, perceptions of disadvantage and strategies of regulation will be reviewed within the analytical framework established in Chapter 2. The picture generated is explored for its contribution to work in these areas and its implications for future research. First, discussion of the findings must be contextualised with a note on a general limitation of the research.

Inevitably the focus of this study has meant that nuance is compromised. This is so in several ways. First, men performers, as has been noted, have to navigate most of the same restrictions as women performers. Where their labour markets are gender-segregated they are also divided as to 'type' and are competitive and over-crowded. Differentiation has been a recurring motif of this study and if patriarchal ideologies are argued to structure the working realities of women performers, they must necessarily structure those of men. As Connell (1987) argues, subordination of women 'requires the creation of a gender-based hierarchy among men…with at least three elements: hegemonic masculinity, conservative masculinities…and subordinated masculinities' (1987: 110). Thus typed division into over-crowded markets, combined with the drive to work, ensure that pay and conditions for the male majority are also generally poor relative to skills and experience. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, the point of departure for this study was the gendered differences within these similarities. Future research might concentrate on bringing

the men back in, possibly taking a non-specifically gendered focus on particular industry issues or in comparative work.

Second, what has not been considered here is the *pleasure* of performance. This includes performers' regular expressions of love for their work and of its potential for individual self-fulfilment as well as the 'atypical' patterns of the occupation. While women performers work within gendered boundaries and it is important that these are examined, it would be misleadingly incomplete to not register the active pleasure found as well as the expressions of frustration.

Finally, what the study focus has elided is the potential for change that was perceived across several occupational categories as inherent in the business. Acknowledging deeply conservative traditions and structures, many people were proud to be part of something they saw as at least intermittently attempting to create art or a communication of ideas. Summarised in the words of the then A.D. of [Theatre 1], there was a sense of a "gradual drifting towards more balanced representation." While a gradual drift suggests adaptation of gender regimes rather than their change, this recalls McNay's (2000) argument, noted in Chapter 2, that 'An act that may seem conformist, from a structural perspective, may in fact entail either a non-propositional content or high levels of self-consciousness, both of which may be indicative of slow but far-reaching cultural shifts.' (2000: 160). There is no question that these shifts have produced great changes in the employment of women performers between our starting point, the reign of Charles II, and the present day.

As is clear from consideration of study data, while there is perception of gendered and racialised employment disadvantage, these perceptions are framed by a situation of regular access to work of equal or superior status to men performers. Further, and relatedly, this access is more complex in form than it has been: women are physically and expressively differentiated to a greater degree in mainstream roles in both subrep and television. However, as discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to methodological issues, contemporary consciousness is shaped by the stories and practices of the past and it is at least arguable that a largely micro-level analysis will always skew emphasis away from full appreciation of change. As the aim of this study was not only to map working realities but also to explore perceptions of gendered disadvantage, this level of analysis and its attendant caveat was unavoidable. Therefore it must be noted that the overall sense from the range of interviewees was that more complex representation (greater access) was a process that was variable in scope and extent, but was certainly ongoing: necessarily, this would have effects on patriarchal norms inherent in performing labour processes. This sense of an ongoing process seemed to stem from awareness of the connections of these processes with shifts in wider social relations.

Notwithstanding limitations in consideration of broader patterns of change (and thus challenge) to patriarchal structures, the awareness of connections highlights a critical theme of the study. This is that an informed understanding of the labour processes of a particular occupational group would not have been possible without consideration of issues not traditionally foregrounded in analysis of industrial

relations. This has not simply been in the understanding of women performers as gendered workers but in the understanding that this outcome is the result of a complex interplay with other, gendered institutions, processes and (social) actors with whom they co-structure working realities. In terms of co-structuring, this interplay has been seen to be as important outside the boundaries of the formal labour process as within it. Thus, referring back to the discussion in Chapter 2 of the formally ungendered perspectives of the majority of industrial relations research, it is not sufficient to add in the effects of 'the home' or the private sphere in consideration of the worker. Gender is constitutive of industrial relations. While its salience will be relative according to issue it is important that it is recognised that this salience is not focused either on the woman worker or on the observable effects of the domestic sphere. In its methodological and analytical approach, this study has given primacy to recognition that the labour process is constituted of people who simultaneously inhabit structures other than their work position and that consideration of these other structures has been integral to analysis of aspects of the industrial relations of performing.

A map of working realities

The findings of this thesis have mapped a particular and necessarily broad arc of working realities for the woman performer. Lack of defined career paths has been a recurring note through the study and this implies a multiplicity of potential routes to and forms of performing work. A map of the working realities of women performers could legitimately have started with the Redcoats at a Butlin's holiday

centre and gone on to examine fringe theatre, speech radio, clowning, Theatre-in-Education tours and so on. However, the absence of a body of work in this occupational area, discussed in Chapter 1, framed the research aims and particular structural focus. This was the drama school as formal entry route and two of the most significant areas of work for UK performers, subsidised repertory theatre and terrestrial television.

