

CREATIVE DIFFERENCES

THE PERFORMATIVITY OF GENDER IN THE

DIGITAL MEDIA SECTOR

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

Sarah Belle Proctor-Thomson, November 2009

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The digital media sector is a site for competing claims about women's equality in employment. On the one hand, commentators have claimed that the digital media sector is exemplary as an open and egalitarian domain for all workers, including women. On the other hand, feminist researchers have identified persistent inequalities in the quality and quantity of women's participation in this sector. I use this apparent paradox as a starting point to develop an analysis of the performativity of gender in the digital media sector in the North West of England, during the period 2001–2007.

Previous feminist research has addressed this paradox by arguing that gender inequalities in the creative and digital industries are obscured by emancipatory accounts of new forms of work. I take an alternative route. Drawing on the work of Judith Butler, I investigate how positive articulations of work in the digital media sector might 'perform' gender inequalities. The theory of gender performativity employed in this study views gender as produced through repetitive discursive practices.

In this study I analyse qualitative data from four sites in the 'discursive field' of the digital media sector. These data consist of: 1) statements in policy documentation from UK government agencies; 2) textual and visual representations of workers in careers and recruitment literature; 3) field notes from a participant observation of a digital industries training event; and 4) interviews with 23 female and male industry brokers and practitioners working in and around the digital media sector. I distinguish four apparently progressive articulations of work and women's participation in these sites. These address changing skills requirements, shifting images of work and workers, and increased recognition and valuing of 'difference' and 'diversity' for creativity in the digital industries. I denaturalise these pervasive articulations by showing the discursive practices involved in their formation.

I argue that there are shifts away from the sector's previous characterisation as an exclusively technical, 'geeky' and male domain and that there has recently been a proliferation of possible worker subject positions in this work domain. Moreover, in a context of increasing attention to creativity, women are identified as 'different' and thus as potentially valuable creative workers. Yet, despite these shifts, women workers continue to be marginalised through repeated differentiation from some of the most valued subject positions in the sector. While women are seen to bring 'difference' and 'diversity' into the digital media sector, they also bring gender. Differences attributed to women are consistently devalued and are seldom recognised as 'creative differences'.

My thesis contributes an analysis of gender to debates about work in the creative economy. It also contributes to the development of feminist investigations of gender, work and organisation by providing a case study of the discursive construction of ideal and normalised workers in the creative work domain of the digital media sector.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Affirmative Action
BD4D	By Designers for Designers
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CEP	Creative Economy Programme
CIDS	Creative Industries Development Service
CITF	Creative Industries Task Force
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DFES	Department for Education and Skills
DTI	Department for Trade and Industry
EO	Equal Opportunities
GACD	Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IGDA	International Games Development Association
IT	Information Technology
ITEC	Information Technology, Electronics and Communication
MITER	Manchester Institute of Telematics and Employment Research
MTNW	Media Training North West
NESTA	National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts
NW	North West of England
NWDA	North West Development Agency
NWUA	North West Universities Association
RDA	Regional Development Agencies
RIU	Regional Intelligence Unit
SME	Small-to-Medium sized Enterprise
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America
WEVH	Women's Electronic Village Hall
WiC	Women in Computing
WiNWIT	Women in North West IT
WISE	Women in Science and Engineering

CHAPTER 1

GENDER IN/EQUALITIES IN A CREATIVE ECONOMY

There is a paradox regarding women's participation in the digital industries in Britain. On the one hand, public policy documents and commentary in popular media claim that recent economic trends have created new opportunities in the digital industries for a diverse group of workers, including women (e.g. DTI, 2005a, b; Leadbeater, 1999b, c). In particular, changing skills requirements, new images of the digital industries and their workers, and increased recognition and valuing of different kinds of workers in these industries have been reported by policy makers and commentators, and are seen as offering an increasingly open and attractive work domain for women workers. On the other hand, academic research shows that women's participation rates in the digital industries remain low and may even be declining (Panteli, Stack, & Ramsey, 2001). This pattern is particularly stark in technical and creative roles in work domains such as the digital media sector. Thus, arguments that there is increasing scope for greater gender equality in the digital industries are in tension with persistent patterns of inequalities. The research undertaken for this thesis is motivated by a feminist and therefore political desire to explore this apparent paradox, and by so doing try to contribute to the transformation of women's lives in this sector.

This chapter outlines the main elements of my research project and situates it in relation to the contextual drivers which motivated its inception. Feminist theorist Moya Lloyd (2007) has argued that ‘one of the primary aims of feminist scholarship [is] to contest the male-stream definitions of woman circulating in culture and society’ (p. 4). To this end, my research interrogates the ways in which workers and work are constructed in qualitative data drawn from four sites in the discursive field of the digital media sector. First, I analyse policy documentation published by a number of UK government agencies including: the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and the North West Development Agency (NWDA). Second, I analyse textual and visual representations of digital media workers published in industry careers and recruitment literature between 2003 and 2005. Third, I analyse materials derived from a participant observation in a digital industries training event in Liverpool in 2004. Finally, I analyse transcripts from interviews with 23 female and male industry brokers and practitioners who worked in and around the digital and creative industries in the North West of England (also referred to below as the ‘North West’ or NW) during the period of my research.

I have employed a discourse analytic approach through which I view discourses as pervasive ways of constituting knowledge produced through social practices, subjectivity and power relations (Weedon, 1987). I consider discourses to be constitutive of reality, that is, of subjectivities, social practices and power. However, rather than seeking to identify pervasive discourses, I set out to identify patterns of discursive practices which constitute four types of articulation set within the broader discourses of the digital media sector. I use the term ‘discursive practice’ to designate localised patterns of speech, statements in written texts and visual representations in published materials relating to the digital media sector (I explain my approach further below and in Chapter 2). I employ the term ‘articulation’ to denote a type of account or a way of speaking about some aspect of women’s participation in the

digital industries. I found it useful to develop my analysis around broad articulations because doing so helped me to link my insights directly to my original interest in the apparent paradox between rhetoric and reality in this sector (I discuss my method of working with articulations and discursive practices further in Chapter 4).¹

Michel Foucault (1969) used the term ‘discursive field’ in analysing the relationship between language, social institutions, subjectivity and power. He suggested that areas like law or medicine are fields which contain a number of competing and contradictory discourses. Adapting this use, I view the articulations and constituent discursive practices which I analyse as operating across multiple sites in the discursive field of the digital media sector. Specifically, I develop a feminist poststructuralist approach based on Judith Butler’s theory of the performativity of gender (Butler, 1988, 1990, 1993, 2000, 2004). I explore how gender is performed through discursive practices within and across the chosen sites and articulations and I consider the resulting implications for in/equalities between men and women workers.

My exploration of the performativity of gender in the digital media sector constitutes an interdisciplinary project which draws from organisational and management studies, sociology, and feminist and critical theory. This reflects my own research background in these disciplines, and the ‘inter-operational’ and interdisciplinary nature of the organisation and management of the creative industries, of which the digital media sector is a part (Jeffcut & Pratt, 2002). As with the creative industries more broadly, the relatively new work domain of digital media production is multi-layered and fragmented; it operates across a range of economic spheres and employs the professional capabilities of a variety of workers. As a specified area of policy development, this sector also has an array of stakeholders. These characteristics of the digital media sector raise issues that must be considered

¹ My use of ‘articulation’ here is not meant to link in a specific way to its use as a specialised analytic construct in ‘articulation theory’ (e.g. Hall, 1996a, b; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

in an interdisciplinary way, paying due attention to the networks of individuals, organisations and institutional structures involved. My aim is to contribute to the growing interdisciplinary field of research about work in the creative economy and creative industries in the United Kingdom (UK), and also to feminist studies of gender, organisation and work.

In the next section I begin by discussing the factors which have come together to shape this research project. First, I provide a preliminary discussion of gender in/equalities in digital media work in the UK. I look at both the positive potential for greater equality in the digital media sector, and the persistent patterns of inequalities between men and women workers in this work domain. Second, I locate my research with reference to recent political interest in the creative economy as a key tool in economic regeneration in the UK. The economic context of my research is significant because it frames the ways in which men and women workers are recognised and valued in this sector. I argue that, as part of an analysis of gender in the digital media sector, it is important to explore the kinds of workers that are required in this field and how workers are attracted and attributed value. In discussing the economic context of this research, I present the region of the North West of England as a useful research location. The third converging issue I discuss is the 'dual agenda' in public policy of recent UK Labour governments which links creative economies with the social inclusion of previously marginalised groups in the labour market (Oakley, 2006). Such a dual agenda pairs notions of creative work with ideas of workforce diversity and I argue that in the male-dominated digital media sector, this association is likely to have specific implications for women workers. I describe how these evolving and shifting issues converge within my research. I then briefly introduce the theoretical framework employed in this research, before outlining the thesis structure.

The formation of a research project: Converging issues

Long before I considered undertaking this doctoral project I became concerned about the ongoing gendering of the working lives of young men and women. My understanding of the persistence of gender inequality developed over time. Access to education, anti-discrimination legislation and shifting social mores had meant that my life and the lives of many other young women of my generation in New Zealand were characterised by opportunities never available to our mothers and grandmothers. Nevertheless, as I moved from school to university and then to employment, I became aware that there continued to be inequalities between men and women in the workplace. I began to pay attention to gender as a divisive concept (de Beauvoir, 1949), one which was implicated in inequalities in employment (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). My reflections on these processes developed slowly as I lived, studied and worked in New Zealand. However, through reading international academic literature it became apparent that patterns of gender in/equalities similar to those I had observed and experienced in New Zealand were discernable in many countries, particularly in Euro-American contexts.²

Given these concerns, as a student and researcher I turned my attention to spheres of work which had gained prominence towards the end of the 20th century. In the UK, the creative industry of digital media production is a relatively new employment domain which contrasts with older industrial bases such as agriculture and manufacturing, as well as with the traditional professional sectors such as law, medicine, and education. I anticipated that the digital media sector might be less subject to patterns of inequality because this emerging domain was possibly not

² I use the term 'Euro-American' in this thesis in preference to 'Western' because it designates more specifically the nation states to which I am referring including Britain, the United States, Canada, and western and central Europe. My preference for this term relates to my rejection of the geographical term 'Western' which assumes an origin point of Europe. However, I acknowledge that this term does not reflect the continuities that can often be found between developments in countries in this group and patterns in New Zealand and Australia.

encumbered by long histories of gender hierarchy. I also anticipated that it might involve new ways of working (Beck, 2000). I set off to pursue research on this work domain as a doctoral student at Lancaster University. As I began my investigation, three issues relating to the digital media sector seemed to converge in tension, and these raised questions for me about the gendering of new work domains. I introduce and explore each of the issues in the next section.

In/equalities in new forms of work

The first and central issue guiding this research is the apparent paradox between recent predictions of enhanced equalities, and identified persistent inequalities between men and women in new employment domains. A number of theorists who have investigated recent shifts in Euro-American economies have argued that gender has ceased to be a significant structuring factor in work and employment (Beck, 2000), and that there have been increasing opportunities for women workers (Castells, 1997). They have contended that new technologies have made significant impacts on domestic labour, health and reproduction, as well as having transformed the organisation of paid and unpaid labour.

It is indeed the case that, since the 1970s, many structural barriers to education, recruitment and promotion for women have been removed through equal opportunity legislation. In addition, male-dominated industries, including heavy manufacturing, mining and agriculture have declined in Britain (Agar, Green, & Harvey, 2002), while industries with greater participation of women including service work, hospitality, health and communication industries have experienced rapid growth (Castells, 1997; Warhurst & Nickson, 2001). By the early years of the 21st century, women's participation in the paid workforce had grown to between 40-45 per cent in a number of countries, including Britain, the United States of America (USA), Canada and Taiwan (Millar & Jagger, 2001). Moreover, there had been notable examples of women gaining the highest positions in various social, political and economic spheres (Adler, 1997).

In addition to these trends, new industries based on digital technologies have emerged affording new forms and organisation of employment. Work practices such as working from home, working across geographically distant locations and working outside of the traditional nine-to-five day have the potential to increase the accessibility of employment in the digital industries for workers with varied life-styles and backgrounds.

The broad field of digital industries have previously been referred to under a range of labels including information technology (IT), information and communication technology (ICT), information technology, electronics and communication (ITEC). In this thesis I use the phrase 'digital industries' to refer to the field of digital technology work of which the main sector considered in this thesis, the digital media sector, is a part. I take a wide view of the digital media sector based on work by Stuart Cunningham (2002), a prominent Australian theorist of the creative industries. He has created a taxonomy of industries producing digital content, ranging from: feature film production, animation, new media communications, online broadcasting, publishing, games, advertising, branding, audio/music, visual arts, but also including domains such as health and education, information services, newspaper, pay television, performing arts and architectural/other computer-aided design activities (Cunningham, 2002: 65). The range of areas that can be considered to be part of the digital media sector has led to a multiplication of taxonomic categories pertaining to this sector (Cornford & Naylor, 2001). Some of the key terms which have emerged since the late 1990s include: 'multi-media', 'new media' and 'digital media'. Each of these terms encompasses a wide range of activities involving digital content production, and, in this respect, some theorists suggest that these phrases need to be treated with care (Gill, 2002; Pratt, Gill, & Spelthann, 2007). In this thesis I employ the phrase 'digital media sector'. I take this as an appropriate phrase given that my interest in this research is not in specific details about the work and organisation of the sector, but rather in the discursive practices that help to

constitute this work domain. Furthermore, I prefer the phrase 'digital media sector' to other available terminology because it describes the focus of the sector, and it avoids the question of whether the 'new media' sector is still *new* after over thirty years of sustained development.

Despite indications of greater opportunities for women workers in the UK generally, there is evidence of stark gender inequality within the digital industries. This work domain has demonstrated continuing and even intensifying inequality between men and women workers since its early development as a commercial sphere between the late 1970s and 1990s. Within the Euro-American context, concern has been raised about the dearth of women working in the digital industries (Miller, et al., 2000). Participation rates of women employed in computing and technology work average around 25 per cent (e.g. 25 per cent in Europe and 20 per cent in the USA, Ahuja, 2002; Igbaria & Chidambaram, 1997), although rates vary widely depending on the type of work being analysed (Igbaria & Chidambaram, 1997; Kouzmin, Korac-Kakabadse, & Korac-Kakabadse, 1999; Panteli, et al., 2001).

Less than a third of those working in organisations concentrating on digital content production in the UK are women. Participation rates of women range from 8 per cent in digital game production, 26 per cent in offline multi-media, to 33 per cent in web and internet media production (Skillset, 2004: 14). These patterns are even more marked when participation in creative work in the digital media sector is considered. For example, in commissioned public policy research on the digital games industry in the North West, Lizzie Haines (2004a, 2004b) found women's participation rates to be 2–3 per cent in programming, audio, and design of games. She found only two areas within game design with a significant number of women – in production (8 per cent) and art (9 per cent). Haines (2004b) reported that the vast majority of women in the games industry are working outside of the jobs of games creation and that they are mainly located in administration, client support, human resources and finance. Similar patterns have been identified in research on the

international digital media sector (IGDA, 2005; Whitehouse & Diamond, 2005). In my research I am interested in the work roles which are considered to develop and build digital media (programmers, designers etc.) because it is these roles which are generally more highly paid, which have greater status, and which have markedly lower participation rates for women.

In addition to low absolute numbers, the proportion of women participating in the digital industries has declined rather than increased since the early 1990s (Platman & Taylor, 2004). The international pattern seems to be that the participation rates of female workers within the software workforce rose until the mid 1980s and then declined (e.g. in the USA, Canada, Japan, Austria, the Netherlands) (Panteli, et al., 2001). Some research suggests that the steepest decline of female workers in the digital industries across Europe has occurred in Britain (Panteli et al., 2001: 4). However, research that develops in-depth and specific knowledge of these issues in the UK remains limited.

Concern has been expressed not only about the absence of women in the digital industries but also about the nature of the work and the patterns of rewards in this work domain. Research has shown that, even when length of time working in the industry, job level and education are taken into consideration, women earn less than their male colleagues (Dattero, Galup, & Quan, 2005; IGDA, 2005: 13; see also Panteli, et al., 2001; Ranson & Reeves, 1996; Truman & Baroudi, 1994). Moreover, it is not only as employees that women are less likely to receive the top financial rewards. Women are also less likely than men to benefit financially from owning their own computing and technology businesses (Hollowell, Mellors, & Silver, 2006).

A number of initiatives funded by governmental agencies, training organisations and industry groups have recently been undertaken to address the reasons for continuing gender imbalances within the sector (e.g. see Haines, 2004a, b; MTNW, 2005; WInwIT, 2005). I regard these publicly funded initiatives as particularly interesting because they account for the imbalances between men and women in the

digital industries, while also attempting to redress these through positive statements regarding women's participation. As yet, the effectiveness of these initiatives in promoting women's participation in the digital industries is at best unclear.

I have highlighted the production of statistics here in order to illustrate the academic and material context for this research, and to locate my research at the nexus of questions regarding the absence/presence of women digital media workers. The creation of statistical maps of women's participation in the digital industries is important in exposing patterns of inequality at all levels of these industries. The contrast between rising patterns of women's participation in the general UK workforce and low (indeed, decreasing) participation in the digital media sector suggest the need for further analysis of this employment domain. Statistics also help to highlight the 'minority status' of women within these industries. As I will show in my analysis, women's minority status and the categorisation of women as a discrete group of workers in the digital media sector, are significant elements in the performativity of gender and inequality in this work domain (see especially Chapters 7 and 8).

However, despite the utility of mapping statistics, 'counting heads' obviously does not provide a complete picture of women's participation in digital industry work. Such quantitative mapping often focuses attention on the need to fill the gender gap, without reflecting on the nature of the industries themselves (Adam, et al., 2006). For example, in relation to mapping statistics of women's participation in the digital industries, there have been questions raised about the kind of employment that is regarded as digital industry work, and how particular work undertaken by workers in this domain is valued (Eriksson-Zetterquist & Knights, 2004; Martin, 2002; Plant, 1997).

Mapping research also tends to frame the issue of women's participation in the digital industries as a 'woman problem'. Some common questions asked include: Why are more women unable to enter the field? How can women be better prepared to

work in this domain? How can women be encouraged to enter? The answers to these questions could potentially expand our understanding of women's low participation rates in the digital media sector. Alternatively, these questions may also obscure the ways in which characteristics of the sector might themselves contribute to low participation rates. Counting heads of women workers in the digital sector does not explain the processes by which low participation rates are produced, nor does it account for the ways in which men and women workers might be seen to fit (or not) within the sector (Puwar, 2004).

There is a continued need for feminist analysis which goes beyond quantitative mapping to consider how women workers are accounted for, and how gender is constructed in the digital media sector. Previous examples of such research include critical analyses of work organisation, career patterns, organisational culture and of the appeal of this employment area for women (e.g. Ahuja, 2002; Perrons, 2003; Whitehouse & Diamond, 2005). A number of critical researchers have identified a disjunction between the experiences of individuals working in the creative and digital industries and overly positive rhetoric found in public policy and popular commentary (e.g. Banks & Milestone, 2007; Gill, 2002; McRobbie, 2002a; Tams, 2002). These researchers have argued that positive rhetoric about work in the creative industries obscures, conceals and glosses over inequalities in these work domains. The paradox between rhetoric and 'reality' provides a starting point for the research undertaken in this thesis, and relevant literature addressing this issue will be explored more fully in Chapter 3.

My research does not seek to provide more evidence of a rhetoric/reality divide. Rather, I explore how rhetoric and its constitutive discursive practices regarding women workers and work in the digital media sector, is performative of the 'reality' of persistent inequalities in this work domain. I explain this approach below and in Chapter 2. At this point it is important to note that shifts in women's participation in the digital industries labour market are embedded in the broader UK economic

context. In particular, the rise of interest in the UK creative economy has positioned the digital industries as core contributors to the regeneration of the UK economy. I argue below that women's participation in the digital media sector is implicated in such accounts of economic regeneration, as is the increased focus on the individual creative worker.

The regeneration of the UK through a creative economy

The second issue that frames this research is the shift in modes of conceptualising economic activity in the UK. Since the late 1990s a great deal of attention has been given to new and creative work domains such as the digital media sector in the UK. Below I will discuss the rise of the concept of creativity in public policy discussions of economic development since 2000 and I shall highlight the ways in which these accounts position the individual worker as the key agent of economic growth in the UK. I go on to explain why the North West of England provides a useful research location which exemplifies the patterns I have identified.

References to the 'knowledge economy' have proliferated since the 1990s and in the new millennium extensive discussion of the 'creative economy' has highlighted changing patterns in the nature and organisation of work (e.g. Venturelli, 2003). An emphasis on creativity and innovation has begun to disrupt and displace a traditional focus on elements of organisational practice including operational efficiency and strategic planning (Andriopoulos, 2001; Bilton & Leary, 2002; Hesmondhalgh, 2006: 9). Since the 1990s the concept of 'creativity' has emerged in government policy and popular commentary as the *primary* source of competitive advantage. Indeed, Thomas Osborne (2003) has cynically suggested that creativity has become a moral imperative in the UK context, and UK-based researchers Chris Bilton and Ruth Leary (2002) have argued that 'creativity has become both the language and the currency of today's knowledge economy' (p. 49). This orientation is apparent in the Creative Economy Programme recently developed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (Purnell, 2005a). This programme sets out to promote investment in

the UK's capacity to innovate, develop and design marketable products, rather than in their manufacture, which has increasingly gone off-shore.

Not only has creativity come to be seen as the cornerstone of the UK economy, but the 'creative industries' have been identified as operating at 'the vanguard of social and economic transformation in the 21st century' (Fleming, 1999: 7; see also Lash & Urry, 1994; Scase & Davis, 2000). In line with this, the DCMS has recently called for 'putting the creative industries at the heart of the economy' (DCMS, 2008: 9). Throughout the 1990s there was a growing attention given in the UK to the potential contribution of the cultural and creative industries to economic growth. However, the focus on these industries intensified when the Labour government took office in 1997 (Creigh-Tyte, 2005). In that year, a new Creative Industries Task Force (CITF) was established to help promote sustained growth of the creative industries, and in 1998 the CITF presented the first *Creative Industries Mapping Document* published by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI)³ (DCMS, 1998). The mapping document of 1998 and the up-dated version published in 2001 (DCMS, 1998, 2001), are widely recognised in Britain, and globally, as having played a groundbreaking role in the construction and adoption of the concept of 'creative industries' as designating a coherent economic cluster which requires planning and development (UNESCO & GACD, 2006).

Despite burgeoning interest in the 'creative economy', the 'creative industries', 'creativity' and 'creative work', these concepts are only ever vaguely defined in UK public policy (e.g. DCMS, 2005). It is not my intention in this thesis to develop a

³ On 28 June 2007, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) were disestablished. At this time the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) was formed, taking over the science and innovation responsibilities from the DTI and the skills, further and higher education responsibilities from the DFES. The Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) was also established at this time to cover the remaining responsibilities of the DTI, as well as those of the Better Regulation Executive. In this thesis I refer to the governmental departments (particularly the DTI and the DFES) that were in place during the main period of my research.

coherent definition of such concepts because I view these as constantly shifting and socially produced ways of framing economic activity through which power is exercised. For example, there has been significant debate about the use of the phrase 'creative industries' because it has involved a shift away from a focus on traditional arts and cultural sectors (Taylor, 2006). This shift in terminology is seen by some as forcing the capitalisation of creativity and arts (for further discussion see: Burns, 1999; Garnham, 2005). Hence, I view the 'creative economy', 'creative industries' and 'creative work' as important constructs, but not faithful descriptions, of economic practice in the UK. Indeed, recent research regarding the creative industries has explored how these concepts are constructed and the implications for vulnerable workers (Banks et al., 2000; Banks & Milestone, 2007; Bill, 2009; McRobbie, 2002a).

The DCMS *Creative Industries Mapping Documents* published in 1998 and 2001 drew together a cluster of 13 industries under the banner of 'creative industries' for the first time. These sectors consisted of advertising, architecture, art and antiques markets, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, performing arts, publishing, software and computer services and television and radio (DCMS, 1998, 2001). Within this diverse cluster, the digital industries are often cited as exemplary industries which are founded on knowledge and creativity (e.g. DCMS, 1998; Leadbeater, 1999). In part, the digital industries are singled out because they are highly economically profitable in comparison with other creative industries. The sectors of software and computer services are reported as having the highest level of employment (555,000), the largest revenue of exports (£2,761 m) and the largest total revenue (£36.4 bn) of all the creative industries in the UK (DCMS, 2001: 10–12). Moreover, digitalisation is seen as the cornerstone of the creative economy in that much of the distribution of cultural and creative products is now realised through digital technologies which have developed since the late 20th century (Galloway & Dunlop, 2007).

Individual workers are regarded as the core units of economic activity in the creative economy (Banks, 2007). For example, while varied, the industries included under the banner of creative industries are all seen to derive from individual creativity. The creative industries identified by the DCMS mapping document (1998) include:

Those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property (DCMS, 1998: 3).

Notably, this framing makes individuals rather than material investment in infrastructure or business development the prime focus for wealth and job creation (Coyle, 1997; Quah, 1996) (see Pratt, 2002 for further discussion). Indeed, Charles Leadbeater (1999b), a British commentator and consultant on regional and national economic development to successive UK Labour governments, argues that Britain has moved into a new era in which the application and exploitation of individuals' knowledge, creativity and imagination will be the key economic drivers. Workers in the creative and digital industries are characterised as autonomous individuals who are able to live off their creative ideas (e.g. Leadbeater, 1999b; Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999, 2001). In such portrayals of the creative industries, the ingredients for economic success are seen to reside in the heads of individuals (Florida, 2002), whose 'main assets are their creativity, skill, ingenuity and imagination' (Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999: 11). Indeed, the use of the term 'creative' as an occupational noun for such workers is gaining wider purchase beyond its original use in the advertising industry, i.e. 'she is a creative' (e.g. Orlowski, 2006; Relph-Knight, 2008; Robinson, 2006).

The focus on individual creative workers as the key 'resources' for the economic development of UK regions and industries continues, and as I was finalising this text this approach was reinvigorated through a set of the public policy documents addressing the development of 'Digital Britain' (BIS/DCMS, 2009; e-skills/Skillset, 2009).

In light of the significant attention given to the development and commercialisation of individuals' creativity (DCMS, 2006a) issues of recruitment and the participation of various groups within the working population, including women, become important. Successful recruitment of creative individuals is seen to require drawing from a broader pool of workers than those who have previously participated in the digital industries (e.g. DTI, 2005a). In this context, my focus is to investigate how gender is performed in accounts which discuss, describe, recognise and value specific types of workers.

In seeking to promote a 'creative economy' in the UK, successive Labour governments since the late 1990s have encouraged regional development of creative industries (Cabron, 1999; Fleming, 1999b). The North West of England has led regional attempts to develop a creative economy. I have bounded my research within the North West region because it provides an excellent research location which exemplifies the increasing significance in the UK of creative work domains as part of economic regeneration.

The regional framing of my research is important. It is within regional bounds that brokering organisations supporting the industry are located, and where practitioners carry out their daily work (e.g. Graham, 1998; Pratt, 2000). Moreover, it is within the specific location of space and time, and across various political projects that public policy statements, training, careers and recruitment literature and worker accounts of women's participation in the digital industries are constructed. My research is focused within the geo-political boundaries of the regional governmental office of England's North West during the period of 2001–2007 (see Figure 1.1).⁴

⁴ The North West Development Agency (NWDA) is one of nine Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) across England which were established under the Regional Development Agencies Act of 1998 (amendment in 2000) to promote regional economic development. While accountable to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), RDAs have considerable control over their economic development strategies.

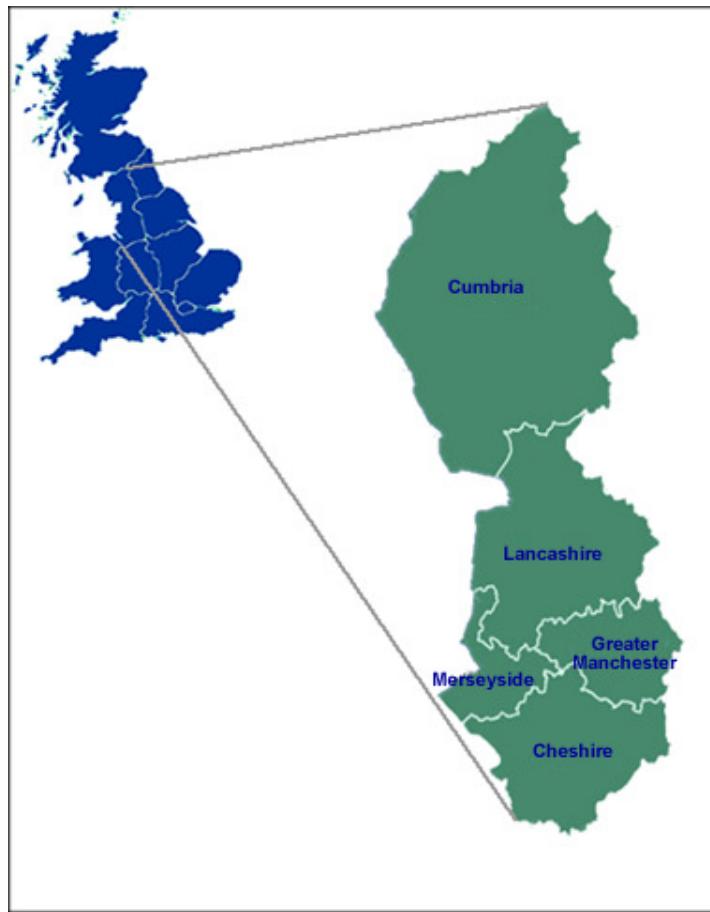


Figure 1.1. Map of the North West Region of England (Adapted map from NWDA, 2009).

With almost seven million residents, the North West of England is home to just over 13.7 per cent of the population of England and Wales. The economic region of the North West consists of 5 sub-regions: Cheshire, Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester (NWDA, 2009). The area of the North West is dominated by the urban centres of Liverpool and Manchester city and together with the centres of Blackburn, Blackpool and Preston in Central Lancashire, they account for over 90 per cent of the region's economic output (NWDA & Centre for Cities, 2006). Other economically significant centres in this region include: Lancaster, Salford and Chester (Pye Tait, 2003). During the course of my research I undertook interviews and some

participant observation in all of these sub-regions except for Cheshire, although the centres of Liverpool and Manchester were the predominant foci.

The North West region is geographically and psychologically distant from England's dominating city of London and its surrounding southern regions. The North/ South divide looms large in British popular culture and is apparent in key indicators which demonstrate the economic and social vulnerability of the North. For example, employment rates, health indicators, educational achievement and Gross Value Added (GVA) estimates in the North West all score more poorly than the England and Wales averages (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Statistical indicators of social and economic vulnerability of the North West of England (National Statistics, 2006).

Indicator	Average for Wales & England	North West average
Unemployment rate	3.4%*	3.6%
Inability to work due to illness	5.5%	7.7%
Health stated as 'not good'	9.2%	11%
Hold a degree or higher education qualification	19.8%	17.2%
Leave education with no qualification	29.1%	31.9%
Gross Value Added (GVA) †	£17,700	£15,500

*All percentages given are of the working age population in the given region.

†GVA here indicates the contribution to the economy of each individual of working age in the given region (National Statistics, 2006).

While teasing out the factors involved in regional differences is complex, a key element identified by regional developers in the North West is the decline of industry in this region during the second half of the 20th century. In the 1980s and 1990s the North West experienced a period of major restructuring and underperformance (Bryan Gray, Chairman of the NWDA cited in NWDA & Centre-for-Cities, 2006). In the context of general global recession, this area suffered significantly from the comparative decline of heavy industries such as mining, steel and ship-building within the UK economy (Cox, 2005), the importation of cheaper textiles from abroad, off-shore production relationships, state de-regulation and de-centralisation realised

by the Conservative governments led by Margaret Thatcher (NWDA & Centre-for-Cities, 2006).

In line with the UK Labour governments' agenda for developing the creative economy, the creative industries have been earmarked as promising contributors to the economic regeneration of the North West economy which was once based on manufacturing and heavy industry. As one appraisal for the development of the creative industries in the North West noted:

England's North West has a strong and thriving creative industries sector and in one of the UK regions with a long history of manufacturing-based industrialisation, the creative, knowledge economy is rapidly gaining place as a key driver for the economic prosperity of the region's future (Culture North West, 2004: 1).⁵

The NWDA has identified the creative and digital industries together as integrated business clusters which have been prioritised for strategic development NWDA (2002–2006). The digital industries are seen as central to localised economic growth in the North West (Cornford & Naylor, 2001: 2), and their development has come to be regarded as a way of counteracting the degradation of the region from the 1980s onwards (Agar, Green, & Harvey, 2002).⁶ Since the 1990s, the North West region has attempted to realise the transition from 'cotton to computers', re-defining itself as a key player in a creative economy (Agar, et al., 2002).

The North West proudly claims that it is the second biggest creative and digital industry cluster across all of Europe, second only to London (Hoshin, 2006). The North West digital cluster is estimated to encompass up to 5,000 companies (SQW, 2002) of between 64,000 and 75,000 employees and sole traders, and to contribute more than £8 billion to the economy (see Culture North West, 2004; Graver & Harrison, 2003; Hoshin, 2006; NWDA, 2002–2006). Not surprisingly, the highest

⁵ *Culture North West* is an advocacy and 'culture champion' organisation established jointly by the DCMS and the NWDA in 1999.

⁶ Agar et al. (2002) recall the extensive celebrations held in 1998 in Manchester for the 50th anniversary of Thomas Kilburn's 'Baby', the first stored-program computer. They argue that such events are important in establishing the credentials of the region and developing the region as a hub for creative digital media industries.

densities of digital companies in the North West are situated within the two largest conurbations of Greater Manchester and Merseyside (centred on Liverpool), although there are a number of companies operating out of more rural areas. For example, the 'Digital Alliance', a self-selected consortium of IT companies in Lancashire, has on its books over 80 member companies (Digital Alliance, 2004).

The North West digital industries are characterised as constituting a fragmented and fragile ecosystem which is reliant on networked relationships among and between small businesses, brokering organisations and individual practitioners (DM Watch, 2003; NWDA, 2002). The percentages of the North West digital media workforce who are freelancers range from approximately 11 per cent in electronic games (an area in which there are typically large houses of developers employed on long projects) to 45 per cent in digital special effects (Skillset, 2004: 13) and only 2 per cent of digital media organisations in the North West employ more than 100 people. Hence, the development and funding of numerous brokerage organisations for these industries has been seen as crucial to the North West. Brokerage organisations work to gather information about the sector and support businesses through trade associations. They also promote entrepreneurship, provide individual business support, and offer training in sectoral specific skills, over and above traditional approaches to large scale infrastructure development (e.g. Manchester Digital, Digital Media-U, Creative Industries Development Service (CIDS), Media Training North West, and Manchester Institute of Telematics and Employment Research (MITER)).⁷ Given the specific structural nature of the digital media sector and the theoretical approach I take which is outlined later in this chapter, I designed my research to investigate discursive practices across the network of actors and

⁷ Other industry development organisations include: Merseyside ACME, Information for Cultural Industries Support Services (ICISS), the International Centre for Digital Content (ICDC) in Liverpool, Digiplay Initiative, M62 (digital games industry network), Manchester Digital Development Agency, Northern New Media Forum, Digital Industries Northwest, Manchester Investment and Development Agency Service (MIDAS), North West Vision and Lancashire Digital Alliance.

organisations involved in the sector, including in public policy, training events, industry careers and recruitment literature and in accounts from organisational leaders and workers.

Thus far I have discussed two concurrent patterns that have been associated with the digital media sector in recent years: the persistent patterns of inequality between men and women in the digital media sector and a shifting focus on the creativity of individuals as an economic driver in the UK generally and in the North West specifically. The ways in which different workers are recognised as valuable and as possessing certain skills is an important area to examine for my analysis of how gender is performed in this sector. This relates to the final issue I consider below regarding what has been described as 'the dual agenda' in recent UK public policy in which the development of the creative economy is linked with greater social inclusion (Oakley, 2006).

The dual agenda in creative economies

As part of enhancing the productivity and growth of the creative industries, the DCMS has identified 'diversity' as a core issue (Purnell, 2005a, b).^{8,9} Increasing attention to diversity in the workforce has been described in UK government policy documents as a necessary component of creative and innovative economies. In addition, UK public policy has promoted the creative industries as important for economic regeneration and for social inclusion of otherwise marginalised populations. For example, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA)¹⁰ has identified the incorporation of social regeneration concerns in public-led initiatives to promote investment in the creative economy (NESTA, 2005).

⁸ James Purnell was Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport between 2005 and 2007, and between 2007 and 2008 he acted as the Secretary of State for this department.

⁹ Other core issues identified in the Creative Economy Programme were: skills and education, competitive intellectual property, technology, business support, infrastructure and evidence.

¹⁰ NESTA aims to support creatives and innovators through its programmes and funding but it also works to improve the climate for creativity in the UK.

British sociologist Kate Oakley (2006) has described the alignment of economic development and social inclusion policies as a ‘dual agenda’ in the UK policy:

In the UK, arguably more than other countries, the rhetoric of creative industries has been tied to political ideas about the links between economic competitiveness and social inclusion. The stated aims for creative industry development have thus been two-fold; to increase jobs and GDP, while simultaneously ameliorating social exclusion and countering long-standing patterns of uneven economic development (Oakley, 2006: 255).

During the writing up of this thesis in 2008 and 2009, a major report regarding the development of the creative economy in Britain provided additional evidence for Oakley’s (2006) contention, stating that:

Diversity enriches our society and communities. But it is also a creative and business imperative. The creative industries suffer when they cannot draw on our creative people, whatever their ethnicity, gender or location (DCMS, 2008: 22).

The dual agenda of the UK Labour governments since 1997 assumes that there is mutual benefit between industries, specific populations and individuals through the opening up of creative economic domains so all may contribute.

Public policy makers and commentators have argued that creativity is evenly distributed across the population, indeed, that ‘everyone is creative’ (DCMS, 2001b: 5). Richard Florida, an influential American theorist who has acted as a consultant for the UK Labour government, has also stated:

Since every human being has creative potential, the key role for culture is to create a society where that talent can be attracted, mobilised and unleashed. All of this turns on an expansive, open and proactively inclusive culture – one that does not discriminate, does not force people into boxes, and does allow them to be themselves and to validate their varied identities (Florida, 2005: 72).

In his analysis Florida refers particularly to the enhanced access and participation of workers in the creative economy who are from minoritised ethnicities, women in male-dominated work domains, and homosexual workers. Florida also suggests there is an important link between creative work and individual identity. While Florida’s ideas have been widely endorsed by policy makers in a number of Euro-American countries,¹¹ they have also been critiqued by academic researchers for (amongst other

¹¹ Richard Florida has participated in UK Labour government cabinet discussions (during the period Tony Blair was Prime Minister) concerning the promotion of the UK’s creative

things), their lack of attention to ideology and power relations in the creative economy (e.g. Barbrook, 2006; Prichard et al. 2006). As I will argue, how individuals identify as creative workers is an important element in the ways gender is performed and in the maintenance of inequalities between men and women (see particularly Chapter 7).

Not only is the capacity for creative work seen to be inherent in all people, but some commentators anticipate that new work practices and the flexible, mobile labour markets that are dominant in creative industries, will further weaken traditional patterns of segmentation of employment (Cornford, 2003). Phil Wood, a leading figure in the influential UK think tank, Comedia, has contended that individual creativity and drive can override the traditional access routes to employment through education and social positioning:

The creative industries are also remarkable for their permeability and ability to straddle the apparent divide between the economic and the social. They have proved to be an effective routeway for many of those excluded from the mainstream economy. Entry to them relies less upon qualification or position and more upon drive and creativity (Wood, 1999: 8).

The term 'diversity' as associated with the workforce is used to refer to multiple axes of differentiation including race, gender, class, sexuality, age and dis/ability, but it is also employed with reference to economic and educational background, work experience, religious affiliation and income. Thus, diversity can mean many things to many people. Indeed, it has been argued that the widespread proliferation of the concept of diversity within workplaces and within UK public policy documents is partially due to the flexibility of the term (Ahmed, 2007; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000).

