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Introduction

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted inequalities in the television industry, due not least to gendered insecurities in employment (Creative Skillset, 2020). The nature of work and employment in film and TV has for many years been shown to disadvantage women's careers in comparison with men's (Creative Skillset, 2010; Dent, 2017, 2020; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, 2015; Percival, 2020). In the UK, a series of reports and studies have drawn attention to imbalances in workforce composition in terms of gender, race and ethnicity, and class (Creative Diversity Network, 2018; Creative Skillset, 2016; Follows et al, 2016; House of Lords, 2015; Ofcom, 2019a, b; SkillSet, 2019). These intertwined inequalities are fundamental to the employment model of the industry, with women, people of colour, and people from working-class backgrounds telling similar experiences of structural disadvantage and marginalization (Brook et al, 2018).

The sector is seen as exhibiting 'unmanageable inequalities' (Jones and Pringle, 2015) in that equal opportunities initiatives have failed to make headway against a prevalent culture of individualism (Genders, 2019; Holgate and McKay, 2009). Although the sector is relatively highly regulated in terms of outputs (Coles and MacNeill, 2017), government appears powerless to regulate internal processes such as employment practices, due to the stronger impact of cost-cutting pressures (McElroy and Noonan, 2019). At the heart of this structural regime of inequality are two interrelated sectoral characteristics: informality in employment status, and homophily in recruitment (Block, 2020; Lee, 2011; Leung et al, 2015; Randle et al, 2014).

Emplement insecurity was exacerbated by Covid-19 but existed before it (Comunian and England, 2020). Freelancing is disproportionately common among women working in the

sector (Genders, 2019), as well as among people of colour (Thanki and Jefferys, 2007). Even in times of workforce growth, employment insecurity has been identified as a significant reason for women leaving the industry (Percival, 2020) and helps to explain gender pay gaps, as the industry increasingly relies on under-payment or even non-payment of those workers with the least labour market leverage (Brook et al, 2018; Genders, 2019). During the 2008 recession, women lost jobs in the industry at six times the rate of men (Leung et al, 2015) and a similar pattern was evident in 2020. The organization Women in Film and TV found in surveying its members that only 16% of payroll contractors (a model used extensively by the BBC) were furloughed by their employer during the 2020 lockdown, whilst less than a third of freelancers and self-employed contractors were able to claim similar government support (WFTV, 2020).

We show in this article that inequalities in employment status and remuneration are rooted in working practices which significantly disadvantage women as women (see Genders, 2019), partly due to gendered assumptions about jobs and careers, and partly due to family-unfriendly working patterns in a context where women are still predominantly primary care-givers (and assumed to be so). Using the concept of inequality regimes, we set out to investigate whether change has taken place as a result of industry initiatives to make the workforce and leadership more diverse and inclusive. We argue that inequalities have become more visible and less 'unspeakable' (Gill, 2014) but that the industry remains characterized by under-representation, under-promotion and under-rewarding of women and people of colour, despite increased female presence in senior roles (ScreenSkills, 2019). Due to the unprecedented scale of Covid-19's impact on television industry, however, we conclude by arguing that it presents an opportunity to rethink organizational practices and 'build back better' (see Prime Minister's Office, 2021), based on the experiences of our respondents, and using examples of family-friendly organizational models within the sector.

Theory and methodology

Joan Acker's influential work on gendered organizations has been used to uncover gendered patterns of disadvantage in a variety of work settings. In 1990 she set out six components of the gender substructure which perpetuates intersectional inequalities (Acker, 1990): organizing processes (including job design and contractual as well as informal rules), organizational culture (with its gendered assumptions about roles and capabilities), job interactions (power relations), gender subtext (hidden assumptions about value), gendered identities (styles and the gendered values attributed to them) and organizational logic (see also Acker, 2006a; Sayce, 2018). Acker, and scholars who have applied some or, more rarely, all components of the analysis to empirical research, emphasize the interaction between processes, practices, and value-laden discourse, imagery and assumptions.