The study looked to find meaning and thus potentially causation in relation to the woman performer's working realities and disadvantages. It was argued that in the perceptions of performers, gatekeepers, employers and employer-proxies we have seen explicit and implicit expressions of patriarchal and racial ideologies which have material relevance in affecting issues of access, pay and career longevity. More narrowly, it was found that the two research aims were not only conceptually linked as in my initial research design, but actively empirically linked, for example in the findings of self-selection for auditions. To this end, while the emphasis in the first part of this chapter is on re-tracing the map of working realities, the findings around perceptions of disadvantage are considered as part of the contours of this map.

Starting

Access to drama schools was found to be clearly affected by the central and most often cited issue of access for women performers: the relatively smaller number of parts available in a generally overcrowded labour market. Data suggested that this also affected the selection decisions made by the employee/employer-proxy hybrid,

the agent. These selections were further influenced by types of role available, indicated by the informal 'categories' of agents' client lists. In both areas (drama schools and agent lists), race and ethnicity were found to be perceived as relevant factors in access. Again, the data indicated that this was related to perceptions of market demand, reinforcing issues of circularity and reproduction which will be discussed further below.

Consideration of the structures of subrep theatre and terrestrial television found that despite their vastly differing resources, financial imperatives are perceived to lead to over-reliance on classics and the familiar. While this over-reliance was discussed as having generally negative effects for the woman performer, the sectoral differences in resources also pointed to the insufficiency of economic explanations of the base of gendered disadvantage. The importance to structuring access of gatekeepers' perceptions and their reproduction was foregrounded, as will now be discussed.

Doing

Reproduction has emerged as a structuring theme of access to work, as seen in particular in Chapter 5. In television, writers observed that it is common practice to try and reproduce what is seen to be produced. In television again, focus groups are frequently used to ascertain what programmes are successful and which performers are popular; efforts are then made to reproduce these commodities, through re-making and re-employment. In both sectors, agents will send clients for auditions for jobs they 'can' do (i.e. jobs most like those they have done before). Many

performers stated that they tried to reproduce in their physical appearance at audition what they thought gatekeepers wanted, reproducing typifications and stereotypes so that they would 'read' persuasively. In this way, hegemonic ideologies of gender and sexuality are manifested and reproduced; producing Connell's (1987) 'cyclical' practice (1987: 141) and a seamless join in structure/agency. In Chapter 2, Althusser's (1971) work on the development and transmission of ideologies was considered and subsequently used in analysis of findings. Here, a core dimension of that work is relevant. Althusser argues that 'The reproduction of the relations of production' is 'the ultimate aim of the ruling class' and that 'It is realized through a class struggle which counterposes the ruling class and the exploited class' (1971: 171). A gender cannot be defined and theorised in the same way as a class (as noted indirectly in Chapter 2), but in the interests of provoking discussion, it is argued that the drive towards reproduction seen in the woman performer's working realities suggests that the 'ultimate aim' of the dominant gender within a patriarchally-structured society, is the reproduction of heterosexually gendered relations. As argued in Chapter 2, central industrial relations experiences of women performers carry traces of ideological 'impulses' that can only be satisfactorily understood as patriarchal in a political/symbolic sense, in their discernible drive to contain, channel and stratify. Performing work is a visible indication of the centrality of forms of differentiation to society and thus how important (and naturalised) are gender and gender stratification. An indirect example of this was seen in Chapter 5, with the writer [ ]'s experience of 'changing' a character's gender by the quiet expedient of changing the name. This incident also illustrated the material relevance of the views

noted in Chapters 1 and 3, that thought must be part of the creation of tangible realities.

In charting aspects of women performer's work, attention was drawn to more general issues in labour processes. A central observation was that issues of discrimination in recruitment and selection, including issues around the concept of aesthetic labour, were highlighted by the simultaneously similar and dissimilar processes of performing work. Literature relating to the links between selection, pay and physical appearance, explored through the previous chapters, indicates that physical discrimination forms part of mainstream labour processes but operates in covert or unconscious ways. The misrecognition of performing as marginal to the mainstream is asserted here, as examination of women performer's working realities makes explicit what elsewhere is disguised. This is seen in particular in the deployment of shared typifications found most clearly in relation to auditions.