It is risky to assume that the multiple axes of difference associated with diversity have equivalent status in a creative economy. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, feminist scholars have argued that gender inequalities are founded on the making of 'difference' between dominant and subordinated groups of people (de Beauvoir, 1949;

economy (e.g. Florida, 2005), and is cited in numerous public policy documents (e.g. DCMS, et al., 2008; Hutton, 2007) and UK academic research (e.g. Clifton, 2008; Houston, Findlay, Harrison, & Mason; 2008).

Trinh, 1987). Despite concern about social inclusion and the valorisation of diversity featuring prominently in UK policy for the creative industries, processes of exclusion within these industries have been largely unexplored (Böse, 2005). Hence, it becomes crucial to examine how and when workers are identified as 'diverse' and to investigate the processes by which such workers may be included or excluded from these industries. In the male-dominated digital industries, issues of exclusion and inclusion are strongly associated with gender in contrast to other axes of differentiation, such as class, race, age and sexuality. In this thesis I explore the ways in which workers are included and excluded through discursive practices which employ notions of creative diversity and I consider how these practices perform gender (see Chapter 8).

The notion that increasing the diversity of the workforce might drive growth within a UK creative economy appears to be a powerful and attractive proposal for those interested in promoting equality between men and women in the digital industries. Many researchers and commentators who advocate increasing the number of women workers in the digital industries have highlighted the benefits for businesses in promoting diversity in workplaces (e.g. see Panteli, Stack, & Ramsay, 1999). As Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Minister for Women between 2001-2005, stated: 'An IT industry dominated by men is only using half the available talent and creativity' (Hewitt, 2005: online source). Women are seen to be well-positioned to take up work in the previously male-dominated digital industries, and as also contributing to workforce diversity in this domain (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Haines, 2004a).

Moreover, as I have begun to show, the digital media sector is seen to be undergoing transformations which may provide opportunities for women workers. Nevertheless, the utopian image of the sector as promoting collaborative, egalitarian work practices and drawing on open labour markets has recently been questioned by critical theorists (e.g. Gill, 2002; Pratt, 2000).

I explore how conceptualisations of difference and workforce diversity emerge in initiatives for increasing the participation of women within the digital media sector (see Chapters 7 and 8). I do not focus on how racialised groups of workers are constructed in this sector. Nor do I examine how gender interacts with other social categories that are often brought into the discussion of workforce diversity, including class, dis/ability, sexual orientation or age. Most recently, interactions between such ‘multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations’ have been analysed through the frame of intersectionality (McCall, 2005: 1771). A burgeoning interest in intersectionality has built on decades of criticism regarding the assumption of the universal subject ‘woman’ in early feminist approaches (Davis, 2008). The concept of intersectionality also challenges analyses which attempt to view social relations through the lens of one category at a time (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006). Nevertheless, I agree with UK feminist sociologist Beverley Skeggs who has argued that there is a continued need to single out and identify the different ‘organising logics’ which produce categories like ‘race’, ‘class’ or ‘gender’ (Skeggs, 2006 cited in Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006). In my research I focus on the making of difference in regard to gender and do not take an intersectional perspective. I do this because inequalities between men and women workers in the digital media sector appear to persist and may even be worsening.

My research project has been shaped by my growing awareness of the three issues in employment in the digital and creative industries I have described above. Persistent patterns of inequality between men and women workers in the digital industries broadly indicate that further research is required to discern what is happening. Such patterns must be considered in relation to changes in the UK economy in which creativity and the individual worker are increasingly emphasised. This is particularly important because UK Labour government agencies have recently foregrounded a dual agenda around social and economic development through highlighting the prospects for a creative economy. In recent years public policy

development strategies for economic growth in the UK and popular commentaries have brought concepts traditionally associated with patterns of inequality (including gender, difference and diversity) into dialogue with the concept of creativity. In the digital industries this is manifest in government-funded initiatives to promote the participation of women workers. Yet, there remains little evidence of positive change for women workers in these industries. Moreover, research which critically analyses gender relations in such creative work domains is starkly lacking (McRobbie, 2002). The digital media sector specifically is a fruitful focus for an analysis of how gender and gender in/equalities are constructed in this changing economic context because it sits at the nexus of creative and technical work domains.

Theoretical framework

This thesis is a project in feminist scholarship. I seek to incorporate into my research 'ways of understanding social and cultural practices which throw light on how gender power relations are constituted, reproduced and contested' (Weedon, 1987: vii). My starting point for this research was my awareness of an apparent paradox between claims of the sector opening up to more and different workers, at the same time as persistent gender inequalities were being identified (Gill, 2002; Perrons, 2003). As noted above, these trends have been widely reported through a proliferation of research which maps inequalities in both the quality of employment and the participation rates of men and women in this domain (e.g. Miller et al., 2004; Panteli et al., 2001).

My research draws on the rich and growing research field investigating gender inequalities in technical work domains. But its distinctive contribution does not take the form of a mapping of inequalities, the investigation of barriers for women in work organisation or the identification of gaps between utopian articulations focussed on the sector and the experiences of men and women in this work domain. Rather, I

investigate how apparently positive articulations, and their constitutive discursive practices, are performative of gender inequalities.

My work is, in part, informed by the work of Joan Acker (1990) and others who have analysed the concept of the 'ideal worker' in organisations (e.g. Puwar, 2004; Whitehouse & Preston, 2005). Acker contended that, rather than trying to understand gender in terms of how to promote women's participation in the workplace, it would be preferable to investigate how workplaces, organisational hierarchies and imagined ideal workers become gendered. Acker has argued that: 'gender is a constitutive element in organisational logic, or the underlying assumptions and practices that construct most contemporary work organisations' (Acker, 1990: 147). She demonstrates how organisational structures and processes are presented in gender-neutral and disembodied terms, and she contends that the nearest a worker can get to the disembodied ideal worker is a male who works full-time, is committed solely to the organisation, and has someone else (conventionally, a wife) caring for all of his needs outside of the working environment. In contrast, women workers tend to be seen to represent sexuality, reproduction, nourishment, and are supposedly tuned to biological rhythms. Because of these associations, women are seen to imperil the otherwise controllable boundaries of organisational life. Acker's argument demonstrates the importance of identifying regulatory norms emerging through discursive practices in work domains. Acker's analysis also speaks to the materiality of discursive practice and the durability of idealised notions of workers. Her research has been particularly influential in highlighting the figure of the ideal worker as a regulatory norm, and recently theorists have drawn on her work in sketching the formation of ideal workers in the digital industries (e.g. Peterson, 2007). My research contributes to this growing body of research by illustrating the processes by which such ideal and normalised workers are discursively constructed in the creative digital media sector. I employ the concept of the 'ideal worker' to denote the most desirable and exemplary worker in the digital media sector. The concept of

‘normalised worker’ is used to denote the accepted and commonplace worker in the digital media sector. As I will show, women workers are differentiated from both groups of workers through discursive practices within the sector.

There is a need to find a methodological approach that levers open our understanding of the terms of existence of women in male-dominated work domains (Puwar, 2004); an approach that precipitates the exploration of notions of gender, difference, and discourses simultaneously. A number of feminist scholars have explored the shaping of women’s lives from poststructuralist perspectives which explore the relationship between language, power, social organisation and subjectivity (Weedon, 1987; Lloyd, 2007). I have developed a feminist poststructuralist approach to discourse analysis based specifically on Judith Butler’s theory of performativity of gender. Butler’s work (Butler, 1990, 1993, 2004) raises questions about how gender is made, re-made or undone through discursive practices. I discuss the theoretical framework further in Chapter 2.

Qualitative research does not always start with clearly defined research questions or with firm hypotheses (Alvesson, 2002; Janesick, 2003). Rather, qualitative research often begins with an intellectual curiosity about a specific topic which is then developed through the formulation of research questions, methods and analysis during the course of the project (Janesick, 2003). This was the case in my research for this thesis. I will explain this process further when I articulate my theoretical framework, review the literature and outline my methodology in the following chapters (Chapters 2, 3 and 4, respectively). Nevertheless, as an introduction to my research it is useful to outline my primary research question which was developed ‘in process’ rather than *apriori*:

How is gender performed in the discursive field of the digital media sector in the North West of England during the period 2001-2007?

My intention is not to produce an account of gender differences, or to map differently gendered experiences of work within digital media, but rather to gain greater understanding of the ways in which gender is discursively produced in the

digital media sector. I analyse qualitative data from four discursive sites in the digital media sector ranging from documents published by UK labour government agencies to interviews with practitioners and industry brokers in the digital media sector. In each site of investigation, I explore how gender is produced through repeated, but also sometimes contradictory, sets of discursive practices.

I investigate my research question through focussing on four types of articulation which are invoked in the discursive sites I analyse. These articulations include practices of: highlighting changing skill requirements for digital media workers; indicating a need to attract and represent 'new' kinds of digital media workers; recognising the importance of difference and distinction in creative digital media workers; and valuing specific types of 'diverse' workers in creative work processes.

In my critical analysis of these articulations I am careful not to set up 'straw men' (sic) that I then deconstruct. As a feminist and student of organisational and employment theory, I am committed to many of the goals which underpin public policy research and practical interventions designed to promote equality between male and female workers in the workplace. Indeed, I very much endorse initiatives which explore how it might be possible to promote greater participation of women workers within the digital industries, which investigate the reasons for gender inequality, and which attempt to generate deeper analysis of workforce diversity as can be found in some of the key policy documents examined in this thesis. However, I consider whether some discursive practices around the promotion of women's participation in the digital media sector might re-instate divisions and instantiate gendered privilege, rather than disturbing or dissolving these. My intention is that this research will inform processes of policy making in the UK.

The thesis structure

In this thesis I begin with the assumption that gender is performed through the iteration and layering of discursive practices across the digital media sector. My aim

is to show how the process of performativity occurs with the hope of denaturalising gender and also contributing to a better understanding of persistent gender inequalities which are apparent in the UK digital media sector. After my introduction of the research presented here, I go on in Chapter 2 to present a detailed account of the theoretical framework which has guided my research. Understandings of difference are crucial to conceptions of gender and I outline how these concepts are interrelated in feminist analyses. I also describe my approach to discourse analysis based on Judith Butler's (Butler, 1990, 1993, 2004) theory of the performativity of gender.

In Chapter 3 I review research literature which has investigated women's participation in the digital industries, the relationship between creativity and gender, and the growing attention which is being given to workforce diversity in organisations. My reading of this literature highlights gaps and ongoing issues in these fields of inquiry and provides the framing for my research project.

In Chapter 4 I detail my research question and outline the processes of gathering, developing and analysing material for my project. I provide information about my research methods and reflect on the ways in which interactions with my interviewees were implicated in the production of gender in my research. I reflect on my research process as a basis to consider the kinds of claims I am able to make in my thesis.

Chapters 5 through 8 present my analysis deriving from the empirical research undertaken in this project. Each chapter explores one of four broad articulations and considers what kinds of workers are produced in these different accounts for change and women's participation in the digital media sector. In Chapter 5 I analyse discursive data from key public policy documents, my observations of a regional industry training event, and my interviews which articulate changing skills requirements in this sector and relate these to enhanced access and opportunities for women workers.

In Chapter 6 I investigate the second articulation emergent in key public policy documents regarding the need to produce different images of the digital industries so women are attracted to and find fit with the sector. My analysis relates to questions of women's choices with regard to entering this employment domain and thus builds on questions of accessibility discussed in the previous chapter. I investigate public policy documents which identify ongoing problems of attracting women workers relating to a male and 'geeky' image of the digital industries, but also provide positive accounts that the image is changing. In these documents recruitment methods are cited as important avenues for enacting such change. I analyse visual and textual representations of workers in careers and recruitment literature to reflect on, and ultimately challenge, public policy calls for a sector 'image makeover' to fit women's interests.

In Chapter 7 I consider a third articulation found in the sector that links the creativity of workers with their ability to demonstrate some forms of 'difference'. My analysis builds on my previous chapters which suggest that creativity is increasingly identified as an important worker attribute in the digital media sector. I outline the ways in which 'difference' is presented as an individualised resource for creative workers in key public policy documents, critical academic literature and in my interviews. I compare these accounts with those that argue that women workers are different kinds of workers.

In Chapter 8 I investigate a final type of articulation which associates creative work processes in the digital media sector with workforce diversity. I explore public policy documents and my interviews to consider the ways in which the concept of diversity gets employed in accounts of creative work processes and how women workers are positioned in these accounts.

In the final chapter (Chapter 9), I draw my analyses together by reviewing my findings and considering what my research shows about the ways in which gender is performed in the digital media sector. I conclude by identifying key issues which need

to be addressed by academic researchers and policy makers in order to enhance prospects for positive transformations of the working lives of men and women in the NW digital media sector, and potentially beyond.

CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FEMINIST APPROACHES TO GENDER, DIFFERENCE, DISCOURSE AND POLITICS

It seems that feminism is in a mess, unable to stabilise the terms that facilitate a meaningful agenda...One might be tempted to despair, but I believe that these are among the most interesting and productive unsolved issues at the beginning of this century. The program of feminism is not one in which we might assume a common set of premises and then proceed to build in logical fashion a program from these premises. Instead, this is a movement that moves forward precisely by bringing critical attention to bear on its premises in an effort to become more clear about what it means and to begin to negotiate the conflicting interpretations, the irrepressive democratic cacophony of its identity (Butler, 2004: 175).

To say, as I have in Chapter 1, that my thesis presents a feminist research project tells little of what this research is about or how it might be carried out. There is no one kind of feminism from which inferences relating to my project can be made. Rather there is a veritable cacophony of feminist approaches, perspectives and methodologies which jostle, at times pulling against each other, and at other times building upon each other to come up with new ways of thinking and transforming gender relations. To borrow from Butler, it often feels like feminism is in a 'mess' of contradictions and tensions in which concepts like equality, sexual difference, the material and the discursive, gender, politics and theory are contested and debated. Nevertheless, while challenging and often unsettling, such tensions are essential

components of feminist theorising and they demonstrate the strength and rigour of feminist academia (Marshall, 2000).

Feminist theory (or that which we may now retrospectively label as such) has been developed by generations of women since at least the 18th century (e.g. Wollstonecraft, 1792). However, it has only been ‘written in’ to organisational studies since the 1980s (Calás & Smircich, 1992). The relationship between feminist theory and organisational and management studies, then, is largely one-way. There have been many examples of excellent organisational research informed by feminist theory, as will be discussed throughout this thesis, yet today there remain very few examples of feminist organisational and employment research which has had a reverse influence on the broader field of feminist theory.¹² Following those before me, my research seeks to write feminist theory into a study of the employment domain of the digital media sector. I explore feminist theory which will help me to interrogate gender and new ways of accounting for the value of difference in relation to women’s participation in the digital media sector. My aim in this chapter is to locate my research in the context of feminist approaches to gender, discourse and politics before developing a more specific literature review of feminist analyses of work in the digital industries in Chapter 3.

My intention in this chapter is not to provide a comprehensive history of feminist thought. Others are already involved in this project and have provided an array of analyses on which one can draw (e.g. Evans, 1991; Kolmar & Bartkowski, 1999; Lovell, 1990; Putnam Tong, 1998; Weedon, 1999). Movements of feminist theory have tended to have been distinguished on the basis of chronological, but also ideological, generations or waves (e.g. Detloff, 1997; Walker, 1992, 1995; Zita, 1997). However,

¹² There are of course exceptions such as Joan Acker’s (1990) analysis of the ideal worker, and Linda McDowell’s (1997) analysis of gender in the financial district of London. Other authors who have developed labour analyses which sit at the nexus of employment studies and anthropology have also been influential in feminist thought, for example Piya Chatterjee’s (2001) analysis of employment in tea plantations in India and Dorinne Kondo’s (1990) analysis of a Japanese confectioner workplace and community.

analyses which emphasise dislocation rather than continuity can also be divisive and promote feminist infighting (Bailey, 1997). More important to my own research are the ongoing tensions in feminist thought that span the first, second and third waves (as they are called) of feminism. Variations in how liberal, radical and poststructuralist feminists (the list could go on) theorise gender cannot be captured in one generation. For this reason, my exploration of feminist theory below is organised thematically rather than chronologically. I explore three major tensions in feminist theory which inform my project. These are the tensions between 1) difference and equality approaches within feminism; 2) theory pertaining to the material and the discursive (drawing on Judith Butler's performativity theory of gender) and 3) poststructuralist orientated theory and feminist politics. Through a discussion of these tensions I map the theoretical framework for my research. Moreover, as I move through the literature review in Chapter 3 and the subsequent empirical chapters (Chapters 5, 6, 7 & 8), the tensions, ambiguities and clashes of feminist approaches take on increased relevance as they surface in accounts of work and workers in the digital media sector.

Gender, difference and equality

In the 1940s, Simone de Beauvoir (1949) argued that gender constitutes a core axis along which individuals are marked out and made different and 'other'. Her analysis is an important starting point for this thesis as the ways in which women workers are accounted for in the digital industries are underpinned by notions of gender and difference. De Beauvoir (1949)¹³ believed that women, as the 'second sex', have been and continue to be considered as 'other' to a normative male figure. De Beauvoir argued:

¹³ Traditionally the particule of a French last name would be dropped when the name is cited without a title, position, or the proceeding given name. However, it is becoming more common, especially within the English language, to include the particule of a French last name at all times. In this thesis I follow the latter convention.

Woman has often been compared to water because, among other reasons, she is the mirror to which the male, narcissus-like, contemplates himself: he bends over her in good or bad faith. But in any case what he really asks of her is to be, outside of him, all that which he cannot grasp inside himself (de Beauvoir, 1949: 196).

Thus, beyond being man's opposite, de Beauvoir suggested that the feminine 'other' is a necessary pre-condition for the existence and definition of the dominant male norm as universal subject. De Beauvoir argued that the making of the universal subject and the Other, of 'man' and 'woman', is a social process. Thus, she saw gender as a cultural fabrication laid upon female and male human beings (Günther, 1998). As de Beauvoir famously stated:

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole which produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine (de Beauvoir, 1949: Book 2, p.281).

De Beauvoir was not the first to argue that the figure of woman was a social construction. Feminist foremother Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) for example, had already argued in the late 18th century that women were not naturally different to men but made different (and weaker in mind) due to their lack of access to education. Nevertheless, de Beauvoir's analysis of sexism, and the relation between 'the One' (man), and 'the Other' (woman) provided an important way of theorising the social construction of gender and of the making of difference.

While de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (de Beauvoir, 1949) has been approached in different ways by feminists since it was published, it gained particular attention from second wave feminism during the 1970s (Günther, 1998). Since that time, de Beauvoir's analysis has continued to attract both stark critique from prominent feminist theorists (including Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Rosi Braidotti; see Fouque, 1991; Kaufmann, 1986), as well as ardent support (e.g. Evans, 1998; Günther, 1998; Moi, 1985; Stavro, 1999). De Beauvoir has even attracted the appellation of the 'greatest feminist thinker of her century' (Moi, 2008).

Of particular relevance for my research, de Beauvoir's analysis of difference and the making of the Other has recently gained recognition within the area of

organisational studies.¹⁴ Drawing on de Beauvoir to consider diversity discourse in UK labour markets, Melissa Tyler (2005) suggests that there are two levels of difference and otherness: one in which there is relative equality across the otherness, and one in which Otherness is produced through inequality, where mutual recognition is not made and the relationship is one of submission. Tyler states that: 'It is not then merely woman's Otherness but her subjection – the nonreciprocal objectification of what it means to be a woman – that de Beauvoir is concerned with' (Tyler, 2005: 565–566). From this perspective it is not differentiation processes per se that are seen as problematic, but rather the power relations embedded in divisions made between males and females. Tyler emphasises that for de Beauvoir inequality is founded in the lack of mutual recognition of Otherness between males and females. In support of this reading, Renate Günther (1998) also emphasises de Beauvoir's commitment to a politics of equality and egalitarianism, and to the demand of reciprocity between men and women. This reading of de Beauvoir highlights that there is a hierarchy amongst kinds of difference (Woodfield, 2000), some enacted through mutual recognition, and others through inequality and subjection. As I will discuss more fully in the next section in relation to Judith Butler's theory of performativity, visibility and recognition are crucial issues in the consideration of the stability but also the flexibility of regulatory gender norms which produce workers.

In contrast with Tyler's analysis, Trinh T. Minh-ha (Trinh, 1987) argues that for de Beauvoir, 'The very theme of difference, whatever the differences are represented to be, is useful to the oppressing group' (Editorial Collective, 1980, cited in Trinh, 1987: 101). Similarly, Christine Delphy (1996) draws on de Beauvoir's work to argue that an egalitarian concept of difference would be a contradiction in terms. Thus, from this perspective, equality between men and women is sought by challenging all accounts of differences between female and males. In this way, de Beauvoir's work

¹⁴ See the special issue in the *Journal of Management Inquiry* on re-visiting Simone de Beauvoir edited by Judi Marshall (Marshall, 2000).

underpins much liberal feminism which accepts the basic structure of social institutions of education, employment and the family, but advocates equal opportunity for women within these. Liberal feminist approaches underscore the rights of all individuals including women to self-determination (Weedon, 1987).

De Beauvoir's analysis of the social construction of the categories of 'woman' and 'feminine', and rejection of unequal treatment of women and men has led some of her critics to describe her as 'an enemy of 'difference'' (Günther, 1998: 178). For example, one of de Beauvoir's most prominent critics, Luce Irigaray, responds to *The Second Sex* by arguing that de Beauvoir problematically advocates for women to become like men:

Not wanting to be 'second' with respect to the masculine subject, she [de Beauvoir] asks, as a principle of subjectivity, to be man's equal, to be the same as, or similar to him. From the point of view of philosophy, that position entails a return to the singular, historically masculine, subject and the invalidation of the possibility of a subjectivity other than man's (Irigaray, 1995: 8).

By contrast, for Irigaray it is precisely the prospect of constructing feminism around women's sexual difference that offers the promise of liberation (Kaufmann, 1986). Irigaray takes a radical feminist view in which she is interested in the ways women experience the world differently than men and her aim is to *re-write* the feminine rather than to reject it as a category. However, Irigaray's attention to sexual difference is not a revival of early essentialist radical feminist accounts which emphasised the feminine *nature* of women (see Weedon, 1999 for discussion). Rather, she has sought to develop a strategy of mimicry of essentialised ideas of sexual difference in ways that alter them and make them open to criticism (Stone, 2007). Irigaray's approach has been identified as a form of 'strategic essentialism' (Ibid.). During the 1980s, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak coined the phrase 'strategic essentialism', advocating the 'strategic use of essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest' (Spivak, 1987: 205). Spivak argued that, while categories of human identity are unstable and only ever partial and should therefore be challenged and critiqued, one cannot avoid using such categories at times in order to make sense of

the social and political world (Morton, 2003). She advocates the occupation of essentialist identity categories as a productive strategy to facilitate the escape from oppressive representations. Hence, for Spivak strategic essentialism is not a theory but rather a practice, a means to an end (Morton, 2003; Spivak, 1987, 1993). In line with Spivak's analysis, Irigaray (1995) uses the notion of mimesis as a re-articulation of stereotypical and naturalised views of women in order to call these views into question. She argues that because mimesis can never be a faithful copy, the flaws in the original conception are exposed. Nevertheless, the risk of Irigaray's position and that of other so-called difference feminists (e.g. Catherine McKinnon, Martha Nussbaum, Mary Daly) is the risk of re-embedding essentialist notions of femininity and of fixed conceptions of women's nature through an insistence on sexual difference.¹⁵

The divisions found between equality and difference perspectives of de Beauvoir's writing may be founded on a false dichotomy (Günther, 1998). Günther (1998) argues that de Beauvoir and Irigaray both challenge essentialised assumptions about women. She also suggests that de Beauvoir clearly does not reject the concept of otherness but argues that the ways in which otherness is perceived has no essential basis. Furthermore, I would contend that de Beauvoir's flexible treatment of difference, as illustrated above, proves to be one of her important contributions to feminist theory. De Beauvoir's work obliges feminist theorists to consider gender and difference from two orientations simultaneously, and this obligation is important for my study. First, if the theme of difference is always useful to the oppressing group, then it is crucial to consider the formulation of any kind of argument about difference in regard to workers in the digital media sector. It leads to questions about who controls the making of difference and about the consequences for those workers who are differentiated from the norm. Second, the subjection and nonreciprocal

¹⁵ The debate continues regarding charges of essentialism in Irigaray's work (see Stone, 2006). However, this discussion is not in itself relevant to this thesis.

objectification attached to the ongoing social construction of women as different kinds of workers must also be considered. In relation to my own research, this suggests that there may be different kinds of differences that are recognised and valued in particular workers. Hence, while traditional notions of women as different may be implicated in the instantiation of inequalities, there could be other kinds of difference which instantiate equality in value, status and power amongst workers. In addition, taking up Irigaray's (1995) claim, there may be ways in which 'the feminine' can operate as an alternative and liberatory form of subjectivity for women.

This brief review of some tensions around feminist approaches to difference and equality raises questions about the nature and function of accounts of gender difference. Two important issues emerge here. The first is the friction between accounts which emphasise women's unique and valuable difference and those which highlight the equal capacity of men and women and which therefore seek to minimise differences in the treatment of and opportunities for these groups of workers. This division can be understood as a contrast between radical and liberal feminist approaches. Although such categorisation is somewhat reductive and belies the complexity of feminist approaches to gender, it nevertheless provides a useful frame for thinking about accounts of women's participation in the digital industries. I discuss this further in Chapters 3 and in my empirical chapters (especially Chapters 5 and 6).

The second issue to emerge concerns how different kinds of differences might be evaluated. I consider this more fully in Chapters 7 and 8 in discussing the ways in which selected public policy documents and my practitioner interviewees produce links between notions of gender difference, creative worker subject, and the creative work process. At this point however, I review these debates to frame my interrogation of gender, and to highlight the need to understand more fully the processes by which differentiation between men and women, the masculine and the feminine, are

constructed. In the following section I consider these processes in more detail in discussing the discursive construction of gender and subjectivity.

Theorising the discursive nature of gender and subjectivity

Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of the social construction of gender provided an important challenge to arguments regarding the nature of women and men. Her critique suggested that there is no necessary relationship between biological sex and gender. De Beauvoir's critique underpins liberal feminist positions which advocate equality for women on the basis of human rights. This is the primary orientation of the political movements of second wave feminism in the USA and beyond which have advocated anti-discrimination legislation and fought for equal opportunities for women. During the 1960s and 1970s, the feminist and civil rights movements were based on identity politics mobilised and organised around gender and racial identities and divisions. However, within feminism, theory and practice emerging from identity politics paradoxically began to destabilise its own agenda. Black and gay feminists' critique of the exclusionary nature of a predominantly white, middle-class, and heterosexual feminism began to raise questions about the nature of the subject 'woman', about who could speak for whom, about who gets excluded and by what means (e.g. Carby, 1982; hooks, 1981; Lorde, 1984).

With the challenges to existing feminist conceptualisations of rights, gender, difference, experience and the subject there was a search for ways of understanding these concepts more fully. As feminist theorist Chris Weedon stated in 1987: 'We need a theory of the relation between language, subjectivity, social organisation and power' (Weedon, 1987: 12). Weedon and a number of other feminist thinkers sought to develop deconstructivist approaches which might advance their understanding of subjectivity, gender and sexuality. Poststructuralist approaches were seen as particularly useful for this agenda (Scott, 1988).

Like feminism, the term ‘poststructuralism’ does not refer to one theoretical position but many. Poststructuralism has inherited from 19th century German philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Georg Wilhelm, Friedrich Hegel and Martin Heidegger concerns regarding the nature of being and about how certain beings come into existence within a historical and social context. For example, Nietzsche called into question the nature of the subject and of understandings of individual experience in his proclamation that: ‘There is no “being” behind the doing, acting, becoming; “the doer” is merely fiction imposed on the doing – the doing itself is everything’ (Nietzsche, 1887: 29). Heidegger (1927) sought to account for the nature of human existence, the ‘I’ in Western philosophy, by considering the history of philosophy itself. He disputed the Cartesian separation between the world and the individual and argued that there is no ‘being’, but rather only an ongoing ‘becoming’. Poststructuralism has also been significantly influenced by developments within linguistics, particularly by the work of Ferdinand de Saussure who described a formal system of language. Saussure’s (1983) contribution was to delineate the components of language beginning with the concept of the linguistic sign. He argued that signs were made up of two elements: the signifier (sound, written word, image) and the signified (meaning). He theorised that the relation between the two was not natural or inevitable, but one that was acquired through language chains of signs.

During the mid to late 20th century, poststructuralist approaches began to develop through the work of theorists including Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva and Gilles Deleuze. Despite significant differences amongst these authors, poststructuralism generally builds analyses around four main concepts: language, subjectivity, discourse and power (Weedon, 1987). As in Saussure’s work, poststructuralism regards the meaning of language as unstable or incomplete, and that language is the location where social forms are produced and can be contested. The notion of the subject as an autonomous, independent agent is challenged, and instead subjectivity is seen to be produced through social practices.

Foucault developed a form of poststructuralism which has been particularly influential in feminist work (Hekman, 1996; Lloyd, 1996), and in some areas of organisational studies (Burrell, 1988; Dixon, 2007; Jones, 2002; Rowlinson & Carter, 2002). Like other poststructuralist theorists, Foucault's work challenged notions of fixed meaning, and of unified subjectivity. Foucault also critiqued established understandings of power (Weedon, 1999) through tracing the historical formations of institutions and practices such as law, medicine and the church. For Foucault, power was not fixed or something that could be acquired or seized by an individual or groups (e.g. Foucault, 1976; 1982). Rather, he demonstrated that power was a relationship which was produced through regulatory systems of rules through which particular statements are established and given dominance (Arslanian-Engoren, 2002). Foucault foregrounded the theorisation of discursive fields, contending that language and power were inseparable within these (Weedon, 1987). This work built on, but also broke with, Marxist notions of ideology (e.g. Althusser, 1971) by highlighting that the material world could not be separated from ideology or discourse, i.e. that ideology was performative.

In undertaking research for this thesis I have adopted a feminist poststructuralist approach. Feminist poststructuralism applies the broad tenets of poststructuralism described above to explore the construction of gender, subjectivity and power. My approach is mainly informed by the work of Judith Butler (Butler, 1990, 1991, 1993, 2000, 2004). Butler combines the theoretical approaches of poststructuralism with feminist perspectives in her theory of the performativity of gender. Thus, while she draws extensively on theorists including Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, Hegel and Nietzsche, she also engages with the work of feminists including de Beauvoir and Irigaray (amongst many others). For example, Butler draws on de Beauvoir, but unlike her predecessor she does not distinguish between the concepts of sex and gender. Indeed, in her most well-known book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Butler, 1990), Butler wages the argument that this distinction

is not viable. According to Butler, the material and discursive cannot be separated. In the following section I discuss Butler's approach to the materiality of discourse.

Doing gender through difference

In recent years, the theorisation of the discursive 'making' of men and women has been developed within the analytic framework of 'doing gender'. An early paper titled *Doing Gender* by Candace West and Don Zimmerman (1987) articulated the argument that gender is a 'routine, methodical and recurring accomplishment' (West & Zimmerman, 1987: 126) rather than an existing category that can be applied to an individual or a behaviour. This idea has continued to have purchase. In 2005 alone, there were over 60 articles published that employed the notion of 'doing gender' (Deutsch, 2007; see also Martin, 2003), and in 2009 a symposium and special issue of *Gender and Society* (Jurik & Siemsen, 2009) was dedicated to the topic. The notion of 'doing gender' is crucial for my research, which investigates the processes, practices, and discourses through which gender is performed in the digital media sector.

While West and Zimmerman (1987) are widely credited with introducing the notion of 'doing gender' to the field of gender studies, Butler is arguably the theorist to have progressed and developed this concept most in her theory of the performativity of gender.¹⁶ Butler (Butler, 1990, 1991, 1993, 2000, 2004) has not only revolutionised gender theory through her conceptualisation of the performativity of gender, but her work has been highly mobile, attracting attention well outside of the feminist and philosophical spheres in which she has been located. Butler's (1990) text, *Gender Trouble*, has been labelled as one of the most influential books in feminism (Lloyd, 2007), and is described as having 'rocked the foundations of feminist theory' (Segal, 1999: 20).

¹⁶ There are important distinctions between the approaches of West and Zimmerman and Butler in regard to the theory of doing gender. I attend to these distinctions in my discussion of my Butlerian approach to discourse analysis below.

Butler theorises gender as a repetitive ‘activity performed’, and as a series of iterations of stylised acts or practices, but also as a shared construction that emerges through interrelation:

If gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one’s knowing and without one’s willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. Moreover, one does not ‘do’ one’s gender alone. One is always ‘doing’ with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary (Butler, 2004: 1).

Hence, Butler contends that gender needs to be understood as ‘a kind of doing’, rather than a prescriptive categorisation. The preceding quote from Butler argues that gender is performed through differentiation from an imagined other. Thus, to discuss gender is to consider processes of making difference. It is this relationship between the doing of gender and difference which can be directly linked to de Beauvoir’s early work and which is crucial for the framing of the research for this thesis.

Butler’s most significant contribution to feminist philosophy comes in her theory of performativity. Butler initially presented the concept of performativity in *Gender Trouble* (1990), and she developed this further in *Bodies that Matter* (1993) and in her subsequent writing. In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler provided the following explanation of her use of the concept of performativity:

Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that ‘performance’ is not a singular ‘act’ or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance (Butler, 1993: 95).

This discussion of performativity responds to some of the main criticisms that emerged in response to *Gender Trouble* and it also outlines the key elements of her theory on which I draw. There are three main tenets of Butler’s conception of performativity which have influenced my research for this thesis. These are: 1) that performativity needs to be understood as repeated iterative discursive practices that are enacted within social relations; 2) that such practices are not simply performed by a subject, or individual, but rather, they constitute the individual and 3) that such

practices are performed within the context of constraining regulatory norms, but that these norms are never absolute or fully determining.

The performativity of gender

Butler's first and major argument related to her theory of performativity is that gender and subjectivity are produced through repetitive discursive practices, i.e. that gender is a doing. This derives from the poststructuralist approach outlined by feminist scholar Chris Weedon (1987) that posits that discourses can be understood as:

...ways of constituting knowledge, together with social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern (Weedon, 1987: 108).

In relation to this approach, Butler's work, has been criticised for suggesting that reality is merely a discursive construction (Collins, 1995; Deutsch, 2007; Webber, 1995). Because Butler argues that there is no stable subject 'woman', and that gender is only 'real' in so far as it is repeatedly enacted, some have accused her of proposing that gender is simply a matter of choice; that individuals can easily choose to perform gender in alternative ways that deviate from the norm (Nussbaum, 1999). For example, Marsha Hewitt contends that, for Butler:

Women are positions in a language game who (which?), once they grasp this fact, may enact their lives in an endless journey of performances whereby fixed, naturalized categories of 'woman' are perpetually subverted in "exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler, 1990: 140). (Hewitt, 1993: 142).

However, such criticisms relate to the second theme in Butler's discussion above and I contend that these criticisms derive from a mis-reading of her work. Commenting on Butler's work, Vikki Bell (2006) observes that:

The fragility of gender production does not mean that its deployment is easily interrupted or broken. Partaking in the cultural fiction is also the securing of one's own 'cultural survival' in a world where genders are distinct, hierarchically related and heteronormatively organised (Bell, 2006: 216).

Thus, to risk existing outside of the conventions of gender is to risk unintelligibility and sanction (Bell, 2006). Moreover, as Butler (2004) herself indicates, the notion of

existing outside gender norms is paradoxical, for to exist outside a norm is to recognise, reinforce and define that norm and to position oneself in relation to it. She states:

The norm governs intelligibility, allows for certain kinds of practices and action to become recognisable as such, imposing a grid of legibility on the social and defining the parameters of what will and will not appear within the domain of the social (Butler, 2004: 42).

Hence, it is precisely because norms govern intelligibility that they cannot be discarded or rejected in any complete way. Norms are useful and needed, for it is through norms that we learn to know and experience the world. However, while norms cannot be rejected outright, they may nevertheless be interrogated. This is the crux of Butler's approach: to denaturalise norms, taken-for-granted concepts, common knowledge and universal notions of gender, sexuality and subjectivity in the hope of troubling these and opening up the possibility for transformation. In this thesis, I explore discursive practices which produce and sediment norms pertaining to notions of valuable workers, through which female and male individuals are made intelligible.

The subject that is never one

The second criticism of Butler's theory of the performativity of gender relates to how she treats the notions of free will, identity, subjectivity and agency. As Butler responds to her critics, she considers the question:

If gender is a construction, must there be an 'I' or a 'we' who enacts or performs that construction? How can there be an activity, a constructing without presupposing an agent who precedes and performs that activity? (Butler, 1993: 7).

In response to this question Butler reflects that:

If gender is constructed, it is not necessarily constructed by an 'I' or a 'we' who stands before that construction in any spatial or temporal sense of 'before'. Indeed it is unclear that there can be an 'I' or a 'we' who has not been submitted, subjected to gender, where gendering is, among other things, the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being (Butler, 1993: 7).

Thus, Butler views gender identity, as she does of identity in general, as neither a fixed or stable element of the individual but an outcome of an interplay of discourses (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004).

Concepts including identity and subjectivity are highly complex and have been topics of extensive theorisation and debate in sociological, philosophical, psychological and feminist research domains (du Gay, Evans & Redman, 2000). In this thesis I use the terms 'identity' and 'subjectivity' as overlapping terms, to refer to the ways that we see ourselves as the same, or as different from, others. I assume that a sense of self is produced through discursive networks which incorporate discursive fields, sites and practices (Butler, 1990; Pullen & Simpson, 2009). I reject the notion that a stable core or essence underpins identification with specific subjectivities. Rather, I view identities and subjectivities as precarious and shifting, involving incomplete processes that are always constituted in discourse (Weedon, 1987). I consider that individuals identify with certain subject positions but that, at the same time, they constitute these subject positions through their own discursive practices.

Sara Salih (2002) suggests that, for Butler, 'gender acts are not performed by the subject, but they performatively constitute a subject that is the effect of discourse rather than the cause of it' (Salih, 2002: 65). Thus, Butler is engaged in a project which is a direct challenge to traditional Western philosophy founded on the conception of the unitary subject. Butler and some of the philosophers whose work she draws upon (e.g. Foucault, Derrida) are engaged in destabilising the apparent coherence and stability of the thinking subject, the 'I', by exposing the processes that are involved in maintaining the integrity of this construction. In this approach subjectivities are neither true or false but are produced as truth through discourse (Butler, 1990). In regard to my research, the importance of exploring discursive practices becomes central to understanding gender and working subjects. As Linda Zerilli (2008) has argued, if gender is seen as an effect of discourses of truth and power, then the analysis and critique of gender should not aim simply to expose the

false grounding of gender, but rather to expose how the ‘ground on which we decide the true and the false of gender is produced’ (Zerilli, 2008: 33). Drawing on Butler’s analysis, the assumption in my research is that legible worker subjectivities are temporary sedimentations of discourses and regulatory norms, produced through repeated discursive practices (Hall, 1996a).

While Butler’s early work was primarily concerned with gender, sex and sexuality, more recently she has deployed her theory of performativity and the nature of the subject in other domains, in law (Butler, 2000), in censorship (Butler, 1997), and in relation to ethics (Butler, 2005). In these analyses she highlights the performativity of repeated stylised discursive practices which produce specific identities. From this perspective, a worker’s identification as a ‘creative worker’ can be seen simultaneously as a construction of the subject and of a specific formation of gender and difference. This approach requires attention to the discursive practices which produce gender. In a methodological sense, the production of gender through discursive practices can be witnessed in various discursive sites such as in the talk of practitioners within the industry and in public policy documents which represent digital media workers. As below, my analysis seeks to explore the relationship between recognisable and valued kinds of worker subjectivities in public policy documentation and how practitioners describe themselves and others.