Acker's work drew attention to the work organization as the site where inequalities are produced and reproduced. However just as the parameters of inequality regimes ('loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations': Acker, 2006a: 443) can differ within branches of the same organization (Acker, 2006b), they are also located within wider processes and structures. The television industry, and cultural and broadcast industries more broadly, have been found to exhibit common features which together constitute a sectoral regime of inequality (Coles and MacNeill, 2017). Based on their interviews with students seeking work placements in the arts and cultural industry in London, Tatli and Özbilgin

(2012) argued that the industry constitutes a unique regime of inequality where people of colour and those from a working-class background are at a particular disadvantage.

Acker's work highlighted the importance of formal and informal organizational rules about working time which legitimize gender disadvantage. Changes in capitalist organization of paid employment have increased time pressures, strengthening the norm of the unencumbered male worker (Acker, 2006a: 458), whilst new technologies exacerbate cultures of presenteeism, making it more difficult for those in weaker labour market positions to set time boundaries (Acker, 2006a: 459). Similarly, work-life balance initiatives can foster helpful changes such as flexible working and home-working, but may leave organizational culture unchallenged and marginalize the women who use them (Kelly et al, 2010). The introduction of supportive policies will therefore not have transformative impact without wider changes in organizational culture. Change is likely to be slow, piecemeal and contested due to the embedded structural nature of inequalities, and it is only possible when inequality becomes visible and therefore delegitimized (Acker, 2006a).

We set out to investigate women's experiences of working in British TV production, through a focus group, a survey and interviews, in order to capture data from as many women as possible within a relatively discrete group occupied in TV production, and in a variety of different organizational types within that occupational and sectoral setting, at various career stages. First, a focus group of senior women working in (mostly TV) broadcasting production was conducted in Manchester in October 2017 (Table 1); all but one (older) were in the age band 40-49. Two were executive producers (one BBC, one independent), one a freelance executive producer, two were series producers (one in radio, having previously worked in TV). All had two children; one woman also had elder care responsibilities. All had changed job after giving birth, either to work part-time or to freelance, or in one case to move into radio.

Organizing codes generated from focus group transcription were used to structure an online questionnaire survey which was distributed via two professional membership networks (Women in Film and TV and the Asian Media Awards Network), in August 2019 and January 2020 respectively, receiving 49 responses in total. Respondents were women working in TV production, with a wide range of roles and career stages represented. 88% were educated to at least degree level, with 40% having a postgraduate qualification. Average tenure in the industry was 12.8 years, and the mean age of respondents was 39.5 years, with the youngest respondent aged 22 and the oldest 60.

The third phase consisted of interviews, conducted between 2018 and 2020 with five women recruited initially via survey (Table 1). The interviews followed a loose narrative-biographical pattern, with prompts supplied from a checklist derived from the organizing codes from the survey responses.

Together the focus group, survey and interviews captured experiences from women at all stages of their career. Findings are presented below in two sections: first, they are discussed within Acker's framework for analysis of gender regimes, building also on existing research for the industry more widely; second, the question of agency and possibility of change is discussed through the lens of our respondents views. Given the method adopted in our study, and in common with many other scholars using Acker's framework, we focus on organizational processes and cultures, as we are unable to observe directly workplace interactions but rely on women's accounts of these. We also pay attention to organizational logic (see Dye and Mills, 2012) which we argue constitutes a useful way of distinguishing different inequality regimes within the broader gendered substructure of the TV industry.

- Table 1 about here -

TV production as inequality regimes

Organizational processes: employer-driven flexibility and the ideal (male) worker

Organizational processes within TV production are overwhelmingly characterized by informality and contractual insecurity (Conor et al, 2015) which exacerbates inequalities, restricts job opportunities, and makes equal opportunities policies ineffective in practice (Holgate and McKay, 2009). 63.8% of our respondents defined themselves as employed, and 36.2% as self-employed, but the widespread use of freelancing meant that respondents found it difficult to self-identify as employed or self-employed. Company size did not by itself indicate stability of employment; rather instability and multiple forms of employment characterized the situation of most respondents, including those who self-defined as employed.

Freelancing was associated by our respondents with an absence of parental rights, lack of time autonomy, and lack of training, development and promotion opportunities. According to Mia (Assistant Producer, 20-29), even when working for one of the big five production houses on payroll, the discontinuous nature of project work meant that 'I feel like I'm floating in the ether, I'm so unattached. No-one really bothers about you'.