The exploration of the range of audition processes found that discrimination does operate in recruitment and selection procedures, indeed that such procedures are overtly and intentionally discriminatory, in that employment decisions are routinely influenced by perception of, to recall Adnett's (1988) phrase, 'some superficial personal characteristic' (1988: 134). However, it does not seem to be discrimination of a type easily categorisable as 'wrong' or easily addressed by any of the regulatory strategies. It is arguably what could be called second-order discrimination in that its purpose is to anticipate what others will 'read' from your choice: it is to attempt to

communicate particular ideas or information in the form of an embodied representation. The realities of the labour process observed in audition indicated the *range* of embodied competencies regarded as constituting key parts of the performer as worker and commodity and further, the overtly gendered character of this range. Thus relevant dimensions of embodied competencies included (openly and matter-of-factly) gatekeeper perceptions of the performer's own sexuality. The motivations for this discrimination seemed variable; sometimes based on ideas of what will generate greater profit, sometimes based on artistic decisions of suitable interpretation of a role. What it is not is more straightforward attribution of racialised and gendered employment characteristics to potential worker by potential employer. This was supported by the findings of performer self-selection and de-selection from consideration of roles and audition attendance. Such selections were often based on perception of their own embodied competencies. These perceptions appeared to be based not (or not only) on past experience in the market (i.e. reproduction) but on their assessment of themselves *as women*. This assessment is based on dominant cultural perceptions of age, attractiveness and so on and is then itself played out in the performer's 'production of people'. This in turn, following Connell's (1987) performer as identologist thesis discussed in Chapter 2 and Rowbotham and Beynon's (2001) work in Chapter 3, reinforces dominant cultural perceptions. Such circularity supports the idea, suggested above, of a dynamic towards the reproduction of heterosexual relations.

Staying

It seems that the disadvantages experienced by women in performing are not perceived as sizeable in relative terms; for instance it was indicated that a proportion of women leading performers earn less pay than similar status men performers, but they are very well paid in comparison to the majority of performers and indeed most mainstream workers. However, it is argued that the disparities are *telling*, in that examination of working realities and exploration of perceptions of disadvantage has pointed towards the existence and importance of patriarchal ideologies in shaping the lives of people whom women performers are paid to 'produce'. Women and men performers are engaged in the same work and yet women performers tend to have fewer job opportunities, lower pay and shorter careers. So, despite the marginalised, ostensibly non-standard nature of the occupation, they shadow widespread female employment patterns.

Closer examination of pay issues found that most performers were unaware of and largely unconcerned with gendered disparities in pay. Considered with other data, this seemed to be attributable to the highly individualised nature of the pay bargaining process, the atypical drive to do this particular job and persistence of the conception of performing as not 'real' work. Further, for the majority of all performers, pay is generally low and gender differences (in keeping with a general view that women and men were not in direct competition with each other) were regarded as less significant than status differences. Here, Rubery's (1997) identification of pay as a mechanism of conferring social position was found to

relate analogously to this occupation's lack of defined career paths. Viewed in its statistical context, most women performers seem to be justified in not prioritising gendered disparity in pay, as the greatest gaps appear to exist in the more successful echelons of the business. Study data indicated that at this relatively rarefied level, women *were* consciously paid less *because* they were women, one of the few instances of recognisably conventional discrimination. As noted in Chapters 3 and 6, there is an absence of detailed, contemporary pay data in the study, but the indications found above imply the need for further research in this area.

In relation to both pay and access, the predominant recurring interview theme was 'less work'. Here, the key issues to emerge were those of the relatively smaller number of jobs available, the frequently more narrowly defined content of those jobs, the steep decline in job opportunities between the ages of (very approximately) 40 and 60, and the importance of acquisition of status in navigating these issues. This was seen clearly in the general perception that the smaller number of jobs in this age range were more likely to be taken by women performers of high status. It was also suggested by a range of interviewees that gendered appearance criteria used to differentiate women performers at early career stages would help achievement of status and thus longevity. In arguable contrast it was also suggested that maintaining access to work over time was easier for 'character' performers, i.e. those not conforming to current hegemonic ideas of female beauty. This latter suggestion, however, contained implicit acknowledgement that such performers would have access to different types of role to those in the non-character group. Hegemonic

ideas of female beauty were seen by all as incorporating a particular time-limit and thus potential time-limit for the attribution of value to a performer. The unspoken sum of these perceptions was the importance of patriarchal conceptions of heterosexuality in structuring working realities.

This aspect of the market can be situated within discussion of Leontaridi's (1998) work, considered in Chapter 2. Leontaridi (1998) argues that both classical economic and segmentation models of labour markets reveal segmentation but that 'What still remains to be proven though is along what lines' (1998: 95). Having identified labour mobility as an important area for research, she asks 'are primary sector jobs rationed?' (1998: 93). Mobility between status ranges has not been directly addressed in this study, but the sum of data points to the mediation of mobility by individual perception constrained and enabled by economic and cultural frameworks. It has been indicated in this study that women performers' pay can be lower because of 'crowding' in a segmented labour market and that this crowding is both caused by and affects the more limited access to work and variations in pay. Again, this crowding has been argued as connected to particular conceptions of gender and patriarchally-structured forms of work in subrep theatre and in television. These conceptions produce the gendered and sexualised structuring of production noted across society by Connell (1987) and Pateman (1988) and examined by Adkins (1995) as discussed in Chapter 2. In performing work this produces a number of segmented labour markets and within these, both primary and secondary forms, with older women performers of lesser status crowded out of job

opportunities and subject to declining pay in the middle-range bracket, as noted in Chapter 6. The emphasis placed by employers on 'names' (discussed in Chapter 5), indicates primary sector job rationing of a superficially ungendered type, based simply on accrual of market value. As examination of the working realities of women performers has indicated, however, that accrual of market value is itself a gendered process.