It is at the point of recognisability of certain subjects that Butler deviates from the dominant western poststructuralist theory by turning to the work of other feminist philosophers including Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray. She draws on de Beauvoir’s ideas to highlight that only particular formations of the subject are recognised and given life. Furthermore, whereas Foucault might highlight the processes of regulation and control in the formation of the subject, Butler, drawing on Irigaray, responds that the only recognisable and verified sex is the masculine. According to Irigaray and Butler, where ‘woman’ is merely the ‘One’s’ Other, the excess through which man is defined, she is not intelligible as a subject. The variance

in the visibility and recognisability of particular formations of subjectivities is a crucial component of Butler's analysis. Butler (1996) describes her position thus:

Within the terms of productive power, regulation and control work through the discursive articulation of identities. But those discursive articulations effect certain exclusions and erasures; oppression works not merely through the mechanism of regulation and production but by foreclosing the very possibility of articulation (Butler, 1996: 68).

In sum, I have outlined two critical aspects to Butler's theorisation of the formation of gender identity which are important to my research. The first is that there is no unitary and intact doer behind the actions which perform certain subjectivities. Rather, the subject is formed through the doing. Secondly, not all subjectivities are visible and recognisable as legitimate and this is crucial in the generation of inequality between men and women.

The doing and undoing of regulatory norms

Butler's emphasis on the construction of regulatory norms raises a third important criticism of performativity theories of gender. Some commentators have argued that, if attempting to exist outside of norms merely reinforces them, then theories of doing gender suggest the impossibility of undoing gender (e.g. Deutsch, 2007). Deutsch proposes that theorists of gender as a 'doing' have perhaps inadvertently, 'undermined the goal of dismantling gender inequity by...perpetuating the idea that the gender system of oppression is hopelessly impervious to real change and by ignoring the links between social interaction and structural change' (Deutsch, 2007: 107). Deutsch argues for a step forward in gender scholarship to explore the 'undoing (of) gender'. She states, 'we need to shift from talk about doing gender to illuminating how we can undo gender' (Deutsch, 2007: 107).

Butler takes up such charges directly in her text, *Undoing Gender* (Butler, 2004). In this, she reemphasises and elaborates the argument first presented in *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990) and then developed in *Bodies that Matter* (Butler, 1993), that because gender and subjectivity rely on and are produced through serial repetitions and citations, there are also possibilities for change. As Butler suggests, subjectivities

are never complete or fully formed but rather they require constant re-iteration and repetition. Butler's argument here again draws on the work of Irigaray in pointing to the inevitable failure of mimesis to produce an exact copy (as described above). Butler highlights the 'failure of discursive performativity' as the way in which gender is *undone* (Butler, 1993: 188).

Butler's critical contribution to feminist theory is to 'expose the constitutive effects of gender as a signifying practice and the logic of exclusion that it supports' (Butler, 1990: 149). She does this by pointing to discursive practices which produce gender and subjectivity. Butler's theory opens up the possibilities for identifying both the doing and undoing of gender and difference in discursive constructions of women's participation in the digital media sector. Such an analysis requires looking for the citational and sedimentary coherence of discursive practices relating to gender, as well as highlighting the inconsistencies, moments of revision or examples of failures of discursive performativity in a discursive field. As I shall discuss below and in Chapter 4, Butler's theory of performativity has informed my attention to discourse and shaped my approach of analysing discursive practices.

Exploring discourses and discursive practices

Discourse analysis should be viewed as incorporating a broad spectrum of interdisciplinary approaches to the qualitative analysis of texts rather than a single method (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). While social scientific interest in discourse has exploded in recent years, the term is often vaguely and ambiguously understood (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002).

Alvesson and Kärreman (2000a) provide an analysis of the varieties of discourse, suggesting discourse can be split up into two main levels consisting of Discourse (with a capital D), referring to grand overarching and institutionalised ways of framing the world, or ideologies, (e.g. the Education Discourse) and discourse (with a small d) referring to daily talk. These authors also point to mid-range levels and identify at least four versions of discourse analysis: micro-discourse, meso-discourse, grand-

Discourse and mega-Discourse. Alvesson and Kärreman's (2000a) primary critique is that researchers often develop discourse analysis which implicitly shifts between the different levels of discourse without appropriate acknowledgment of these shifts. A similar argument has been made by authors Julia Nentwich and Elizabeth Kelan (2007) with reference to feminist theory of doing of gender. These authors admonish researchers who they consider implicitly conflate the work of West and Zimmerman with that of Butler on doing gender, despite clear distinctions in the theoretical underpinnings of these respective authors' approaches to discourse. Nentwich and Kelan (2007) argue that West and Zimmerman take an ethnomethodological approach which focuses on the doing of gender through daily interactions. This could be related to the micro- or meso-discourse analytic approaches identified by Alvesson and Kärreman. In contrast, Nentwich and Kelan describe Butler as having developed her work out of a poststructuralist approach in which her focus is on identity construction vis-à-vis hegemonic Discourses (relating to grand-Discourses or mega-Discourse).

The approaches taken by authors such as Alvesson and Kärreman (2000a), and Nentwich and Kelan (2007), are inconsistent with my reading of Butler's theory of the performativity of gender. At some points, Alvesson and Kärreman seem to treat language and discourse as interchangeable concepts. At other times, their concern for different levels of discourse – from the micro-level of daily talk to the mega-Discourses of dominant paradigms for thinking – severs the connection between local citational language practices and the regulatory norms which are both constituted by and constitute these practices. Furthermore, Nentwich and Kelan's separation of daily interactions from hegemonic Discourses when they distinguish the work of Butler and West and Zimmerman obscures Butler's insistence that discourses are performative through the cumulative repetition of everyday practices.

Other authors have expressed similar concerns regarding the dislocation between levels of discourse apparent in some research that identifies as discourse analysis. As

Susan Ainsworth and Cynthia Hardy (2004) have suggested, ‘while discourses are realised through texts, they are much broader than texts and include the broader social and cultural structure and practices that surround and inform their production and consumption’ (Ainsworth, 2004: 236). In effect, these and other commentators are calling for an integrated framework for discourse analysis which extends beyond the linguistic event (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Indeed, it is the exploration of the inextricable relationship between hegemonic discourses and the discursive practices realised in written or spoken texts which is crucial to Butler’s approach to performativity. As Sara Salih reminds us:

When Butler uses this word [discourse] she is not *just* referring to ‘speaking’ or ‘conversation’, but specifically to Foucault’s formulations of discourse as ‘large groups of statements’ governing the way we speak about and perceive a specific historical moment or moments (Salih, 2002: 47) (italics my own).

Thus, the operationalisation of Butler’s theory in empirical work requires researchers to explore re-iteration and citation within daily interactions but to consider these discursive practices in the context of broader regulatory norms.

Hence, my own approach revolves around the investigation of discursive practices that instantiate regulatory norms of gender in the digital media sector. This mode of analysis has been developed with reference to Butler’s theory of performativity in which the focus is on the repetition and sedimentation of discursive practices, rather than Discourses per se (see Hodgson, 2005 for similar discussion of Butler’s approach). As Butler states:

Performativity is...not a singular ‘act’, for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like-status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition (Butler, 1993: 12).

Perhaps to avoid the reification of Discourses, Butler tends to use phrases such as ‘acts’, ‘practices’, ‘gender scripts’, ‘gender norms’, ‘directive norms’, ‘gender regimes’, and ‘regulatory norms’ rather than ‘gender Discourses’ (with a capital D). Butler’s way of exploring the performativity of gender is through identifying citational chains of discursive practices. In this thesis I do not attempt to specify an overarching set of

discourses which explain the performativity of gender. Rather, I use the terminology provided by Butler, referring to discursive practices in order to remind the reader, and indeed myself, that discourses cannot in any meaningful way exist outside of their doing and saying. My focus is on the recitation of particular ways of speaking, writing and visually representing employment in the digital media sector through which we find gender articulated and governed.¹⁷ As Butler states: 'The various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all' (Butler, 1990: 140).

From a Butlerian perspective, it is important not to see gender norms as discursive resources which are fixed in stone. Gender norms and the making of difference between men and women are produced through cumulative, consolidating, and yet flexible discursive practices. This understanding of discourse is crucial to Butler's claim about the potential transformative effects of discursive practices. In addition, the performed nature of discursive practices is important in this research. In Butler's analysis of performativity, gender is produced through repetitive and stylised discursive practices; in a quite literal sense, gender is performed:

As in other ritual social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualised form of their legitimation (Butler, 1990: 140).

The discursive performance to which Butler refers is the sedimentation of linguistic/bodily acts:

Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity, instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self (Butler, 1988: 519).

This approach disputes the problematic of the material/discursive relation with which I began in this section. Repeated forms of discursive practices contribute to ways of

¹⁷ A similar approach to exploring 'discursive processes', rather than hegemonic and all pervasive 'discourses', has recently been demonstrated by Kathleen Riach (2007) in her study of the discursive construction of 'older workers'.

understanding the world and are performative of the world through the establishment of legible subjects, behaviours and objects. Finally, the recognisability and understandability of discursive practices relates to style, words used, genre and so on, but they also relate to broader regulatory norms and discourses.

In general, theorists involved in discourse analysis tend to avoid attempting to analyse *the meaning* of a set piece of text by concentrating more on how language is *used*, rather than on what language means. This relates to the poststructuralist rejection of the assumption that language simply represents the material world, experiences of individuals, cognitions or values. Nevertheless, although ‘discourse does not possess meaning’ as such (Phillips & Hardy, 2002: 4), the argument that discourses are performative, or have effects, requires some consideration of the function of language use and shared understandings.

Following Austin’s (1962) theorisation of speech acts (on which Butler’s theory of performativity builds, see *Bodies that Matter*), the statement, ‘I now pronounce you husband and wife’, is directly performative in that the saying of this statement constitutes action. However, the performative nature of this statement relies on at least some partially shared understanding between actors connected to this speech act. If the parties involved (including husband, wife, minister/registrar and witness) did not have some common understandings of this phrase, there could be questions raised about its potential for performing the action it declares. However, from a Butlerian perspective, the parties involved become such, or are brought into being (as husband and wife, as witness and minister) through the citational acts involved in a marriage ceremony. Thus, reference to shared meaning is appropriate only in as much as it refers to the location of a speech act in a citational chain that relies on context and convention in order to be performative. Sara Salih suggests that, for Butler, ‘language is a citational chain preceding and exceeding speaking subjects who are retroactively installed by and in discourse’ (Salih, 2002: 104).

By reviewing Butler's theory of performativity, I have begun to map out my own approach to studying gender in this project. I endorse the poststructuralist rejection of the concept of a unitary subject and emphasise the ways in which discursive practices produce that which they purport to describe through repetition and the citation of broader regulatory norms. However, certain challenges arise for a feminist empirical study which does not rely on the assumption of the coherent subject of woman on whose behalf it fights. This brings me to my final point of discussion in this chapter concerning the politics of feminist poststructuralist theory.

Feminist poststructuralist theory and politics

Feminism is a politics. It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society (Weedon, 1987: 1).

I state on the first page of this thesis that my research is a feminist project, and, as such, it is a political project. However, as the criticisms of Butler's theory of performativity outlined above foreshadow, there is a palpable uneasiness amongst some theorists regarding performativity approaches which are taken up in the name of feminism. A number of feminist theorists have questioned the compatibility between theories of the performativity of gender and the political agenda of feminism which is focused on transforming women's lives (e.g. Carver & Chambers, 2008; Gill, 1995). Given these tensions, it is necessary in the final part of this chapter to delineate how my feminist poststructuralist project is a political project. This is important because it provides the background to why I develop the kind of analysis I do in the following chapters and what I expect my research activities to achieve.

The politics of feminist poststructuralist theories such as Butler's performativity theory is, at worst, seen as a contradiction in terms, and at best precarious (Carver & Chambers, 2008). This is exemplified by Karen Zivi who states:

To say that Judith Butler's theory of performativity has had an important influence on contemporary understandings of gender identity is to make a fairly uncontroversial statement. To say that her theory of performativity makes a valuable contribution to progressive democratic politics is, however, to make a claim likely to elicit puzzled looks (Zivi, 2008: 157).

The suspicions regarding Butler's work, and feminist poststructuralism more broadly, revolve around fears that deconstructing woman as a subject, may involve rendering impotent woman as a political agent. Because hegemonic knowledge has been reliant on the assumption of a universal, essential subject, it is assumed by some that a feminist theory that is without a central subject, one that insists on the partial, multiple and shifting nature of subjectivity, will be unable to construct legitimate knowledge that can counter the oppression of women (Calás & Smircich, 1999). Thus, commentators have argued that, if there are no unified categories of women and men, there is no foundation on which to campaign for equality between these groups (e.g. Hewitt, 1993).

This response to the perceived threat of losing the subject woman is understandable, but it assumes that such a subject is inherently coherent, stable and intact. Butler would dispute this assumption, as she explains:

To question the subject is to put at risk what we know, and to do it not for the thrill of the risk, but because we have already been put into question as subjects. We have already, as women, been severely doubted: do our words carry meaning? Are we capable of consent? Is our reasoning functioning like that of men? Are we part of the universal community of human kind? (Butler, 2004: 227).

Seen in this light, feminist poststructuralism is about exposing and critiquing the framing of woman as subject that is already in play.

The dispute within feminism about these issues is often presented as between abstracted theories of discourse and the lived material experience of 'real women'. I was confronted with this tension when I was once explaining my interest in Butler's work to a potential supervisor. This senior academic exclaimed, 'but the problems of this world are material problems! People who are hungry, literally have no food in their stomachs. That is not a discursive issue'. Other authors who have taken up the notion of performativity have described similar moments in which a 'death-and-rock' critique was launched at them where sceptics take hard surfaces (tables and rocks) and the finality of death as evidence of the material 'real' which exists regardless of discourse (Carver & Chambers, 2008). Of course, as should be clear by now, I do not

deny the materiality of life, but I would argue that such materiality is always already discursive. There is no way to dig beneath the discursive to find the 'real experience' or 'real person'. Butler argues this point in the following commentary:

Essential to so many political movements is the claim of bodily integrity and self-determination. It is important to claim that our bodies are in a sense *our own* and that we are entitled to claim rights of autonomy over our bodies...It is difficult, if not impossible, to make these claims without recourse to autonomy. I am not suggesting that we cease to make these claims. We have to, we must...[But] although we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own (Butler, 2006: 25–26).

It is Butler's dual focus exemplified in this quotation on concrete actions for transformation of gender relations and on the need to open up concepts of gender, sex, identity and woman that is considered so important by many critical theorists (Nealon, 1994). This view has informed my discussion in this thesis so far. For example, I have deemed it important to map out in Chapter 1 the imbalances in participation rates and inequalities in financial reward between men and women working the digital industries. However, here I also want to insist that the categories of 'men' and 'women' workers are not stable or unified and are open to critique. In my investigations I have tried to make what Butler would refer to as a double movement, that is to 'invoke the category [of women], and, hence, provisionally to institute an identity [for political action] and at the same time to open the category as a site of permanent political contest' (Butler, 1993: 222).

Feminist poststructuralists have been critiqued for destabilising the very subject of feminism – the category woman (Hewitt, 1993). In response, a number of feminist theorists have argued that all attempts to delineate universal characteristics of woman as a base for political action are doomed to failure because they are necessarily exclusionary and partial (e.g. Lloyd, 2007). This argument has been significantly strengthened by the extensive work of some Black and post-colonial feminists who have demonstrated the processes of marginalisation of women of colour in what they characterise as white western feminism. Authors such as Audre Lorde (1984) and bell hooks (1981) have demonstrated that the category woman is

not unified, inclusive, or homogenous. In this regard, it can be argued that the issue is not the loss of the category of woman, but the challenging of a means-ends view of politics that requires a coherent, pre-given subject. As Linda Zerilli states:

Driving the tenacious but impossible idea of such a theory [that there is a 'category of women'] is a conception of politics as instrumental, means-ends activity centred on the pursuit of group interests. This pursuit requires a coherent group (for example, women) with shared concerns (Zerilli, 2008: 30).

Zerilli argues that the problem with this instrumentalist conception of politics is that it can lead feminists to either affirm, 'what they may well know is not the case' (for example, that 'women' constitute a coherent group'), or to deny 'that one can affirm anything political that one does not know' (for example, speak in the name of women) (Zerilli, 2008: 32). Moreover, as I discussed in the first section of this chapter, the difficult debates between equality and difference feminism are precisely focussed on the question of the subject of woman and whether she is essentially different or socially constructed as different from men. It is for this reason that many commentators have declared that feminist politics need to be based on something other than a unitary category of woman (see also Lloyd, 1996). Poststructuralist theory offers a means for re-assessing the apparent divisions between theory and politics, and equality and difference feminisms, by exchanging universalities for pluralities, diversities and contingencies (Scott, 1988). Moreover, poststructuralist analyses can help tease out the types of discourses from which feminist questions come (Weedon, 1987). Foucault has described this approach as a 'politics of critique' (Foucault, 1984 cited in Lloyd, 1996: 245) in which the denaturalisation of discourse renders alien that which is taken as the norm. Through this process, assumptions about the world and traditional ways of knowing can be resisted and rejected. As such, a poststructuralist project which seeks to denaturalise notions of gender is a political project.

To expose discrimination against women as a form of political action without attempting to investigate how gender is produced is inadequate. As Butler states:

It is not as if a regulatory regime first controls its object and then produces it or first produces it in order then to control it; there is no temporary lag between the production and the regulation of sex; they occur at once, for regulation is always generative, producing the object it claims merely to discover or to find in the social field in which it operates. Concretely, this means that we are not, as it were (merely) discriminated against on the basis of our sex. Power is more insidious than that: either discrimination is built into the very formulation of our sex, or enfranchisement is precisely the formative and generative principal of someone else's sex (Butler, 1996: 64).

It is the co-constitution of woman as subject and inequality that is of critical importance for my project. Hence, I contend that discourse analysis, theory production and critique are necessary, if not sufficient, conditions for transformation. Poststructuralist discourse analysis offers a set of tools by which one may 'analyse the operations of exclusion, erasure, foreclosure and abjection in the discursive construction of the subject' (Butler, 1993: 8). It is possible to challenge the status quo through the analysis of discourses and discursive practices because this analytic process displaces taken-for-granted concepts like 'man' and 'woman' by exposing how they are discursively constructed (Salih, 2002). Furthermore, by exploring the moments of failure in the recitation of norms and by highlighting the new formations which are produced through these failures, it might also be possible to identify avenues for feminist change. Such points have to be considered as openings, rather than pathways, to a predictable outcome because it is never possible to predict exactly what will be produced through our own discursive practices (Zerilli, 2008). Nevertheless, in these ways, discourse analysis as a method of inquiry does constitute a political intervention.

Conclusion

While there are stark tensions within feminist perspectives regarding the concepts of gender, difference, discourse and politics, these struggles constitute a productive field on which I draw in this thesis. They have provided a fruitful context and set of resources for investigating how gender is performed in the digital media sector, but also for assessing emerging discourses of difference and workforce diversity.

I began my discussion by considering the tensions within feminism between equality and difference feminist approaches. De Beauvoir and her successors' discussions of the link between gender, difference and in/equality pointed to two ways of viewing this relationship: the first assumes that there is a hierarchy of differences, the second considers the very nature of differentiation to be problematic. De Beauvoir's work has generated much debate within feminism particularly in discussions of women's difference. One way to move beyond these debates is to seek to understand the relationship between the material and the discursive through specific poststructuralist analyses. I have described the framing of the feminist poststructuralist approach I have adopted in this research project by drawing on the work of Butler. Butler's conception of the performativity of gender is based on the notion that discursive practices produce material relations. I have outlined in some detail what I take from Butler's work in the development of my research. In this approach there is no unitary subject, and the world is seen to be discursively produced. Invoking this perspective I assume that it is possible to understand material/discursive relations more fully by exploring the discursive practices in specific settings.

Having laid out my theoretical framing, my main question for exploration in my research became:

How is gender performed in the discursive field of the digital media sector in the North West of England during the period 2001-2007?

In the following chapter (Chapter 3), I review the research literature which explores gender and women's participation in the digital industries. This enables me to tease out a number of key areas for investigation within my research project. I present these as a series of articulations or ways of discussing the digital media sector and women's participation at the beginning of my chapter on methodology (Chapter 4).

CHAPTER 3

BEYOND MAPPING IN/EQUALITIES: THEORISING THE GENDER-TECHNOLOGY RELATION, CREATIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE DIGITAL INDUSTRIES

In this chapter I build on my theoretical framing for this project by reviewing the academic research literature related to women's participation in the digital industries. Research on this topic has expanded significantly over recent years and has gone beyond mapping in/equalities between men and women, to try to understand and explain the relationship between gender and technology. Liberal, radical and poststructuralist feminist approaches described in Chapter 2 frame this research and can be found in research investigating women's access to education and work, their choice to participate in technical work domains, how work is organised to meet women's needs, and the qualities that women may bring to the digital industries. This body of research literature provides the feminist academic context for my own research. However, my review highlights two important gaps which revolve around changing conceptions of work within the digital industries. First, while creativity has increasingly become a key concept in the digital industries as discussed in Chapter 1, this is not reflected in the feminist research exploring this area. Hence, in this chapter I briefly review research relating to creativity, creative work and gender, and link

these to my project as a first step to addressing this gap. Secondly, there is limited consideration of how an increasing attention to the value of workforce diversity and individual differences in creative work domains might shape changing gender relations in the digital industries. I examine the emergence of business cases for diversity in organisational literature and highlight some important questions which need to be addressed when considering accounts of women's participation in the digital industries. I conclude the chapter by outlining the main issues I take from the academic research literature into my research design (discussed in Chapter 4).

The gender/technology relation

Feminist research on gender/technology relations in the workplace emerged as a post-1980 phenomenon prompted in part by the increased proliferation of computing technologies (Sørensen, 2002). The field has expanded rapidly since that time (Adam, Howcroft, & Richardson, 2004; Stanworth, 2000; Wajcman, 2000) and draws from a broad range of analytic traditions including Socialist-Marxist theory of the labour process (see Wajcman, 2000 for discussion), critical studies of science and technology (Haraway, 1991a, b, 1997; Kuhn, 1970; Latour & Woolgar, 1979; Wakeford, 1997); eco-feminist critiques of technology (d'Eaubonne, 1974; Ruether, 1975) and the study of gender in technology work (Wajcman, 1991). Feminist discussions concerning gender and technology have generally adopted one of two perspectives, either celebrating the positive emancipatory potential of technology for women's lives, or identifying technology as a key factor in women's oppression (Wajcman, 1991).¹⁸ On the one hand, there are accounts of the opportunities that new technologies afford women, including those that highlight prospects for greater personal control over

¹⁸ A utopian approach to technology has also been championed by social theorists of the post-industrial society such as Alvin Toffler (1980), Barry Jones (1982), Andre Gorz (1982) and Daniel Bell (1973). More recently, authors including Anthony Giddens (1991, 1999) and Manuel Castells (1996) provide a more problematised view of this relationship while still assuming the potential liberation of humankind from manual labour and the dissolution of social division through emerging technologies.

reproduction (e.g. Firestone, 1970), reduction of time spent on domestic labour and changing patterns of paid work (e.g. Coyle, 1997; Plant, 1996). On the other hand, commentators have outlined the oppressive potential of emerging technologies when used by organisations to extend their control over employees (e.g. Benner, 2002; Bryant, 2000; Felstead et al., 2001).

Related to this utopian/dystopian split is a major distinction commonly made between liberal and radical feminist approaches to technology. On the topic of technology and employment, liberal feminist approaches tend to assume that technologies (and science) are neutral forces which, if properly applied, have the potential to improve women's lives. Within this framework, commentators and researchers argue for better access to technical training and employment for women, the deconstruction of traditional stereotypes of technical workers and the pursuit of equality in work and play (e.g. Newton, 1984). Hence, much of the empirical research based on this approach explores the established roles and life expectations for women and investigates how traditional gendered expectations and practices could be and are being challenged (e.g. Ahuja, 2002; Lee, 2005; Newton, 1984; Newton & Brocklesby, 1982).

While this research has been significant in identifying and opening up access to employment in some technological spheres, there are also some problems with this approach. Such accounts tend to place the responsibility for resolving gender inequalities on women who are required to adjust their thinking about stereotypes and personal expectations, to be pro-active in acquiring technological training and skills (e.g. Igbaria & Chidambaram, 1997) and, thus, to become more like their successful male counterparts in technical domains.

Other commentators have been even more optimistic, arguing that women have an affinity with particular technologies and that they can use these for their own ends (Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2007). This view is taken up by some theorists who advocate a cyber-feminist approach (e.g. Plant, 1996, 1997; Spender, 1996). While there is a

range of approaches within the broad field of cyber-feminism, all subscribe to the expectation that women might realise some form of emancipation and freedom through digital technologies. Some cyber-feminists have heralded technology as a liberatory medium for challenging and undermining traditional forms of sexuality, gender typing and binaries, and consumption within digital cyberspace (see Wajcman, 2007 for discussion). For example, Sherry Turkle (1995) has argued that online communication offers a site in which gender boundaries and identities traditionally linked with the physical body can be negotiated, and traditional forms of gender can be transgressed (see also Stone, 1996). From this perspective, an increasing reliance on digital communication technologies in organisations may open new employment possibilities to women.

This approach draws on a distinction between sex and gender in which gender is regarded as a social construction which is applied to female and male bodies. However, as I have discussed previously, from a performative view of gender, this distinction is untenable. Indeed, researchers have cast doubt on some of the more optimistic expectations about the potential of digital technologies to facilitate changing gender relations (e.g. O'Brien, 1999). Even if work is mediated via technology, it is embodied in the sense that it requires working bodies for its enactment. Thus, even in the digital industries, where the tools for work can be viewed as rather ethereal patterns of code, corporeal workers remain inscribed through gender norms (see Gatens, 1991 for discussion).¹⁹

In contrast to liberal and utopian understandings of technology, some radical feminist analysts have tended to regard technology as oppressive to women and as crucial in patriarchal structures (e.g. those taking an eco-feminist approach including

¹⁹ Moira Gatens (1991) develops the concept of the 'situated and imaginary body' as an analytical frame for exploring and transcending the sex/gender distinction. Gatens rejects the idea that 'the important effects of the historical and cultural specificity of one's lived experience is able to be altered, definitively, by consciously changing the material practices of the culture in question' (Gatens, 1991: 143).

d'Eaubonne, 1974; Merchant, 1980; Ruether, 1975). These commentators have tended to naturalise and celebrate women as different from men and to exalt traits which they consider to be innately or naturally feminine, including pacifism, caring and environmentalism. They argue either for the rejection of technology, or for the incorporation of 'women's ways' into scientific and technological fields in the hope of transforming these masculine domains.

Such argumentation informs some recent accounts of the feminisation of work and of women's potential contribution to the digital industries (e.g. Fondas, 1997; Panteli, et al., 2001). The notion that employment has been 'feminised' has been applied to findings of an apparent rising demand across many sectors for skills traditionally associated with women such as communication, support, caring, and networking, across a diverse set of work domains (e.g. Fondas, 1997). It has also been employed in analysing specific industries in which there has been a significant increase of women, thus altering the proportional representation of men and women. However, the impact of the feminisation processes in the workplace are highly contested within feminist analyses of work and organisation (Wajcman, 2006). The notion of the feminisation of work is discussed further in the following section.

Researchers who are critical of radical feminist theories of technology argue against the tendency towards essentialism within such interpretations and note their failure to explore the construction of concepts such as gender or nature (Scott, Semmens, & Willoughby, 2001). Moreover, such feminist approaches have been critiqued for tending towards technologically determinist arguments which obscure the social construction of technology (Grint & Gill, 1995; Kember, 1998).

There are some researchers who might be labelled as cyber-feminist, but who draw on poststructuralist ideas to explore the relationships between technology, bodies and social reality. For example, one of Donna Haraway's (Haraway, 1985, 1991a, b, 1997) contributions to feminist analysis of science and technology has been to emphasise that bodies and technology are not distinct. Indeed, Haraway notes that

our bodies are themselves technologies which have been shaped and produced through social relations. In her *Manifesto for Cyborgs*, Haraway (1985) neither rejects nor valorises technology but instead she considers technology as a political formation which contributes to the production of viable subjects. She describes the metaphor of the cyborg in the following comment:

A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction. The international women's movements have constructed 'women's experience', as well as uncovered or discovered this crucial collective object. This experience is a fiction and fact of the most crucial, political kind. Liberation rests on the construction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension, of oppression, and so of possibility. The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century. This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion (Haraway, 1985: 149).

In this commentary, Haraway destabilises the notion of the subject 'woman' and critiques technological determinist perspectives which see technology as shaping social relations. She draws from poststructuralist and postmodernist ideas in showing that all that is known, and can be known, is always already mediated in social relations of power and knowledge. Her analysis of science and technology demonstrates a strong commitment to the materiality of socio-technical relations: she posits the material machine/organism as a political formation. Thus, in contrast to some liberal and radical feminist approaches which are founded on notions of a unitary subject and which take women's experience as a political platform, Haraway sees the potential for transformation in the perpetual fluidity of identity, the social and technology. In this way, her analysis can be aligned to Butler's theory of performativity and it offers a way out of the confines of the debate about equality and difference approaches to theorising gender and technology.

Thus far I have distinguished liberal and radical feminist research which explores gender and technology relations. Although this division is blunt, it is useful because these two approaches figure prominently in feminist research on digital industries employment. However, as I have begun to suggest, there are also alternative approaches to gender/ technology relations which draw on poststructuralist

perspectives. I will consider this research in more detail in the following section in my discussion of gender, technology and paid work.

Gender, technology and work

There is a significant body of research which explores how gender inequalities are perpetuated in the digital industries. Such research can be categorised as attending to four main themes: women's access to the industry through possession of appropriate human capital, women's choice to work in these domains, work organisation and careers, and the recognition and value of workers and skills. I locate my own research in relation to these main themes.

Access to the industry and developing human capital

Early analyses of women's participation in technical areas of employment were typically based on liberal, access or equal opportunities frameworks. In such research, scientific, engineering and technological fields were regarded as male-dominated arenas, which women needed to gain access to, and invest in, through obtaining appropriate training (see Henwood, 2000 for critical discussion). It was assumed that once women had more or better training, and had gained relevant experience, they would have equal access to these technological work domains.

Retrospectively, such conceptualisations could be viewed as early contributions to human capital theory. Human capital theorists emphasise that it is the attributes of individual workers which determine their hireability. This framework is advanced in regard to gender inequalities by Magid Igbaria and Laku Chidambaram (1997) when they observe that: 'individuals are rewarded in their current jobs for their investment in education and job training' and that 'inequalities in career success results from differences in men and women's human capital' (p. 64). Much research, commentary and social policy have used and continue to use a human capital model which emphasises increases in women's access to technical education and work domains. Organisations such as Women into Science and Engineering (WISE) and Women into

Computing (WiC) in the UK, are advocates for this approach and their activities are supported, developed and sustained by many academics and activists (e.g. Newton, 1984; Nightingale et al., 2008; also see Women's Electronic Hall, WEVH, 2008). While this framework has highlighted discrimination and has turned attention to equal opportunities in this field, it assumes that technology and technical industries and organisations are neutral and non-gendered. Women are seen as needing to acquire specific skills which match those of their male counterparts in order to enter the industry. This framing can obscure the structural, institutional or discursive factors which contribute to and shape inequalities between men and women in technical work domains (Henwood, 2000).

As the digital industries have changed, so too have accounts of women's access based on their skills and attributes. As noted previously, the phrase 'feminisation of work' has been used to refer to the increasing demands in workplaces for social and emotional competencies traditionally associated with women and femininity (Beechey, 1988). While still relating to issues of access, such framing takes a more radical approach and argues for the incorporation of 'women's ways' into technical employment domains. For example, Nanette Fondas (1997) has identified an increasing advocacy of qualities traditionally seen as feminine, including interactive, relational and participative management styles. References to feminine skills and invocations of feminine competencies are now pervasive in the digital industries, which are noted for non-hierarchical and team-based work organisation (Peterson, 2007; Woodfield, 2000). In these contexts, it is predicted that women may have increased access to work in this field because of their 'feminine skills' (see Joshi & Kuhn, 2007 for critical discussion).

Of course, from a poststructuralist or anti-essentialist approach, such contentions can be critiqued for assuming that particular communication and social skills are essentially feminine (see for example Fondas, 1997; Metcalfe & Linstead, 2003). This sort of framing revolves around and consolidates two binaries: men

versus women and social versus technical capabilities. Moreover, the ‘feminisation’ of previously male dominated industries (e.g. general practice medicine, academia), in the form of increasing proportions of women workers has been associated with negative consequences such as declining relative wages (Catanzarite, 2003; Cooke-Reynolds & Zukewich, 2004; England, Allison, & Wu, 2007; Levanon, England, & Allison, 2007).

Despite the critique of essentialism, access-based approaches to women’s participation in technical work domains remain popular. Indeed, women’s access to the digital industries emerges as an important concept in Chapter 5 when I discuss the shifting skill expectations for digital media workers articulated in public policy documents and in my interviews. In recent years, a number of authors have proposed that while both men and women might have the required qualities to access employment in technical fields, they may have ‘different approaches, different interests’ (Muryn Kaminski & Reilly, 2004: 21) and, thus, make different choices for training and employment. This is seen to contribute to differences in participation rates in these industries. In the following section I consider research which foregrounds the notion of women’s choice.

Women’s choice

It has been argued that women could work in areas of digital technology production if they wanted to, but that they choose not to (Siann, 1997; Turkle, 1988; see also Wilson, 2003). This is the conclusion of a widely referenced project by Gerda Siann (1997) which sought to explore the factors involved in women’s choices about entering technology fields. Sherry Turkle (1988) has also made a related claim, arguing that women do not fear the technical nature of computing work, they are simply reticent to become involved in ‘geeky’ work environments in which they don’t feel they fit. Foregrounding choice in academic analyses of women’s participation in technical domains marked an important step in asserting women’s capacity for technical work. However, here again, women’s low participation rates in the digital

industries are commonly accounted for through reference to assumptions about naturalised differences which lead to varied preferences of women and men.

Research which assumes that technology is a masculine area and that girls and women need to be attracted to remain within the sector, tends to assume deficiencies in women (and girls) if they do not choose to enter this technological field (e.g. see Henwood, 1996, for a critical discussion of early work by Peggy Newton and colleagues about female engineers; Newton, 1984; Newton & Brocklesby, 1982). Furthermore in such research, contextual and institutional issues are often obscured. Thus, a focus on choice can be problematic without adequate recognition of the social processes which shape the choices made available to men and women. This is of concern because previous research has suggested that there may be significant racialised and national patterns around women's and girl's choices to participate in the digital industries. For example, unlike much research in Euro-American contexts (e.g. Mercier, Barron, & O'Connor, 2006; Rasmussen, 1997), Helen Derbyshire (2003) found no significant differences between male and female school-age children in Africa in regard to their desire to engage with computing technology. Derbyshire argued that African girls and women are absent from the digital industries not because they cannot or that they do not want to participate, but because male children tend to dominate the limited ICT resources available in their schools. Roli Varma (2007) also identified the importance of context on women's choice in her analysis of race and class in the digital industries in the USA. She found that women from minority ethnic groups did not see 'geek' culture as a deterrent to establishing careers in high-tech industries because the financial rewards and elevated social status of working in this area out-weighed this negative association. Other US researchers have also identified differences in the ways in which Black and White workers respond to the 'geeky' or nerdy images of the digital industries (Eglash, 2002; Eglash & Bleecker, 2001; Stephen & Levin, 2005).

My focus in this thesis is specifically on the discursive performativity of gender in relation to workers in the digital media sector, and I do not explore issues of race, ethnicity or nationality in detail. However, my assumption is that gender and race are constructed simultaneously through discursive practices within the digital media sector. For example, a public policy contention I explore in Chapter 6 is that the digital industries need to be made more attractive to women. This type of articulation assumes a white woman subject with sufficient access, but not the desire, to engage in digital technology work. As the research outlined above hints, this assumption is unlikely to be valid for all women in all contexts. In this thesis, I critically approach concepts such as 'skill' and 'choice' and see these as produced through chains of discursive practices. Of course, more research is required to explore inequalities and power relations in the digital industries as they operate at the intersection of gender, race, class, age and sexuality (see discussion of intersectionality in Brah & Phoenix, 2004; McCall, 2005; Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

There has been a growing body of research since the mid 1990s which investigates the gender relations in computing and technology work from a more critical and mainly discursive perspective (Sørensen, 2002). An excellent example of such research is provided by Sue Clegg and Deborah Trayhurn (1999) who sought to 'move on from the old debate about women and computing' (Clegg & Trayhurn, 1999: 76). These authors focussed on women's choices in their study of digital industries, but they were interested not only in what choices are made, but also in how women understand their choices, on what basis they make their career decisions and with what predicted outcome. In so doing, Clegg and Trayhurn shifted the spotlight from women to the digital industries themselves and raised questions about why the industry is unattractive and perceived of as inhospitable to girls and women. I consider these issues further in the following section.

By reviewing feminist studies of women's access and choice within technical employment domains, it is clear that there are often conflicting perspectives which

emphasise issues of equality or of difference in relation to women workers. A critical review of research by theorists such as Newton, Siann and Turkle which highlight notions of appropriate skills, psychology and fit raise some important concerns. In particular, questions emerge regarding how normalised digital industry workers are constructed, and how women workers emerge as a distinct group amongst such workers. My feminist poststructuralist approach is apposite because it seeks to explore the social practices which produce such working subjects. For example, I explore issues of women's access to work with reference to the changing skill requirements of the digital industries in Chapter 5 and in Chapter 6, I consider issues of choice and the 'fit' of women workers in the digital industries through an analysis of representations of workers in recruitment and careers literature.

Work organisation and careers

In addition to issues of access and choice, retention and advancement of women within the digital industries have also been well researched (Ahuja, 2002). One of the most prominent debates concerning gender relations in the digital industries is centred on the organisation of work practices and careers. Within this debate, attention is focussed on the relationship between broad organisational structures and individual workers. As I noted in Chapter 1, researchers have argued that there has been a decline in women's participation in the digital industries since the mid 1990s and that women are leaving these industries in disproportionately high numbers (Panteli, et al., 2001; Platman & Taylor, 2004). Indeed, UK researcher, Alison Adam, and her colleagues (Adam, et al., 2006) suggest that retaining women in the industry is just as difficult as attracting and recruiting them. It is now recognised that, in the promotion of women's participation in the digital industries, 'Saying "welcome" is not enough' (Miller, et al., 2000: 379).

In her analysis of careers in IT, Manju Ahuja (2002) identifies a number of critical issues which limit women's equal participation in that field. Ahuja argues that low rates of women entering and developing careers in the IT industry are a function

of social and structural barriers including social expectations, work/family conflict, informal networks, occupational culture, lack of role models and institutional structures. In response to the identification of barriers to participation of women workers in the digital industries, researchers have recently called for change in institutional structures, organisation and work processes (e.g. Gibb & Waight, 2005; Grey & Healy, 2004; Raghuram, 2004). For example, Grey and Healy (2004) in their exploration of career and work experiences of what they call a group of 'high status, highly-skilled women IT contractors' found that structural issues of childcare, work/life balance practices and organisational policies influence women's decisions about whether to enter and whether to remain working in the digital industries. Hence, the provision of childcare and initiatives such as mentoring and continuing education programmes are seen as possible solutions which address the high rates of attrition amongst women in the industry (Gibb & Waight, 2005; Grey & Healy, 2004; Raghuram, 2004; Stephen & Levin, 2005).

Because of acknowledged difficulties in balancing employment and domestic responsibilities including childcare, professional women and groups promoting and supporting women in the workforce have been particularly strong advocates of flexible work arrangements (e.g. Catalyst, a US member organisation which works with businesses to promote equal opportunities for women in workplaces; Kropf, 1999). Innovations in digital technologies have facilitated non-standard working patterns such as flexitime and home working and this has fuelled expectations that the digital industries could be a sector in which changes in work organisation benefit women workers. Nevertheless, it is striking that this optimistic view that digital communication technologies will make women's lives easier presupposes that it is women, rather than men, who should take primary responsibility for childcare.