> There is no investment, there's no need to invest, because you're not theirs. They'll just get someone else… I just felt that way with productions that are taxing, they just get a new person, that's not fried by it. You know, they just use people up (Jenna, 30-39, freelance shooter-producer).

In some cases freelancing had been chosen as a deliberate strategy to achieve better pay or conditions, but often it was simply seen as a natural consequence of employment in the sector: 'I've only ever been freelance, which is not a choice. I'd definitely rather have a stable, secure job' (Jenna).

Organizational processes, in Acker's framework, produce and reproduce vertical and horizontal segregation. Technical roles continue to be male-dominated not just quantitatively ('Female camera operators, unusual. With children, doubly unusual': Annette) but in the gendered role assumptions which inform everyday interactions. Respondents referred to the 'lack of opportunity for women -especially female crew members in a technical role' (Camera Operator, 30-39) and the 'attitude among male colleagues about women being camera ops, sound recordists, and so on' (Assistant Producer, 30-39): 'I've actually been asked in interviews, by men who are looking at me sideways, are you sure you can hold the camera all day? I don't think they'd ask a man that' (Jenna). Female-dominated departments were said to be 'treated like it's not as important as the technical departments and if mistakes happen it's always treated like a much bigger deal if we make one' (Costume Supervisor, 40-49).

> It's very clear that there needs to be an uptick of obvious and easily accessible training opportunities for people less represented in the post-production community. Especially on the more technical side of things. The number of times I've walked in to fix something and have been given an order for tea are uncountable and I doubt my male colleagues receive the same treatment (Editor, 30-39).

Our interviewees highlighted how complex segregation patterns led to under-representation of women in senior roles, and in turn to pay inequality. Whereas our focus group participants had made their way through to senior producer roles, our interviewees

stated that bifurcation of roles now took place after Assistant Producer level, with women oriented towards development roles associated with legal and financial responsibilities, which can be carried out relatively flexibly (and often on a freelance basis), and men taking the more prestigious and highly paid creative and director routes: 'There are definitely male and female roles in telly [….] 90% of Directors I've worked with are men' (Assistant Producer, <30).

Production management was identified as a largely female role:

'I know of three production managers who are men, the rest are women' (Karen, production manager, 50-59). Whilst Karen identified this gendered role-typing as chosen to some extent by women because of ability to manage budgets and complex scheduling, she argued that it constituted an unspoken norm within the industry.

Lack of opportunities for training and development, linked to occupational segregation, was seen as particularly difficult for women working part-time and older women, but regarded as endemic:

> [I] have worked for companies where male directors unofficially mentor an up and coming male researcher or Assistant Producer giving them opportunities to shoot, but as this is not a scheme as such, to date this hasn't happened with any females, who are often directed toward office work and logistics. Likewise females on the office doing editorial roles aren't mentored by Series Producers or Edit Producers on the job, so makes that leap from mid level to senior much trickier. [There's a] lack of training across the board regardless of gender (Producer, 30-39).

Respondents linked lack of development opportunities to homophilic promotion practices and gendered assumptions about career pathways. Vertical segregation thus reinforces occupational segregation: 'I find that senior in-house edit roles tend to go to men, so any in-

house roles that are available to women are at much more junior rates' (Freelance Editor, 30-39).

> If I look at the women at our media department, the women were there. It was also men who rose to the top, it was the men who were the series producers and the rest of it, and the women who were working as the assistant producers but producing shows. There was a lot of chauvinism in the top tier of management. They were men and appointed their own (Carole).

A combination of male-dominated management and job insecurity in some cases allowed egregious forms of discrimination and harassment to occur (see Hennekam and Bennett, 2017). In one case (role not attributed for added anonymity protection) an interviewee had been the victim of 'inappropriate touching' by a male manager and was worried about having to travel on shoots with this man. This woman did not contemplate complaint, not because such incidents were accepted as part of the job, but for fear of victimization in a context where 'every job is your next reference'.

As well as actively hampering attempts to introduce more diversity into the industry through recruitment, homophily (see Grugula and Stoyanova, 2012) encouraged an atmosphere where casual, everyday racism could be seen in casting decisions and job opportunities, promotions opportunities and denigration of individual contributions. Structural patterns of advantage and disadvantage related to education and class were cited as areas of primary concern by our focus group, survey and interview participants. All interviewees and focus group participants expressed feelings of 'not fitting' into the orthodox route into jobs: 'A lot of it is very informal. If you don't know where to go… there's so many different levels of it. So, for entry level jobs, you need to be mobile, you need to have your

own transport, you need to have your own car to get to shoots. So already that's excluding some people, it's a big barrier' (Lois).