So a broad overview lets us see not only segmented labour markets but multiply internally segmented labour markets: not only women, but women under 40, over 40 and over 60; white women and ethnic minority women; black women with a specific shade of skin; 'character' women and 'love interest' women, and so on – seemingly limited only by our conceptions of social relations. This picture ironically reflects discussions in feminist literature of the heterogeneity of women and their interests. It is the confined mirror-image of attempts to further the interests of women through recognition of their specificities. This study does not seek to generalise from its findings, as discussed in Chapter 3; it was not the rationale of the methodological structure employed. However, what has been found raises points argued to be of interest for discussion in mainstream employment sectors. The particular forms of segmentation noted above (in formally unsegregated work) highlight conventional occupational segregation as symptom of inequalities not cause, and offer support for Reskin's (1988) argument that to stop at an occupational segregation explanation of gendered wage disparities is incorrect. She argues that the 'sex-gender hierarchy' and the interests of maintaining hegemony by the subordination of other groups will

result in differential treatment even in sex-integrated occupations (in Myers et al.
1998: 278).

The persistence of the drive to differentiate thus necessitates ongoing examination of
the concept of patriarchy. As noted in Chapter 2, Connell (1987) argues that it is
most useful to think of a gender *structuring of production*, not just a sexual division,
an assertion that he argues 'allows a clearer recognition of differentiations within the
work-force that have to do with sexual politics but which operate *within* the broad
categories of sex**.'** (1987: 103). This argument chimes with Reskin's (1988)
suppositions and the particular parameters within which women performers work.
Intra-occupational segmentation of this formally unsegregated occupation is not
simply structured by sex/gender but by *types*, by ideas of gender, age and ethnicity
made flesh in the performer. The findings on manipulation of these ideas will now
be discussed.

Strategies of regulation

Individual regulation

Individual regulatory strategies in relation to current realities of access were found to
revolve around establishing and maintaining gatekeeper contacts and a gendered
physical and mental preparation for auditions. There was a parallel
acceptant/resistant typification of 'the business' as meritocratic but also as unduly
dependent on individual judgement. Most interviewees accepted a (consciously

aspirational) construct of theatre and television work as 'art' in the sense of individual (thus sacrosanct) creation. Alternative conceptions of change, such as positive action in the form of quota systems, were perceived as undesirable as well as unworkable in an arts sector. Again, concurrent perceptions were found of acceptance of the market in structuring access and pay in combination with an idea of the work itself as somehow separate. This dual perception was found in many guises, for example the acceptance by performers of an egalitarian ethos explanation of the 'company wage' while at the same time recognising the underlying primacy of subrep theatre's lack of resources.

[ ] (P) was one of a small minority of performers who perceived disparities as a form of discrimination and as a long-term member of the Equity Women's Committee had strong views about the attitudes of women members:

> I think there's an amazing and horrifying acceptance of the status quo really, among most women performers. Even to the extent that, you know, there just *are* more parts for men, that's just how it is, as if it's some sort of act of nature or something.

The recognisable frustration of the union activist was found to be misplaced, in terms of the variation in performer response. Attitudes of 'acceptance' found in the study encompassed a variety of reactions: from unquestioning acquiescence to the status quo, to an achieved accommodation with processes perceived as biased against exploring the range of women's experiences. Towards this end of the spectrum of attitudes there were examples of resistance, even in the face of the

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constraints of competitive, over-crowded segmented labour markets. The examples of resistance included not 'dressing' for auditions, but mostly involved rejection of work, with implications not only for immediate loss of pay (particularly acute for the freelance worker) but also for potential loss of a 'shop-window' and future work and contacts. This can be characterised in part as an attempt to exercise control in an occupational sector noted for its workers' lack of control and indeed passivity (Lapotaire 1999; Todd 1984:23): as Wiseman (1992) writes of seventeenth-century actresses who became writers, to attempt to move 'from ciphers filled by the discourse to manipulators of the codes.' (in Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 1996:127).

This is connected to an argued further reading of the 'acceptance' aspect of individual strategies of regulation. It has been seen that market value in its varying forms was a recurrent theme in interview. It is arguable from close reading of interview data that one construction of the *performers'* acceptance of market value is as self-protection. As noted by the Commission on Industrial Relations (1973), traditional attributes such as skill, experience and effort can be irrelevant at the point of employment as compared to embodied attributes such as weight or colour of hair or skin. Interview data has reinforced this assessment. A variation is the acknowledged shared typifications used by all involved in allocating and performing employment in this area and put most succinctly by the director quoted in Chapter 5: "Does she read as a mother figure?" The requirements were then seen to vary from this 'semi-detached', almost archetypal, specification to recognised personal preferences. The absence of *positive* individual regulatory strategies leaves a

vacuum filled by unmonitored individual whim which is frequently either male or filtered through a (white) 'male gaze'. The patterns did not appear to be immediately obvious to most performers, whose priorities seem to focus on an individualised perception of a meritocratic career path, often governed by variations of the notion of 'psychic income' discussed in Chapter 6 and below.