Arguments have been mounted suggesting that individuals who are put under pressure in traditional work arrangements are likely to experience pressure in new, and apparently, flexible arrangements (Benner, 2002; Bryant, 2000). In a discussion

of the situation of ICT home workers, Annie Phizacklea and Carol Wolkowitz note that 'the technology itself does not guarantee a more agreeable, autonomous or better rewarded way of working at home' (Phizacklea & Wolkowitz, 1995: 122; see also Stanworth, 2000). On the one hand, flexibility can be related to employee choice, increased freedom and individual control of their own work. On the other hand, flexibility can also be associated with exploitation and with an extension of the external control of employees' work and home lives (Felstead, et al., 2001). The variation in outcomes of flexibility programmes for workers has been found to be linked to workers' organisational status, market value and vulnerability.²⁰

Research which argues for changes in work organisation in order to accommodate the working needs of women is important and useful in moving beyond the 'woman problem'. Nevertheless, without adequate consideration of assumptions about women's roles, such research can also be problematic. For example, Ahuja (2002) notes critically that the perception of women as family-oriented and unwilling to travel or work late has hampered their chances of being hired and/or promoted in the area of information technology. However, paradoxically she does not explore or critique these generalised and gendered perceptions. Instead, she calls for changes in workplace practices so that family demands do not inhibit women's participation and progress in their chosen field. In short, Ahuja advocates policies which maintain, and may even reinforce, gendered norms for the working lives of men and women (see Liu & Wilson, 2001 for similar kinds of explanations). In this way, problematic assumptions about men's and women's roles are mobilised to explain the differentiated progression of these groups of workers within the digital industries.

Hence, while family-friendly work policies or flexible working arrangements through the use of ICTs may result in some positive changes, without consideration of

²⁰ For an in-depth analysis of home-working practices in both manufacturing and ICT work see research by Felstead and colleagues (Felstead & Jewson, 1996, 2000; Felstead, et al., 2001; Phizacklea & Wolkowitz, 1995).

gendered roles and expectations related to childcare and domestic labour, women may remain disadvantaged in employment (e.g. Gerson, 2002; Morehead, 2001). Research is needed to interrogate how women workers are discursively constructed, and how work is gendered. Such interrogation should explore how individuals and structures are co-constitutive rather than view these as separate. For example in Ahuja's study, she might have asked: through what discursive practices are women constructed as family-oriented?

Discourse and women's participation in the digital industries

I turn now to research informed by poststructuralist theory (including discourse theory and theories of subjectivity) in order to find ways of overcoming dualistic framings of individual free choice and deterministic social structures (e.g. Clegg & Trayhurn, 1999; Clegg, Trayhurn, & Johnson, 2000; Henwood, 1998; Stepulevage & Plumeridge, 1998). Poststructuralist theorising of gender relations in technological work is important because it attends to the discursive claims made about men and women workers.

There is a growing body of research which regards gender as a set of dynamic and everyday relations within technical work domains. This work has emerged out of the criticisms of earlier analyses of women's participation in these areas, as well as from the ongoing development of feminist poststructuralist theory (e.g. Sørensen, 2002). In studies of formal education, work organisation and career patterns, theorists have undertaken sensitive, complex and theoretically engaged research which tackles issues of access, the development of suitable workers, choice, work organisation and career structures in technical work domains (e.g. Perrons, 2003). The sophisticated investigations undertaken by researchers such as Flis Henwood (Henwood, 1996, 1998, 2000), Sue Clegg and Deborah Trayhurn (Clegg, 2001; Clegg & Trayhurn, 1999; Clegg, et al., 2000) and Linda Stepulevage and Sarah Plumeridge (Stepulevage, 1997; Stepulevage & Plumeridge, 1998) have all highlighted the problematic nature of generalised accounts of women's participation in scientific/technological education

and employment. Moreover, since I began my research for this thesis, there has been a perceptible shift towards investigations of the conceptualisations of workers in the digital industries and of the kinds of skills they are thought to possess. Hence, there has been increasing investigation of how jobs, roles and skills in this work domain are gendered through discursive processes (e.g. Hollowell, et al., 2006; Kelan, 2006; Peterson, 2007; Whitehouse & Preston, 2005; Woodfield, 2000).

A recent example of such research is Esther Ruiz Ben's (2007) study of the gendering of professional standards in the software industry in Germany. Ruiz Ben explores the mutual constitution of professional and gendered identities within software development work. She found that:

Technical affinity, technology concepts and their relative importance play a crucial role in defining expertise in software development and in gendering tasks. The specialisation of tasks in larger enterprises leads women to enter fields that are more socially and externally oriented, those determined through contact with and understanding of customer and end-user preferences (Ruiz Ben, 2007: 326).

Ruiz Ben found that the highest participation rates of women were to be found in the largest organisations, but that women in these organisations generally took up roles relating to customers and users, and which tended not to have a technical skill basis. She found fewer women in smaller and less professionalised organisations where workers assumed more heterogeneous roles. Ruiz Ben's research signals the ways in which the labelling of skills as 'feminine' or 'masculine' may intensify occupational segregation in the digital industries, particularly in larger organisations which support a range of specialist roles. In Chapter 5, I consider discursive practices which identify shifting skill requirements in the digital industries and I explore the relationship between accounts of idealised workers and the skills women are seen to bring to the sector.

Although attention has increasingly turned to the discursive construction of the technical worker in contrast with the communicative and social worker (e.g. Kelan, 2005; Ruiz Ben, 2007), there has been little research on the construction of *creative* workers in the digital industries. For example, while Wendy Faulkner (2000) has

suggested that creativity is an important concept in software engineering, pointing to a significant difference between creative developers and test/integrators of software, she does not explore the concept of creativity further. Similarly, other feminist theorists have highlighted the importance of creativity within digital industries work without exploring the concept in relationship to the gendering of digital industry work (e.g. Kelan, 2005, 2006; Woodfield, 2000). These more recent analyses suggest that there may be important convergences between conceptualisations of technical expertise and creativity, and of creativity and social ability in the digital industries.

Ros Gill (2002) offers one of the few analyses which relates images of the creative worker in the digital media sector²¹ to patterns of gender inequality. She describes the image of the digital media sector in the following commentary:

The now standard tropes of representation include a trendy warehouse setting in the cultural quarter of a city, a group of young people coded as 'diverse' (male, female, black, white, gay, straight) and as 'creative' (untidy, chaotic, obsessive), who work long and unusual hours (e.g. getting up at lunchtime and then working through the night) and relate to each other in a casual and informal manner (Gill, 2002: 70–71).

Gill argues that this image of the diverse and creative worker in the digital media sector is often contrasted with that of a 'previous generation of technologically literate IT workers (e.g. programmers and software designers) who had a distinctly more 'nerdy' or 'anoraky' image' (Gill, 2002: 70). Moreover, while other academic researchers have generally not explored this apparent shift, the changing image of the digital media sector has been heralded by policy makers as enhancing the prospects for the increased participation of women in this sector (e.g. DTI, 2005a). This expectation is linked to moves away from a masculine, nerdy or 'geeky' image within digital industry workers (Margolis & Fisher, 2002).

In her study, Gill (2002) sets out to explore the more negative experiences of individual workers which have been obscured by the mythology associated with the

²¹ Gill refers to the 'new media sector' in her analysis, which I take to involve the same kinds of work which I designate under the heading of the digital media sector (as discussed in Chapter 1).

changing characterisation of digital media work. Her argument is that there is a disjunction between the rhetoric and the reality of the sector such that beneath the veneer of its 'hip, cool and equal' (Gill, 2002: 86) image, a range of less desirable work practices pervade, particularly in relation to gender inequalities (see Moore, Griffiths, & Richardson, 2005 for related discussion). Gill argues that the positive features of the industry which are widely endorsed, including informal work practices, flexibility and the pre-eminence of meritocratic and individualistic discourse, produce new patterns of gender inequality in the sector.

The concerns raised by Gill regarding the relationship between shifting discourses and inequalities in the digital media sector also underpin my research. I analyse how accounts of work and workers in the digital industries are performative of gender inequalities. To undertake this work, I consider two pivotal concepts which have emerged in shifting accounts of the digital media sector but which have not been adequately analysed in research exploring gender, technology and work. These are the concepts of creativity and of workforce diversity which I discuss in the following two sections.

Gender and creative work

The term 'creative' has been used variably in reference to the digital industries. It is frequently used as an adjective to denote particular kinds of people (a creative worker), objects (creative product) and processes (creative thinking), as well as in descriptions of more collective concepts (e.g. creative economy, creative industries). But, it has also been appropriated as a noun to refer to individuals working in design or artistic roles (e.g. She is a creative). The term 'creativity' can be used to designate a set of innate capacities identified with an individual, as much public policy commentary from UK Labour governments since 1997 has posited when linking economic growth and the creativity of specific individual workers (e.g. Florida, 2002; Ray & Anderson, 2000). Alternatively, creativity can be viewed as an identifiable and

shared process occurring within groups, organisations and industries (e.g. Andersen & Lorenzen, 2005; Bustamante, 2004; Cunningham, 2002; Fleming, 2003; Garnham, 2005; Taylor, 2004).

It is not my intention to evaluate the various uses of the terms 'creative' and 'creativity' in this thesis. Rather, I explore how these terms are constructed through discursive practices, particularly with reference to women workers. While theoretical and political interest in creativity as an economic driver has increased rapidly in recent years (Osborne, 2003), there has been little consideration of its relationship to gender. In order to understand the gendering of creativity in the digital industries, it is important to consider the two primary foci found in public policy rhetoric: the individual creative worker and the collective process of creativity. In the following sections, I briefly examine these before turning to the relation between gender and creativity as it has figured in recent academic research.

Creative workers

How to 'harness' creative workers has become an important focus in public policy around the digital industries in Britain (e.g. Heeley & Pickard, 2002). But conceptions of specific kinds of creative worker should be seen as cultural and historical constructions (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000b). The ways in which attributes of workers are identified and valued, and expectations about the kinds of activities in which they are expected to engage change over time.

Over the last 150 years, there has been a stream of exploration focused on individuals who now might be labelled 'creative workers' and who are engaged in collecting, synthesising and producing symbolic and cultural meaning. This includes early accounts of the middle classes such as Karl Marx's (1867) analysis of the petite bourgeoisie, Alvin Gouldner's (1979) study of the intellectual and technical intelligentsia, and Barbara and John Ehrenreich's (1979) investigation of the professional managerial class. In 1959, Peter Drucker (1959) coined the term 'knowledge worker' to designate an individual who trades in data, collects, transfers

or translates information and who generates new ideas. This term has been used extensively in popular commentary and academic studies of organisation and management since the second half of the 20th century and is often paired with discussions of work in the creative economy (e.g. Christopherson, 2004; Yigitcanlar, Baum, & Horton, 2007). Critical of the notion of the ‘knowledge worker’, Mats Alvesson (2001) sets out to problematise the concept of knowledge by dislodging it from a reified functionalist framing in which it is seen as a discernable individualistic resource. He highlights that, because knowledge is dependent on social recognition, it must be perceived and recognised and thus workers must ‘nurture’ an image of being knowledgeable. Caution regarding the reification of knowledge and creativity of workers is pertinent to my research and I discuss this in detail in Chapter 7.

In an alternative account of workers who are involved in providing symbolic goods and services, acclaimed French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) identified a group of workers he called ‘cultural intermediaries’ (Bourdieu, 1984: 359). He contended that this group of workers includes those in the media, entertainment, the arts and advertising who are regarded as intermediaries between cultural production and consumption (Negus, 2002). It is important to note that it was the processes of cultural production with which such individuals are involved that interested Bourdieu (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). It is somewhat ironic then, that as his theory has become popular in sociology and cultural studies (Featherstone, 1991; Negus, 2002), the figure of the cultural intermediary has been taken up in a way that re-centres the individual worker within a romantic framing of creation (Negus & Pickering, 2004).

Dissatisfied with early theories of knowledge workers, Robert Reich, a prominent theorist of work in the post-industrial context, has argued that knowledge per se is largely without value unless it is used creatively (Reich, 1993). Reich described a new group of workers he called ‘symbolic analysts’ whose work he sees as involving the identification, translation and manipulation of symbols, images, information and meaning (Reich, 1993: 178). Reviewing Reich’s work, Pasi Pyöriä (2005) argues that

the most important criteria cited for knowledge work ‘are centred on the symbolic content of task structures that...allow for creative application, manipulation or extension of knowledge in organizationally contingent settings’ (Pyöriä, 2005: 122). Pyöriä argues that, while often only implicit, creativity is integral to conceptualisations of knowledge work.

References to creative workers have come to stand alongside, or supplement the references to knowledge workers or cultural intermediaries in Euro-American economies. For example, Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson (2000) have identified a prominent group of ‘cultural creatives’ emerging within the economy of the USA in the late 20th century. Similarly, Richard Florida (Florida, 2002, 2005), and Charles Leadbeater and Kate Oakley (Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999, 2001) have employed notions of the ‘creative class’, and ‘cultural’ and ‘knowledge entrepreneurs’, respectively. Florida (2002) identifies the ‘creative class’ as a group of individuals ranging from lawyers, engineers and software developers, to musicians, DJ’s and artists, who are considered to be contributing to economic growth in regions and cities through their intellect and creativity. For Leadbeater and Oakley (Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999, 2001), ‘cultural’ and ‘knowledge’ entrepreneurs are ‘new breeds’ of young and independent workers in areas of design, music, fashion, computer graphics and games, film and television.

Tracing more than a century of categorisation and analyses of workers who engage in processing and transforming information and knowledge, highlights the fluid and historical contingency of the figure of the creative worker as s/he appears in the digital industries. It also invites poststructuralist questions regarding the formation of the subject position of the creative digital media worker through discursive practices. I propose that the figure of the creative worker which I later identify in much recent public policy documents in the UK (see Chapter 7), can be read as a sign of the times that may be performative of what it purports to describe. Hence, my brief review of academic research on this figure raises questions regarding

the kinds of qualities that creative workers are said to possess, about the ‘fit’ of women into a class of creative digital media workers and about how accounts of creativity in digital media work might influence women’s participation in such work.

Creativity as a process

The concept of creativity has traditionally been individualised and associated with ‘genius’ and intellectual prowess (Battersby, 1989; Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). As Jay Seitz (2003) has argued, the ‘genius view’ has been an important lens for discussions of creativity, implying that ‘(a) creative persons have unusual and phenomenal thought processes, and (b) these thought processes are largely unconscious and operate through flashes of insight’ (p. 385). This paradigm is exemplified in much psychological research on creativity in which a variety of cognitive, affective and motivational processes of individuals have been identified as important in the creative process (Mumford, 2003; Russ, 2003). Nevertheless, the very terms ‘creative industries’ and ‘creative organisations’ used by UK public policymakers since 1997 imply that creative work is embedded in a series of networked relationships involving structures, processes and a variety of workers. For example UK researchers of the creative industries, Keith Negus and Michael Pickering (2004), highlight the networked nature of creativity in their analysis of the music industry in the UK. These authors demonstrate the ways in which the attribution of creativity, and the identification of creative individuals, are embedded in processes of recognition and valuation which are contextually determined (Negus & Pickering, 2004). Moreover, they insist that, within the creative industries, creativity is never an isolated act of an individual, observing that:

An individual can no more realise the creation and exhibition of a movie than be able to manufacture and make function (with water and electricity) a washing machine. Hence, all judgements about the value and possibilities of creativity inevitably involve consideration of the human relationships and social processes through which an individual or group may have come to realise a particular creation (Negus & Pickering, 2004: 56).

Here, Negus and Pickering emphasise that creativity is a social process. They challenge established (predominantly psychological) theories of creativity as

individual capacity. Their framing is important for my thesis research because, as I will discuss below, individualised accounts of skill and talent underpin many gendered notions of creativity. Moreover, if creativity is seen exclusively as an attribute of specific workers, there is a need to consider what kinds of workers are seen to have capacity for creativity.

In the last two decades there has been a limited, though significant, effort by some researchers to dispel individualised genius myths found in psychological research (e.g. Howe, 1999; Weisberg, 1993). Prominent creativity theorists Teresa Amabile (Amabile, 1996, 2001) and Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1996), have both proposed models of creativity which allude to individual capacity for creativity but which also highlight the social processes which facilitate creativity.

Teresa Amabile has developed a considerable body of work around the investigation of the concept of creativity within organisations and workplaces. Her major contribution has been to map the non-talent components of creativity, i.e. the components which cannot be categorised as 'innate' or be attributed to 'raw' individual talent or genius (Amabile, 1996, 2001). Amabile identifies learnt skills, processes of work and thinking and 'intrinsic task motivation' as the three key components of creativity. She argues that each of these elements can be influenced by contextual and social factors (Amabile, 2001).

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) concurs with Amabile, outlining the critical conditions for creativity. Training, motivation, and perseverance are on this author's list of factors which he regards as contributing to creativity. Csikszentmihalyi emphasises the critical importance of recognition by social peers of a product or of an individual as 'creative'. He argues that, without social agreement, it becomes difficult to argue that something or someone is creative. Thus, creativity has increasingly been theorised as interdependent with reference to factors including social context, resources, and support. Furthermore, creative solutions have been found to be incremental and cumulative and built on successive rounds of testing and rejecting

ideas. They are seen as worked out through engagement with others (historical and present) in specific contexts (Seitz, 2003).

In regards to organisational contexts, collaboration between individuals has been identified as important in promoting creativity (Abra, 1994). Richard Hackman (1987), a well-known researcher of organisational creativity, argues that input factors influence how groups interact and operate, which in turn affects creative group outputs. The proposal is that the specific ingredients involved in a group process, including task complexity, the diversity of group members (Hackman, 1987) and the type of work context and organisation (Oldham & Cummings, 1996) will shape the process and its creative outcomes. Workforce diversity is not only seen as an input factor that might promote creative work processes in organisations (Bilton, 2007; Hackman, 1987; Leonard & Swap, 1999; Moss-Kanter, 1983; Mumford, 2003), but it is also a concept which has become associated with women's participation in the labour market. I explore the concept of workforce diversity further after I briefly discuss the relationship between power, gender and creativity.

Power, gender and creativity

From a poststructuralist perspective, concepts like technical skill, creativity and creative workers are discursively constructed through social interaction and produced in and through relations of power. While a number of authors including Amabile (Amabile, 1996, 1999, 2001), Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and Negus and Pickering (2004) suggest that creativity is socially constructed, there has been limited probing of the power relations around notions of creative work. For example, Negus and Pickering (2004) provide an excellent discussion of the industry involved in recognising and valuing creativity through institutions, individuals and flows of information, but they do not fully address inequality and power in these areas. Even with the burgeoning of critical analyses of the creative industries and creative economy (Banks, 2007; see for example recent special issues of *Creativity and Innovation Management*, Jeffcut & Pratt, 2002; and *Cultural Studies*, Nixon & Du

Gay, 2002), there has been little analysis of power and/or gender relations. Factors such as gender, class, race, age and sexuality are often ignored or superficially glossed over.

Accounts of creativity and creative work in the UK economy are generally framed in gender-neutral terms. For example, gender neutral accounts of creativity are found in the UK public policy materials introduced in Chapter 1, in which creativity is seen to be universal and distributed widely across populations. Indeed, the influential academic and consultant, Richard Florida, has declared that 'creativity is the great leveller — it defies gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and outward appearance' (Florida, 2009: online source). Nevertheless, other commentators have argued that there is a hidden gender subtext within the dominant discourses around creativity (Eisler & Montuori, 1995). Riane Eisler and Alfonso Montuori refer to the fact that the majority of psychological theories of creativity have been developed with reference to men because, traditionally, the recognised geniuses in the fields of science, mathematics, fine art, and theatre have been men (see also Battersby, 1989). The failure to consider how gender relations influence conceptualisations of genius has led to some problematic claims about the innate relationship between masculinity and creativity. One such claim was provided by the well-known theorist of creativity, Hans Eysenck, who has boldly claimed: 'Creativity, particularly at the highest level, is closely related to gender; almost without exception, genius is found only in males (for whatever reason!)' (Eysenck, 1995: 127).

Despite the general neglect of gender relations within analyses of creative work, there have been a few notable commentaries outside of organisational or political economy studies which I have found useful. Writing from a humanities perspective, Christine Battersby (1989) explores gender and genius, providing a particularly engaging analysis of the historical construction of the figure of the male genius in European fine arts and literature. Battersby argues that, since the time of ancient Rome, the notion of 'genius' as human excellence has been modelled on the male

individual. However she contends that, as ideas of genius shifted in later periods (particularly in the Romantic period) to incorporate qualities which were traditionally associated with femininity, such as emotionality and sensitivity, these attributes were seen to require male sexual energy rather than being associated with women. Battersby's analysis demonstrates that a gender hierarchy was maintained even while there were shifts in the conceptualisation of creativity and genius in European arts and literature in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Battersby's arguments have resonance in my consideration of shifts within the digital industries which highlight its creative rather than its technical features. Her work is particularly important because while there has been much attention to the gender/technology relation within previous research investigating women's participation in the digital industries, there has been limited exploration of the gender/creativity relationship.

There has been some recent research which explores the figure of the creative worker in the creative industries and takes into account gender relations (Banks & Milestone, 2007; McRobbie, 1998, 2002a; Nixon, 2003; Tams, 2002). For example, Angela McRobbie has explored the gendering of the British fashion design industry. McRobbie identified a sharp gender division in subject choices in art schools in Britain. Subjects attributed higher status, including the 'fine art' of painting were dominated by male students, whereas areas considered less artistic, such as fashion and textiles, were identified as feminine and female students predominated in these courses. While McRobbie explores choice, she also considers how and why creative art fields are gendered.

Sean Nixon and Ben Crewe (Nixon, 2003; Nixon & Crewe, 2004) and Elly Tams (Tams, 2002, 2003) have also researched issues of gender and creativity in the UK creative industries. Research from these authors has demonstrated the ways in which creatives are valued for characteristics which are assumed to be masculine traits. Tams (2002), for example, highlights the pervasive use of the concept of 'autonomy'

in recent accounts of the work of ‘creative entrepreneurs’ and she argues that the ideal worker in this field is generally constructed as ‘autonomous’ and male. More recently, Mark Banks and Katie Milestone (2007) have noted in their study of the UK digital media sector that traditionalised gendered family roles are appropriated in this sector as an organisational logic for work practices. These examples of critical research underscore the importance of investigating how a shifting emphasis towards *creative* work within the digital industries might influence gender relations. Moreover, this issue should be explored with reference to the increasing deployment of notions of difference and workforce diversity in this field. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, the making of difference is at the heart of the concept of gender. Below I argue that the notions of creativity and of gender are inextricably tied into the concept of workforce diversity in the digital media sector (I pursue these issues in more detail in Chapters 7 and 8).

Workforce diversity and the ‘business case’

In Chapter 1, I argued that UK public policy regarding the development of a creative economy linked a social inclusion agenda for increased diversity in the workforce to the promotion of economic growth. Such a ‘dual agenda’ (Oakley, 2006) has developed in concert with a growing legitimacy of workforce diversity as a business concern during the 1990s (Proudford & Nkomo, 2006; Wise & Tschirhart, 2000). For example, reports of the increasing participation of ethnic minorities, women and older workers in the US labour market focused attention on how organisations might deal with, accommodate, but also benefit from, increasing workforce diversity (e.g. Judy, D’Amico, & Geipel, 1997).²²

In this regard, there are two distinct approaches to workforce diversity within organisational research and practice (Zanoni & Janssens, 2003). The first approach

²² Deborah Litvin (2006) argues that although the study by Judy et al. (1997) brought attention to diversity issues, there were many errors in their data collection and analysis.

emphasises power relations between groups and focuses on specific groups who have traditionally been targets of discrimination, including women, minoritised ethnicities and disabled workers. The second approach is broader and it downplays power relations between groups in order to focus on inclusiveness (Hays-Thomas, 2004). This approach was clearly articulated by an early theorist of workforce diversity, Roosevelt Thomas (1991), who argued that:

Diversity includes everyone: It is not something that is defined by race or gender. It extends to age, personal and corporate background, education, function and personality. It includes lifestyle, sexual preference, geographic origin, tenure with the organisation...and management and non-management (Thomas, 1991: 10).

Within this broad approach, every individual is seen as distinctive or different (Zanoni & Janssens, 2003) and attention is turned to explorations of how to manage individual differences effectively (Nkomo & Taylor Cox, 1999).

These two approaches to workforce diversity are distinguishable in that the first can be associated with a social justice orientation, and the second generally takes a business orientation which seeks to explore how to manage diversity amongst workers for the benefit of the organisation (Wrench, 2005). I will describe each of these approaches in turn and go on to demonstrate how and why the slippage and overlapping of the two is important for my research project.

The social justice approach to workforce diversity can be characterised as following on from the earlier equal opportunity (EO) and affirmative action (AA)²³ initiatives in employment emerging in many countries since the 1960s. Such initiatives were designed to promote equality for marginalised social groups, particularly women and members of minoritised ethnic groups. In many cases, equality for these and other minority groups of workers became institutionally guaranteed through legislation around concepts of equal pay for equal work and anti-

²³ Affirmative action refers to policies and practices developed to redress inequality based on discrimination experienced by particular groups (largely minoritised ethnic groups and women). Often affirmative action involves targeted or preferential recruitment or development of particular groups to promote their equal participation in education and employment.

discrimination in numerous countries, including the USA, the UK, New Zealand, Australia and Canada.

EO initiatives are closely aligned with liberal feminist approaches which have sought equality in access and opportunity for women. However, many organisations have tended to implement only the minimal practices required under legal EO regulations (e.g. Cockburn, 1991; Liff, 1996; Webb, 1997), thus contributing only partial and often weak influences on equalities in the workplace (Dickens, 1999). Sonia Liff notes that EO strategies are generally oriented towards formal procedural change of behaviour, rather than addressing entrenched beliefs and attitudes which are crucial in the maintenance of inequalities (Liff, 1999). In addition, more radical initiatives for equality (such as AA policies implemented mainly in the USA, but also elsewhere), have attracted a considerable backlash and criticism. Claims about reverse racism and sexism or about favouritism towards marginalised groups have been mobilised in such backlash (Litvin, 2006). Backlash commentators suggest that individuals should be valued on the basis of their competence and merit alone, without reference to social or demographic groupings.

In contrast with EO initiatives, diversity approaches offered a new way of thinking about participation of workers who were identified as other than the normalised, white male worker. Invoking the concept of diversity was seen by some as a way of stepping out of the mire of negative reactions to EO and AA and of avoiding the concept fatigue associated with catch-all terms like 'equal opportunities' (Kirton & Greene, 2005). For some, diversity approaches seemed to offer new ways of conceptualising quality employment for all (see Ahmed, 2006a for critical discussion).

While invoking social justice ideals remains an important strand of some approaches to diversity in organisations, increasingly workforce diversity is explicitly discussed in and through business case arguments. Business cases for diversity describe the benefits to productivity and profitability that a diverse group of workers

may bring to organisations. Concerns about changing workforce demography and about criticisms of earlier EO initiatives have contributed to the proliferation of business case approaches to diversity in the USA since the 1990s (Litvin, 2006) and, since then, across the globe (Humphries & Grice, 1995; Jones, Pringle, & Shepherd, 2000). In countries including Australia, the UK and New Zealand, the concept of managing diversity within organisations has had considerable airing in both public and private sectors, and amongst both equality specialists and academic researchers (Ahmed, 2006a; Jones, 2004). In a recent review of workforce diversity reporting in 22 large European companies, Viki Holton (2005) has contended that the business case for diversity is the primary means through which organisations will make changes which involve enhancing and valuing diversity. The use of business case arguments for managing diversity in organisations has become predominant and constitutes the mainstream approach to researching and discussing workforce diversity.

Critical theorist Alison Konrad (2003) contends that there are three basic business case arguments used for the promotion of diversity within organisations. First, as she explains, some advocates for the business case argue that, in order to secure the broadest possible talent pool for recruitment, organisations need to attract and accommodate workers from all backgrounds. The second argument Konrad identifies relates to the need for a diverse workforce from which market intelligence of a broad client base can be developed. The third common argument found in the majority of business case arguments for diversity revolves around claims that diverse groups of individuals working together outperform more homogenous groups in problem-solving, innovation and creativity (see for example, Gilbert, Stead, & Ivancevich, 1999; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). It is this third argument which is of particular interest for my research. Because, as I noted in Chapter 1, public policy calls for greater participation of women in the UK digital industries have been made through arguments which outline the creative benefits for organisations of diverse

workforces (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Millar & Jagger, 2001). Yet, there has been very little critical analysis of the connection between claims regarding the benefits of diversity in organisations and work in the digital industries (although see Griffiths et al., 2005; Griffiths et al., 2007). Moreover, while enhanced creativity is a crucial component of business cases for diversity (Konrad, 2003), there are few studies which consider this argument from a critical perspective. I develop such an analysis in Chapter 8.

A business case approach to diversity merges ideas of individual merit and competence with the acknowledgement that there are differences amongst workers. Deborah Litvin (1997) has argued that in this approach the term 'diversity' becomes a highly flexible term which is employed by organisations and mainstream diversity researchers as either an individualised or a collective term. An individualist approach to workforce diversity, as advocated in the UK by prominent diversity researchers Rajvinder (Binna) Kandola and Johanna Fullerton (1994), emphasises individual characteristics and needs, rather than the shared characteristics of social groupings based on gender, race, class, age or sexuality. In contrast, managing diversity advocates have also been criticised for employing essentialist conceptualisations of identity groups. In this latter case, critics point to managing diversity approaches in which employees are identified as representatives of particular reference groups and are then assumed to share stereotypical characteristics of that group (Konrad, 2003; Zanoni & Janssens, 2003). This type of approach is clearly apparent in business cases for increasing women's participation in particular sectors, occupations or roles (e.g. Campbell & Minguez-Vera, 2008; Deavenport, 2003; Stephenson, 2004). In such examples, social justice concerns for greater gender equality are overlaid by the building of a business case for employing and supporting women workers. In this and other instances, social justice and business arguments for diversity may overlap, shift and/or slide across each other.

The malleability and mobility of the term 'diversity' have been found to help sustain its proliferation in recent public discourses (Ahmed, 2007). However, when

social justice and business concerns become indistinct, the transformative potential of discourses of diversity is undermined. Where diversity is promoted solely through the business case, initiatives orientated towards equality rest on the discretion of individual organisations (Dickens, 1999). Calls for greater representation of women in digital industries based on business needs alone could make levels of gender equality vulnerable to economic fluctuations (Dickens, 1999; Forbes, 1996; Griffiths, et al., 2005). Whether approaches to managing diversity and business cases for diversity are founded in individualised or collective notions of workforce diversity, there is no guarantee that they will counter historically produced power relationships between individuals and/or between groups of workers (Humphries & Grice, 1995). Indeed, discourses of diversity may even normalise and entrench unequal power relations between some groups of workers (Litvin, 2006; Wrench, 2005).

The problem is that the degree to which otherness is constructed and attributed to certain workers and then assessed as valuable or not is specified not by those workers that are othered, but by privileged individuals and groups. In this context, liberal and radical feminist approaches to women's participation in employment are not able to address the repeated occlusion of power in organisational practice. The binary of sameness and difference associated with EO and diversity policies may become unstable when it is clear that both notions are constructed in relation to a standard and dominant norm (Liff & Wajcman, 1996). Moreover, where the difference associated with specific workers means difference from the standard norm, the perpetuation of inequality is likely (Liff, 1996). As Kirton and Greene argue, in relation to discourses of diversity:

The criticisms of the traditional EO approach remain: 'difference' is only valued as long as it contributes to profit or organisational objectives; the persistence of the white, heterosexual, non-disabled, male norm; the division between public and private spheres; and the fact that only certain members of disadvantaged or under-represented groups who are able to meet the norm most easily will benefit from the policies (Kirton & Greene, 2000: 112).

In this context, a focus on equality of opportunity and outcome for all social groups needs to be established before it is appropriate to consider the business benefits of diversity (Kirton & Greene, 2000).

There is a need to develop analyses of the notion of 'workforce diversity' in specific discursive contexts. Critical theorists Patrizia Zanoni and Maddy Janssens (2003) have offered a nuanced analysis in which they highlight how arguments for diversity, including individualist, collectivist and social justice accounts, vary across practitioner articles, organisational handbooks and academic research. Of these sites, Zanoni and Janssens argue that attention to discriminatory practices and power is restricted to academic articles. Pertinent to my research, their analysis indicates that the shifting ways in which the notion of 'workforce diversity' is constructed within the discursive field of the digital media sector is important to understanding power and gender relations in this work domain.

Conclusion

My review of the rich academic research literature exploring women's participation in the digital industries in this chapter underscores the need for a detailed analysis of the convergence of the key concepts of gender, technology, creativity, difference and diversity. Previous research has highlighted a gender/technology relation within the digital industries in which there is an alignment of technology with masculinity and of sociality with femininity. Women have been described as lacking the appropriate skills, access or desire to participate in technical work and remedies have been suggested to address these deficiencies. In contrast, more recent research has demonstrated that technical areas of employment do not accommodate women's careers, so that different ways of organising digital media work have been considered.

I have argued that liberal and radical feminist theories inform much of this research but that some of the most pressing questions in this field may be best approached from a poststructuralist perspective. Moreover, while previous studies of

the gender/technology relation in employment provide the background for my research, I have outlined two key gaps within academic literature on this topic. The first is that, despite the increased attention given to creativity in the digital industries, there has been limited analysis of the relationship between gender and creativity in digital industry work. The second gap is in the adequate theorisation of how workforce diversity becomes associated with creativity and with women in the digital industries. My review begs the question of whether increasing emphases on creativity in accounts of digital media work might change or influence gendering processes that have previously been documented in relation to technology.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, METHODS AND PRINCIPLES

In this chapter I discuss the methodological choices I have made in developing my research. To begin, I present my research question and identify the four articulations regarding work and workers in the digital media sector to which I attend in this thesis. I then outline my methods for assembling data and how I went about analysing this data. The principles of reflexivity and accountability have guided my project and in the final section I explain how I have attempted to build on these principles in my research. To conclude, I outline the general format of the chapters which follow.

The discourse analytic approach I have employed in this thesis provides the basis on which my research question and methods were selected. This approach can be situated in the broad field of qualitative methodologies. Qualitative research emerged from ethnographic studies of the 1920s–1930s and was originally defined within a positivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a). However, it was not until the early 1980s and 1990s that qualitative research began to gain some traction (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b). In contrast to earlier qualitative approaches, the rise to prominence of qualitative methods during the 1980s and 1990s has been colligated with the linguistic turn in humanities and social sciences (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000b;

Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995). This ‘turn’ involved the recognition of the role that language plays in the construction of the social world and called into question objectivist and realist notions embedded in much traditional research (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). In this later period, qualitative research methods have been typically developed within an interpretivist framework in which language is seen as *constitutive* of social reality rather than as simply representative of it.

There are a number of distinct orientations to the analysis of language (Phillips & Hardy, 2002) which fit within a broadly discursive analytic frame but which would not be commensurate with my poststructuralist Butlerian approach. For example, many feminist researchers have engaged in the analysis of interview talk in order to gain understandings of participant’s experiences, beliefs and thoughts (this is the case in much of the women-in-management literature; see Calás & Smircich, 1999 for discussion). In contrast, my approach to analysing discursive practices does not assume that interview material is representative of internal values or beliefs. Rather, I regard material from interviews as part of the discursive field of the digital media sector and of a network of sedimented meanings, regulatory norms and power relations which shape experience.

Research question

My research design evolved as I moved further into my research, rather than being formed completely before data assemblage. Such a developmental and shifting process is common in qualitative research (Janesick, 2003). I began with the recognition of an apparent paradox between the rhetoric and reality regarding women’s participation in the digital media sector. My review of the extant literature around women’s participation in the digital industries presented a number of areas to which I might attend in my research. Issues of skill and skill requirements, women’s career choices, the emergence of the concept of creativity in the digital industries and the distinction of women as ‘different’ kinds of workers all seemed to warrant further

investigation. After considering some of the key debates, tensions, and approaches in feminist, organisational and sociological theory pertaining to gender and difference, my primary research question became:

How is gender performed in the discursive field of the digital media sector in the North West of England during the period 2001-2007?

I developed this question to guide my research because, following Butler (1990, 1993), I contend that exploring the performativity of gender through an analysis of discursive practices will contribute to the denaturalisation of taken-for-granted ideas about gender.

As I began my initial data assemblage and analysis I then formulated clusters of articulations through which I could integrate my overall question and the relevant themes which emerged in my review of the extant literature. I use the term 'articulation' to refer to a broad way of describing some aspect of work in the digital industries and women's participation. My use of this term is not meant to connect in any close sense with the development of 'articulation theory' by authors including Stuart Hall (1996a, b), Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985).²⁴

The four articulations I considered in this thesis consist of:

- The notion that skills required for digital media work are changing, and that women workers are particularly likely to have such skills.
- The idea that the image of the digital media sector needs to change to attract more women (and that it is changing).
- The association made between a worker's ability to demonstrate some forms of difference and their designation as creative workers by others.
- The claim that workforce diversity contributes to creativity and that women contribute to diversity in the digital media sector.

These articulations address moments of change in the sector and thereby are part of the paradoxical rhetoric from which my research interests originated. I consider each in turn in Chapters 5 to 8. There was one significant type of articulation I found in the

²⁴ In an interview with Lawrence Grossberg (1986), Stuart Hall describes the theory of articulation as 'both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects' (Grossberg, 1986: 53).

public policy documents regarding women's participation in the digital industries which I did not take forward into my analysis because it didn't emerge strongly in the other research sites of the interviews, training event or careers and recruitment materials (discussed further below). This pertained to changing work organisation within the digital industries to meet the needs of women workers, including greater work flexibility, better childcare availability and the reduction of long working hours. Interestingly, these issues have received the lion's share of analysis in recent feminist research of this work domain (e.g. Banks & Milestone, 2007; Ahuja, 2002; Gill, 2002; Perrons, 2003). Because of this latter point, I felt I could focus my attention elsewhere.

The four articulations were investigated through a multi-sited research design involving the analysis of textual materials produced in the North West of England during 2001–2007. The sites I selected consisted of UK public policy documents, recruitment and careers literature, an industry training event and a set of interviews with workers in and around the digital industries. These sites were chosen because they integrate different related levels within the discursive field of the digital industries: political, industrial, organisational and individual. Each site involves specific, but not always intentional or conscious, ways of employing different discursive practices to communicate understandings of change in the digital industries. In the section that follows, I provide detail of these sites and my methods of data assemblage.

Data assemblage

I have used the term 'data assemblage' rather than 'data collection' because, the qualitative data referred to in this thesis was not simply found and gathered but rather were created and selected.²⁵ My methodological design seeks to explore

²⁵ The phrase 'data assemblage' is used often in statistical research, but I have also found it used in one instance in organisational studies research by David Boje (2000).

discursive practices in a broad network of sites which partially constitute the digital media sector. In general, I use academic research literature to frame my analyses but in Chapter 7 I critically analyse research literature regarding workers in creative and knowledge work domains as a form of data. I argue that the selected UK-based literature I analyse is an influential part of the discursive field of the digital media sector in which a dominant articulation operates regarding the link between individual differences and creativity.

In addition to academic research literature, I analyse four main types of data. I analyse printed materials from UK Labour government agencies and representations of workers in careers and recruitment literature. I also developed transcriptions of spoken words from interviews with digital industry developers, trainers, and practitioners, and reflective researcher texts based on a participant observation of a digital industries training event. Specific detail of each of the four main data sets is given below.

UK public policy documents

I have previously argued that the creative industries and digital industries are discursive constructs, as are notions of the creative economy and creative workers. I use these terms cautiously and assume that they are produced through discursive practices rather than denote coherent or complete entities. For example, the creative industries mapping exercise undertaken in the UK in the late 1990s was a process of re-labelling sectors which had previously been included in the arts and culture sector (DCMS, 1998, 2001a). Thus, it is precisely through government policy and research such as the *Creative Industries Mapping Document* (DCMS, 1998, 2001a), that the 'objects' of the digital industries and creative industries in the UK are formed.