The big broadcasters were seen as particularly dominated by 'posh blokes' (Davina): 'I think when you're making docs, particularly at the BBC, I feel like because I didn't go to a private school there is a barrier there' (Ellie).

Even the work of talent managers makes no inroads into this closed recruitment system which is presented as based on 'luck':

> In between jobs, I have found, there isn't any recruitment… I've been to talent managers…. They've told me, if the companies don't know me already they probably won't even open my email. […] And the talent managers will tell you, 90% of jobs don't get advertised (Jenna).

Informality actively inhibited attempts to introduce greater diversity into the industry:

> There are a lot more BAME people working for post-production service companies, than freelance in production, because more jobs are advertised in post-production services. There's just so much nepotism and stuff in production (Lois).

For women of colour, respondents recognized that this resulted in a double burden increasing the chances of burnout and exit from the industry: 'I have suffered both physically and mentally due to the strain of an unrealistic workload as well as because of the prejudice I have suffered' (Picture Editor, 30-39).

Four of our survey respondents self-identified as non-white (three from a Pakistani, one from Indian background), and all referred to experiences of discrimination either directly ('I feel my opinions have been trivialized because of ethnicity but also because of my gender': Producer, 40-49) or indirectly, that is, not from colleagues but from people encountered

through the production process such as interviewees: 'I have experienced both racism and Islamophobia from colleagues. I have also been treated differently by people I've worked with because of my ethnicity. Some of these incidents have been overt and others less so' (Producer, 30-39).

In these cases, male domination of senior roles was seen as an obstacle not just for their own promotion possibilities but also the opportunity to raise concerns about the way they were treated. Respondents from a South Asian background spoke of routinely insensitive treatment by managers: 'There's not enough of an in-depth understanding of those from an ethnic minority background… often a lack of sensitivity. Managers need better education on this' (Picture Editor, 30-39).

Organizational cultures: reinforcing gendered career paths

Organizational cultures of boundaryless work, constant availability and unstinting commitment prevail within the sector (Banks and Milestone, 2011) and were reported by respondents across the sector, regardless of organizational size:

> The real problem is presenteeism in the film industry. Sometimes there are films where they try to work normal hours. But it's more like, if you're dedicated to your job, you'll stay til it's done, you'll stay til midnight or whenever. If you leave early, you're not dedicated (Lois).

> The job is all or nothing - when you have a contract it completely consumes your life and it is hard to have room for anything else. […] Productions increasingly are

understaffed and budgets are pushed to limits at the expense of the health and safety of the team (Assistant Producer, 30-39).

As the last quotation indicates, those on freelance or payroll contracts felt a particular pressure to work in a 'feast or famine' way, with little scope to plan life or make personal commitments as a result: 'That's standard for the industry, the expectation is that you will do whatever it takes to get the job done. Because you work from project to project. Everyone does it' (Karen, Production Manager, 50-59).

Not only do organizational norms of unencumbered workers dictate working hours and related practices, they create implicit, gendered value systems where presenteeism is equated with strength and non-work responsibility as weakness (Gill, 2014):

I think wanting to have work-life balance in my industry is seen as a weakness and almost an admission of not being able to cope. This needs to change. This attitude needs to be addressed and work-life balance needs to be encouraged and applauded (Picture Editor, 30-39).

As interviewee Jenna stated, 'In our industry, we internalize a lot. If you can just crack on with it, you're a good soldier'. In such conditions, women who want to succeed are driven to minimize concerns about personal safety and well-being, are unable to complain about what they feel is inappropriate behaviour by male colleagues, and run a high risk of burn-out.