In relation to pay, several performers said that they were happy to put up with erratic levels of income in exchange for the freedom of not having a predictable job in a fixed workplace and, for some, the belief that the work they do can be part of affecting/changing society. This displays a 'preference for risk…and…the existence of 'psychic income' arising from the 'art-for-arts' sake' phenomenon...These latter explanations suggest that artists do not themselves believe that their jobs are 'bad', despite being non-standard.' (Creigh-Tyte and Thomas 2001: 274). It is also possible, however, to add a structural dimension to these observations. This is exemplified by the position of women performers, divided one from the other by lack of fixed workplaces, temporary casualised contracts and endemic competition against those most like themselves in age, appearance or 'type' and thus would have most in common with in experience of the labour process. These factors militate against 'seeing' disadvantage or discrimination in the first place (e.g. Cordova 1994) and against seeing that anything can be done about it.

The issues of acquiescence, achieved accommodation and self-protection within the concept of 'acceptance' in individual regulation as well as perception of pay issues,

indicate possibilities of future analysis that would further understanding of control and consent in the labour process.

The examples of resistance noted in the study indicate that the potential for politicisation of the issues is there but that the individualised nature of the business, i.e. its structure, inhibits individual agency from having the same cumulative effect that individualised instances of disadvantage are perceived to have. Thus issues around informal regulation are closely related to issues around formal regulation.

Social and legal regulation

A minority of interviewees across a few groups (performers, writers, union officials and drama schools) said explicitly that politicisation of Equity's women members was the best route to address performer inequalities, implicitly acknowledging the limitations of formal strategies of regulation. Nevertheless, it also implicitly acknowledges a necessity for collective consciousness and collective action; that trade unions remain the best hope of embodying such collectivities and realising their aspirations. However, where union regulation might once have been seen as a primary force, the political and legal developments of the last twenty five years have altered this perception in relation to principal features of industrial relations. It is therefore unsurprising that Equity – challenged as most unions are by recruitment and retention problems and operating within unusually challenging occupational conditions – is unable or unwilling to address less tangible issues relating to their members' traditional work patterns. The absences of conventional job segregation

and historical union discrimination against women performers reinforce a situation where there is no structural imperative for the union to target recruitment and retention strategies at women. In addition, as mooted in Chapter 6, Equity arguably has no option but to pursue what is convincingly argued to be the weaker (individualised) servicing model of union organisation. This is principally because of its members' lack of fixed workplaces, workplaces argued as highly significant in pursuit of a more robust organising model (Kelly 1998; Waddington 2003).

Further, as discussed through the thesis, the inability of the conventional regulatory strategies to affect these processes in performing emphasises what the critical literature in these areas has argued: that addressing discrimination and disadvantage cannot be left to external mechanisms that treat these issues as individualised and (effectively) aberrant. Legal regulation which is premised on the individual cannot avoid avoiding fundamental questions of the reproduction of social relations. There have been limited moves towards shifting this focus, seen in the statutory incorporation of recommendations of the Macpherson Report (1999) on institutional racism in the police force (Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000). These moves are restricted to public authorities and bodies, although a positive reading of this shift in focus could be taken from the work on the 'environmental' effects of legislation noted in Chapters 4 and 6. A less positive reading is that broader, more radical change must necessarily be involved. In relation to law, Davies and Freedland (1983) have argued that 'Law is a secondary force in human affairs, and especially in labour relations.' (1983:13). As discussed in Chapter 6 more recent

opinion would probably re-formulate this as 'Law *as currently constituted*', in that

an effective place for legal regulation of labour relations is argued for through

imposition of positive duties on employers (Hepple et al. 2000; Hepple 2003). As

has been noted above however, resistance to such an imposition on theatre and

television employers might well come from performer workers in that most accepted

a construct of theatre and television work as essentially an individual creation.

Certainly, in relation to both legal and social strategies regarding other dimensions

of access to work such as childcare, the impression from all categories of

interviewee was that, in the words of an Equity official: "If you want a career, if you

want a family, you find a way." The attitude of the union officers was that, with

limited resources (both financial and in capacity for mobilisation) and facing a large

number of disparate, often single-project-based employers, it was beyond the

capability of a union to develop a strategy that would result in measurable change.