Not only do government policy accounts contribute to broad understandings of the creative and digital industries and creative work, they can also have direct effects on the lives of workers within these industries through related funding initiatives, development programmes and provision of training. As Susan Christopherson (2004)

has argued in the context of the USA, 'new media work is being defined as much by the policy context within which it has emerged as by the technology it uses' (Christopherson, 2004: 544). For these reasons, public policy documentation is an important discursive site for my research.

While often prominent and influential, public policy documents do not go through traditional legitimating processes such as academic peer review, nor are they controlled by commercial publishing interests. Material of this type is not systematically catalogued and takes some effort to find and pull together. I scoured government departmental websites, followed up cited documents in the news media, and tracked references in UK based research bibliographies to identify this body of literature. Through this process, I identified well over 30 documents published by UK government and North West development agencies during the time period of interest (2001–2007), and which related broadly to my research interests regarding work in the digital and creative industries and women's participations in these industries (see Appendix 1 for an indicative list). From this collection of publications I then selected for analysis a set of what I call 'key' public policy documents (see Table 4.1). My selection of 'key' documents was based on relevance to my research aims and my judgement regarding the significance of the document for the industry. My selection included documents which provided the basis for further policy development in the area of digital and creative industries and/or women's participation in these industries, were cited by others in academic and policy literature, were mentioned in political speeches of government officials and/or were discussed in national news media.²⁶ The first cluster of reports on women's participation in the digital industries (A) forms the basis of my exploration of policy statements relating to women's participation in the digital media sector.

²⁶ For example the Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, was reported by WIRED magazine (Mayfield, 2001) citing statements from a report on the image of ICT by Annabelle Phillip and Trinh Tu for e-skills (Phillip & Trinh, 2001).

Table 4.1. Government policy-related literature (published between 2001–2007 and presented in chronological order).

A. Women's participation in the digital industries

Phillip, A., & Trinh, T. (2001). *Images of ICT*. London: e-skillsNTO.

Millar, J., & Jagger, N. (2001). *Women in ITEC courses and careers*. Suffolk: Women and Equality Unit (WEU), Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), Department for Education & Skills (DFES).

Greenfield et al. (2002). *SET fair: A report on women in science, engineering and technology*. London: The Royal Institute of Great Britain.

Haines, L. (2004a). *Women and girls in the games industry, phase 1*. Manchester: Media Training North West (MTNW).

Haines, L. (2004b). *Why are there so few women in games? Phase 2*. Manchester: Media Training North West.

DTI (2005a). *Women in the IT industry: Towards a business case for diversity. Interim report*. London: Department for Trade and Industry (DTI).

DTI (2005b). *Women in the IT industry: How to retain women in the IT industry. Phase 2 research*. London: Department for Trade and Industry (DTI).

B. Skills development for the digital and creative industries

Heeley, J., & Pickard, C. (2002). *Employing creativity: Skills development in the creative industries in the North West of England*. Warrington: Commissioned by North West Development Agency (NWDA).

Kurien, A. et al. (2003). *Digital industries in the North West*. Manchester: MITER Digital Media Watch, Manchester Metropolitan University.

Pye Tait (2003). *The state of skills in the North West: Regional report*. Warrington: Commissioned by Regional Intelligence Unit (RIU), North West Development Agency (NWDA).

e-skills (2005). *IT Insights: Regional skills in the North West*. London: e-skills UK.

Hoshin (2006). *North West strategic review of skills provision: Digital industries sector final report (Strategic Area Review (StAR) Report)*. Manchester: Learning & Skills Council, North West Universities Association (NWUA).

C. Developing the creative and digital industries and the creative economy

DCMS (2001a). *Creative industries mapping document*. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). (related to the 1998 report)

DCMS (2001b). *Culture and creativity: The next ten years*. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Graver, A., & Harrison, J. (2003). *Benchmarking employment in the cultural industries - North West Bulletin*. Warrington: Commissioned by the Regional Intelligence Unit, North West Development Agency (NWDA).

Culture North West (2004). *A snapshot of the creative industries in England's North West*. Manchester: Culture North West and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

NESTA (2005). *Creating value: How the UK can invest in new creative businesses. NESTA Research report*. London: NESTA.

DCMS (2005). *Creative Economy Programme: Diversity original hypothesis*. DCMS. Retrieved 25 July, 2006, from <http://headshift.com/dcms>.

DCMS (2006a). *DCMS Creative Economy Programme: Regional development agencies' working paper*. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Hutton, W. (2007). *Staying ahead: The economic performance of the UK's creative industries*. London: Work Foundation and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

I also examined documents in two other clusters on skills development for the digital and creative industries (B) and the development of the creative and digital industries and the creative economy (C). My study of these latter clusters of public policy documents enabled me to explore the broad context of the digital industries. They also provided discursive material regarding the digital and creative industries against which I could compare the specific ways in which women's participation in the industries were discussed. The four articulations around which I base my analysis were drawn from these clusters of public policy documents and were also referred to in my interviews.

Representations of workers in careers and recruitment literature

In addition to documents published by the UK Labour government agencies, I also analyse representations of workers in careers and recruitment literature found in graduate recruitment magazines, jobs sections in newspapers and recruitment websites directed at digital media practitioners in the North West of England during 2003–2005. I collected these materials from multiple locations including the computer science department in my university, local newspapers, a creative industries careers fair and publicly available online information.

Representations of workers in recruitment and careers literature are a crucial part of the complex discursive field which constitutes the digital media sector. Not only do such representations provide examples of specific discursive practices relating to digital media work and workers, but they are also explicitly produced by industry representatives and organisations to interpellate specific kinds of workers into this sector. They can be read as cultural configurations which produce intelligible gendered subjects while excluding other possible subject positions (Hancock & Tyler, 2007). Careers and recruitment advertisements contribute to the intelligibility of working subjects through repeated practices of representation which sediment norms for how to recognise valuable digital media workers, and the kinds of roles that women and men might take up in this sector.

Furthermore, some of the public policy documents which I analysed in my research (e.g. e-skills, 2005; DTI, 2005, see full cluster A above) suggest that how workers are portrayed in publicly available media is important in promoting women's participation in the digital industries. As I will show in Chapter 6, these documents articulate a need to change the image of the digital industries away from its 'geeky' origins and that recruitment material is an important site in which to enact this change (e.g. Millar & Jagger, 2001).

By exploring visual and textual representations of workers in careers and recruitment literature, I moved beyond a strict focus on linguistic discursive practices. This approach is in accord with Butler's theory of performativity which regards speech, bodily acts, representations, in fact all social practices, as elements of discursive practice which produce gender. In Chapter 6, I provide a fuller discussion of how I worked with this literature.

Researcher texts from a participant observation of an industry training course

As part of my research I undertook a participant observation of a 3-day North West digital industries training event. While there is considerable debate regarding how the concept of training should be defined and understood (Lewis, 1997), it is generally associated with the development of vocational or practical knowledge and skills through structured or semi-structured teaching and learning experiences. Publicly-funded training sits at the nexus of government policy and organisational practice involving key stakeholders including national and regional government agencies, digital media organisations, educational institutions and individuals.

The North West Digital Industries Grad School, which I attended from 21–23 September 2004, was part of the development strategy for the digital industries in the NW region. It was jointly funded by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) and the North West Regional Hub of the Research Councils' UK GRAD Programme. The UK GRAD Programme is internationally recognised as an exemplary training

intervention which supports 'the academic sector to embed personal and professional skills development into research degree programmes' (UK GRAD, 2008: online source). I attended this event as a doctoral student and as a researcher studying the digital media sector. My dual role was fully disclosed to the programme facilitators and the participants.

48 doctoral researchers attended the 3-day course. The majority of participants were in their mid 20s to early 30s (although ranged between 22 and 45 years approx). The post-graduate researchers were mainly British with international students from India, Germany, New Zealand, West Indies, and the USA also attending. Eleven (23 per cent) of the participants were women. This is a significantly larger proportion than the recorded participation rates of women in creative and technical roles in the NW digital industries at the time of my research.

The Digital Industries Grad School provided a site in which an integrated set of ideas was found relating to the kinds of skills and attributes workers need in the digital industries. It sought to attract young, would-be workers for the digital industries, explicitly inviting participants to see themselves as potential digital media workers and to participate in training to help them succeed in such a role. I took extensive notes throughout the course and developed these into more reflective materials after the course. I was particularly attentive to discussions about desirable skills and attributes of workers and about how these could be developed. I provide an analysis of this event in Chapter 5 when I discuss changing skill requirements for the digital industries.

Transcripts from interviews with industry brokers, organisational directors and digital media workers

The final component of my research involved interviews with industry brokers, organisational directors and digital media practitioners. The interview transcripts resulting from these interactions are analysed in Chapters 5, 7, and 8 alongside my

analysis of the other types of data identified above. The following section outlines in detail what I did in my interview fieldwork.

Identifying and engaging with interviewees

I employed a form of purposive sampling in which I established criteria for the eligibility of potential participants (Merriam, 1998). I sought to engage with individuals in the North West who participated in the digital media and creative sectors and who were conversant with the practices, discourses and changing dynamics related to these work domains. I was interested in talking with heads of digital media units or organisations, employees who worked in digital media production roles, freelance or self-employed digital media workers and industry network brokers and trainers.

I used the snowball technique to contact individuals to interview for this project. I made initial contacts with people who were working or knew of people working in the digital media sector through my attendance at university and various public digital and creative industry events run in the North West during 2003–2004. Some of these initial contacts later became interviewees. I then asked my initial contacts to identify others who might be appropriate interviewees for my research project. The second group of interviewees created through these referrals were, in turn, asked to identify further potential participants and so on (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Vogt, 1999). The technique establishes a chained set of interviewees based on personal and professional networks. The usefulness of this approach within my research can be illustrated by considering some of my early engagements with workers in and around the digital media sector.

Because the snowball technique relies on personal recommendation, it has been a method employed by researchers to gain access to individuals who are otherwise 'hard to reach' (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Jandeska & Kraimer, 2005; Sudman, 1976). Gaining access to interviewees in the digital media and creative industries sectors through more formal channels proved challenging in this project. Firstly, most

organisations within the digital media sector are small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) (Kurien, et al., 2003), and they have relatively flat organisational structures. The small size of digital media organisations and their typical lack of hierarchy was a challenge because identifying the gatekeepers who might have provided access to employees was difficult. In addition, there are few obvious professional bodies or highly visible professional groups within the digital media sector. Indeed, interview questions regarding the professional groups or bodies in which interviewees may have participated garnered limited response. In general, the importance of personal networks was more commonly referred to by my interviewees and thus the snowball method was particularly useful. Other researchers investigating work in the creative industries have employed the snowball method of recruiting participants for similar reasons (e.g. Richards & Milestone, 2000).

A second issue that made potential participants 'hard to reach' was the time pressure on organisations in this sector. Originally, I had planned to conduct an ethnographic study in a single digital media firm. Through initial contact with a number of organisational directors it soon became apparent that the small size of most digital media organisations and the project-to-project time demands involved in this work made directors unwilling to open their firms to this process. For example, in two cases, I met with organisational directors of digital media firms and had engaged their interest in participating in my research, but when I submitted a fuller proposal detailing my planned ethnographic research, it was rejected. In both cases, the heads indicated that time pressures within their organisations meant it would not be possible for them to participate in the research. One of these stated: 'Even dragging a staff member away from their work for an hour could not be justified by the management; an hour of labour is worth £1000 to the organisation'. These responses led me to conclude that research which required a smaller investment from organisations and individuals was more likely to engage participation.

The snowball technique has also been used as a means to map social networks, particularly within organisational analyses (Rowley, 1997; Starkey, Barnatt, & Tempest, 2000). Although I was free to follow up contact referrals at my discretion, the respondent-guided element of locating the interviewees shaped my research a great deal.

Through an initial contact I met in a research methods training session at my university, I was able to build a 4-link chain of external contacts involving seven interviewees (see Figure 4.1). This was the first and longest chain and yielded interviewees who were involved in regional development, network brokering and at the CEO or director level of two small digital media organisations.

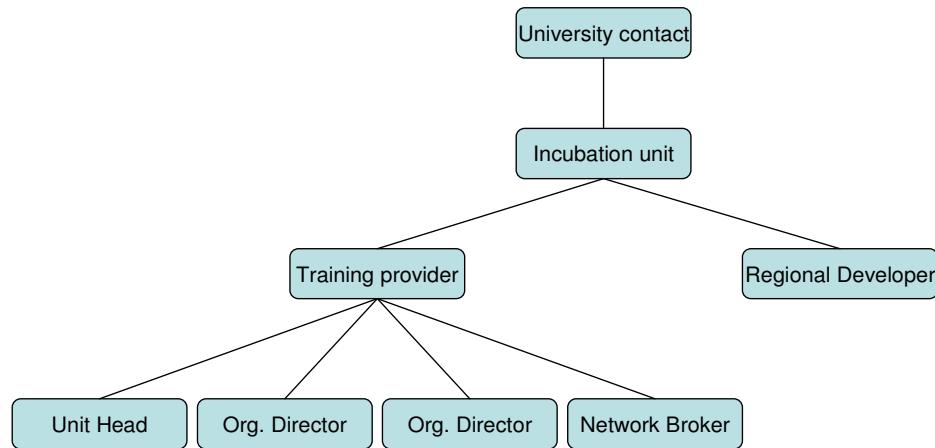


Figure 4.1. First chain of contacts using the snowball technique.

By tracking the referrals made by interviewees in the first chained group I began to become aware of a kind of circular network in which a particular group of key players emerged (see Figure 4.2). Network brokers and regional developers referred to each other and both groups referred to some of the same heads of related organisations and vice versa. It became clear that this chain of contacts was largely limited to a strategic development level of the digital media and creative industries sectors in the North West. Indeed, the heads of the digital media organisations in this chain described their engagement with strategic development boards, training initiatives in the region and industry-wide network evenings. Through this initial

entry into the sector I had come across a 'latent organisation' (Starkey et al., 2000) of strategic level planners for the creative digital media sector.

It became difficult to use this initial chain of interviewees to gain access to lower level employees, self-employed and free-lance workers. Notably, although the initial contact in the incubation unit and the contact in the training organisation were women, there were no referrals to female digital media organisation heads or workers. With one exception, all of the women I interviewed in my research were referred to me by women outside of the sector, possibly indicating that broader social networks (outside of professional networks) are particularly important for women within this sector.

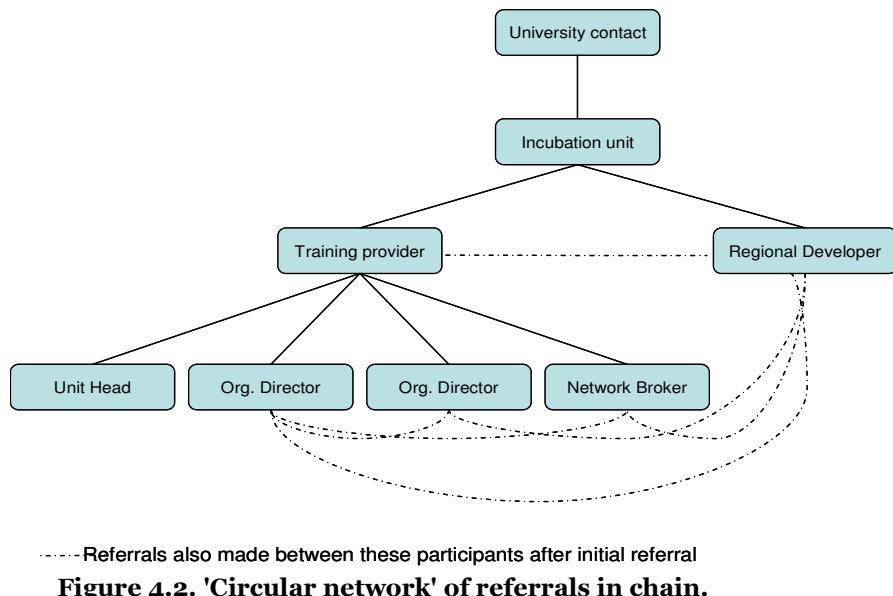


Figure 4.2. 'Circular network' of referrals in chain.

The difficulty of changing levels to gain access to employees, free-lancers and self-employed workers, as well as accessing women workers may be related to the ways in which formal and informal networks were described by some of my interviewees. One woman practitioner interviewee noted that she no longer attended networking nights organised by regional development bodies such as the Creative Industries Development Service (CIDS) because, as she described it, 'it's the same old faces going, just 'cause you know, they think they could, they should be there, and

flexing their muscles sort of thing and it just seems a bit of a...waste of time (laugh'). Another interviewee, a lead designer in a successful Manchester firm, introduced me to a network called By Designers 4 Designers or BD4D. He observed that BD4D is for 'people like us' (him and his colleagues in digital media work). This interviewee described it as a place to be 'inventive, crazy and creative'. Investigating this further, I found the website for BD4D which sported the very catchy by-line of 'creative fight club'. Fight Club was the title of a popular movie made in 2001 which centres on a secret male fighting club from which women are completely absent. A picture thus starts to emerge about the kinds of people the designer was talking about when he says it's for 'people like us'.

In regard to methodology, these formative findings suggest that there are certain limitations of my research in terms of who was included in my interview fieldwork. Beyond the first chained sample described above, I tried to use different avenues for identifying potential interviewees at other levels such as through the digital industries training course, and contacts in my university who knew of workers in the area. While I did not follow up these formative findings regarding social networks further, they do point to an area for future investigation. Indeed there has been some indicative research which suggests that professional and social networks are significant factors in the inequality between men and women in creative work domains (Christopherson, 2008; Richards & Milestone, 2000).

The interviewees

I interviewed 23 individuals and this number was partially determined by the referrals made to me and time limitations (relating to the time required to locate, interview, transcribe and analyse interview materials in addition to assembling other research materials). I was also guided by conceptual concerns when making decisions about interviewing. My aim was to generate suggestive but also justifiable insights which helped in the pursuit of my research question rather than try to identify comprehensive or complete language patterns (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). I stopped

interviewing individuals when I felt that I was able to provide a feasible account of some of the discursive practices which perform gender in the NW digital media sector.

In Table 4.2 I have provided a list of my interviewees and Appendix 2 provides a biographical note on each. I use pseudonyms for both individuals and organisations throughout this thesis. I have also adapted some of the organisational details and provide only general statements regarding characteristics of organisations in an effort to preserve confidentiality. The majority of my interviewees were practitioners working within organisations specialising in digital media production, some were part of digital media units within organisations with some other type of core business such as broadcasting or education. I also interviewed five individuals who were in business development and network brokerage or training. The practitioners interviewed were involved in a full spectrum of digital media development, including design, architecture, animation, programming, business modelling and usability analysis of new software.²⁷ As is common within the digital media sector, many of my interviewees were involved in more than one of these activities across various projects (Kidd Damarin, 2006). My interviewees included female and male individuals of a range of ages, with various sexual and ethnic identities.

Interactions with 21 of the interviewees included at least one (and often more than one) phone conversation(s) and one face-to-face interview (approximately 1.0–1.5 hours long). The main components of the remaining interviews consisted of a phone conversation for approximately 20–30 minutes and a follow up email in which I sent an adapted interview guide to which they responded by return email. The adapted guides focussed on one or two questions on each designated topic, which are detailed below. During subsequent contact I was able to make some further remarks

²⁷ The one area of digital media production not included in this research is the digital audio/music production sector. This sector has been identified as having unique issues and these have been considered elsewhere (e.g. Negus, 1998; Smaill, 2005).

Table 4.2 List of Interviewees.

Name (Initials)*	S e x	Age	Job/ position	Organisational core business	Location
Business Development and Network Brokerage					
Trish Baker (TB)	F	45–50	Org. director	High-tech incubation	Manchester
Fraser Brown (FB)	M	30–35	Digital industries network broker	Creative industries development	NW City†
Patrick Jones (PJ)	M	40–45	Development unit director	Creative industries development	NW city†
Training Provision					
Tessa Homer (TH)	F	40–45	Programme leader	Educational institute, New Media Training	Liverpool
Lucy West (LW)	F	40–45	Org. director	Multi-media training	NW City†
Organisational Directors & Digital Media Unit Heads (all also hands-on practitioners except for ^)					
Laura Cooper (LC)	F	25–30	Co-director	Digital animation & film	NW town†
Brigitte Davies (BD)	F	30–35	Co-director	Interactive installation performance	NW city†
Crispin Hill (CH)	M	25–30	New media manager	Branding/advertising	Manchester
Tim Jones (TJ)	M	45–50	Co-director	Educational software development	NW city†
Daniel Kelly (DK)	M	40–45	Creative director	Digital branding & design	Manchester
Gregory Kiddey (GK)	M	35–40	Co-director	Web design	Manchester
Mark Pope (MP)	M	35–40	New Media Manager	Broadcasting	Manchester
Cameron Reed^ (CR)	M	35–40	R&D Unit Manager	Technology research & development	Liverpool
Kevin Stark (KS)	M	30–35	Animation Manager	TV, film & animation	Manchester
Penny Wright (PW)	F	30–35	Co-Director	Web design	Manchester
Employees, sole-traders & freelancers					
Matt Glennie (MG)	M	25–30	Freelancer	Digital design & animation	Manchester
Hamish Gowan (HG)	M	25–30	Consultant	Educational institute & web design start-up	NW city†
Grant Holt (GH)	M	25–30	Technology developer	Interactive installation performance	NW city†
Josh Munroe (JM)	M	40–45	Educational software developer	Tertiary education	NW city†
Flynn Peters (FP)	F	30–35	Sole-trader	Digital Film	NW city†
Justine Riley (JR)	F	35–40	R&D consultant	Tech dev & services	Liverpool
Harry Smith (HS)	M	40–45	Programmer	Tech research & dev	Liverpool
Bob Taylor (BT)	M	30–35	Animator	Tech research & dev	Liverpool

*I have indicated initials of the pseudonyms I gave to each of the interviewees. Throughout the thesis I use these initials when quoting interview transcripts.

†Because confidentiality is hard to protect in small industries and regions I have not specified cities and towns in potentially identifiable cases.

and ask for clarification on specific points. I then developed a script for analysis which included recorded comments, email responses by the interviewees and my reflections.

I taped and fully transcribed 16 of the face-to-face interviews and took extensive notes during the other five (see Appendix 3 for the transcription conventions used in this process). In the latter cases, individuals were somewhat reluctant to allow the discussion to be taped and transcribed. I followed a standard ethical research approach, including providing the interviewees with a project information sheet and a research agreement.²⁸ As part of our negotiations about the research arrangements, I agreed with some interviewees that I would take notes only rather than record the interviews (refer to Appendix 4: Information Sheet, and Appendix 5: Research Agreement). The interviewees who were reluctant to have their interviews recorded were generally involved in close strategic networks within the industry and/or were in easily identifiable positions. Indeed, even when I conducted a recorded interview with a director of a small start-up company he asked for the recorder to be stopped during a discussion about a former colleague.

Appendix 6 contains the full interview schedule. The interviews were semi-structured and were guided by this schedule but not restricted by it. There was slight variation in the topics covered in each interview. In some interviews particular issues were pursued in more depth than in others. The key topics covered in all of the interviews are listed below. I have also included some illustrative questions which were used in the interviews in relation to each of the topics.

Interview questions

- Getting into employment

How did you get to be doing what you are now doing? What factors fed into your decision to take up this kind of work?

²⁸ At the time of developing my research at Lancaster University there were no formal requirements to have my research design reviewed by a University ethics committee as is common elsewhere.

- Current Work
 - How many people are working in your organisation? What are the key roles within your organisation that people carry out?
 - Could you describe for me what you did yesterday? (What are your various kinds of activities). Is this typical?
 - Have you any examples of work that we can look at?
- Needed attributes for workers in the digital media sector
 - Can you describe the personal characteristics that are needed in order to be very successful in your field?
- Creativity and Creative Work
 - Think of someone who you see as really creative. Can you describe them for me?
 - When have you been/ are you most creative?
 - Do you see yourself as a creative worker?
- Equality issues and women's participation
 - How many women in your firm?
 - Have you seen or experienced any evidence of discrimination against particular individuals or groups of workers in your workplace?
- Future Plans
 - What plans do you have for the future of your organisation?
 - What do you see on the horizon for your own career?

My questions were designed to generate discussion in regard to key debates that I found in my literature readings concerning skill requirements, workers' identity formation, the significance of creativity and women's participation within the digital media sector. The list demonstrates the order in which I pursued my key topic areas within the interviews. Only in the second half of the interview did I broach questions about women's participation in the digital industries and issues of equality. I ordered the topics in this way because I assumed that interviewees' general accounts of their work would be informative about the performativity of gender in this sector and would provide useful comparisons with discussions directly concerning women's participation in this work domain. I think my assumption is borne out in my analysis presented in the following chapters.

As I began interviewing individuals I added in some interview questions that I found useful in stimulating accounts about digital media work. For example, before I

met one of my interviewees face-to-face, she asked if she should bring some examples of her digital media work along to the interview. In the interview she became highly animated when showing me digital art installations and wearable computing artefacts she had made and she spoke extensively about what she valued in her work. After this interview I asked all subsequent interviewees to bring along some favourite examples of their work. They showed me websites, film clips, digital animations, images and interactive online games. This approach stimulated rich interviewee discussions about the kinds of qualities they valued in digital media products, how their work was carried out and how they compared what they did with others in their field.

Analysis

As I have already indicated, in any qualitative research project analysis is ongoing throughout all phases of the research. This includes the shaping of the research, the creation and assemblage of field texts, initial attempts to order and make sense of research material, and the revision and reproduction of the analysis in generating a text which reports the research and is suitable for readers (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

The early analytical processes within my research project can be exemplified through reference to my initial framing of my research. My original proposal was to study gender within the digital industries with a focus on digital media production including web design, software development and so on. At this early stage, my theoretical attention was focussed on the gender/technology relation, as this was the main approach taken in preceding feminist analyses of digital industries work domains and this seemed crucial to my research (see Chapter 3 for discussion). In contrast, the importance of the concept of creativity within this sector only emerged for me through two preliminary discussions with individuals working in the sector. In these informal chats, my contacts initiated discussions of creativity and creative work and also referred to others I should follow up who worked in a number of locations within the creative industries in the North West of England. These encounters

occurred very early on in the research and they launched my investigation of the ways in which gender relations were linked to the emphasis on creativity within the digital media sector. My interest in the conceptualisation of creativity and of creative workers intensified as I gathered more public policy documents which discussed the digital media sector in the context of the creative industries (e.g. DCMS, 1998, 2001a; Heeley & Pickard, 2002).

Once the field texts were created I moved into a more structured analysis phase. I describe this below through a series of stages for the purpose of greater clarity for the reader, but in practice the analysis was more continuous and iterative than what is described.

Stage one: Reading and organising data

I assumed that each of the discursive sites I analysed did not operate in isolation and were rather closely integrated. As such, I sought to explore consistent and cumulative, as well as contradictory and disjunctive, patterns of discursive practices. In general, I investigated public policy documents as containing direct, explicit and formal pieces of language practice which have been crafted and endorsed by UK public policy researchers, policy makers and elected officials. Public policy documents are not the product of spontaneous interaction but are rather moderated through editing processes. They have been shaped by party politics, budgetary negotiations and national political agendas. Furthermore, while they act and constitute actions, I come to them not when they are in the process of formulation but after they have been edited and screened to convey a particular message or messages. I viewed the visual representations and texts in careers and recruitment literature in a similar way to the policy documents in that this material is developed, edited and formally presented by selected officials operating in industry development or in organisations. However, by developing an analysis of visual representations of workers in this second site my approach was different to that of the policy documents. In addition to looking for patterns in the content and form of texts, I also looked for similarities and disparities

in who was presented in these representations, how they appeared (dress, grooming, position in the picture), and links between the text and representations. My interviews and observations brought me into the realm of more spontaneous, everyday language use. While I would want to maintain that the spoken word is also filtered, and at times carefully chosen, there is more flexibility in spoken language.

The structured analysis process began with reading and re-reading the field texts a number of times. I first attended to information relating to my main research question in the public policy documentation and careers and recruitment literature pertaining to the digital industries because I was able to collect these materials relatively easily throughout the research. I highlighted, wrote notes in margins, and used copious post-it notes. I also made additional accompanying notes relating to the ideas and issues I found in each key document I examined. I went through a similar process of initial reading of the field texts and this also occurred gradually as I wrote up my observations and fully transcribed my interviews (see Appendix 3 for guidelines I used in my transcription). Thus, my readings and analyses of these field engagements built successively on one another as each new field text was produced.

For the interviews and observational material I used the qualitative research software NVivo to aid in tracking emerging themes in my reflections and analysis at this first stage. This software package allows the researcher to code sections of texts with categories, embed reflections and notes within the research documents and also to organise, order and create hierarchies of categories. I used this software as an aid to manage the data, but I did not utilise the full range of its capabilities. This is because I felt the assumptions about qualitative inquiry literally written into the code of the software were not necessarily consistent with my methodological approach. For example, this software has been extensively used in grounded theory analyses (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998 for detail of grounded theory approaches) as it facilitates the process of theory abstraction in which lower order categories can be successively compared, contrasted, and organised into higher order

categories. The aim in grounded theory is to build a coherent overarching theory which incorporates all lower order categories which emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). In contrast, my approach was not to develop an overarching theory but rather to offer a detailed analysis of a set of discursive practices which might contribute to the understanding of gender and inequality in the digital industries.

Within and across these discursive sites I searched for clustering of terms, images or concepts which were drawn on and constructed in discussions regarding work in the digital media sector and women's participation. At this first stage of reading I organised loose categories of statements, images or comments which seemed to me to relate to a shared issue. My initial attempts at analysis led me to identify 57 different categories within the data. Some categories which I formulated represented a specific topic, i.e. career, or worker identity, or tension between business and creativity, but others denoted interesting moments in the research process, or the use of specific terms or metaphors. Thus, this first phase of reading and organising the data was important in acquainting me with the material, however with 57 multi-level categories it did not lead easily into clear insights about the sector. Reflecting on these difficulties I then selected the four broad types of articulation for deeper consideration which seemed to be related to clusters of categories. I presented these at the beginning of this chapter.

Stage two: Identifying discursive practices

In the second phase, I reviewed the materials from the different discursive sites in parallel to investigate the discursive practices relating to the four main articulations I had identified in my initial reading. This was a difficult process. Unfortunately, Judith Butler is well-known, and often critiqued, for her lack of explanation regarding her methods of working with empirical data (Smith, 2008). Thus, although my research is guided by a Butlerian understanding of the performativity of gender, I found that I

had to explore other traditions of discourse analysis as I tried to operationalise this approach through methods of analysis.

I found social psychological approaches to the analysis of interpretive repertoires particularly helpful in guiding my own reflections about analysis. Jonathan Potter (1996) has defined interpretive repertoires as 'systematically related sets of terms that are often used with stylistic and grammatical coherence and often organised around one or more central metaphors' (Potter, 1996: 131). The concept has been developed from a social psychological foundation and is typically used to identify specific types of accounts that interviewees draw on to explain a particular phenomenon (see, for example, Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Potter & Halliday, 1990; Potter & Reicher, 1987; Silverman, 1987, 2001).

Researchers who have developed analyses of interpretive repertoires do not assume or seek consensus among individuals or groups, nor do they assume consistency or uniformity in the talk of an individual (Farrow & O'Brien, 2005). Indeed, this type of analysis is often employed on the understanding that exposing tensions between conflicting repertoires may yield a better understanding of the processes that help constitute the social world from which they emerge. Thus, this type of analysis highlights the contextual and often contradictory ways in which individuals draw on various repertoires (Lee & Roth, 2004: 5; see also Potter et al., 1990).

The analysis of interpretive repertoire is carried out through attending to stylistic and grammatical coherence, the emergence of central metaphors in language patterns and the tensions and ambiguities which emerge in the repetition of language patterns across different contexts. Sometimes techniques from conversational analysis are also used by researchers in this area, such as analysing the use of repair (Stringer & Hopper, 1998; Weatherall, 2002), and hedging (e.g. Gill, 1993; Smithson, 2005) to identify moments of contradiction in interviewee talk.

In my research I have employed many of the tools that are used in the analysis of interpretive repertoires. I looked for repetitions of key images, metaphors and concepts across and within the different discursive sites. I also attended to apparent ruptures where terms or phrases were noticeably absent or replaced by other terms, metaphors and tropes. I tried to take note of similar patterns of association made between certain concepts in my research materials. This process meant I explored how ideas were stated alongside what was stated. For example, in Chapter 7 I discuss a common discursive practice I identified in the interviews in which interviewees gave evidence of how they were distinctive and different from most digital media workers as part of their discussion about being a creative worker.

While I employed a number of tools that are used in interpretive repertoire analysis, it is important to distinguish my own analysis of discursive practices from the conceptual assumptions underpinning the interpretive repertoire approach. For example, this approach explores how individuals use specific repertoires to interpret and account for specific phenomena. In my approach I do not attend to speech patterns as indicative of the ways that individuals interpret events or ideas; rather, I understand discourse to be pervasive and cumulative and as produced through discursive practices across various sites within the work domain of the digital media sector. A concrete example of how my research is different to common use of interpretive repertoires is that I analyse statements in published policy documents and visual representations in careers and recruitment literature. In both forms of data there is no 'interpreter' who is easily accessible and to whom interpretations can be attributed. I also reject the tendency found in research employing interpretive repertoire analysis of excluding or obscuring information regarding the negotiation of language between researcher and interviewee (Ball & Carter, 2002; McKinley & Potter, 1987). Indeed, Potter himself has suggested that the notion of repertoire may obscure interactional business in interviews (Potter, 1996). Throughout this thesis I

have tried to adequately present my involvement in the interviews and articulate the ways I have approached the printed material I analyse.

Stage three: Analysing the relationships within and between discursive practices

To paraphrase feminist organisational theorist, Deborah Jones (1998), discursive practices including terms and patterns of talk do not equal discourse (with a capital D); rather, discursive practices can be coded in various ways depending on their context. Thus, in the final stage of analysis it was important to consider the ways in which certain discursive practices were undertaken in the different sites of the public policy documents, interviews, observation and careers and recruitment literature. I explored evidence of inconsistencies across the different discursive sites and *within* language patterns at a particular site. In this final stage, I hypothesised about the functions and effects of specific language or visual and textual representations as part of broader norms of gender (Potter and Wetherall, 1987, Garnsey & Rees, 1996). The following chapters (Chapters 5-8) discuss my analysis. However, before moving into my analysis proper, below I discuss the principles of reflexivity and accountability that have guided my research and I reflect on my experiences of the interview fieldwork in order to unpack some of the complexities of incorporating these principles into the research process.

Guiding research principles

Within qualitative research there is significant debate regarding how research should be evaluated for quality and rigour. Since the early 1980s a number of researchers have attempted to revise principles established in quantitative research, such as reliability and validity, and apply those to qualitative methodologies (see Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Lather, 2003; Seale, 2003). However, this approach tends to retain the positivist assumptions of objectivity and neutrality which are common in quantitative research but rejected in discursive approaches. One example of the

difficulties in this approach is the re-interpretation of the notion of triangulation by well-known qualitative methodologist Patti Lather (2003). In quantitative and mixed-methods positivist research, triangulation refers to using more than two methods to analyse an issue with the belief that similarity of findings of two or more methods will converge on the truth. Rejecting the idea that research can uncover the 'truth', Lather argued that the concept could be usefully revised to include the employment of a variety of data sources, methods and theoretical approaches in order to establish 'trustworthiness' of qualitative research. However, Lather's approach assumes that findings from different methods will converge on a coherent set of meanings which are found to be credible for a diverse set of actors. This approach contrasts with the framing assumption of my research that coherency *and* inconsistencies in discursive research can enhance our way of thinking about particular phenomena.

In my research I do not aim to uncover, find or discover the truth of gender and difference relations in the digital media sector. Rather I hope to construct a justifiable account of these. My approach can be linked with John Smith and Deborah Deemer's (2003) call for research that is practical and moral rather than straight-forwardly epistemological. Thus, rather than requiring that researchers are accountable for the truth value of their research, Smith and Deemer argue that researchers should be held morally responsible for the knowledge that they construct. In this respect, it is the responsibility of the researcher to develop research in which they are fully aware of and can articulate their decision-making process throughout their research. Moreover, the researcher must take responsibility for the outputs of their research. My research is guided by these two principles which can be denoted by the more familiar concepts of reflexivity and accountability and have been identified as key values in rigorous discursive research by feminist theorists (e.g. Bruni, Gherardi & Poggio, 2005).

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is both a state of awareness and a practice (Abbiss, 2005). It refers to the awareness that the researcher herself is unavoidably part of the world she is investigating and is a co-producer of the knowledge developed through her investigation. To achieve awareness it is necessary to build into the research practice continual processes of reflection and interrogation of the intellectual assumptions of one's research (Bruni, et al., 2005). Reflexivity has been a dominant and guiding value in feminist research for some time, albeit in contested and different ways (Prasad, 2005). Increasingly reflexivity has been identified as a critical research practice across a range of disciplines including management and organisational studies (Alvesson, Hardy, & Harley, 2004).

Feminist researchers have invoked reflexivity as a means of both expanding the kinds of knowledge that can be produced through academic inquiry, but also as a means to critique the relationship between knowledge and knowledge production (Calás & Smircich, 1992). Some early second-wave feminist research broke with conventional orientations to objectivity by foregrounding and evaluating the researcher's position within the research account. Exploring the positioning of the researcher has become an important part of feminist efforts to achieve reflexivity, and I have pursued this myself in Chapter 1. However, reflexivity is not a matter of merely stating pre-dispositions or providing lists of social identificatory labels (Lather, 2003). Reflexivity should include analyses of the relation between the researcher and the researched (Holloway, 2001), as well as investigations of how the researcher and researched become so through interaction.

In order to illustrate the importance of incorporating reflexivity in discursive research, I will now turn to consider some examples of my research in-process. The first example includes a section of field notes I wrote directly after my third interview (refer to Appendix 7 for interview notes form). I wrote this specific excerpt to remind myself of issues relating to the interview process, rather than the content.

Field notes: Tips for interviewing

1. *If you are meeting in a café or bar take some money and offer to buy a drink etc. Don't let them get in there first, because it positions you immediately as a young student.*
2. *Don't think so much aloud, i.e. 'were you.., no, I don't think I'll ask you that now...' The participant doesn't know the schedule and will just go along with what you present, there is no need for them to know about your confusion.*
3. *Ask a question as you have prepared it and don't add any more comments to this. Wait for a significant time. If the participant has not responded, then ask them again but in slightly different words. DO NOT make suggestions about how they could answer the question, because this may sway the participants.*

These field notes demonstrate the complexity of power relations within the interview process. The balance of power in my research shifted within the dynamics of my interview relationships and the status of expert relating to my interviewees and myself was never fixed. My interviewees were professional, a number of them were business owners and they were experts in their field. Despite the sector being known for its youthful workforce, two-thirds of the interviewees were more than 10 years older than I, and two-thirds were male. As a student, who was knowledgeable, but a non-expert, in the field of digital media and as someone reliant on good will to solicit participation in my research, I was often quite deferential in my interactions with my interviewees. However, given the importance of expertise in both the digital media and higher education sectors, it was hard to resist feeling the need to assert some form of authority and control in my interviews. The first and second tips that are shown above indicate my difficulty in managing and negotiating my identity as a researcher in this regard. In contrast, my third tip indicates that I was aware of the ways in which I did have influence in shaping interviewees' talk and that I thought it necessary to moderate this process carefully. Crucially, this third tip also indicates how my own and my participant's positions of researcher and interviewee became produced through our interview interactions (Learmonth, 2006).

Prior to undertaking the fieldwork, I had read widely about the interview process and had engaged in interview-based research, but in the fieldwork undertaken for this

thesis I was caught off guard by the demands of the interview process. Within much critical qualitative research, and particularly feminist research, power relations are matters of great concern (Lather, 2003). Some commentators have argued that the relationship between the researcher and research participant is open to exploitation and manipulation because the researcher occupies a position of relative power through status and education (Holloway, 2001). Moreover, researchers often position themselves as a knowledgeable expert who deconstructs *other* people's discourse (Gill, 1995). These field notes demonstrate the ways in which power was exercised by and through the institutions and social relations within my research interactions (see also Puwar, 2004; Swan, 2003; Weedon, 1987).