Incompatibility of work and family, and problems returning to work after maternity, have been identified as the major reason for women's decisions to leave the industry (Dent, 2020; O'Brien, 2014; Percival, 2020). For those who stay in the industry, several studies have highlighted the high rate of childlessness as a career decision for men and women, but particularly for women (Antcliff, 2005; Conor et al, 2015; French, 2014; Wreyford, 2013). Only 23.4% of our survey respondents had children, and of these just over half had only one

child. Respondents who were mothers were mostly in senior producer, director and CEO roles. The two youngest interviewees both expressed concerns that they would have to sacrifice their career if they wanted to have children, and one said that she was seriously thinking of leaving the industry as a result.

Many respondents (with and without children) referred to the difficulties of combining work and family, not just because of the long working hours but also because of the weakness of supportive policies. Although fifteen of the survey respondents said they had taken a career break, only three had done so for maternity or childcare. 20.9% said they had taken some form of parental leave including maternity leave (whereas around a quarter of the sample had at least one child). Lack of access to maternity and parental leave was cited by freelancers but also staffers, many of whom had complex contractual arrangements which meant they were classed as self-employed, leading to fears about capacity to start a family: 'It worries me greatly that I've specialized in a job with zero maternity benefits/support and zero flexibility on hours. If I have children, how will it work?' (Production Designer, 30-39)

On the other hand, staffers in some cases cited support beyond statutory provision, if they had the means to support unpaid leave:

> The other thing the BBC is good at is things like service leave and a career break, and in fact they had given me unpaid leave. They gave me three months to manage the transition between primary school and secondary school with my kids. So they've been good at that. And what I've found is that I come back absolutely buzzing full of ideas (Ellie).

The women in the focus group also referred to the ability to have small amounts of temporal flexibility, around the margins, in cases of child sickness or school needs. In such cases, their flexibility was ad hoc and at the discretion of individual managers. The ability to

combine work with care needs was seen as a 'perk' rather than a right, to be distributed by managers on an individual basis. In this sense as others, little appears to have changed since the 1990s (Antcliff, 2005).

Production, with its career pathway from assistant producer up to producer, producer-director and director, was widely seen as posing specific problems for those with caring responsibilities: 'I don't think you can work in production you're a mother, or you can, but that does involve not seeing your child five or six days a week' (Lois).

Motherhood shaped career choices in various ways: women chose occupations or ways of working (for example, freelance) which they thought would enable them to combine work and care.

> I made the choice to do paid work from home. You can do that in post-production, because you can do the paperwork from home, working around the children. […] it kind of happened by accident, because someone asked if I could help on a film. I said I would do it if I could coordinate from home, so I took it on as post-production supervisor (Lois).

Respondents pointed out that unhealthy workplace norms created work-life balance problems not just for mothers, but for fathers also, and for people with elder dependents (see Berridge, 2020). Male partners working in male-dominated occupations (such as lighting, in one example cited to us) had difficulty negotiating time off to look after sick children or pick up children from school or attend school functions. Moreover, in frequent cases where male and female partners worked in television this overloaded responsibility onto the woman: 'They need to make sure men have family time, too […] We cannot share childcare until there is some effort to challenge those assumptions about who does the care' (Lois).

Gender sub-text

As well as vertical and horizontal segregation, and a strongly embedded motherhood penalty causing gendered, often discontinuous career pathways, our respondents attributed pay inequality to systematic under-valuing of women's contributions:

> Inequality in pay, I see this daily. Inequality in the way we are treated, men's word is often taken above mine even if I've already proved myself at the company. When I query anything I'm told I'm too sensitive. Men being told they are 'ambitious and should be nurtured' if they are young and successful, women being told 'what's the rush? and you are inexperienced (Development Executive/Producer, <30).

The gendered sub-text could take the form of belittling language such as 'my dear', men taking credit for women's ideas, or 'regular, everyday sexism' in the industry (Mia), whilst male domination of decision-making creates an atmosphere in which everyday sexism goes unquestioned. Some senior women in our survey said they had called out inequalities or sexist language, although they were aware that they could be singled out as troublesome for doing so: 'I know that in the past I have made far less than less experienced male members of staff and being the only female lead I felt odd bringing it up at the time' (Editor, 30-39).