Underlying this attitude must also be recognised an awareness of the union's own

vulnerability since the demise of its central characteristic, the pre-entry closed shop,

as well as the more universal awareness that the work of union officials is long-term

and thus necessarily based on compromise (Hyman 1989). All issues are seen as

framed within the context of a *continuing* bargaining relationship. This is also

analogous to agent's relationships with their client's potential employers, as was

seen in Chapter 4. Thus it seems that even within the boundaries of their own

occupation, performers, and especially women performers, are in some sense

marginalised. An image that recurred in interviews with various occupational

categories was that of the performer as child or supplicant, in that they were continually dependent on others for access to the things they wanted. For example, [ ] (A), discussing a director client on her books, said that "it's more of a grown-up relationship". This same observation was cast in a slightly different light by [ ] (CD): "They *much* prefer to be, to want other people to be the villains…Not their responsibility." This line of reasoning is relevant to the research aims in that it contributes to the woman performer's perception of lack of control and feelings of passivity, the 'waiting to be chosen' theme that recurred many times. This in turn inhibits awareness of systemic disadvantage and the will to utilise regulatory strategies. The costs of doing so are high, as [ ] (P) makes clear, but the gains are potentially higher: "You have to start saying no to them, it's as simple as that. And if that means a long period of time passes before you work again, you have to be able to sit with that, that's the only way to change these stereotypes."

Such change is not easily amenable to *formal* strategies of regulation, as the quote implicitly recognises. The patterns of less work and less high-status work for women performers, with a marked decline in access for middle-aged women, are not the results of direct or indirect discrimination as understood in the SDA 1975. A large proportion of available performing work is either only for a female or only for a male (for instance, to play Queen Victoria or Prince Albert) an idea institutionalised in the Act in the 'genuine occupational qualification' (GOQ) exemption in s.7 and reflected in the RRA 1976, s.5, as amended by the Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003 (noted in Chapter 5). However, there are many roles which could be played by either sex and represented by any

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ethnicity. In fact, as discussed in Chapter 5, there are regular occasions when roles traditionally played as white *or* black, are played non-traditionally and against expectation. This of course also happens in relation to gender, for example Shakespeare's Globe Theatre's regular single-sex productions or a recent female Hamlet (Gardner 2003). All of this implies that 'authenticity' is a moveable feast determined by individual gatekeeper preference. This implication has not been addressed by legislators or union. However, perceptions and instances of ongoing individual gatekeeper attempts to affect representations were found (seen positively by some and more cynically as 'fashionable' by others). This, combined with formal regulatory inactivity, argues for the greater purchase of individual *gatekeeper* regulation in this area, a possibly pessimistic conclusion considering the structural and ideological constraints within which gatekeepers have been found to act.

The arguments for restriction of the legal exemptions made by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) (1998), as noted in Chapters 2 and 5, attempted to re-frame the regulatory strategy, by effectively shifting the focus and onus on to the potential employer. However, although appearing to focus on legal regulation, the re-framing would still involve the individual challenging particular casting decisions. As we have seen, the characteristics of the occupational sector militate against such challenges. What the CRE's revision recognises however is the relative subtlety of what is going on: not discrimination *per se* but cumulative disadvantage that effectively results in discrimination. This analysis is also largely true of pay issues, where the findings indicate that although patterns of gendered pay disparities are

apparent, these are largely related to the patterns of access and owe a great deal of their persistence to lack of awareness, partly structured by the highly individualised nature of pay negotiations and to the atypical fluctuations in attitudes towards pay.

A very small minority of interviewees (none of whom were performers) saw the value of law in enabling individuals to take action. The majority perception was that most performers cannot afford to 'make waves' in this way. A few members of the minority felt that positive action in relation to the programming of theatre and television seasons could be the way of balancing artistic integrity with fairer patterns of work. This broadened the approach from the general attitude of employing more women writers, to looking at commissioning choices to see that over a period of time they were balanced. This position edges towards Hepple et al.'s (2000) argument for the imposition of positive duties on employers noted above, possibly implying the cultural shift argued as necessary to support effective legislative change, discussed in Chapter 6. One of the senior union officials felt that legal protection extended to non-standard workers would encourage a perspective amongst performers that they were not as vulnerable as they often felt, but at the same time there was recognition that legislation was an inappropriate tool to change the content of performing work let alone to manipulate perception of suitable casting.

Translation

Many interviewees, and particularly performers, said that what was needed to regulate the smaller number of work opportunities was more women writers and more women in senior positions in theatre and television. This frames the issue in classic liberal terms, although as empirical findings have shown, the impulse to reproduction is not gendered in any straightforward sense. There was a general perception that women's voices (in the sense of a broader range of represented experiences) were not heard or valued to the same extent as men's and that an increase in women employed in key positions would effect change. Of course, there have been women in key positions as *performers* for an unusually long time. Women performers have been criss-crossing public/private boundaries for several centuries and yet their sustained example of the potential for women to achieve equal and higher status than men in the same occupation has not 'leaked' into the mainstream. It is arguable that this is partly due to the absence of equivalent journeys by men from the public to the private sphere (Lansky 2000): as we noted in Chapter 2 in relation to women performers *joining* men performers in the seventeenth century, there has not been a fundamental re-ordering of the gender regimes we inhabit.