In a second snapshot of my research it becomes clear as to how gender was performed in the interaction between myself and my interviewees. This example demonstrates the ways in which it was not possible for me to stand as separate to the discursive processes which constitute gender and which I analyse in this thesis.

Field notes from my eighth interview

It is towards the end of the period of my fieldwork and I am in an interview with a senior programmer working in the digital media research and development unit of at a large university in Liverpool. We have begun to discuss the presence of women in the digital media sector. The interviewee offers some analysis of why fewer women than men are programmers. He states:

I think that girls may be more artistic, just generally anyway, um, you know, once again jokingly you'll like things with flowers, with colours in and just general day-to-day life. If you're in a, girls'll say that'll look nice in a room, whereas you know, what us blokes are like, would sit in a tip and wouldn't even notice. So um, I think from that point of view, girls just generally, are, I think it's more, it's key to their personality where programming is more key to a bloke's personality, but there is obviously, like all things, there is cross-overs, there's not generalisation.

I responded 'yeah of course' to this last comment and went on to ask if there were any women designers in his organisation.

In this moment of my interview fieldwork the shared construction of gender and difference is palpable. The senior programmer presented a binary picture with girls, colours, artists, flowers and seriousness on one side, and blokes, mess, playfulness and programming on the other. The way in which gender categories were mobilised in

this interview and how the two of us became positioned on opposite sides of the gender divide was striking. While he as a 'bloke' was associated with digital media workers ('us blokes'), I was positioned on the 'girls' side which was associated with flowers and interior designing ('you'll like flowers'). This was a clear hailing of me as a gendered subject. My rather weak response in this interaction confirmed the appropriateness of this interpellation. This snapshot demonstrates an active, relational, co-construction of identity through a series of discursive practices which included placing technology and creativity in a dichotomous relation, the interviewee positioning himself as evidence that males like programming, hailing me categorically as one of many females who don't like programming and naturalising interest in technology as a masculine characteristic.

These examples of my field notes provide rich information relating to the themes of this thesis which I analyse in the following chapters, including the gendering of technophilia and the creative process, and the constructions of workers in this sector as geeks, artistic individuals, blokes, lads and so on. However, I have introduced these here to highlight the performative dialogic production of gender subjectivities within my research. This is important because it exemplifies the ways in which as a researcher, one cannot step outside of the discursive practices under study and rather must reflexively view themselves as co-producers of the data analysed.

Accountability

The second important principle guiding my research process is that of accountability (Bruni et al., 2005). I operate a broad definition of this term which includes the expectation that a research project and researcher should be answerable to the participants involved, to the readers of their work, and in relation to the research objectives. Nevertheless, at times in my research I felt that my accountabilities to different stakeholders of the research were in tension. I felt this tension when trying to be accountable to both my interviewees and my research objectives. For example, I planned to critically analyse interviewee transcripts and highlight specific discursive

practices which appeared to produce gender, difference and inequality, but as I began to meet with practitioners, trainers and industry developers in the field I started to feel that my approach was somehow deceitful and contrary to the interests of my participants.

In order to address this tension I made sure that my interviewees were aware at the beginning of our engagement (via email and phone) that I was situated in a Women's Studies department, that I was interested in issues of inequality in the digital media sector and that I would be analysing their interviews as part of my research. This approach was likely to make gender more salient to my participants within the interview context but as I will show in my empirical chapters, my interviewees seldom discussed issues of gender or women's participation in digital media work unless responding to a question on these topics. Also in line with my theoretical approach, in this thesis I have identified discursive practices in the interviews as components of broad networks of discourses, rather than as reflecting the beliefs or experiences of individual interviewees. Finally, I acknowledge that as a researcher I am involved in, and contribute to, the discursive practices which produce gender and difference in and around the digital media sector. In this respect, I have tried to allow sufficient access to the data by presenting extended interviewee quotations and, my questions that stimulated interviewee responses. By providing detail about the research process in this way I hope to provide readers the chance to assess the justifiability of arguments I propose in the thesis.

Conclusion

The choices we make about method are not straight-forward or easy, and involve myriad intertwining interactions and processes. Furthermore, methodological decisions are productive of the reality we describe as researchers (Law, 2004). In this chapter I have attempted to present some of the key features and moments in my methodological process, in an effort to provide an explanation of my research.

I have described the elements in my project including my practices of assembling data and the tools I have used for my analysis. By developing a discursive analysis of data from multiple sites I build on Butler's (1990) theory of the performativity of gender as a successive 'activity performed' across multiple discursive locations. I have also provided snapshots from my field notes deriving from the interviewing component of my project to illustrate the importance of developing a reflexive methodology that includes consideration of my own role in producing the data that I analyse.

The following chapters build on my discussion in this chapter to develop arguments about sets of discursive practices that are employed in the four selected discursive sites of the digital media sector. I have structured each of the analyses in a similar way to guide the reader through the research process and findings. In general I begin each chapter by drawing on relevant research literature to frame my analysis before I explore selected public policy documents related to the articulation being investigated. In the case of Chapter 7 I also use critical research literature as a form of data. I then go on to analyse discursive data from one or more of the other three discursive sites: careers and recruitment literature, the industry training event and/or the interviews with practitioners, industry developers and trainers. In my analyses I identify sets of discursive practices that are drawn on and reproduced in these sites relating to the digital media sector. My study of these different data helps me to tease out the sometimes contradictory discursive practices across these sites and to provide insights about how gender is performed through the making and valuing of specific kinds of workers in the digital media sector.

CHAPTER 5

CHANGING SKILL REQUIREMENTS AND GENDER IN THE DIGITAL MEDIA SECTOR

This chapter investigates how gender is performed in the articulation of changing skill requirements in the digital media sector. In recent years, there has been a veritable explosion in political, organisational and academic interest regarding the development of specific skills to meet changing economic demands in this sector (Hayward & James, 2004). During the same period, a number of UK public policy documents have linked changing skill requirements with increased participation of women workers (e.g. DTI, 2005a, b; Haines, 2004a, b; Millar & Jagger, 2001). In particular, the continual growth in markets for personal technologies, bespoke technology products and client user services are said to require creative and interpersonal skills which are quite different to those usually associated with technical backroom computer work (e.g. e-skills, 2005).

But, while there has been extensive analysis of gender in relation to technical expertise (e.g. Adam, Howcroft, & Richardson, 2004; Grint & Gill, 1995; Stanworth, 2000; Wajcman, 2000), there has been limited research which explores the performativity of gender in the changing context of the digital industries. In this chapter, I begin to address this lacuna through an analysis of data relating to digital media skill requirements from three discursive sites.

Firstly, I investigate statements in key documents published by public government agencies which highlight specific kinds of skills as crucial for the digital industries (e.g. DTI, 2005 a, b; e-skills, 2005; Heeley & Pickard, 2002; Miller & Jagger, 2001). I consider these in conjunction with my fieldwork observations which I developed while participating in a NW digital industries training event. I then explore my practitioner interviewees²⁹ discussions of required skills and attributes of ideal digital media workers.

I show that there are consistent discursive practices across these sites which suggest that skills requirements for the digital media sector have shifted and expanded in recent years. In all sites ideal workers are cast as hybrid workers with integrated skills. An analysis of my practitioner interviews adds further depth to my discussion, as I consider how certain skill sets are attributed value in the digital media sector and how women workers, in particular, are seen to be skilled workers. Before I discuss my empirical data I begin by briefly reviewing the critical literature on the concept of skill (e.g. Grugulis, 2007b; Keep & Payne, 2004). This literature provides a frame with which to understand shifting skills requirements in the North West digital media sector.

The concept of skill

Recognising the contested and ideological nature of 'skill' is crucial for my research. As we saw in Chapter 3, equal participation of men and women in technical work domains has been theorised from a liberal feminist approach in relation to whether women are suitably skilled for such work. This argument has led to extensive analysis of women's pathways into, and out of, technical education during the early years of the development of the digital industries (e.g. Newton & Brocklesby, 1982;

²⁹ As indicated in Chapter 4, I use the term 'practitioner interviewees' to refer to the group of 18 interviewees who were engaged in digital media production as at least part of their job including organisational directors, digital media unit heads, programmers and/or designers. This group of interviewees can be distinguished from the remaining 5 interviewees who worked in industry development roles or in training.

Nightingale et al., 1997). However, skill should not be viewed as a static attribute of workers. Prominent UK researchers of skill and skill development, Irena Grugulis and Steven Vincent (2005) suggest that notions of skill are continuously recast with reference to the interactions between worker subjectivities and markets. They state:

Skill is the result of a complex interplay between the expertise and experience of individuals; the way work is designed and controlled; and the status and labour market power that these individuals (or the groups that they belong to) are deemed to possess (Grugulis & Vincent, 2005: 199).

In contrast to common understandings of skill as possessed by individuals, these authors argue that skill emerges from the interaction between individuals, institutions and social relationships. Central to Grugulis and Vincent's analysis are questions about power relations between particular groups of workers and about accessibility to specific work domains. Indeed, previous research has demonstrated that workplace inequalities between men and women are often reinforced through formulations of skill, competence and merit within recruitment and promotion practices (Burton, 1992; Hinton, 2000). Furthermore, the way skill is articulated and evaluated in technical work domains has been shown to be highly gendered (e.g. Grugulis, 2007b; Wajcman, 1991; Woodfield, 2000). As Keith Grint and Ros Gill (1995) note in their widely referenced text regarding the gender/technology relation:

It could be argued that there is a dialectical relationship between women and 'skill', such that women are concentrated in jobs which are deemed unskilled, and, conversely, that those occupations in which women constitute a majority of workers come to be seen as relatively less skilled than those dominated by men. 'Skill' is not some objectively identifiable quality but rather is an ideological category, one over which women were (and continue to be) denied the rights of contestation (Grint & Gill, 1995: 9).

In this comment, Grint and Gill point to the iterative processes by which skills are gendered. Both the specific occupational roles *and* the skills which women are seen to regularly perform are attributed lower value than those associated with male workers.

I employ the notion of skill recognising that it is an ideological and shifting concept. Indeed, the concept of skill is said to have a much broader application today than in the past (Keep, 2001). As recently as 30 years ago, the term was primarily used to refer to physical dexterity, technical and craft practices and knowledge (Keep

& Payne, 2004). In this context, distinctions were made between the technical skills and the personal attributes required to carry out a job (Felstead, Gallie, & Green, 2002). In more recent years, abilities often referred to as 'soft skills' or 'generic skills' are now incorporated into the notion of skills including the ability to communicate well, emotional sensitivity, reasoning skills and the capacity for team working (Felstead, et al., 2002). Hence, the concept of skill has come to include what might have previously been thought of as innate personal attributes or informally learned behaviours (Grugulis, 2007a). As Keep and Payne (2004) state:

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that 'skill' has now become a universal grab bag for any attribute that employers and policy makers deem desirable in their 'ideal-typical' flexible employee, whether it is creative problem solving, simple obedience or general malleability (Keep & Payne, 2004: 69).

An expanded framing of skill is apparent in the UK public policy documents on skill development in the digital industries which I consider in this chapter. From a liberal feminist access-approach to women's participation, a change in skill requirements away from a sole focus on trained technical skills may open up this employment in the digital industries to women workers. Indeed, improved access to the digital industries for women on the basis of changing expectations of workers to possess 'soft skills', is a prominent focus of UK policy-level initiatives (Wilson-Kovacs, Ryan, & Haslam, 2006). Hence, exploring the changing requirements for skills in the digital industries is a crucial first step to understanding how gender is performed in the digital media sector.

Required skills for the digital industries

In this section I begin by discussing my observations of a digital industry training course for the North West of England which I attended in 2004 and consider these alongside a set of documents emerging from publicly funded initiatives to investigate changing skill requirements of the digital industries (e.g. e-skills, 2005; Heeley & Pickard, 2002). I then compare my findings with a second set of public policy

documents that address digital industry skill requirements in relation to women's participation.

The North West Digital Industries Grad School (hereafter referred to as the Grad School) was a prime location for my investigation of skill requirements. It was an event deriving from the interaction between public policy demands and publicly funded training initiatives, and was designed to develop workers with appropriate skills for the digital industries in the North West. The Grad School was funded through the UK GRAD Programme and the North West Development Agency (NWDA). The stated objectives of the UK GRAD Programme and Grad School respectively were to aid 'the academic sector to embed personal and professional skills development into research degree programmes' (UK GRAD, 2008: online source), and to 'enable current PhD students to see themselves and their future in a new context, the digital industries' (email providing course information).

Forty-eight doctoral research students working in technical research programmes in North West universities participated in this event.³⁰ The Grad School also attracted significant participation from individuals from the industry who acted as student mentors, facilitators and trainers, and attended the 'networking evening' which was held as part of the course (including representatives from the BBC, IBM, National Museums Liverpool, regional digital industry development agencies and a number of SMEs).

A case study film of the Grad School was developed as part of a promotional DVD for the UK GRAD Programme. This film offers a formal snapshot of the Grad School which was endorsed by its organisers, the film-makers and editors of the DVD. The film-makers interviewed almost all of the student participants and course facilitators who participated in the Grad School. Industry representatives who attended the

³⁰ Students came from the universities of Central Lancashire, Hull, Lancaster, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield.

industry networking evening were also interviewed about why they supported and participated in the event.

I view comments from those featured in this film as filtered and revised forms of talk. For example, when I was being interviewed for this film the interviewers rephrased my comments in tidy sound-bites and asked me to repeat these back to them. Thus, although the film depicts apparently spontaneous spoken language practices within an interview format, these were refined, repackaged and edited according to the wishes of the UK GRAD Programme and the film-makers. Below are a set of quotations from industry representatives presented in this film:³¹

It's getting the best brains in the North West into businesses in the North West and I think that's a very important issue (Eamon Walsh, Brainboxes, leading PC Communication card developers and manufacturers based in Liverpool).

It's a great way of tapping into local talent, you know, very often you know, there are fantastic people with fantastic ideas and they just don't get the opportunity to shine and to show people they can do it ... We get a lot of people applying to us and we're looking for people that have a spark of originality, people with ideas, people that are willing to work very hard and people who, you know, want to contribute. You know it's as simple as that. If you can get those three or four things together then you're half-way there (Mario Dubois, New Media Unit, BBC based in Manchester).

I think a course of this nature is absolutely essential to further widen the digital media or digital industry economy in the North West (Richard Ashdowne, Manager Interactive Media, Reflex Communications, communications, event design, and interactive media production based in Manchester).

(Transcribed from promotional film made about the North West Digital Industries Grad School, UK GRAD Programme, 2005).

In these comments two discursive practices can be identified which were repeated in the Grad School and key public policy documents which address skills requirements of the digital industries. The first practice that is employed was to position individuals as 'natural' resources to be refined for the digital industries. The industry representatives stated that the course is useful for 'getting the best brains

³¹ The film did not include the interviewer's questions and so I have been unable to include them here.

into...businesses in the North West', 'tapping into local talent' and for further 'widen[ing] the digital media or digital industry economy in the North West'. These statements also invoke ideas of individualised innate capacities such as 'talent' and 'brains' and these were distinguished from trained business skills. The Grad School was specifically developed in order to teach business skills to technically expert and creative individuals.

This approach of the Grad School relates to the second repeated practice found within the comments above and the public policy documents, of highlighting the need for integrated skills and attributes. This practice is exemplified by Mario Dubois' comments suggesting that individuals need to exhibit at least three or four qualities in order to be 'half-way' successful in the digital industries. He identified desirable workers as those who have a set of characteristics which included 'fantastic ideas', 'a spark of originality', 'a willingness to work very hard', and a desire 'to contribute'. I illustrate further how these two key practices were employed in the Grad School and public policy documents below.

Individuals as trainable resources for the digital industries

According to one recent report on skills development in the digital industries there is a pending 'crisis on the doorstep of the UK economy' in the form of vast skills shortages in IT fields (e-skills, 2004: online source³²).³³ A survey document on the digital industries in the North West published by MITER Digital Media Watch (Kurien et al., 2003) found that 31 percent of the companies they surveyed had problems finding people with the right skills. The authors of this document suggested that individuals in the North West were lacking the combination of technical ability and business skills. As evidence of this Kurien et al. quoted one of their participants who stated: 'There is a lack of business skills. College and university knowledge is not

³² No page number available for online source. Full location details of source provided in the reference list.

³³ e-skills UK is the licensed Sector Skills Council for IT and Telecoms in the UK.

sufficient, they need practical business skills as well to be applicable to real working environments' (Kurien et al., 2003: 19). In these documents individuals in the North West are seen as resources for the UK economy broadly and North West companies specifically.

A major component of the training offered at the Grad School was the Digital Entrepreneurship Case Study that was run over the three days of the course. This case study took the form of a business development simulation involving teams of seven or eight people who were asked to develop a business idea, write a business plan, and present their proposals to a panel of prospective venture capitalists. Prior to the launch of this case study the facilitator emphasised the need for the students to orientate themselves towards the entrepreneurial requirements of the digital industries, as she explained:

You've got to put your entrepreneurial hat on now.

These are skills you'll have to use in order to be successful.

Start putting yourself into the digital industries mindset.

(Course facilitator: comments as part of the Digital Entrepreneurship Case Study).

Thus, in the Grad School an entrepreneurial approach was treated as something that could be learned, or 'put on' by the student participants and, thus, was contrasted with notions of natural talent and creativity. For example, a workshop session for the case study was titled 'Creative Ideas Generation'. At the beginning of this session the facilitator explained that some people are 'natural dreamers who come up with creative ideas all day', and that, for such individuals, 'there are really no bounds'. The participants were then split into roles of 'creatives' (creative ideas people), 'implementers' (people who translated a selected creative idea into a viable business idea) and 'critics' (people who tested and challenged these proposals).

In the Grad School, entrepreneurship was presented as a broad concept which involved adopting a 'digital industries mind-set' to employment, and this involved developing a set of business skills which could be applied in specific workplaces.

Thus, other activities designed for the student participants included business and financial planning, marketing, communication and presentation skills and social and networking skills.

In the Grad School and the policy documents cited above workers are required to meet organisational and industry ends and are evaluated as trainable resources. This point becomes crucial for the remaining analysis in this thesis. As I will show, digital media workers are required to possess skills which meet organisational demands, and women workers are seen to meet such demands in certain prescribed ways. But more on that later, after I consider the second repeated practice found in the Grad School and public policy documents of highlighting the need for hybrid workers.

Hybrid workers

The student participants in the Grad School were told by one session facilitator that 'you need several hats to be successful in the digital industries'. This emphasis of collecting a portfolio of skills was reiterated throughout the Grad School. For example, in a careers session, a three-dimensional 'skills box' graphic was presented and student participants were asked to place themselves within the three-dimensional space. The dimensions of the box were assigned three vectors: technical skill, interest in working with people, and artistic ability. This exercise did not merely imply that possessing a collection of specific skills, interests and attributes was important; it also highlighted the need for an integration or mix of these qualities. This careers session was one of the only moments in the Grad School in which technical skill was explicitly discussed. Creativity and the development of business skills were given the majority of attention. While this pattern of emphasis was likely due to the status of the participants as technical graduates – and thus already technically skilled – this finding provides some evidence of a move away from exclusive demands for technical skill in these industries.

A review of skill expectations presented in public policy documents on the digital and creative industries (DCMS, 1998, 2001a; e-skills, 2005; Heeley & Pickard, 2002)

illustrated a similar practice of highlighting integrated skills. For example, an e-skills report on skill development needs in the North West digital industries stated:

The future skills required by I.T. professionals will focus on systems architecture, with the highest rewards promised to those who can work in (sometimes international) teams to design business relevant systems and services. Solutions analysts and project managers who have a combination of business and I.T. understanding will also benefit from developments (e-skills, 2005: 7).

The report went on to suggest:

The need for increased experience linking technology to business will blur the distinction between the skills needed by in-house I.T. professionals and by the business managers. Increasingly, this blurring will open up new career path options – with individuals moving between I.T. and business roles. These ‘hybrid’ people create profound implications for how skill development must be delivered in the future (e-skills, 2005: 33).

These statements take a step away from a primary demand for in-house IT professionals. The authors highlight that workers in the future will need to have ‘blurred’ and ‘combined’ skills. These include technical software and systems skills, but also the ability to work with clients and users to develop systems appropriate for business needs. The contention is that digital industry workers will need to be ‘hybrids’.

The policy documents I reviewed on skills development in the creative industries (including the digital industries) (DCMS, 1998, 2001a; Heeley & Pickard, 2002), also emphasised the integration of skills. In their analysis of skill needs in the North West creative industries, Heeley and Pickard (2002) argue that creativity is ‘one of the most important skills needed by the national workforce to help increase UK competitiveness’ (Heeley & Pickard, 2002: 14). But these authors also contend that individuals in the creative industries need to be ‘flexible and adaptable employees’ who have ‘broad based qualifications’ (Heeley & Pickard, 2002: 14), including technical and craft skills and business knowledge.

The identification of desirable workers as ‘hybrid workers’ in the Grad School and public policy documents resonates with some recent popular commentaries and academic research on knowledge and creative work. For example, the development of small businesses by independent entrepreneurs has been highlighted by a number of

commentators as a key factor contributing to the growth of the creative economy in the UK (e.g. e-skills, 2005; Florida, 2002; Landry & Bianchini, 1995; Leadbeater, 1999a, b, c; Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999, 2001; NWDA, 2007). Academic writers have also emphasised the need for workers with 'new hybrid skills' that cut across 'technical and creative skills, and sometimes business skills', within inter-disciplinary teams in the digital industries (Ducatel, Burgelman, & Bogdanowicz, 2000: 22; see also Kidd Damarin, 2006). The emergence of such hybrid workers in the UK has prompted researchers and commentators to combine previous classifications of 'knowledge workers', 'creatives' and 'entrepreneurs' to create new labels such as 'knowledge entrepreneurs' (Leadbeater & Oakley, 2001) and 'creative entrepreneurs' (e.g. British Council, 2009; Moss, 2004; Tams, 2003). These labels shift attention away from the previously dominant figure of the technical 'geek' in the digital media sector (Margolis & Fisher, 2002; Turkle, 1984), towards a newer figure of the 'hybrid worker' as the promissory agent for UK economic development. In this regard, hybrid workers are positioned as resources for business.

In the Grad School, creativity and business skills were emphasised rather than technical skills. By contrast, the policy documents I analysed placed the greatest emphasis on the need for a combination of technical and business skills. Nevertheless, all sites gave attention to the need for workers to have integrated skills. Viewing these sites together, the ability of workers to be adaptable and flexible and to move between skill sets emerges as just as important if not more so than the specific skills that may be required. Men and women workers were presented as business resources that must be trained and developed into hybrid workers.

It is of note that no explicit association between notions of gender and skills was made in the articulations of skill requirements in the policy documents and Grad School presented above. This lack of reference to gender is in stark contrast to what I found in a set of UK policy documents which considered women's participation in the

digital industries (DTI, 2005a, 2005b; Haines, 2004a, 2004b; Millar & Jagger, 2001).

I discuss these documents below, before going on to analyse my interview material.

Changing skills requirements and women workers

Women workers are identified as particularly well suited to shifting skill requirements in the digital industries in documents published by UK public agencies (e.g. DTI, 2005a, 2005b; Haines, 2004a, 2004b). For example, Jane Millar and Nick Jagger (2001) state in their report on women workers in the information, technology, electronics and communications (ITEC) sector that:

Over time, pressures for change have demanded a different genus of ITEC specialists who, alongside their technical skills:

- possess strong communications skills
- are able to share their knowledge with specialists and non-specialists through participation in team work
- are flexible and adaptive and are able to build and maintain productive relationships with users of the technological systems that they create (Millar & Jagger, 2001: 28–29).

Millar and Jagger then reflect on their analysis as follows:

This redefinition of the key skills and abilities that are required for ITEC-related work has opened up new opportunities for women, who generally excel in these critical, non-technical areas, to enter into ITEC careers. In the context of severe shortages of skills and talent in ITEC, the rhetoric of professional discourse has declared that there has never been a better time for women to enter and prosper in ITEC employment (Millar & Jagger, 2001: 29).

In these excerpts, the digital industries are presented as having significantly changed from their previous formations and women are presented as well suited to new skills requirements. This is highlighted through the use of phrases such as ‘pressures for change’, ‘redefinition of key skills’, ‘different genus of workers’ and ‘new opportunities’. Due to expanding functions of the digital industries related to client and user servicing, Millar and Jagger argue that workers need interpersonal skills in addition to technical skills including the ability to communicate well and the capacity for sharing, team work, flexibility, and ability to build relationships.

Like the Grad School and public policy documents cited above (e-skills, 2005; Heeley & Pickard, 2002), Millar and Jagger highlight the importance of combining

technical skills with creativity and skills in business and customer care. But these authors go further to argue that 'creativity and innovation' (p. 3), and 'customer-focussed and client-servicing skills' (p. 32) in the UK economy will be enhanced if more women are employed in this sector.

Another invocation of women's suitability for work in the digital industries can be found in a DTI study presented in two parts by Rebecca George, Chair of Intellect: Women in I.T. Forum³⁴ (DTI, 2005a, b).³⁵ The first report focussed on developing a business case for diversity and more specifically, for women's participation in the digital industries. The second sought to explore why women leave the digital industries. The first of the George reports states that:

The sector is poor at demonstrating that specialist I.T. skills (e.g. programming, technical support) are not always needed for a career in I.T. Some jobs have nothing to do with computers at all...The 'soft' communication and interpersonal skills that women are good at are very useful in customer-facing roles (DTI, 2005a: 41).

Again, in this statement women are identified as good at 'soft skills' such as communication and inter-personal skills. These social abilities are contrasted with the 'hard' technical skills of programming and the ability to provide technical support. Like the Millar and Jagger (2001) report, this document identifies interpersonal skills as vital for workers in the digital industries. However, contrasting Millar and Jagger's emphasis on the *integration* of technical and (non-technical) interpersonal skills, the statement above plays down specialist IT skills and directs women towards jobs that 'have nothing to do with computers', including customer-facing roles. Indeed, the George report suggests that technical skills are not necessarily required for workers in this domain.

³⁴ Intellect is the UK trade association for the technology industry. It is a forum focused on 'finding real solutions to the long-standing problems of how to attract, retain and advance more women in the IT industry' (Intellect, 2007: online source). The forum operates in the form of a collaborative partnership between employers, employees and government and seeks to influence and advise government ministers on programmes that need to be undertaken to increase the participation of women in the IT industry.

³⁵ Authorship is not attributed in these reports but George oversaw the DTI forum which produced this research. For ease of communication I will hereafter refer to them as the George reports.

In a third set of reports commissioned by the North West Development Agency, Liz Haines (Haines, 2004a, b) presents her research on women workers in the North West digital games industry. Haines asserts that women can contribute their social expertise to the digital games industry. Moreover, she argues that, as the industry is professionalised and formal management and HR practices are developed, women will gain greater access to employment in this work domain. Haines predicts that such changes would facilitate the recruitment of more women into the sector and would also offer new, 'non-technical' roles for women to take up.

The reports from Millar and Jagger (2001), George (DTI, 2005a, b) and Haines (2004a, b) draw on notions of there being a good fit between women's skills and changing industry skill requirements. These approaches can be linked to earlier liberal feminist strategies which set out to increase women's access to the digital industries by promoting skill-based technical training (e.g. Nightingale et al., 1997). However, in the commentaries cited here it is not women's technical skills, deriving from specific training, which comes under scrutiny. Rather, it is their assumed communicative abilities which are the vital hinge in these positive assessments of women's potential. This characterisation employs a division between naturalised communication skills of women vis-à-vis trained technical skills which are more often attributed to male workers.

In this set of public policy documents we find two assertions. The first is that the skills required by valued workers are broadening thereby exposing the need for creativity and social and client-focussed skills, alongside technical skills. The second assertion is that the varieties of roles in the digital industries are diversifying beyond conventional technical roles, including customer-facing, communication, user-training and HR roles. These latter roles are described as 'non-technical' (Millar & Jagger, 2001) and 'nothing to do with computers' (DTI, 2005a) and are presented as roles into which women may fit.

There are diverse implications of these two kinds of ‘opportunities’ for women workers. On the one hand, if integrated skills are required, it is important that women are recognised for their interpersonal capabilities, creativity, business expertise *and* technical skills. The consistent association of women with interpersonal skills in contrast to technical skills makes this less likely. On the other hand, where there is greater specialisation of roles, and women are repeatedly aligned with those roles which are non-technical, segregated patterns of male and female participation in the sector are likely. This is of concern because a number of researchers have contended that technical skills and social expertise are not equally valued in the digital industries (Grugulis, 2007b; Woodfield, 2000). Indeed, gender inequalities in pay and conditions have been linked to disproportionate participation of women in roles which have lower status in the digital industries including administration support, human resource management, and client-facing roles (Whitehouse & Diamond, 2005). I discuss these issues further below when I consider how women workers are described as skilled workers by my interviewees.

Expositions of skill which utilise pre-ordained gender categories are problematic because they ignore where and how skills, talents and interests become gendered through discursive practices.³⁶ Moreover, there may be tensions between how public agencies prescribe changing skill requirements in the digital media sector and the value that practitioners in the sector attribute to certain skill sets. For example, Ruth Woodfield (2000) and Wendy Faulkner (2002) have found that organisations and workers in software engineering typically construct both technical skills and social capability as necessary qualities for this sector. Yet, despite an abstract appreciation of both domains of skills, these researchers found a tendency of the workers they

³⁶ Several critical theorists have demonstrated that the performance of traits traditionally associated with femininity, including emotional and social capability, is valued differently according to whether this is realised by a male or by a female worker (Abrahamsson, 2003; Adkins, 2002; Woodfield, 2000).

interviewed to emphasise their technical skills alone (see also Faulkner's recent study of technical engineers: Faulkner, 2007).

In my analysis of practitioner interviews below I identify discursive practices consistent with those found in the public policy documents and the Grad School reviewed above. As I will show, my interviewees presented integrated skills as necessary for digital media work. But, my interviewees also presented a hierarchy of skills in which creativity and technical expertise were attributed higher value than entrepreneurship, a commercial focus or business skills. For all of my interviewees creativity was accorded the highest value. These practices which are employed in interviewees' general discussions about ideal skills and ideal workers provide the context for how women's participation in the digital media sector was discussed by my interviewees.

Ideal digital media workers

In order to investigate my interviewees' views of the skills and attributes of digital media workers, I asked them to describe the characteristics that they regarded as important for success in the digital media sector. My open question allowed interviewees to describe others who worked in the industry, to describe themselves as workers and/or to take-up a more abstract discussion of skill requirements in the sector. The most common approach of my interviewees to answering these questions was to describe ideal workers as those with integrated skills and then to present these skills in a hierarchy of value. I illustrate this below, before I go on to explore how women workers were presented as skilled workers.

A hierarchy of skills

Brigitte was the co-director of a small firm, who provided interactive digital installations for corporate and community clients. She responded to my questioning regarding the required skills for successful digital media workers in the following way:

*BD ...They have to, **have to** (her emphasis) have a basic understanding of computer science, like just the foundations... what you want people to do is just learn the basic things, like um, certain statements or whatever, and then they can transfer that. So, you've got to have that and you also have to have a creative mind, because there's lots of people who are really good programmers or have those basic conceptual computing ideas down, but they just can't think, I don't want to say out of the box, but they can't, it's unbelievable really (BD: 147).³⁷*

For Brigitte the first requirement for individuals working in this field is 'a basic understanding of computer science, like just the foundations'. Brigitte emphasised the importance of technical knowledge and unlike my other interviewees, she also highlighted the learning processes involved in workers becoming technically skilled. In general, my interviewees more often presented technical expertise in regard to innate interest and capacity (see discussion of gendering of skills below). Brigitte also contrasted technical skill with the need for a creative mind and argued that both are necessary. Her comments present creativity as an important and naturalised trait which augments acquired technical expertise. Brigitte opined that there were many individuals in the industry who were limited precisely because they possessed only technical skills.

Brigitte's identification of creativity as a high status trait or talent which must be combined with technical expertise was consistent with comments from my other interviewees. For example, Matt stated:

You have to be, I'd say you definitely need an artistic background, ah of some form. 'Cause, nearly everything you do, it really is, it's a different form of art. Ah, so it's either, you don't necessarily have to be good at drawing, it's, as long as you've got an artistic mind, like, you can put that down either on paper or through software but ah.. 'Cause if you have a really creative mind, you're, you'll definitely appeal to more people (laugh) (MG: 173).

³⁷ The citation reference I use for interview material throughout the thesis includes the initials of the pseudonym I gave the interviewee and a paragraph number referring to their interview transcript. I include the initials so that the reader is aware of multiple quotations from a single interviewee. The paragraph number, while relative according to the flow and continuity of speech in each interview, provides the reader with information about the order of multiple comments from the same interviewee. Please see Appendix 6 for full transcription conventions used in this thesis.

For Matt, an artistic background and a creative mind are the most important attributes for workers in the sector. Working with software is seen to be merely the use of a tool (like paper and a pen) by which one can realise creative ideas.

Daniel, a creative director of a digital branding company, also valued a creative orientation over and above technical skills by contrasting his own approach with that of others in the industry. Daniel cynically identified the majority of interactive digital designers as 'just geeks, all they want to do is code' (DK: 86). In this comment Daniel invoked a familiar and stereotypical image of workers in this domain (Margolis & Fisher, 2002; Turkle, 1984). He noted that it was difficult to get such workers to think beyond technologies to consider what creative products could be developed with them. In contrast, when describing his own involvement in the sector, Daniel distanced himself from this geeky and technical image. He stated that:

It's no good just making something for the sake of it and then it just sits on the computer. I'm more interested in actually, well, what we could do with it?... I've always been into computers, but I've always been into making things with computers, I haven't been like, 'this is so many mega hertz' and I just don't care, it's like 'well what can I make with it?' (DK: 27-29).

While Daniel described his ongoing fascination with technology, he maintained that he was not interested in technology for its own sake, but in what he could create with it. For Daniel, technical skill and passion for creation are linked and he emphasises the latter.

This ordering of value for technical skills and creativity was repeated throughout my interviews and my interviewees sought to present themselves as primarily creative workers. Seventeen of the eighteen practitioner interviewees said that they were engaged in creative work and that they regarded themselves, or at least hoped to be considered by others, as creative workers. Only one practitioner described himself primarily as a 'technical worker' (JM).

A commentary presenting a slightly different relation between technological skill and creativity was offered by Grant. Grant worked in the same organisation as Brigitte, which produced interactive digital installations for events. He discussed his

early work in terms of acting as a 'technology demonstrator' in that he focussed solely on playing with 'cool new technology'. He then described a developmental progression towards a more intellectual and artistic approach, and throughout the interview he emphasised the creativity involved in his work. Nevertheless, Grant described the notion of being an artist ambivalently. I asked him whether he saw himself as a 'creative worker'. He responded:

We've been talking about this recently actually and, and we've been thinking about, we don't necessarily feel like artists, and we, for a long time we've, we desperately wanted to be artists but haven't really felt like we've earned our wings yet. {Yep} So we've been trying and trying and trying, but then we suddenly realised that well, no, why should we want to be artists? We kind of are what we are (pause). So, recently we've been thinking about what we are, and defining ourselves and we've come up with, it's not perfect, but we've been using the word artisan. {Oh yeah?} So we're not, it's got more, there's an aspect of um skilled handicraft, rather than the kind of finer conceptual art. We've kind of, we like the idea. I think it's a strong skill to have, the fact that we do build stuff, and we know how to make things {Right}. And if you can compare us with new media artists, who will maybe get people to build their, some of their systems for them, in some ways it's not, we're kind of a bit disillusioned with a lot of modern art, where, where the concept is divorced from the skills to realise it, {Yep}. So I kind of saw an article on Damien Hirst, and um, you know, he obviously comes up with all the concepts but then, there's one guy who builds most of his work, sort of a carpenter come handyman guy. But he doesn't get any of the, in some ways he's got all the physical skills, the practical skills of creating these things, um. So you know, Damien didn't catch the shark, he didn't pickle the shark, {He didn't put it in there}, he didn't chainsaw it in half, he was there watching (GH: 96).

In this reflective commentary Grant rejected obsession with technologies for their own sake, but he also resisted identification with fine artists. For Grant, being an 'artist' was associated with social recognition and was seen as an aspirational identity of high status. Yet, despite these positive associations, Grant and his colleagues, also saw the figure of the artist as being burdened with pretension and in-authenticity. He noted that the label of 'artist' did not accurately reflect who they were or what they did. Grant designated the technical craft skills required to build interactive digital media installations as crucial for their work, and thus preferred the term 'artisan' to denote their roles as technical *and* creative craft workers.

Each of the interviewees quoted above provided formulations about digital media work as integrating the use of technology with creativity. In their comments, creativity appeared to be valued more highly than technical skill, but both were deemed valuable and necessary. This contrasts from how my interviewees talked about entrepreneurial, commercial motivations and business skills. As I will show below, my interviewees downplayed these areas of digital media work and suggested that business skills were necessary but less important than technical expertise and creativity.

Entrepreneurship, commercial motivation and business skills

In Euro-American contexts the commercial potential of digital media technology development is reiterated in the constant retelling of success stories of companies like Microsoft, Google or Rockstar Games. Yet, the relentless pursuit of profit through digital media production is not universally endorsed by workers in this domain. UK-based researcher Tiziana Terranova (2000) chronicles a deep tension amongst digital industry workers who must negotiate the contrasting subject positions of 'resistant fighters' who challenge the status quo and operate at the cutting-edge of technology, with that of 'pivotal agents' contributing to the ever expanding project of capitalism. In a related discussion, Richard Barbrook and Pit Schultz (1997) employ the term 'digital artisan' but use it in a different way than Grant (above) to refer to 'autonomous, creative and skilled craftspeople' in the digital industries who resist relinquishing their control to market demands of commercial enterprise. Other UK researchers have also identified worker ambivalence regarding the relationship between commercial and creative aspects of work in the creative industries (e.g. Jeffcut & Pratt, 2002; Tams, 2003). This body of research has developed particularly in response to the relabeling of the cultural/arts sector as the 'creative industries' by the UK Labour government which intensified the link between creativity and commercial enterprise (Jeffcut & Pratt, 2002; Tams, 2003).

The majority of my practitioner interviewees discussed an uneasy relationship between the creation of creative artefacts and the commercialisation of those artefacts. They did this by distancing themselves from an entrepreneurial approach, by downplaying their commercial motivations and by suggesting that they engaged in business activities due to necessity rather than interest. Such ambivalence might be seen as surprising coming from individuals who are freelancers, small business owners and/or working for private commercial companies. It also contrasts sharply with the entrepreneurial approach and need for business skills advocated in the public policy documents and the Grad School discussed in the previous sections.

Despite almost 70% of my interviewees (16 of 23 interviewees) having started up their own small business or aspiring to do so in the future, no interviewee explicitly described themselves as an entrepreneur. Indeed, the majority articulated some resistance to being categorised in this way. For example, Gregory, Grant and Penny distinguished their own approaches from that of others in the industry who they identified as 'sharks', 'money men' and 'people who go corporate' respectively.

Gregory referred scathingly to a particular 'entrepreneur' as 'the only one he knew to make any money out of the crash of 2000', and as 'nothing but a face-man', who 'looked like he knew'. Gregory mocked this colleague for his flashy offices, business-speak, slick dress and predilection for driving (and crashing) fast cars. Further, Gregory contrasted himself and his co-director (who he considered had the expertise to produce what they promised) against the 'majority of entrepreneurs' operating during the dot-com boom (who did not). When discussing the dot.com crash and its effect on his two-person company Gregory stated:

The whole fact that the economy went plop meant that, unless you could sort of half-way do what you said you could do, really you can't afford to make a living out of it. And so a lot of the sharks and suits, marketing people, it was all just, blather, they all just buggered off. So it was actually quite a good time to start up (GK: 53).