As several studies have shown, such strong gender norms and sub-texts not only make it difficult to challenge inequalities, but encourage women to adopt individual coping strategies which reinforce gendered career patterns. Women 'career scramblers' (Leung et al, 2015) make sideways rather than vertical career moves, stunting their career progression and reinforcing horizontal segregation. By adapting to industry norms 'career scrambling' thus allows them to remain unchallenged (Gill, 2014): 'I have made huge career and financial

sacrifice to get the time to raise my child but my job is much less interesting and challenging than my previous role as a production manager' (Business Development Manager, 30-39); 'By the time my children arrived I'd been back in radio, went to television, back into radio, and I don't know if I would have gone back into television or not, but ten hour edit days, I just wasn't going to do them' (Carole). Such coping strategies appear understandable in the face of observed and expected negative career impacts of confrontational resistance.

Organizational logic

Where the concept of organizational logic has been used in the context of Acker's framework, it has usually been in a general sense in order to emphasize organizational drivers of inequality as opposed to individual employees' choices, style or identities (e.g. Dye and Mills, 2012). In this sense, organizational logic is shorthand for gendered processes, practices, cultures, discourses and interactions. However, in Acker's original work it was associated with structural features of specific work organizations, in particular the nature of hierarchical Tayloristic organizations which reproduced a sexual division of labour in their allocation of work roles (Acker, 1990) and pay structure (Acker, 1989, 2009). Later she suggested that hierarchy was less useful in the context of organizational structuring which took the form of delayering and less vertical structures (Sayce, 2018). In other words, organizational form and structure matter, and restructuring could at least in theory lead to changes in the gender substructure. Based on our research findings we argue that integrating organizational structures into the discussion could be useful as a way of exploring differences

between organizations within a sectoral inequality regime, especially in the context of debates about structural changes within the TV industry.

The BBC's structure and culture have been analysed due to high-profile, successful equal pay cases. In 2018 the House of Lords' Digital, Media, Culture and Sport Committee recommended greater transparency through publication of pay in pay bands, as well as the publication of its high earners' list (House of Lords, 2018). In 2019, the Committee criticized the BBC for omitting large numbers of employees paid through personal services companies (obligatory self-employment, as Carrie Gracie's case disclosed publicly) and thereby failing to publish pay data in full, under the pretext that BBC Studios is a commercial company and should not be obliged to disclose more than independents. On the contrary, the Committee maintained that the BBC as a publicly funded body was fully obliged to obey transparency instructions from parliament (House of Lords, 2019). The Carrie Gracie case highlighted a culture of secrecy enabled by the BBC's hierarchical structure (EHRC, 2020), which persisted despite adaptation to a 'post-bureaucratic' context of marketization and organizational fragmentation (Harris and Wegg-Prosser, 2007). As Gracie (2019: 20) acknowledged, the BBC is not unusual in having 'anomalies and unexamined discrimination embedded in its pay system', but what emerged from the equal pay cases and the public scrutiny they generated showed how such discrepancies form part of a structural approach to gender inequality, including for example an informal policy to downgrade the work of older women, and the existence of an 'unspoken caste system' (Gracie, 2019: 20).

Our respondents highlighted advantages and disadvantages of working for the BBC compared to independents and self-employment. Homophily in recruitment was particularly strong at the BBC, they argued. The core-periphery model deployed by the BBC whereby staffers had effective rights such as maternity and parental leave, as well as the possibility of job-sharing, provided benefits to some employees; however, respondents emphasized the

contingency of such rights, which depended on the attitude of individual managers and directors, and the individual negotiating power of employees: 'When the flexible working directive came in I felt I had rights to work part-time at the BBC but had to work it out myself i.e. the rota for them. As a freelancer you don't have that power' (Carole).

Several women compared the situation across different organizations where they had worked, with both focus group participants and interviewees expressing the view that pay bands were narrower in independents than in the BBC's talent management system[1], and that informal flexibility was easier to achieve in small independent companies than the big corporations, although they also saw advantages in the latter, in terms of larger teams and office environments with more resources: 'In the indies, there is sometimes flexibility […]. So if you've got a sick child, […] there is the flexibility there. Probably at production manager and above, that is a bit easier' (Karen).

In the Covid-19 context, Ingrid reported that the small independent company where she worked had used furlough flexibly to make sure that employees with small children were able to take it; in her case, with one older child, she had been able to have periods of both furlough and working from home:

> It's easier to organize work flexibly in the indies, and vice versa there are some advantages to the security the BBC can (sometimes) provide. The BBC has this huge bureaucracy, it's an old model, but in some respects the infrastructure is foolproof. [The independents] are just a lot more fluid in the ways they're working.