These key positions have been highly visible and yet there seems to have been no cross-over effect of expectation of women's success into more conventional work environments. This is apparent in the continued peripheral position of performing as 'work' and of its women workers as specifically sexualised. This is not one-way

traffic around a circuit of culture, from society to visible woman, but is also regularly constructed by capital, based on a gendered attribution of value and the potential for extraction of increased surplus-value from these constructions. It is arguable that this is partly the result of the observed conflation of work with worker in the general marginalisation of performing as a labour process discussed in Chapter 2: a marginalisation found to be 'internalised' and accepted by most performers. Further, and crucially, that the form of work itself can be seen as 'feminised', although not in the ways usually understood by this label. As we have seen, although acting calls itself a profession, it is not in the accepted sense of the word as there is no mandatory training or qualification. Work on the idea of a profession considered in Chapter 4 also shows it to be associated with original exclusion of women and that its form was invariably full-time and involving a clear career progression. Performing not only fails to exhibit these androcentric characteristics, its key purposes and techniques are emotion, physical display and pretence, qualities historically associated with 'woman'. The work itself is temporary, short-term and unpredictable, further failing to conform to the traditional breadwinner template for employment. Given such characteristics, the description of performing as 'feminised' has the force of social logic. In keeping with the premise of gendered subordination discussed throughout the thesis, social logic operates to isolate the potential example of the woman performer.

Women performers as workers

Performing is an unusual occupation to examine as, unlike other integrated occupations (for example academics or journalists), the occupation is not ostensibly gender-neutral: there has always been an expectation that women will largely play women's parts, even if this expectation is sometimes either absent or unfulfilled in practice. This has resulted in women performers experiencing consistent *advantage* in employment relative to other occupations. These include opportunities to achieve unusual levels of material reward for their work in terms of access (choice of work) and pay. The opportunities are naturalised in that both inside and outside the occupation it is regarded (and has been for a very long time) as usual for women to 'achieve' on an equal basis with men. If there were no women in the higher levels of the occupation, it would be regarded (again both inside and outside) as abnormal. However, this advantage is at the same time intimately related to disadvantage in that it highlights the continual reproduction by society of gender by sex and that we need women performers to 'be' 'women' (rather than men to 'be' 'women') and that is why they have access to advantage.

A minority of interviewees directly suggested that the key to understanding the working realities of women performers was the position of women in general society, implying that performing work whether intentionally or not acts to some degree as an indirect reflection of society. As discussed in Chapter 6, some saw a direct link between society and women performers' access to work (and thus pay). This perception was not simply in terms of an increase in women police officers will

result in an increase in *Prime Suspect*s, but more fundamentally in the ways in which we construct gender. This was eloquently expressed by [ ] of [London Theatre], discussing women performers' narrower range of work opportunities: "In the end you know I think it comes down, as I'm sure you have already in a way concluded, to how we identify and acknowledge power and authority. And in this culture, wherever you look, power and authority are still fundamentally assumed to be the province of men." This conclusion reflects broader analyses of patriarchal constructions of gender: 'If authority is defined as legitimate power, then we can say the main axis of the power structure of gender is the general connection of authority with masculinity' (Connell 1987: 109). Pateman's (1988) analysis of civil society, as discussed in Chapter 2, traces the origins of this authority/legitimate power to a 'sexual contract' predicated on subordinate identities of gender and sexuality. The material outcomes of this conflation of masculinities and authority have tended to bound access opportunities (roles) for women performers. This in turn has resulted in systemic pay disparities largely attributable to fewer points of access, with thus less chance of establishing longevity. The exceptions to this trend, however, are not deviant cases but are accepted and expected. It was argued that this situation, paradoxically, works to reinforce disparities by perpetuating an expectation of equality and that this perception is structurally reinforced by individualised bargaining above minimum terms.

This study has shown that interviewees across all the relevant occupational categories perceive that women performers do experience systemically greater

dimensions of the disadvantages experienced by both female and male performers. This is a phenomenon that seems to be explicable only in the context of relations of subordination extant in wider society, which affect both product and process. Differential value is attributed to gender (and gendered age) in performing work and within these gender categories, value is allocated according to a hierarchy based on societal perception and structures. As Sontag (1978) argues, both women and men suffer anxiety about their appearance, based on societal perceptions of attractiveness, 'But there is a much wider latitude in what is esthetically acceptable in a man's face than what is in a woman's' (1978: 78). This has resonance in the perceptions that performers operate within the same strictures but with different parameters of acceptability. These parameters have been analysed as staked out by prevailing ideologies of gender and thus as ensuring that women performers are inevitably colluding in the perpetuation of their own work constraints, blurring 'structure' and 'agency' as argued in Chapter 2. Further, that women performers, in their working realities and experiences of disadvantage, are effectively both formal and informal proxies for women in wider society. This is apparent, as has been explored, in the restrictive effects of the attribution of value to gender and to physical type, effects that are in part gatekeeper-determined and in part self-defined.