In this temporal map of the industry Grant rejects what he construes as the hollow drive of many entrepreneurs to charm investors and make a lot of money. He distinguished his own company by referring to their technical and creative expertise.

Another interviewee, Matt, distinguished commercial motivation from his interest and passion for creative work. He emphasised that he 'wasn't in it for the money' and commented that, 'If someone gave me £100,000 pounds for a job but I hated it, I couldn't do it. I guess that's bad really, I guess I should be money oriented' (para. 295). Matt maintained that his digital design work had always been a hobby, highlighting his creativity and passion for his work.

Like Matt, Penny, a co-director of a small start-up company, also distinguished herself from others working in her sector who she saw as primarily interested in making money:

I always want to have the ability to work with people on different projects like this or sound and keep doing creative stuff. I hope that I never just go money, money, money and just corporate, corporate, corporate, and I think that a lot of people do that. Especially in the creative industries (PW: 249).

In contrast to others in the industry who she classified as focussed on financial gain, Penny emphasised that her interest was in creativity and in working with people.

Only two practitioner interviewees presented entrepreneurial and commercial aspects of their work in explicitly positive terms. The first, Hamish, described his progression into setting up his own company as a natural move, given that both his parents were entrepreneurs and that they owned their own businesses. Another interviewee, Daniel, rejected the often made division between creativity and a business-focus, as our exchange below illustrates:

SPT You were talking about encouraging the staff, like to kind of think creatively, but also to think about how it can be used in a business way. Do you see those things in tension? Um, between, like creativity and entrepreneurial way of thinking?

DK Yeah, no, there are people that think, you know, you're just a sell out or something, not us, but..(pause)..that becomes more leading towards the artist, the tortured artist thing and, the end of the day, even artists get paid by Charles Saatchi, you know what I mean? To actually bloody live. So it's a bit, I don't, that

argument just doesn't stand up for me. It's this utopian, sort of, bohemian vision of like a suffering artist who just you know, lives on the breadline but does this amazing work. Well as far as I'm concerned, I want more people to see our work, I want the most people to see our work as there could be. So, you have to get it out there. Otherwise it don't mean anything. You could be the best designer in the world. If no one sees it, it doesn't mean a jot (DK: 96).

Daniel warned against moralism in attitudes towards creative work and he insisted that there was nothing wrong with making money through creativity.

There are a number of influences that may have contributed to my interviewees' reluctance to speak about their commercial motivations, or their entrepreneurial aspirations. In Britain it is often considered brash to discuss financial status, particularly with strangers as I was. In addition, as Gregory's comments above highlight, at the time of the interviews the digital media sector had gone through a period of volatility in many Euro-American nations including the UK. Since the boom and bust of numerous digital media companies during 1999-2001 aggressive entrepreneurial rhetoric and practices which sought to entice investors for start-up development had gained a bad reputation (Howcroft, 2001). Thus, my argument here is not that these interviewee comments indicate a lack of interest in commercial and business growth. Rather, I argue that their ambivalent and resistant discussions of these aspects of their work were productive in elevating their claims of technical expertise and creative talent. As above, my interviewees often directly contrasted commercial and business objectives and the skills needed for these aspects with their passion for creative work.

In another example, Laura, a co-director of a small start-up, constructed a division between her and her colleagues' focus on creativity and motivation for financial gain:

Our aim was never to get rich quick which is just as well, really! We wanted to work on interesting projects and work with a mix of creative people. We try to balance our commercials work by making independent short films every couple of years for the festival circuit. Commercials for the money, short films for the soul, as they say (LC: 24).

In commenting that the creative work they do is ‘for the soul’, Laura associated such work with her inner-self, while she regarded their commercial work as externalised, identifying it as a means for survival. Indeed, she also commented: ‘The business side is considered the necessary evil. Really, we’re not into paperwork!’ (para. 31). By splitting her work into the commercial and the soulful, Laura was able to present herself as oriented toward creative freedom, while still acknowledging her financial motivation and success.

In a similar fashion, while Gregory, initially scoffed at the ‘suits’ whom he associated with empty business-speak, he went on to explain that this did not mean that he and his partner eschewed organisational growth or strategies to achieve this. Gregory talked about the approach his organisation was taking in the development of their start-up digital media company:

We’ve actually set some goals. We want to um, it’s likely, we’ve set a three-year goal basically on our way to a ten-year plan, which sounds a bit corporate but um, I think without goals you’re almost a ship sailing on no course, so it’s a good thing to have. We don’t necessarily want to get bigger, ’cause, (pause), oh you know, we want to get bigger. We want to, I think we might need these people [additional employees], we are going to need these people in order to achieve certain objectives. So they’re a by-product of it. Right, we are not interested in big flash offices, or having sports cars (GK: 166).

In this quotation Gregory seems to be struggling to find a balance between acknowledging the need for planning their commercial and business growth and his valuing of other aspects of his work. He distances himself from a corporate image, but he acknowledges that business planning is important. Similarly, Matt asserted that his motivations were not commercially driven, but he did discuss in some depth his need to develop skills to ‘market’ himself effectively and to secure commercial contracts.

Furthermore, while Penny initially asserted that she never just wanted to go ‘corporate, corporate, corporate’, she subsequently identified the importance of acquiring business skills as the director of her own start-up:

When you build an e-commerce site and it is, you’d either, you either, you have to kind of integrate it with someone else’s on-line accounting, and

it, you know, into their own bank account and you know, it's boring, mega boring, and you kind of end up more like, an accountant. You build accounting packages for people at the end of a website, you know, and that, that is unfortunately where a lot of the money is, in um. And then you have to make sure it's legal, it's backed up, it's safe, it's secure, and you know, you think 'alright, I'm starting out quite artistic and creative' and then as you go further and further down the field you're just getting bored with contracts, lawyers, insurance, (chuckling). And you know, you're working in the total business world and it's just something that you have to pick up. Ahhh! (PW: 165)

Penny contrasts creative and artistic beginnings of projects with the realities of operating in the business world. Hence, despite her resistance to overt money-making and aspects of corporate practice, she acknowledged the need to acquire business skills. There are clear indications as to how Penny evaluated different forms of expertise in her comments. She described business aspects as 'megaboring' and a far cry from her creative and artistic interests.

In summary, there were two main kinds of discursive practices employed by interviewees when describing the skills needed by successful workers and in their own work. First, both technical skills and creativity were presented as necessary for skilled digital media workers. Thus, in line with public policy statements above my interviewees did not emphasise technical expertise as a main or exclusive requirement. Many of my interviewees including Brigitte, Daniel and Grant distanced themselves from workers who they saw as solely into the technical aspects of their work. Moreover, while both skill types were deemed important, creativity was consistently presented as most important.

In contrast, my interviewees tended to present an entrepreneurial approach, commercial motivations, and business skills as the least favoured or valued aspects of their work. In this there was a particular disavowal from the image of entrepreneurs and business people and associated trappings of suits, flash offices and so on. Unlike interest and skills relating to technology and creativity, skills including business planning, client-servicing, financial management and negotiation of legal requirements were not areas in which my interviewees claimed natural talent. Rather their discussions suggested that such skills were reluctantly acquired.

Within the apparent hierarchy of skills presented by my interviewees, social and communication capabilities were not mentioned. This finding contrasts with the key public policy documents pertaining to women's participation in the digital media sector which I discussed above. However, once our discussions moved onto the topic of women's participation specifically, social capabilities were frequently foregrounded and in contrast, male workers were often characterised as having an exclusive technical focus.

The gendering of specialist workers: Technical lads, social women and artistic girls

My fieldwork included examining the publicly available information on the companies in which my interviewees worked (such as company websites). As part of my study of this material, I looked for staff lists to ascertain how many women and men were employed in these companies. Towards the end of the interviews I then referred to the proportion of female and male workers in the company to introduce the topic of women's participation in the digital media sector. When a list was not available, during the interview I looked around the office (most of the offices were open-plan) and literally counted heads. My approach replicated the ways in which such information is handled in political and academic contexts as a matter of participation rates (e.g. Millar & Jagger, 2001; Panteli, et al., 2001).

As I noted above, there was a general tendency in the public policy documents, Grad School and interviewee comments to reject or downplay a sole focus on technical expertise. Nevertheless, when I directly raised the topic of women's participation in the sector, interviewees emphasised the need for technically skilled workers. In such discussions, a number of female and male interviewees mobilised a gendered figure of the 'technical guy'.

Despite Daniel's earlier emphasis on the need for workers to possess integrated technical and creative skills, in his discussion of women's participation in the digital media sector Daniel specifically highlighted the importance of technical expertise. In

this discussion he reproduced a gender binary by aligning male workers with this set of skills and female workers with communication and social aspects of digital media work:

SPT: It sounds like you've got quite a few women in your organisation?

DK: Yeah, we've got a lot of women. It was started up by Janet, and Suzie is our director on the client side. We've got you know, a lot of women.

SPT: 'Cause it's not that common, well the other organisations I've been around, women are quite scarce, and I was, looked at your website and thought this is a, in terms of proportion, um it's...

DK: Yeah, I think it's a good thing. 'Cause it..(pause)..The problem with technology in any kind of new media side, is that it can be really made out to be very techy, 'cause of the nature of the business. But, what you want is for..(pause)..when society uses something, they use it because it's simple and they can understand it, not because it's scary and technical. I was having a conversation this morning, you know SMS messaging³⁸, people use it because they can connect to people and send each other messages. They don't go 'this is a really cool technology and wo, look at my phone!'

*SPT: (laugh), well, some might but...most people=*³⁹

=laugh) yeah, well some of the lads might because they're like into, if they're into cool gadgets and constantly upgrading the phone every month then fair enough...But the majority of people, and why it's become so massive, is because people communicate with each other. It's no big deal and it's 'cause it's, the technology becomes invisible to them. And I think women have a much better handle on that. They want to make it much more usable, much more friendly, and ah, humanise the whole process (DK: 45).

This exchange exemplifies the ways in which my interviewees often foregrounded technical ability and 'geeky-ness' when accounting for the low participation of women in the sector. Daniel sets forth the argument that the 'techiness' of the digital media

³⁸ SMS Messaging refers to a communications protocol called Short Message Service (SMS) which allows the interchange of short text messages between mobile telephones.

³⁹ The = sign at the end of one line and the start of the next in a transcription indicates that statements from different speakers are overlapping. The full list of transcription conventions used in this thesis are explained in Appendix 6.

sector is a problem from this perspective, yet, significantly, he also argues that techiness is related to the ‘nature of the business’.

Furthermore, Daniel corrects me when I suggest that ‘some people’ might be into technical aspects, insisting more precisely that it is ‘lads’ who have these interests. This is a form of ‘repair’ as theorised in conversational analysis (CA) (Stringer & Hopper, 1998). The term ‘repair’ in CA is used to refer to moments when one participant in an interaction corrects or repairs what they perceive to be an error in their collocutor’s speech. For example, one individual may repair another’s use of the pronoun ‘he’ when they incorrectly assume that the referent is male. Examples of repair involving perceived errors relating to gender may indicate the participant’s ‘orientation to common-sense understandings of gender’ (Weatherall, 2002: 771). In my exchange with Daniel I had not referred to a specific gender, but Daniel repairs my comments to align with a conventional association of men and masculinity with technical interest. In his comments, the descriptor ‘techy’ is identified as the prime feature of the business and it becomes conflated with ‘laddy’. This allows Daniel to critique the male domination of the sector, but also to offer a justification for the continuation of this pattern.

Daniel also distinguishes ‘scary’ technology from social and invisible technology, and he associates women workers with the latter. Daniel suggests that women’s strengths lie in their ability to make technology more usable for the consumer, thus women become identified with client-oriented and interpersonal skills and are valued for their understanding of and closeness to consumers.

Daniel was not the only interviewee whose comments conjured images of ‘techy lads’. Laura suggested that the animation sector is dominated by ‘guys with computers’, and Matt referred to ‘software guys’ that are always at industry networking evenings. In later parts of my interviews I asked the interviewees if they had experienced or witnessed any discrimination in their workplaces. In response to this question Penny commented:

[The digital media sector] is kind of male-dominated, but a lot of industries are aren't they? The worst thing I think about this industry is technical, technical guys. There'll always be a technical guy and they are all the same, every where, just very um, you know, 'I know what I'm doing, and I don't want to share with you because, you...' you know, and that is very much a kind of male sort of, (pause) don't know what you'd call it (PW: 191).

This characterisation of workers in the industry reinforces the association of technical interest and ability with male workers. In addition, Penny implies that technical guys in the industry act as gate-keepers. She suggests that her ability to do her job is in some respects restricted due to 'technical guy's' assertion of their technical competence and their unwillingness to share knowledge. To soften her negative assessment of the pervasiveness of this type of worker in the sector, Penny proposes that a lot of other industries are also male-dominated. This gendered characterisation of technical workers sits in tension with her account of her work as 'technical, creative and enjoyable' offered in an earlier part of the interview (PW: 28).

As in the public policy documents presented above (e-skills, 2005; Heeley & Pickard, 2002; Millar & Jagger, 2001), social capabilities only figured in interviewee discussions when women's participation and gender was made salient. In this way, gender and skill are co-constitutive. Public policy and interview statements which assert that women are well-placed to take up client-focused roles tend to mobilise fixed and rigid understandings of the skills that women are likely to possess, and they re-inscribe a gender binary (Gill & Grint, 1995; Wajcman, 1991).

Butler (1996) has noted that discursive practices control and regulate by bringing certain identities into effect and excluding others. When individuals working in the digital media sector draw on discursive resources which re-consolidate the conventional gendering of technological and social skills, I would argue that it becomes difficult to identify 'technical women'. If women's engagement with technology is primarily associated with sociality and communication, then the technical nature of their work is likely to become obscured and technical women may be rendered illegible. This is of concern given that the hybrid worker who has

integrated skills including technical skills, creativity and business expertise, loomed large in the policy documents and interviews. Moreover, as Grugulis and Vincent (2005) have argued, 'soft skills, regardless of their desirability or complexity rarely give individuals labour market power when unaccompanied by technical expertise' (Grugulis & Vincent, 2005: 202).

Nevertheless, it is possible that the growing attention given to creativity in the digital media sector, as highlighted in the public policy documents and Grad School, could disrupt or shift the gender/technology relation that I have discussed here. Two interviewees elaborated a specific association between women and the capacity to be creative, and distinguished this from the technical capacity of male workers. In the following exchange, Tim, a co-director of a small educational software start-up company, ambivalently discussed my observation that there were significantly more men than women working in the industry:

SPT Do you have many women as freelancers, I mean ... within the...I mean women are underrepresented in the field.

TJ Yes they are, um the instructional designers that I have on my books, I have five, and they are all women.

SPT Right, depends on what things they do?

TJ When we get into the other areas like animation and programming tends to be more male-dominated. And that's only because when you go to the agency it's all who's available, who's got the skills and you know, what they're doing so you're never guaranteed who it is, might be best for you for that particular time. So, I've never thought of it like that before really to be honest.

SPT Hmm, but does it seem like there's pockets of, kind of fields or skills that people grav=

TJ =gravitate towards..(pause)..I don't think there's, I haven't seen the imbalance. I think programmers, yes definitely you'll tend to find it's very dominated, again I think it's something to do with the logic, when you get to things like animation and artistry and animators um, probably starting to mix a bit, as you say probably the female balance isn't equal, but certainly into instructional design where it is the creative, creating this thing, I've got five women on the books (TJ: 180).

Tim initially rejected the notion that there was a gender imbalance in the digital media sector and he noted that he employed a number of female instructional designers. Further, he justified the absence of female workers amongst his contracted programming and animation freelancers by noting that generally only male workers are skilled and available for this work. Tim picked up on my question regarding participation rates of men and women according to the work area. When he associated animation with programming, he presented the field as logic-based and therefore male-dominated. However, later he linked animation to artistry and creativity. In this case he described animation as a more gender-balanced area of digital media.

The connection drawn between women workers and creativity here resonates with the analysis offered in some of the government policy documents I reviewed above which aim to promote the participation of women in the digital industries (e.g. DTI, 2005a, b; Millar & Jagger, 2001). These documents suggested that women may be attracted by the creative aspects of digital media work and that they may be able to contribute particularly to the creativity of the sector. However, this begs the question of what kind of creativity women are seen to possess? Tim's comments link women's creativity with instructional and educational design in contrast to technical aspects.

Harry, a senior programmer in a digital media firm, also associated women workers with creativity but did so in regard to more domestic forms of creativity. We were talking about women's participation in the industry, in the following exchange:

SPT Are there any women programmers or=

HS =There is but not here there isn't, well actually, I tell a lie, 'cause Meredith⁴⁰ can, she programmes, but she does, she'd say she wasn't a programmer but she is. So there's one. But generally that's what you'll find...(pause)

SPT Why would she say she wasn't a programmer?

⁴⁰ Pseudonym given.

HS Because she doesn't do the type of languages we do. 'Cause once again it's this confidence thing, they don't think - because I do like C++ and that's about as tough as it gets - they don't, do they, seem to think what they do is as meaningful? But um, I don't look at it that way, I think all programming would, just HTML or just C++, you know, you're a programmer, 'cause it's creative. And what as we just said, because it's creative you've got the opportunity to do it your way and just stamp with your feel on it. So, (pause), but generally I've found that it's not the sort of thing girls do, programming. I mean you will get some, but you just don't, I'd say for every ten programmers you might have in a room, you might be lucky if you had one who was a girl. Um, whereas it's probably the other way around with the design. You find there's more girls, there's far more girls in design.

SPT Yeah, why do you think that is?

HS Um, well, I don't think girls like sciences for a start. Um but generally no one does really. I think more, it's a technical thing anyway and blokes tend to, even from when you're kids, your toys and all that are more technical and things like that whereas, you're not going to like this, girls like painting the faces and..(pause)..I don't know really, I think that girls may be more artistic, just generally anyway. Um, you know, once again jokingly you'll like things with flowers, with colours in and just general day-to-day life. If you're in a.., girls will say 'that will look nice in a room', whereas you know, what us blokes are like, would sit in a tip and wouldn't even notice. So um, I think from that point of view, girls just generally, are, I think it's more, it's key to their personality where programming is more key to a bloke's personality. But there is obviously, like all things, there is cross-overs, there's not generalisation (para. 129-135).

I have presented this extended exchange because it illustrates tensions around notions of skill, creativity and women's participation in the sector. Harry struggles to identify the single woman programmer in his company, only mentioning Meredith after some reflection. He suggests that his colleague's lack of confidence in regard to her technical skills inhibits her from describing herself as a programmer. Moreover, Harry suggests that he initially overlooked Meredith as a programmer because she does not see herself in this way. Harry then projects Meredith's hesitancy onto all 'girls'. By the end of the exchange, he indicates that programming is not the sort of thing that girls do. He accounts for low numbers of women programmers by depicting girls' lack of interest in science and technology and suggests that girls may be better represented in design areas of digital media work.

While Harry links creativity and programming tightly together, when he talks about women's involvement he invokes ideas about forms of creativity related to traditional forms of femininity. He associates girls' artistic interest with a domestic aesthetic rather than to digital media production. Finally, Harry attempts to elicit my endorsement of his observations by employing remarks such as: 'they don't, do they, seem to think what they do is as meaningful?', or 'whereas you know what us blokes are like'.

In interview discussions in which gender and women's participation become salient, a different set of discursive practices relating to skilled digital media workers can be identified. Social aspects of digital media work are for the first time brought into the interviewee discussions and are associated almost exclusively with women workers. Technical aspects of digital media workers are attributed greater centrality for the sector in such discussions as compared to other parts of the interviews and are associated with male workers. Finally, when creativity is discussed in the interviews as a capacity of women, it was framed in terms of specific forms of creativity.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted how changing skill requirements in the digital media sector are articulated through examining interplaying discursive practices in key public policy documents, a digital industry Grad School and my interviews with practitioners. I have argued that claims about increased women's participation through changing skill requirements entrench gender ensuring that women are distinguished from normalised and ideal workers.

I have shown that in the public policy documents and Grad School, workers and potential workers were regarded as 'natural' resources which could be developed for the purposes of the digital industries. In contrast to previous characterisations of skilled workers in these industries as primarily 'technical experts', in these sites I found a broadening of the concept of skill as it pertains to the digital industries (see

Grugulis, 2007b). Ideal workers for these industries were identified as those who could integrate technical and creative talent with trained business skills including entrepreneurialism, client servicing, marketing, effective communication and commercial development. Such workers were labelled as 'hybrid workers'.

But abstract discussions of the variety of skills needed for the sector in these sites did not cast light on the hierarchy of skills operating in the sector which my interview data foregrounded. I have noted in this chapter that the most common combination of skills for successful digital media workers cited by my interviewees was of technical skills and creative thinking; the need for business skills was acknowledged, but treated as secondary. Social and communicative abilities did not emerge at all in my interviewees' initial discussions of ideal digital medial workers.

My analysis suggests that technical expertise is only one element of a range of skills currently required in the digital industries. In particular, creativity was cited in all of the discursive sites I analysed as an essential additional quality. My findings add to previous feminist scholarship on women's participation in the digital industries (e.g. Grint & Gill, 1995; Wajcman, 1991) by arguing that in addition to recognising the relation between gender/technology, the linking of gender and creativity is also an important element in the performativity of gender in this sphere. In Chapters 7 and 8 I explore the interaction of notions of creativity, difference and diversity in the conceptualisation of women in the digital media sector.

Moreover, despite changing skill requirements, I have noted recurring binary patterns in how men and women workers were perceived and evaluated. In the public policy documents and interviews, women workers were primarily associated with specialist roles requiring 'non-technical' and social skills. Women's presence in the digital media sector was generally linked to education, consumers, usability, domestic artistry and the social uses of technology. In such discussions male workers were also associated with specialist roles, but crucially these were roles requiring highly valued technical expertise. In these ways the continual foregrounding of women's

communicative skills in ‘non-technical’ areas of digital industry work (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Millar & Jagger, 2001) contributes to a fixed conceptualisation of women workers and reduces the likelihood that they will be perceived as *hybrid* workers. Through this pattern of association, women workers who are interested and skilled in the technological dimensions of digital media work become unintelligible. Thus, my findings challenge arguments found in some public policy documents and liberal feminist access-based approaches to women’s participation in the digital industries (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Millar & Jagger, 2001; Nightingale, 1997), which suggest that changing skills will open up the industries to more women. Even in the context of changing skills requirements, women continue to be positioned as under-prepared to fulfil the full range of skills required in this work domain.

Through the study of key public policy documents and my interviews I have shown that when the topic of women’s participation in the sector was explicitly addressed, very different skill requirements were highlighted. The following chapters show consistent patterns in which separate and dislocated discussions of key concepts like difference, diversity and creativity are employed when women’s participation in the sector is made explicit. The following chapter demonstrates such a pattern in visual and textual representations of digital media workers found in careers and recruitment literature. In this, I consider the kinds of worker subject positions that are depicted in these materials and how workers might be expected to fit these.

CHAPTER 6

FITTING WORKERS FOR A CHANGING SECTOR

The digital industries in the UK are said to have specific ‘image problems’. Public sector policy makers (DTI, 2005a; Phillip & Trinh, 2001) and commentators (Nickels, 2004) have argued that few women choose to enter these work domains because there is a misfit between the dominant image or impression of the digital industry as ‘geeky’, technical and male, and women workers’ self-perceptions (e.g. Phillip & Trinh, 2001). Thus, while the most optimistic accounts in the public policy documents I have thus far reviewed link changing expectations for skills with increased access for women workers to employment in the digital industries, a need to encourage women to choose to enter this work domain has also been emphasised in these documents (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Haines, 2004a, b; Millar & Jagger, 2001; Phillip & Trinh, 2001). Consequently, public agencies including the DTI and e-skills UK have contended that there is a need to ‘refine’ (Millar & Jagger, 2001), ‘re-market’ (Phillip & Trinh, 2001), ‘re-brand’ (Greenfield, Peters, Lane, Rees, & Samuels, 2002) and ‘makeover’ (DTI, 2005a) the image of the digital industries through promoting what they see as more appropriate role models and representations of workers in the industry.

In this chapter I investigate statements in selected public policy documents which articulate a need for a change in the image of the sector and/or which claim that the sector image is already changing. I juxtapose such statements with my own analysis of visual and textual representations of workers in careers and recruitment literature published between October 2003 and March 2005. While it is not possible to discern *the* meaning of any single representation, this study is designed to track patterns of association, repetitions of symbols, words, or types of portrayal. Hence, I identify discursive practices in photographic, drawn and textual representations of workers in digital industries careers and recruitment literature and consider how these might constitute norms which produce required digital media workers.

My approach in this chapter resonates with preceding related feminist research and is highly relevant for the objectives of my project. Feminist researchers have demonstrated that the visual representation of workers in popular media, advertising and organisational literature is a significant site of gender construction (e.g. Dellinger, 2002; Gill, 2009a; McDowell, 1997; Puwar, 2004). Such visual representations depict female and male bodies within specific contexts, appearances and roles. Hence, they provide potentially fruitful material in which the performativity of gender in relation to workers might be analysed. Representations in careers and recruitment literature are particularly significant because they can be analysed as complex forms of communication which act as lynchpins, connecting individual, organisational, occupational, sectoral and societal levels of the industry (Rafaeli & Oliver, 1998). They contribute to the formation of working subjects in the sector through offering representations of specific worker subject positions, with which individuals might then engage, identify with or resist.

For the purposes of analytical clarity I distinguish the concept of 'image', as an abstract idea or impression held by various stakeholders about the digital industries, from visual and textual 'representations' of workers. I explain my approach to these

concepts below in order to provide a frame for my analysis of public policy documents and careers and recruitment literature which follows.

Skills, image and representations of workers

It is at the nexus between required skills, image, and working subjects which I place my discussion in this chapter. As I have discussed in Chapter 5, there are shifting expectations for workers with various skill sets within the digital industries. But beyond skill requirements, appropriately skilled workers need to be attracted to work in the industry, and furthermore, organisations and industries need to recognise and select workers who possess the required skills. In this section I firstly consider the relation between skills and the notion of 'image' as it is applied to workers, organisations and industries in academic research literature on knowledge and creative work. This literature suggests that the recognition of skilled digital media workers by employers, colleagues and clients is tightly associated with how they appear and are perceived, and that this process is likely to be gendered. I then go on to consider how representations of workers in careers and recruitment literature might contribute to the image of the sector at the same time as producing required workers by encouraging their audience to identify with specific kinds of working subjects.

Recognising skilled workers in the digital industries

Irena Grugulis (2007a, b), a prominent UK scholar on the concept of skill, argues that in new areas of work including service, knowledge and creative work, there is seldom a 'product', in the sense of traditional domains of manufacturing, trade or transportation, against which an individual's work can be measured. She contends that service work, the application of knowledge, or creative work become the product even though they are often only evident in the vocalisation of an individual's thinking and/or their involvement in social interactions. In this respect, the assessment of workers' skills in these work domains is largely based on employers', clients' and

colleagues' perceptions, beliefs and assumptions about that individual. Indeed, how individuals present themselves at work (linguistically and through appearance and behaviour) and how they are perceived by others as skilled workers has been investigated by a number of theorists of knowledge, service and creative work (Alvesson, 2001, 2004; Alvesson & Köping, 1993; Grugulis & Vincent, 2005; Warhurst & Nickson, 2001). As Grugulis argues, it is 'more important to be *seen* to be an expert than actually to be one' (Grugulis, 2007b: 96).

This body of literature begs the question of what kind of image must workers portray in order to be viewed as an expert in the digital media sector? There are significant examples of feminist research which can be used as guides when considering this question. Joan Acker (1990) has argued that women are marginalised and gender segregation is maintained by the proliferation of images of men's skilled bodies in organisations. Further, feminist theorists have identified the gendering of certain scripts of looking professional in well-established professionalised work domains. For example, Linda McDowell (1997) and Nirmal Puwar (2004) argue that 'the professional' in finance and the British civil service is fashioned in a masculine form. They suggest that women who seek to take up such professional roles must negotiate how to present themselves in relation to a required idealised masculine norm. Thus, in the context of her study of gender in the finance industry in London, McDowell (1997) states:

Women are out of place in the embodied social structures of the workplace precisely because they are unable to acquire the cultural markers associated with the attributes valued in the workplace, or perhaps to qualify this, those associated with the rational and bureaucratic workplace' (McDowell, 1997: 35).

McDowell argues that women generally adopt one of two approaches when presenting themselves in the finance industry: either to attempt to enact a dominant masculine norm or to enact an overt femininity. Puwar (2004) describes the former strategy in her analysis of what happens when women attempt to wear 'ill-fitting suits' both literally and symbolically, tailored for the normative masculine ideal of power and authority in the British civil service. Puwar states 'women MPs have the additional

problem of a lack of historical precedence. They have a lack of costumes they can don in the acting of a politician's script' (Puwar, 2004: 96). Both researchers outline the ways in which the ideal worker is prescribed in male form, and provide examples of women workers attempting to fit this form through managing their appearance and image. McDowell and Puwar argue that such attempts *do* gender as part of the process of being 'professional'.⁴¹

While Puwar and McDowell provide excellent examples of gender analysis of some worker roles, their research is explicitly based in large bureaucratic organisations with long histories of professionalisation practices. In contrast, the cultural markers associated with valued worker attributes in the digital industries may be less easy to identify. As I have discussed, the digital industries are characterised by accelerated change and shifting expectations for workers with hybrid skill sets rather than established workers in specific professional roles. Recent academic research has argued that how workers appear and present themselves is closely tied to how they are evaluated (Alvesson, 2001, 2004; Grugulis, 2007b; Grugulis & Vincent, 2005). As such, there is a pressing need to develop a feminist analysis of images of workers in the shifting context of the digital media sector.

Academic analyses of the image of workers in computing were first conducted during the 1980s and 1990s (Håpnes & Sørensen, 1995; Levy, 1984; Rasmussen, 1997; Turkle, 1984). In particular, the dominant portrayals of workers in computing as 'geeks' and 'hackers' were popularised (Wajcman, 2006). Both labels have traditionally been applied to individuals who are brilliant, obsessive about technology, passionate or even in love with their computers, and uncomfortable with or reject cultural norms of appearance and social behaviour (e.g. Håpnes & Sørensen,

⁴¹ I have only presented Puwar's (2004) analysis of gender here but it is important to note that a major contribution of her work is around the intersectional issues of gender *and* race in the construction of the ideal worker in the British civil service.

1995; Turkle, 1984)⁴². Turkle's study of MIT students in the early 1980s provides one graphic description of young computer hackers who ironically revel in their social uncoolness at the site of their own bodies. She describes them as flaunting 'their pimples, their pasty complexions, their knobbly knees, their thin, undeveloped bodies' (Turkle, 1984: 196). Turkle demonstrates that the geeky image of the computer science student corresponds with a lack of traditional markers of masculinity, and a transcending of male power linked to the strength of the body, through technological skill and mastery. Thus, for her participants, computing technology afforded a shedding of bodily concerns, and mastery was associated with intellectual pursuit alone. As one of Turkle's participants stated 'To be at MIT is to be a tool, a nerd, a person without a body' (Turkle, 1984: 196).

However, despite such experiences of technology, Turkle noted that the body was not so easily abandoned by the computing students she interviewed. The un-groomed and dishevelled body not only marked the passionate technical expert but also provided the means for establishing social connections between the students. Moreover, while the computing students in Turkle's study rejected the traditional markers of masculinity, the norm for participation was still based on a male form.

More than 15 years after Turkle's study, Margolis and Fisher (2002) tracked the ongoing domination of the 'computer geek' figure in computing science education. However, these authors described the geek image as a kind of mythology which is perpetuated in abstract accounts of computing but is less often identified with by young computing students. This finding suggests a shifting image of the digital industries worker. Furthermore, given the changing skill requirements in the digital industries for creativity and business skills alongside technical skills, it seems the association of skill, image and worker identification in the digital media sector needs

⁴² The terms 'geek' and 'hacker' are often used interchangeably, although some theorists argue that these terms refer to distinct types of individual who engage in computing work. For example, in contrast to geek, the term hacker is more often used to convey individuals who are anti-authoritarian and at the margins of mainstream society (e.g. Håpnes & Sørensen, 1995; Levy, 1984).

greater consideration. Before I go on to do this I will briefly distinguish how I am using the terms 'image' and 'representation'.

Representing workers

In organisational studies the image of an organisation has been described as the mental picture of an organisation held by a viewer or set of viewers (e.g. employees, customers, competitors) (Alvesson & Berg, 1992; Mills, 1995). Such mental pictures or images can be seen to be formed through networks of discursive sites and associated practices including the telling and retelling of organisational stories, worker behaviours and appearance, and the production and distribution of organisational texts including visual and textual representations. In this context the concept of 'image' can be analytically distinguished from the concept of 'representation'. I employ the term 'image' to denote a broad impression or mental model about digital media work and workers and I take the position that such images can only form through iterative discursive practices. I reserve the use of 'representation' to refer to the textual and visual representations of workers (involving types of discursive practice) in careers and recruitment literature which are my objects of analysis. Thus, my use of the term 'representation' should be viewed as distinct from broader feminist debates regarding the ethical and political implications of representation as the process of speaking for Others (e.g. Alcoff, 1995; Spivak, 1988; Squires, 2001).

Researchers from organisational studies and sociology have analysed visual and textual representations of workers in popular media, news media and organisational publications as part of understanding a range of employment and organisational issues (e.g. Barratt, 2003; Gustavsson & Czarniawska, 2004; Guthey & Jackson, 2005; Hancock & Tyler, 2007; McDowell, 1997; Mills, 1995; Prichard, 2002). For example, within organisational studies, Chris Grey (1998) has explored the representation and making of professional workers in large accounting firms. Edward Barratt (2003) has looked at how enterprise is figured and represented in recruitment

literature from the UK banking sector. And Eric Guthey and Brad Jackson (2005) have analysed photographic portraits of Chief Executive Officers to explore the paradoxical attempts of corporations to construct authentic corporate identity and image. These examples illustrate an increasing interest in the critical analysis of visual representations within organisational studies as part of exploring issues of culture and the formation of emerging working subjects. My research contributes to this growing field of research and offers a feminist analysis of image and representations of workers in the shifting digital media sector.

Researchers concerned with power relations relating to gender and race in employment have led this type of research approach. Visual representations of workers provide particularly useful material for analyses of race and gender in that they depict female and male bodies and white and non-white bodies which are inscribed in cultural norms and social meanings (Butler, 2004). Good examples of such research include Albert Mills' (1995) analysis of race and sex discrimination in British Airways in 1995 through an analysis of the company's corporate material. In 1997, Linda McDowell analysed photographic portraits of managers and employees in corporate publications and news media as primary sites for her exploration of gender in the financial sector. More recent examples include Eva Gustavsson and Barbara Czarniawska's (2004) investigation of the gendering of online service provision through the analysis of digital portrayals of attendants on corporate websites, and Phillip Hancock and Melissa Tyler's (2007) examination of the gendering of organisational subjects through exploring the representation of workers in recruitment literature in the UK. I draw from these examples of critical research in my analysis below.

Representations of workers in recruitment advertising have a unique status in the field of visual representation because they must convey a great deal to the desired audience in a small and fixed moment. As Ros Gill (2009a) points out, print advertising tends to produce short, condensed and momentary pieces of

communication which rely on easily recognisable stereotypes. For this reason, advertisements have been a fruitful site for feminist researchers to analyse the constitution of gender norms through media (e.g. Barthell, 1988; Bell & Milic, 2002; Goffman, 1979). Elsewhere Gill (2007) states:

Advertisements do not work by imposing meanings upon us or by manipulating us in some crude way. They create structures of meaning which sell products not for their use value, their functional value as objects, but in terms of ourselves as social beings. Through advertising, products are given 'exchange value' – statements about a particular commodity are translated into statements about who we are and who we aspire to be (Gill, 2007: 50).

Of course, in recruitment advertising which represents workers, the process of producing a subject through selling an idea is intensified in that the thing being sold is literally the chance to become the person pictured – the worker. In careers and recruitment literature, information is provided about the firm and the work context, but also about who the reader might become. Thus, this literature is a site in which the requirements for specific workers, representations of workers, and workers' resistance to, or identification with, specific roles, become tightly linked.

The study of visual representations in careers and recruitment advertising is highly relevant for my research. I view representations not simply as faithful snapshots of reality, or just gloss which obscures reality, but rather as simultaneously real and performative of reality (e.g. Hancock & Tyler, 2007; McDowell, 1997). My contention is that representations of workers in such literature are part of the discursive field of the digital media sector and produce particular regulatory norms or structures of meaning which influence how workers see themselves and are perceived by others. For example, researchers have previously demonstrated the ways in which organisational skill needs are closely related to the controlled appearance of individual workers in recruitment advertising in the UK (Barratt, 2003; Hancock & Tyler, 2007). Particular subject positions are invoked and compelled within careers and recruitment advertising while others are seemingly absent (Hancock & Tyler, 2007).

It is important to note that my research is not designed to explore how representations of workers are read or perceived by individuals. Indeed, there is never only one way to decipher the meaning of discursive practices (Gill, 2007). Nor can I determine the image or mental model in an implied viewer's thinking which might or might not be produced by certain representations. While industries and organisations have expectations and norms of the ways in which workers should be presented for organisational and industrial purposes (Adkins, 2002; Warhurst & Nickson, 2001), I would reject the notion that recruitment advertisements wield direct power over the audience, making them *do* specific things. What they *do* depends on how they are variously understood and taken up (Ahmed, 2006b; Gill, 2007). Thus, I explore selected representations of digital media workers as discursive practices which contribute to the intelligibility of specific working subject positions against which viewers are expected to evaluate their own and others' fit.

To begin my analysis I firstly consider a set of statements drawn from selected public policy documents regarding the importance of changing the image of the sector below. A review of these statements demonstrates the ways in which notions of image and representation have become incorporated into initiatives to promote the participation of women in the digital industries.

The image of the digital industries and women's 'choice'

Questions regarding a problematic image of the digital industries were common in public policy documents exploring women's participation (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Haines, 2002, 2004a, b; Phillip & Trinh, 2001), but were entirely absent from documents addressing work in the digital and creative industries more generally. Thus, issues of image were only associated with the recruitment of women, rather than digital industry workers in general (e.g. e-skills, 2005; Heeley & Pickard, 2004). Here I focus on the former cluster of documents which consists of the George reports on building a business case for diversity and identifying why women are leaving the digital

industries (DTI, 2005a, b), the Haines reports on women in games development in the North West of England (Haines, 2004a, b), Millar and Jagger's report on women in the ITEC sector (Millar & Jagger, 2001), and a report by Annabelle Phillip and Trinh Tu commissioned by e-skills UK on the image of ICT work (Phillip & Trinh, 2001). Each of these documents addresses in some way the question of how to promote participation rates of women workers in the digital industries in the UK through the notion of image. They all articulate an 'image problem' for the sector in that it continues to be characterised by an unattractive and alienating image as a technical and geeky work domain. But these documents also provide positive accounts of changes to the sector and to the sectoral image that are already underway. As such, these types of statements are formed as part of a positive characterisation of the sector.

'Image problems' in the digital industries

In 2001 the UK Sector Skills Council for Business and Information Technology, e-skills UK (then e-skills NTO) commissioned research into the image of ICT work. Women were found to be underrepresented in this work domain and an unattractive image of the digital industries was thought to be a contributing factor (Phillip & Trinh, 2001). A particular focus for the e-skills UK research was on how women and girls perceived the digital industries. The resulting report by commissioned researchers Annabelle Phillip and Trinh Tu (2001) identified a number of issues that they saw as negatively affecting the image of digital industry careers and thus inhibiting effective attraction and recruitment of skilled workers. Two interlocking and 'off-putting' views of the digital industries were identified by these authors: 'the image of the "techno nerd" and the prevailing image of an almost exclusively male-dominated environment' (Phillip & Trinh, 2001: 3). As a result, these authors argued for a 'long term approach to "re-branding" of the industry' (Phillip & Trinh, 2001: 6) which should involve:

...emphasis[ing] people, not just technology, as important – that communications skills are equally important, as are being a team player with creativity and initiative and “re-marketing” of computing training courses (Phillip & Trinh, 2001: 6).