Our survey took place around the time the BBC conducted its own report into women's experience of working there (BBC, 2018). Whilst the BBC's report acknowledged feedback from female employees about an unresponsive environment for those with caring responsibilities, our survey findings suggest that the BBC's response was limited in two main

ways: first, it framed the solution around support for individual women's progression, such as mentoring, rather than questioning the link between the family-unfriendly environment and wider workplace cultures and practices; and second, it focused on enhanced parental benefits for employees with stable employment contracts, without considering why so many employees with caring responsibilities are excluded from such benefits due to the nature of their employment status.

Change and agency

Acker (2009) acknowledged that inequality regimes are fluid and subject to change, reflecting wider societal norms as well as internal organizational structures and practices. In her work on Swedish banks Acker argued that organizational restructuring could lead to more favourable outcomes for women, although she expressed scepticism, recognizing that change was driven not by equality concerns but by capitalist search for profit (Acker, 2006a). Whilst organizational restructuring can create opportunities for more egalitarian practices, it will not necessarily do so, and may lead to further inequalities if underlying assumptions remain unchallenged (Acker, 2006a). Efforts to bring about transformation often meet resistance because 'advantage is hard to give up' (Acker, 2009: 213). Actions and events which increase the visibility of inequalities nevertheless create possibilities for disruption because they counter the taken-for-grantedness of privilege.

Our respondents highlighted two main changes they had observed during their own careers: reorganization of the production process using new editing and other technologies; and increased public pressure to diversify workforces and leadership. The former creates possibilities for agency through change in the organization of working time and the

expectations it alters, but, as Acker highlighted, such changes are likely to be implemented in ways which exacerbate existing power disparities.

The focus group participants in particular reflected on the extent to which new technologies made it possible to shorten the editing process and make it more flexible. As women who had continued in their careers whilst also caring for family they were well placed to observe change over time. They remembered when ten-hour stints in editing suite were the norm, and argued that shorter hours resulted from a combination of changed expectations and fixed budgeted hours for editors: 'if an edit goes past 9pm, we think it's a bit unfair. The cut-off now is 6pm. It used to be much later' (Davina).

Like survey respondents, however, they argued that technological change had created new difficulties, making work boundaryless and home life 'on-call'. Managers determined the extent to which technologies made life easier or more challenging, within the existing organizational logic: 'We make jobs fit five days, because that's the convention we all work by. But there are actually lots of jobs that maybe you could do them in four, maybe you could do them in six' (Davina).

> It just takes scheduling, all you need is scheduling. Not overseas obviously. So say you could be at the BBC and work in kids' TV for a while, in kids telly say, for a year, as a part-time B camera, or DB director. In a bigger company, the BBC, they could do this. You could shift women around to less demanding roles, but they're still keeping their hand in, they're keeping their relationships and contacts (Jenna).

Although critical of diversity initiatives which they felt did not address working practices within the industry ('They have no idea how people make their careers. You have to jump through all these hoops': Lois), respondents suggested that signs of slow change were apparent as more women made their way to senior positions: 'Representation in senior roles –

[…] I understand this can take some time to change. I think at the moment we're going through a slow transition which will take a bit of time to rectify' (Online Editor, 30-39).

Female representation in television management is increasing, albeit slowly: from 41% to 42% between 2018 and 2019, in the context of a 45% female workforce (Ofcom, 2019). Participants recognized that having a female manager did not necessarily mean a more woman-friendly working environment, due to competing pressures, but many cited work experiences where female managers had helped them. The growth of the independent sector, as noted above, is seen as having mixed outcomes for the working environment (Genders, 2019; McElroy and Noonan, 2019). For our respondents the diversification of organizational forms meant more opportunities for female management of production and for different ways of organizing work:

> Women setting up independent companies are able to support other women. So on one of the films we're working on at the moment, the ethos of the film itself is about strong women, and it's a predominantly female team headed by a woman (Ingrid).

Some respondents argued that public pressure for workforce diversity had led to greater, although insufficient, transparency in recruitment:

> Jobs generally aren't advertised, although it's getting better, jobs are advertised a lot better now than they used to be, because the industry's had a good shaking up, it needs to get its act together on diversity. A lot of jobs are advertised on social media. But again you have to be in the loop. It's so hard for newcomers (Karen).