Women performers are formal proxies in that they are employed to 'be' women; to represent 'women' for consumption in the circuit of culture. They are informal proxies in that they are allocated to highly segmented labour markets based on wider patterns of social relations; on their simultaneous position as signifying workers and

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as women. This simultaneity affects women as workers in the mainstream, but not in the same overt and observable way. It has been argued through the preceding chapters that in the construction and operation of these labour markets can be seen the dominance of prevailing, patriarchal conceptions of 'women'. This broad analysis is refined by consideration of the findings, discussed through the study and noted above, that minority ethnic women performers are subject to additional 'appearance' criteria in relation to access. The data on minority ethnic performers' experiences, in particular the feelings of isolation noted in Chapter 5, suggest the need for further research in this area.

Again, consideration of findings on access and career longevity relate directly to Sontag's (1978) analysis of gendered differences in perceptions of age as cited above, further supporting the idea of the informal proxy. Pay issues also demonstrate this idea: groups of women performers are paid less because they are women doing women's jobs – and in this area, quite literally, rather than as a description of an observable phenomenon. In the work patterns of women performers can be read stories of women in society.

To extend this idea we should note a common theme in analysis of data, which was the wish to achieve a level of bargaining influence rather than a simple desire for 'success'. It was perceived as not being something that one (in general) could work towards but that it was principally dependent on accrual of market value. As seen in Chapters 5 and 6, this value can be acquired in several ways, not all of which are

directly dependent on perceived capacity to generate surplus-value. However, it

seems that performers, if not commodities in Marx's (1976) strict sense, are

certainly *visibly constitutive* of commodities (plays and programmes) and as such,

consideration of the value (in its more general sense) attributed to these visible

components is required.

We see the woman performer as a peculiarly observable example of the fetishism of

commodities; the product that is eventually sold acts to disguise the gendered social

relations that have both produced the experience of the labour process for the

woman performer and that attribute (shifting) values to her. This 'social fetishism'

misrepresents the relations between people, projecting on to the woman performer a

collection of more or less desirable features in a similar way to the example of king-

as-king discussed in Chapter 2. The pervasiveness of this social fetishism is

indicated by the fact that they are employed to 'be' women, as men performers are

employed to 'be' men, but for men the range of ways and types of being are

systemically broader, more complex and better rewarded in terms of pay, access to

work and career longevity. If we *believe* that youth and particular configurations of

bone structure are more desirable, they *are* more desirable – the queen-as-queen. If

we *believe* that women interfere with the narrative in certain roles (seen in Chapter

5) or are only acceptable in certain roles filled by particular types of women, then

this is so. Therefore idea of the commodity as informed by patriarchal ideologies is

central to an understanding of key aspects of industrial relations for women

performers. It is only ideas that make possible the assignation of exchange-value to

the age and shape of woman. It is only saleable because of the thoughts and relations between men. In the performing context this is commodity fetishism, as these attributes are held to bear value and potentially surplus-value and so we see the logical confusion of social fetishism with commodity fetishism and the continued reproduction of both. The exploration of the perceptions of the participants in the performing labour process contributes to an understanding of the circular and interconnected relationship between the putative inside and outside of these processes and to the role of practice as social structure.

It is here that the limitation of nuance by the focus of this study, discussed above, is of value. It makes the complex and disguised usefully one-dimensional and visible. Women performers illustrate most effectively a Marxist definition of the commodity as well as the gender regimes of the society that produces the commodity: they reify the economic and social order.

In employment terms, this has resulted in differentiated patterns of work. [ ] (A), talking about the role of the agent in steering clients to make strategic choices of role, said of acting as a career, "this is a marathon, not a sprint." It seems that, with regard to regular access to work and income, for a woman it is more likely to be a sprint. This was widely acknowledged by interviewees and was put particularly bluntly by the leading performer [ ]. She was talking about her daughters becoming actors and I asked if she would have different expectations if one of them were male:

> I think it would be easier for them. I would be much happier for them. I
> don't like girls going into the business. Because your career is, it's very

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difficult to keep working as long as I have. You know, as you get older the
parts are thinner on the ground there's absolutely no doubt about that.

The relevance of structure as cyclical practice is key here. Eagleton (2003) notes
that culture is the grammar that frames feminism's political demands: 'Ways of
feeling and forms of representation are in the long run quite as crucial as childcare
provision or equal pay. They are a vital part of political emancipation.' (2003: 47).
Eagleton distinguishes feminist and traditional class politics in this sense, arguing
that cultural activity has not been central to the struggle for better pay and conditions
in the same way that 'a struggle over sexist imagery is integral to feminism.' (*ibid.*).
In his broad analysis Eagleton is correct. However in this occupational context we
see that cultural activity, struggles over hegemonic meanings, have direct
connections with pay and conditions and are fused in the class, race and gender
interests of women performers as workers.

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