Gender pay gap reporting has increased the visibility of pay inequalities in the larger companies, alongside equal pay cases at the BBC (Genders, 2019; see also Ofcom, 2019b). Following the BBC pay cases, Channel Four received adverse publicity when its gender pay gap was found to be three times that of the BBC. In response, the new female chief executive

pledged to increase the appointment of women to senior posts (Sherwin, 2018) and set targets for representation of women, BAME employees, those with disability, and LGBT+ employees (Channel Four, 2019). However, although it increases transparency, gender pay gap reporting will not by itself reduce inequality, and may even help to obscure the wider structural pressures which create it (Rubery, 2019).

Conclusion: time for a change

Using Acker's framework for analysing inequality regimes, this study highlighted the intertwining nature of multiple drivers of intersectional gender inequality in British TV production. It also emphasized the organizational basis for such drivers of inequality: the gendered substructure. By focusing on organizational inequality regimes, we argue that it is also possible to view the potential for agency and change. The relatively little-used concept of organizational logic is a useful way of identifying ways in which large hierarchical corporations can create the specific conditions for inequality through opaque and highly individualized practices, as well as through unspoken pay determination practices which increase managerial discretion. Collective action which supports the action of individual women has proved decisive in increasing the visibility of the organizational logic and the gendered substructure which underpins it. At the same time, such large organizations have the capacity to shift expectations about gendered time norms.

Our respondents did not see inequalities as legitimate or inevitable, but rather the product of interrelated, specific practices within the industry. We speculate that one reason for this awareness could be media reporting of gender pay gaps, particularly at the BBC, and the

impact of the #MeToo movement in the broader world of entertainment and broadcasting, following the succession of earlier reports drawing attention to inequality and lack of diversity in the sector. Skillset's 2008 report suggested that only a few older respondents mentioned outright sexism, despite evidence of historical abuse and harassment, several of our interviewees including the youngest participants spontaneously offered incidents of sexism, as well as racism, they had encountered personally or indirectly through their friendship network. This greater visibility of gender-based could, we argue, contribute to change, although as our respondents recognized that change will be slow and subject to resistance.

Regulatory initiatives could help to shore up the impetus for change and delegitimize resistance to it. The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly damaged the sector, but also provides an opportunity to rethink existing practices. Recent calls for diversity have made the case for target-setting and quotas (Ofcom, 2019a), whilst recognizing that they are a blunt instrument. The government could do more: its Covid assistance to the sector could, for example, be made conditional on meeting diversity targets, and on making conditions more secure for freelancers. It could also renew consideration of how best to protect freelancers through better workplace regulation (BEIS, 2018).

Finally, lockdown has forced employers to rethink work organization. Based on our survey and interviews, we argue that an opportunity has presented itself to diversify shooting, using local teams rather than always organizing expensive location shoots, and to use the benefits of remote working to rethink flexibility, so as to enable employees rather than constrain their career opportunities. Tracking the impact of the pandemic on cultural sector working practices is an important new research agenda. However, like Acker in the context of bank restructuring, we are sceptical that change will happen without a combination of regulatory pressure and organizational willingness to adapt.

Notes

[1] Samira Ahmed's successful equal pay case against the BBC in 2018-2020 revealed the corporation's policy on talent, which remained focused on its top-level presenters despite criticism from a series of commissioned reviews from 2008. Following the release of internal documents on talent policy, the BBC was criticized by government ministers for its inconsistent and insufficiently transparent approach relying heavily on management discretion. See the tribunal judgement at https://www.gov.uk/employment-tribunal-decisions/samira-ahmed-v-bbc-2206858-2018.

Table 1: Focus group participants and interviewees

Pseudonym	Occupation	Age band
Focus group		
Ellie	Executive producer	40-49
Davina	Executive producer	40-49
Carole	Producer (radio; previous TV experience)	50-59
Beth	Freelance executive producer	40-49
Annette	Series producer	40-49
Interviews		
Mia	Assistant producer	20-29
Lois	Post-production coordinator	40-49
Karen	Production manager	40-49
Jenna	Freelance shooter-producer	30-39
Ingrid	Production manager	40-49

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