In response to the e-skills UK report, Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Minister for Women and Equality between 2001 and 2005, called for ‘more “IT” girls and fewer net nerds in our computing industries’ (cited by Mayfield, 2001: online source). Further, Hewitt stated that:

The IT sector needs an image makeover to make it more attractive to women...the image that many schoolgirls have of IT is more computer geek than computer chic. Frequent adjectives found in the literature describing female attitudes to IT careers include: “Boring”, “unsexy” and “anti-social” (Ibid.).

Phillip and Trinh and Hewitt all point to a specific image problem for the digital industries and advocate for efforts to change the image. Following the e-skills UK research, Hewitt established a UK Government committee to look at the issue of recruiting and retaining women in the digital industries. From 2001 onwards a number of documents were published by publicly funded agencies which addressed this issue and called for change to the image of the sector. For example, in the more recent George reports (DTI, 2005a) it is stated:

Women are not attracted to careers in IT and the industry is affected by image problems. Many women perceive the sector as “nerdy, geeky and too technical”. The IT industry has a poor stereotyped image from a woman’s perspective (DTI, 2005a: 7).

There is an explicit link made in these documents between the image of the digital industries and their workers. The digital industries are described through references to workers who are: ‘nerdy’ and ‘geeky’ (DTI, 2005a: 7), ‘social misfits, compulsive “bums”, game-playing wizards, “nerds” and geniuses’ (Millar & Jagger, 2001: 24), ‘computer anoraks (“techie”/“geeky” connotations)’ (DTI, 2005b), ‘passionate hard-core game hobbyists’, ‘heroic entrepreneurs’, ‘garage-hackers’ (Haines, 2004a), those with a ‘trainspotter mentality’ and ‘anorak geeks’ who are perceived as lacking in social and personal skills (Phillip & Trinh, 2001: 3). In these

documents such descriptions of workers were almost exclusively associated with young and white males and are seen to alienate women.⁴³

At the core of the accounts of women's alienation is the idea that there is misfit between the popularised image of digital industries workers and the kinds of identities women construct and take on. As Haines (2004b) states:

The garage-hacker culture at its strongest elevates the nerdy but successful male founder of the company to heroic status, sees the industry as a home for the passionate hard-core game hobbyist, and resists the influence of professionalism and of new faces and ideas. It is a world where women are referred to as "ladies", where to go home early is to let the team down, and to fit in is to be seen as "laddish" (p. 11).

Millar and Jagger (2001) too suggest that the strong image of the sector as geeky and of workers as hackers 'limit[s] girls' and women's "psychological access" to ITEC' (p. ii), and thus leads to women discriminating against the industry as a career choice.

By contrasting the dominant image of digital industry workers and women's psychological fit with these geeky figures, these documents may simultaneously contribute women's dislocation in this sector. In these documents women are not only distinguished from more negative notions of compulsive bums, social misfits and geeks, but also from technical, genius, passionate, heroic, focussed and successful workers.

In addition to potentially alienating women, the geeky image of the digital industries is also seen to be a stale and out-of-date idea of the work domain (e.g. Millar & Jagger, 2001; Phillip & Trinh, 2001). The contention is that the perpetuation of the technical and geeky image does not adequately portray the changing, broader and 'true scenario' of digital industries (Phillip & Trinh, 2001). For example, Haines (2002) identifies an 'unfairly geeky' image of the games industry that belies the broad range of opportunities available in this sector (p. 5), and Millar and Jagger (2001)

⁴³ Ron Eglash and colleagues (Eglash, 2002; Eglash & Bleecker, 2001) note that it is not only gender associations which shape geek and nerd identity but also race. The ways in which gender and race relations intersect in the digital industries warrant further inquiry.

describe the image of the ITEC industry as 'a historical construction' (p. 24). Further, these authors state:

The masculine image of ITEC and ITEC occupations is a deterrent to women. However, many feel the image of ITEC employment does not reflect the reality and the diversity of ITEC work in modern society. Refreshing this image in order to promote the benefits of specific ITEC careers and/or studying ITEC courses (e.g. increased employability) is the key to encouraging greater numbers of women to build their educational profiles towards participation in ITEC employment (Millar & Jagger, 2001: ii).

Millar and Jagger suggest that part of 'refreshing' the image of the sector is to provide many more varied and positive role models of successful women working in these areas, as well as in popular fiction. Phillip and Trinh (2001) also pinpoint the importance of 'positive 'attractive' role models and characters that might arise in fiction, such as the cult film *The Matrix* (p.11). In contrast, Haines (2004a) asserts that 'real-life' role models are more necessary. Quoting one of her informants she states:

We need an icon that's not Lara Croft! We need our female real-life superstars to go to schools, be interviewed, be in the spotlight, be exposed. We need initiatives sponsored by big publishers to unapologetically encourage women to enter the games industry, with finance, jobs and in-kind promotion (Aleks Krotowski, email, cited in Haines, 2004b).

Here an emphasis is placed on providing examples of women who are successful within the digital industries, but who are not geeky, socially isolated or 'anoraks'. This exemplifies a second main practice within these documents to call for a 're-branding' of the image of the digital industries through promoting attractive role models. The contention made is that 'a lack of strong female role models discourages many [women] from entering the industry' (DTI, 2005a: 7; see also, Greenfield, et al., 2002).

A 'co-ordinated campaign' of public-led initiatives has been put in place since 2002 to meet the challenge of 're-branding' the digital industries (Greenfield, et al., 2002: vi). This campaign has included a highly successful national schools-based *Computing Club for Girls* (CC4G) to 'transform their attitudes towards technology-

related careers' (e-skills, 2009: online source)⁴⁴ and a promotional video presenting a variety of female workers in the digital industries to 'raise awareness' of potential roles and to 'increase sector attractiveness for those women thinking of entering into a role within the IT sector' (e-skills, 2003: online source).⁴⁵ In these, representations of women workers are seen as potential sites of intervention to balance participation rates of men and women in this work domain. The proliferation of possible modes of engagement and roles are seen to open up the possibility that women will find their fit.

The policy documents I have reviewed also make an explicit recommendation that job advertisements in the digital industries are 'modified to encourage people with skills not usually associated with the technically minded, such as communications, team work and multi-tasking' (Phillip & Trinh, 2001: 11). Millar and Jagger (2001) highlight the strategic use of recruitment literature arguing that there is a need for ITEC firms to direct 'attention to the language used, and the image portrayed in their recruitment drives in order to encourage women to apply for vacancies' (Millar & Jagger, 2001: 29). They cite the activities of large corporations such as Microsoft which are already in place and are changing the image of the sector.

In this section I have outlined the ways in which selected publicly funded research and initiatives for the promotion of women's participation invoke notions of image, and women's feelings of fit and attraction to the industry. Statements in public policy link with the broader liberal feminist attention to women's choices to participate in technical domains which I discussed in Chapter 3 (e.g. Clegg & Trayhurn, 1999; Margolis, Fisher, & Miller, 2000; Rasmussen, 1997; Siann, 1997; Wilson, 2003). For example, Siann (1997) and Wilson (2003) argue that there is a

⁴⁴ CC4G was originally funded and implemented by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), but was formally launched as a national programme by the Secretary for Education and Skills on 14 June 2005 at the DTI Conference centre in Westminster. As I was completing my thesis write-up in June 2009, this initiative was re-launched as a computing club for girls and boys and given the new title, CC4G: Connect, Create, Go.

⁴⁵ Commissioned by e-skills UK in 2003: Women Can do IT Too (e-skills, 2003).

mismatch between the dominant image of the technical worker and how women are supposed to be or choose to be. It has been argued that a strategy taken by women to deal with this mismatch is to not enter the digital industries at all (Adam, et al., 2006). As I have shown, the public policy documents above construct a similar account which suggests that women have the capability to *access* and succeed in these industries, but that they *choose* not to. The assumption is that if the image of the digital industries worker can be changed from the technical and geeky male and aligned more with how women see themselves, women will see their potential to fit and *choose* to enter these areas of employment.

Below I explore how workers are represented in recruitment advertising and careers literature. I investigate whether workers are beginning to be represented in ways different from the previously dominant geeky image as is signalled in the public policy literature. I consider the practices involved in representations of working subject positions for potential workers to find their fit, and I discuss the potential implications for gender inequalities in the sector.

Attracting workers to the digital industries

From October 2003 to March 2005 I gathered a file of careers and recruitment literature relating to employment in the digital industries in the North West. The majority of this literature was found in locations in which the potential audience would already be interested in employment opportunities in the digital industries. For example, I periodically gathered graduate recruitment magazines with a focus on digital industries from an open seating area within the computer science department building at my university. I also collected careers information and recruitment advertisements from IT sections of the *North West Jobs* newspaper, online recruitment websites and a Creativity City Careers Fair held in Manchester in 2004.

Taken together, these variously located materials have a broader scope and presence in the North West digital media sector than my other research sites in that

they addressed a wide audience including those already working in the digital industries and those training for such employment. Moreover, because most of the representations I examine here were produced by organisations which either develop digital media, or who are involved in promoting the industry to potential workers, my analysis adds an organisational element to my overall research project.

The first notable and repeated technique used by producers of the careers and recruitment material I collected was to address the audience directly and ask them to determine their own fit with the company. Some illustrative phrases which directly addressed the reader included: 'Does this sound like your kind of company?' (HBOS, 2003), 'Are you ready to buck some trends' (Vodafone, 2003), 'If this sounds like a team you'd like to be part of...' (Strategic Systems Solutions, 2005), and 'the future isn't defined, it's up to you' (DrKW, 2003). Thus, by literally calling 'hey you!' careers and recruitment literature can be viewed as an Althussarian process of hailing certain kinds of workers (Barratt, 2003). Of course, the process of hailing is an interaction between the caller (who exclaims 'hey you!'), and the interpellated subject who acknowledges that call by turning around (Althusser, 1971). The process of interpellation requires the subject to develop some understanding of the constructed call (for my purposes, the desirable worker) and to consider that this call is addressing them. Therefore, it is highly relevant to analyse recruitment and careers literature alongside public policy documents which state that in order to encourage women to see their fit with this work domain, the image of the industries must be changed.

I sorted the representations of workers I found in the careers and recruitment literature into clusters which portrayed workers in similar ways. For example, I distinguished a set of representations which depicted workers as formally dressed business people, another set portrayed workers in a more casualised manner and so on. Some representations presented two or more people interacting with each other, but the vast majority depicted individual workers. In the latter case, worker profiles

were often presented which detailed the individual's education and work experience. As I discuss below, this approach adds a personal quality to the information presented, as if to say 'these are just normal people and you could do it too'.

Contrary to recorded proportions of male and female workers in the digital industries (e.g. 8–33 per cent female participation; Skillset, 2004), the number of men and women depicted in the recruitment and careers literature I collected was near to an even split (e.g. in each graduate recruitment magazine, 39–49 per cent of the workers represented were women). Further, the previously dominant image of the white, bespectacled and geeky male worker was very rare. I have clustered the representations of workers into three main clusters based on how the workers were dressed and posed, the contexts in which they were pictured and the words and phrases used in the accompanying texts. The three clusters represent workers as: 1) casual, fashionable and cool, 2) active, passionate and heroic, or 3) professional and business-like. Below I discuss these three main kinds of representations and identify repeated practices within these. To open this discussion I firstly consider a careers article which explicitly aimed to revise the image of the nerdy and geeky computer user through the representation of a range of different workers.

Masters of the Universe: IT guys and 'It' girls?

A special feature in the graduate recruitment magazine *Real World Careers Magazine* profiled a group of young science and technology graduates as Masters of the Universe (Quinn, 2003) (see Figures 6.1a, b, c). I found this magazine at a Creative City Careers Fair held in Manchester at the start of 2004. In contrast to the other organisational recruitment advertisements which I will present below, this article takes a general and informational approach. It seeks to encourage the audience to consider working in the digital industries by profiling a set of young workers who have recently entered the field. Each profile has a one-or-two page spread which incorporates a photo, a column in which the worker responds directly to a set of interview questions (responses presented in first person) and a brief summary of the



Figure 6.1a. 'Masters of the Universe', front cover of careers article in *Real World Careers Magazine*, (Quinn, 2003: 2).

worker's career written by the author in third person. The practice of presenting profiles of current workers as part of careers literature has previously been discussed by Edward Barratt (2003) as a means of suggesting to the audience the authenticity of

the account. Barratt contends that the 'up close and personal' approach encourages the audience to see such careers literature not as a constructed advertisements, but rather as fair reflections of actual work within the organisation or industry. The detailing of career pathways in these types of representation also suggests to the implied audience that they could be just like them if they chose the right path.

Quinn's article explicitly attempts to revise the geeky image of technology work in order to align it with demands of the 21st century. The opening statement of the article refers to a changing image of technology work and workers away from a dominant, nerdy and geeky image:

The fastest-growing, highest-paid jobs of the 21st century are set to be in technology. Every conceivable sector will need technically literate graduates, but this won't be a golden age for geeks. Companies have new agendas, and graduates who work in science and technology might not necessarily come from technical backgrounds, even if they work with leading edge technologies. These are the careers which shape our future... (run on dots in original, Quinn, 2003: 4).

The emphasis made on change and forward progression of the industry in this article is illustrated by phrases such as 'fastest-growing', 'new agendas', 'leading-edge' and 'shape our future'. Here, there is an explicit rejection of the image of these industries as 'geeky', and an emphasis on the opening up of routes into the technical industries. Thus, while there is a stated need for 'technically literate' graduates, these do not necessarily need to come from technical backgrounds.

The image on the opening page (Figure 6.1a) is particularly interesting when placed alongside the emphasis on change and the future in the article. The positioning of the individuals featured in this representation as 'Masters of the Universe' underscores a recurrent trope in the digital industries of the power of technology and technology experts. Reciting the famous story originally published in 1818 of Dr Frankenstein by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (Shelly, 1984), the drawn picture presents a 'mad scientist' clutching the handle of a large machine which has created a 'Master of the Universe'. As in the original text, in this representation the creation becomes more powerful than its creator. This 'master of the universe' goes forth to not only lead the future, but become the future. Both figures in this portrayal of

creation and control are male, and as such this front page is in distinct contrast to the greater attention to women graduates within the article (three out of the five profiled workers were women). Thus, as the reader turns the title page to read the content of the article they are presented with a visual shift from the traditional representation of science and technology as a domain of the socially disconnected male scientist, to a modern representation which hosts a range of workers, including women.

The individuals profiled in the body of the article are each assigned a nickname (see Figure 6.1b). In order of appearance there is a 'Software Superman' (Simon Steele), a 'Game Queen' (Lauren Grindrod), an 'IT Girl (no room for nerds)' (Nanami Smith) and a 'Bulletproof Babe' (Nikki Woolmore). The fifth individual profiled is a laboratory worker for a pharmaceuticals company (Tim Davies, Figure 6.1c), and is given the title 'Labour of Lab'. These titles and visual representations introduce an explicit and specific gendering of digital industries workers through associations with traditional understandings of femininity and masculinity as I outline below.

The two males are given titles which refer to impressive strength (Superman) and passion (labour of lab, a play on the phrase 'labour of love'). These titles, thus, speak to the quality and dedication of these individuals albeit in a playful way. Indeed, the young male software developer appears to be more of a 'Clark Kent' than a 'superman'. Like the 'mad scientist' pictured on the first page, this software developer is directly facing the audience with his finger poised over his tools, ready to do his work. Further, the representation of Tim Davies, in a white coat and goggles and standing in his lab, is directly emblematic of the well-known masculinised stereotype associated with the domain of science and technology presented on the opening page of this article. The expertise, skills and interests of these male workers are marked by their titles and the ways in which they are presented in their workplaces and in contact with some of the tools of their work. The recitation of the opening representation by these male workers helps to sediment their place as 'Masters of the Universe'.

In contrast to the male workers, the female workers are presented in ways which demand little attention to their skills, interests or expertise in technology. The ‘Game Queen’ (Lauren Grindrod) is the only woman pictured in her work context and in contact with a piece of technology relevant to her work. However, unlike the software superman she is not poised ready to use the technology; rather, she is holding her game controller in a relaxed and almost absent-minded manner. Lauren’s title attributes the status of royalty, a position of birth and genetics, rather than mastery, education or passion.

The profile of the second female figure, and her title, ‘IT girl, no room for nerds’ (Nanami Smith) explicitly rejects the image of the IT worker as nerdy or geeky. This representation echoes Patricia Hewitt’s previous public call for ‘more “IT” girls and fewer net nerds’ in UK computing industries (Quicke, 2001: online source). In popular British vernacular, ‘It girls’ are known as those who are famous for being famous, and as having no skills or abilities that might otherwise warrant such fame. In this representation Nanami is visually and textually abstracted from her work as a software engineer at IBM. She is presented in an indefinable space (a hallway?) and the photo is cropped so that the focus is on her face. There are no markers in this visual representation as to the kind of work she engages in, the technology she uses, or her workspace. This information is embedded in the text of her profile.

The third female figure, Nikki Woolmore, is also presented as quite separate from the hardware and software with which she works in her job as a ballistics programmer. Nikki is presented (somewhat uneasily) in front a strong symbol of masculine power, a military tank. Thus, arguably this representation challenges the traditional paring of women workers with feminine interests and skills. However, this representation could also be read as making a slightly askew reference to advertisements of automobiles popular in the 1980s which pictured young women draping themselves across car bonnets; she smiles directly at the camera, her hair falls down across her chest and her body is turned slightly inwards. Nikki’s nickname



Figure 6.1b. 'Masters of the Universe', images from *Real World Careers Magazine* (Quinn, 2003: 2–13).

'Bulletproof babe', mixes these connotations of sexuality and militarised power together in way that has now been popularised by the iconic digital games character Lara Croft (see Fantone, 2003 and Kennedy, 2002 for critical discussion of Lara Croft as a feminist icon).

This article presents a range of different kinds of workers in addition to the stereotypical geeky digital industry worker. In this light, it can be viewed as a direct response to public policy calls for more and varied role models for women workers. Nevertheless, how these representations deviate from the geeky stereotype appears to be divided along gendered lines. Hence, the ways in which the male workers are presented – in white shirts or coats, wearing glasses, in their work environments – can be read as consistent with established understandings of powerful figures of science and technology. By employing symbolic practices associated with science and technology, the technical skills and interests of these workers are likely to be more easily deciphered. In contrast, the ‘IT Girl’, the ‘Bulletproof Babe’ and the ‘Game Queen’ are named and visually represented in a feminised framing with few links to science and technology. Two of the three women are pictured in ambiguous contexts (out of touch with their technical work) and the titles of all the women help to present these workers as gendered bodies first and foremost; their bodies perform femininity rather than expertise.⁴⁶ The close up on the ‘IT Girl’s’ face and the position of the ‘babe’ in front of the tank present these workers in sexualised ways which are more common in women’s fashion and life-style magazines than digital industry magazines. The skills and attributes that these women might employ in their work cannot easily be read from their appearance and

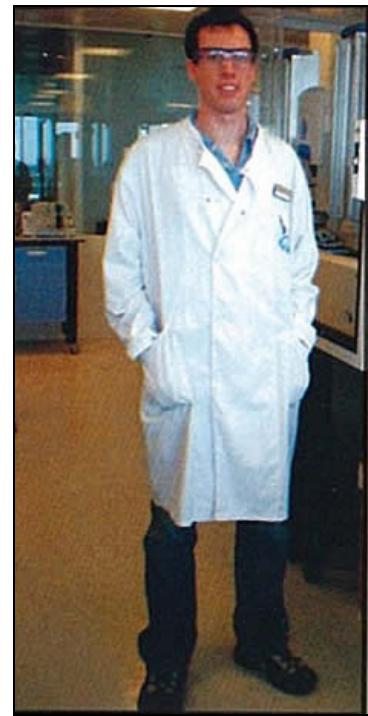


Figure 6.1c. ‘Masters of the Universe’, image from *Real World Careers Magazine* (Quinn, 2003: 17).

⁴⁶ Anecdotally, I showed first and second year women’s studies and sociology students the images of these workers and asked them to ascertain the occupations of each individual. Consistently, the occupations of the male figures were more accurately deciphered than those of the women profiled.

would need to be proved by other means through qualifications or a track-record of effective work.⁴⁷ In this way a gender/technology binary is likely to be reinstated such that to appear as a woman and as different from established norms of technical workers may exclude one from being associated with technology (Powell, Bagilhole, & Dainty, 2009). In the following, I consider this possibility in relation to the three main clusters of worker representations I found in the careers and recruitment literature.

Digital industry workers as casual and cool workers

Some of the representations of workers in the article discussed above could be described as depicting casual and cool workers. The women workers, in particular, are presented in jeans, stretch tops, rolled up sleeves, long and/or clipped-back hair. They don't wear business attire and are not represented in an active work context such as sitting at their desks or in work meetings. The portrayal of digital industry workers in such an informal way was one of the most common practices I identified in my collected careers and recruitment literature. Slightly more male workers were depicted in these types of representations, and both female and male workers were shown with relaxed and stylish hairstyles including shaggy, long, tied-back or spiky hair for both men and women. They were generally presented individually and in casual attire such as jeans, t-shirts, and short-sleeve shirts.

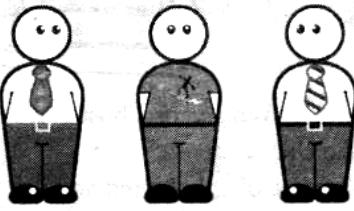
Such a 'casual and cool' type of digital industries worker has been broadly publicised in popular media since the late 1990s (Gill, 2002) and this type of portrayal provided the closest fit with the appearance of my practitioner interviewees. My interviewees were generally dressed in jeans and t-shirts, hoodies or open-necked shirts. None wore skirts or dresses, and only one male interviewee working in a regional development agency wore a formal suit. All but one woman interviewee had

⁴⁷ Previous research has argued that women and minoritised groups often carry the burden of proof where their competence is not assumed or expected by colleagues but is dependent on some form of *evidence* (e.g. Segura, 1992; Talmud & Israeli, 1999).

short hair (her hair was pulled back in a low ponytail) and only one woman wore visible make-up. In this respect, the representations of casual and cool workers which I discuss further below, could be viewed as providing a more up-to-date and faithful sector image in ways which might destabilise the male and geeky connotations of the digital industry worker.

An example of a 'casual and cool' type of representation is provided in a recruitment advertisement from a global IT consultancy firm found in the industry and technical pages of a regional jobs newspaper (see Figure 6.2). This advertisement depicts three drawn (masculine) figures standing in a line. The central figure in the illustration is dressed in a t-shirt with a surfer on it and a pair of casual trousers. This figure looks straight ahead while the two end figures, each dressed in tie, shirt, dress pants and shined shoes, looks towards the central figure. This advertisement addresses the reader directly. Under the figures the by-line reads 'You'll stand out if you're smart enough'. This statement is followed up in a paragraph below which states 'We're looking for outstanding people to join our team and we're not particularly bothered what you wear, you've just got to be smart'.

Taking this text and visual representation together, the advertisement associates informal and personal choice in clothing with 'smart' 'outstanding' people. In contrast the 'suits' presented on either side of this central figure are placed as non-descript, less important and physically less central, functioning to fill in the background to the central figure. It is interesting that the casualness of dress standards which this organisation professes is presented as one of the major reasons why the reader might be attracted to find out more about the company. At the point of asking the reader if 'it sounds like a team you'd like to be part of', the only other information provided in relation to the firm is that it is a global company, it works in the financial services sector and it has strong multi-year partnerships. The organisation attempts to



You'll stand out if you're smart enough

Strategic Systems Solutions is a global IT consultancy with offices across the UK, in the US and China. We work with the world's financial services sector and have developed strong multi-year partnerships with our clients.

We're looking for outstanding people to join our team and we're not particularly bothered what you wear, you've just got to be smart.

If this sounds like a team you'd like to be part of, come along and meet us and have a drink on us. We'll be running open evenings in pubs or hotels close to our offices in Liverpool, Leeds, Newcastle, Nottingham and Preston, plus York and Stevenage over the next few weeks where you can find out more about us in a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

The next open evenings are:

Preston: Holiday Inn, The Ringway, Preston, on Tuesday 8th March, 5pm to 10pm

Liverpool: Hog's Head, 18-20 North John Street, Liverpool, on Thursday 10th March, 5pm to 9pm

For full details of the open evenings or how to apply, visit our website at www.sssworldwide.com and check out the recruitment pages.

APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT & INTEGRATION	SYSTEMS OUTSOURCING
Business process re-engineering	Smartsourcing planning
Project management	Transition management
Business analysis	Application enhancements and support
Database management	24/7 production management, support, and performance monitoring
Test execution and management	
Performance improvements	
Integration with legacy systems and 3rd-party products	
Networking/telecoms	

IT without boundaries
Strategic Systems Solutions

Figure 6.2. 'You'll stand out if you're smart enough', Strategic Systems Solutions recruitment advertisement. *Jobs North West* newspaper, (Strategic Systems Solutions, 2005: 26).

represent itself through the casual image of the 'smart' worker, and informality and a relaxed atmosphere are underscored through its flexible and entrepreneurial slogan 'IT without boundaries'. The implied viewer of this advertisement is a particular type of digital industry worker: the casual, smart, relaxed man who likes drinking and

socialising in pubs. The relationship between the casual and smart worker and the business professional is clearly delineated. I return to the figure of the business professional in a later section of this chapter.

Figure 6.3 presents a different kind of representation of an informal and cool new worker which has also been proliferated in UK printed media and TV in the UK published since 2000.⁴⁸ In this type of representation workers tended to be presented as up-to-date with the latest technological trends, and in touch with fashion and creative cultures including music, design and photography. In Figure 6.3, Tom's body is adorned with a variety of the latest consumable technologies that deliver movies, music and communications directly to the user.

The text states that Tom is particularly enamoured with his 'latest WAP phone, DVDs and MP3 player'. He is overtly stylish and cutting-edge. This representation of consumption is related to 'who he is' and this is distinguished from his perceived skills. Tom is described in terms of having an innate or essential connection to technology, especially new technologies. However, Tom is not a traditional geek in which trained skills are emphasised rather, he is culturally savvy. The advertisement states that 'who you are is as important as the skills you have'.

Although Tom is presented as being intensely interested in new technologies, unlike his geeky predecessors, this advertisement de-emphasises his skills and experience and promotes the importance of a tight fit between identity and workplace culture. Moreover, what makes Tom 'tick' is assumed to be readable from external markers such as the digital products he consumes. Some commentators have described this type of shift as one from geek to geek-chic in which 'the lowly geek has become a cultural icon, setting the fashion standards for the new millennium' (Makutani, 2000: B1). This articulates well the way in which a re-visioning of the

⁴⁸ For example, *Nathan Barley*, a 6-part Channel 4 comedy series aired in February 2005, is about a cooler than cool digital media worker who is glued to his phone and obsessively up-to-date with the latest fashions.

digital industry worker as 'cool' may also maintain the male association with technology. Within the material I collected I did not find any related representations of female workers who were portrayed as intensely engaged in the use of creative and consumable digital technologies. As I will go on to discuss, women were far more often presented in business roles.

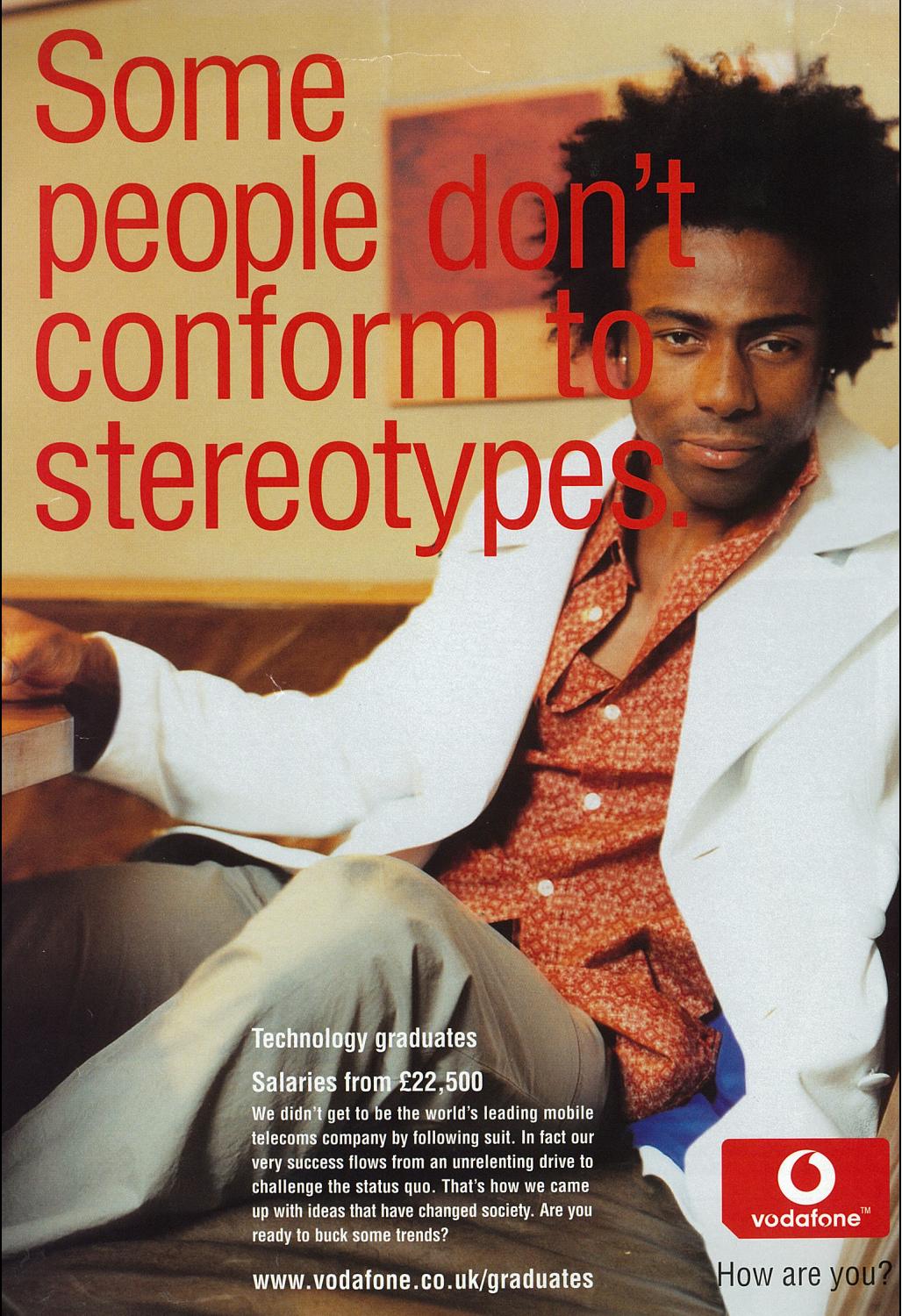


Figure 6.3. 'Your details matter', Computer People online recruitment advertisement (Computer People, 2002).

A recruitment advertisement (Figure 6.4), which I found in a magazine from a Creative Cities Careers Fair in Manchester, presents another casual and stylish worker. But rather than exemplifying a common type of representation of the casual digital media worker, I include this advertisement here because it demonstrates a number of uncommon practices making it notable by its contrast. The first point to note is that this representation provides a rare depiction of a non-white digital industries worker. The distinctive and unique presence of this worker is reiterated a number of times in the accompanying text in phrases such as: 'Some people don't conform to stereotypes', 'we didn't get to be the world's leading mobile telecoms company by following suit' and a mention of the firm's 'unrelenting drive to challenge the status quo'. Without fail, every representation of non-white workers that I found made some sort of statement which distinguished these workers from normalised workers in the industry.

This representation presents an arresting and sexualised figure. The figure is de-contextualised from his work and situated in an intimate setting in what looks to be a café. He reclines in an open and suggestive manner: his shirt is casually unbuttoned, his body turned and he is looking to the audience as if to hold their gaze. Like Figure 6.2, this advertisement distinguishes the casual and cool digital media worker from others who 'follow suit'. But in Figure 6.2 it is suggested that workers will stand out if they are smart enough; in Figure 6.4 there is no given reason why the individual pictured is associated with 'challenging the status quo' and non-conformity. Perhaps the implied viewer is expected to read this from his stylish and sexualised appearance and situation, or the colour of his skin.

I found this type of sexualised representation of the 'casual and cool' worker to be exclusively presented in relation to non-white and female workers. Another example of this was found in a recruitment advertisement for the Holding Company for the Bank of Scotland (HBOS). This advertisement (Figure 6.5) presents a close-up snapshot of a smiling and carefully made-up face of a young Indian woman with a by-



Some people don't conform to stereotypes.

Technology graduates
Salaries from £22,500

We didn't get to be the world's leading mobile telecoms company by following suit. In fact our very success flows from an unrelenting drive to challenge the status quo. That's how we came up with ideas that have changed society. Are you ready to buck some trends?

www.vodafone.co.uk/graduates

vodafone™

How are you?

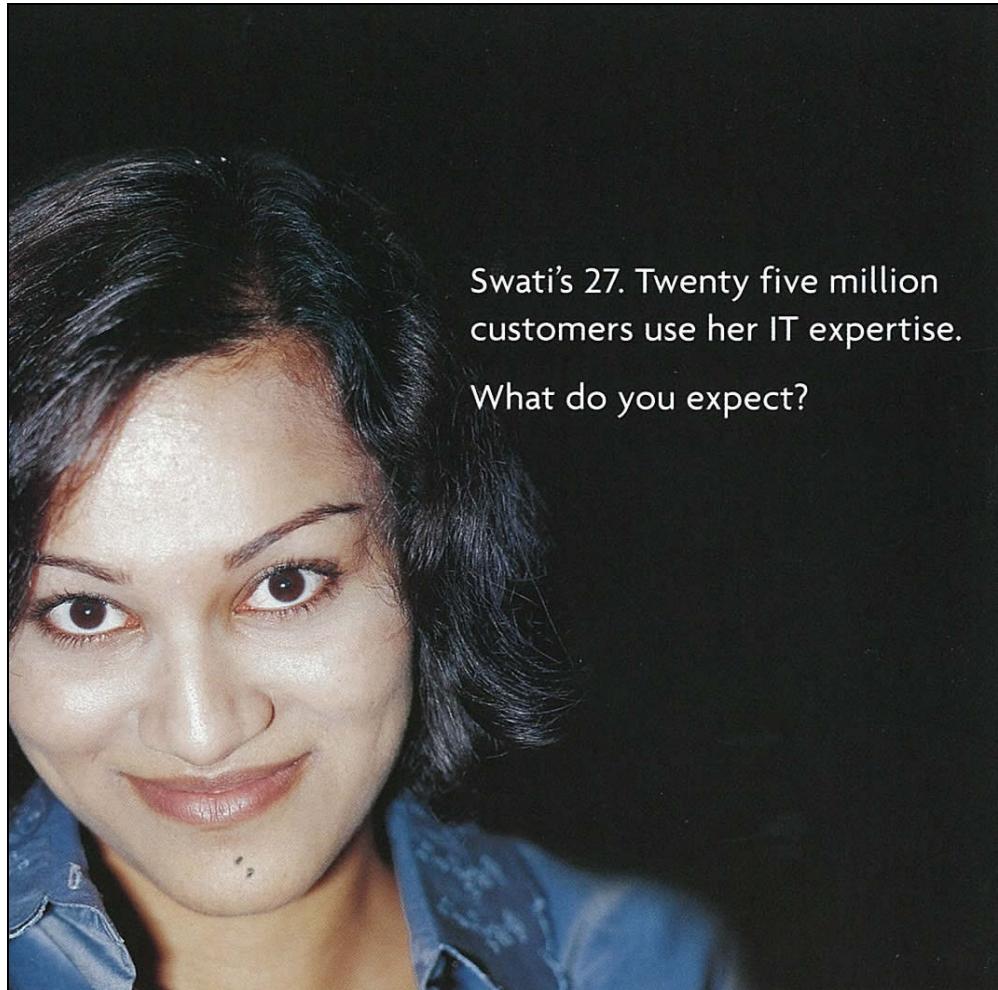
Figure 6.4. 'Some people don't conform to stereotypes', Vodafone recruitment advertisement. *Real World Careers Magazine* (Vodafone, 2003: 25).

line that reads 'Swati's 27. Twenty-five million customers use her IT expertise. What do you expect?' (HBOS, 2003). This advertisement arguably presents Swati in a (hetero)sexualised way also: her face is up-turned and lit against a dark night-time background, the angle of the shot corresponding with what the view might be for someone slightly taller, standing close and looking down onto her face. I found other recruitment advertisements which portrayed white female workers in subtly sexualised representations (see Figure 6.10b), but it is of note that no white male workers were presented in such a way.

The HBOS recruitment advertisement (Figure 6.5) also demonstrates some of the other means through which female and non-white workers were distinguished from normalised white male workers in the careers and recruitment literature I reviewed. HBOS offer a 'mind-opening breadth of career opportunities' and state that they are committed to equal opportunities. While common in recruitment advertisements picturing women or non-white workers, I never found this type of statement in advertisements that represented individual white male workers. I will discuss this point further below.

The representation of workers as 'casual and cool' was common in the careers and recruitment literature I reviewed. Unlike the next two clusters of representations, this type of representation was not dominated by either male or female workers, or to white workers. Moreover, these advertisements suggest that the geeky image of digital industry worker might be changing to incorporate more socially aware and informal type of worker roles to which all individuals may have access. As I have discussed, this type of representation most closely aligned with the appearance of the men and women practitioners I interviewed for this research.

Nevertheless, two issues emerge in relation to these advertisements which may influence how women workers are recognised and perceived in the sector. Firstly, unlike white male workers, non-white and women workers are seen to be available to be coded sexually. Secondly, many of the examples above explicitly distinguished



Swati's 27. Twenty five million customers use her IT expertise.
What do you expect?

GRADUATES £18,000 - £25,000 UK wide

Created by the merger of Halifax and Bank of Scotland, HBOS can provide you with exposure to a mind-opening breadth of career opportunities. For 2004, we are offering about 100 vacancies in areas such as General Management, Corporate Banking, HR, Actuarial, Finance, Estate Agency and IT. Our vacancies are spread throughout the UK with locations from Edinburgh to London and Bristol to Aberdeen with all programmes providing structured training and development. Does this sound like your kind of company? Find out more at www.hbos-futures.co.uk

Equal opportunities for all – our policy is as simple as that.

BANK OF SCOTLAND  **HBOS plc** 

Figure 6.5. 'What do you expect?', Halifax/Bank of Scotland (HBOS plc) recruitment advertisement. *Inside Careers: Information Technology Magazine, 2003/2004* (HBOS, 2003: 89).

desirable workers from 'suits' or business people. As I will discuss later, women were most often represented in the careers and recruitment advertisements in professional business attire and contexts. Thus, the distinction between the casual cool worker and the be-suited worker may have specific implications for women workers in the digital media sector.

Digital industry workers as active, passionate and heroic

A second cluster of representations in the careers and recruitment literature depicted digital industry workers as active, passionate and/or heroic workers. The representations which I clustered in this group were varied, but all represented workers as completely removed from their work contexts, and many portrayed workers engaged in ostensibly non-work activities such as sports and adventure activities. Distinct from the de-contextualised representations of women workers discussed above, in this cluster a lacuna of information regarding the expertise of the workers is filled by an emphasis on their feelings, attitudes and passion. Such representations almost always depicted male workers.

Take, for instance, the full-page recruitment advertisement for Deutsche Bank found in the *Target IT* magazine (Figure 6.6) (Deutsche Bank, 2003/2004) which I collected from the computer science department of my university. This advertisement presents a picture of a kite-boarder, in mid flight above a wave. The male individual pictured is fully immersed in the elements of sun, wind and water and is harnessing these elements for his own purposes. Glaring sunlight fills the centre of the photograph and bounces off water droplets giving the audience the feeling of being there. This effect is enhanced by the small and simple font of the opening statement which is almost obscured by the glare of the sun. The text reads:

We recognise that you have the skills and perseverance to achieve your goals.
That is why we want to work with you.

We have the world class organisation, you have the ambition.

Together we have a passion to perform (Deutsche Bank, 2003/2004: 4).

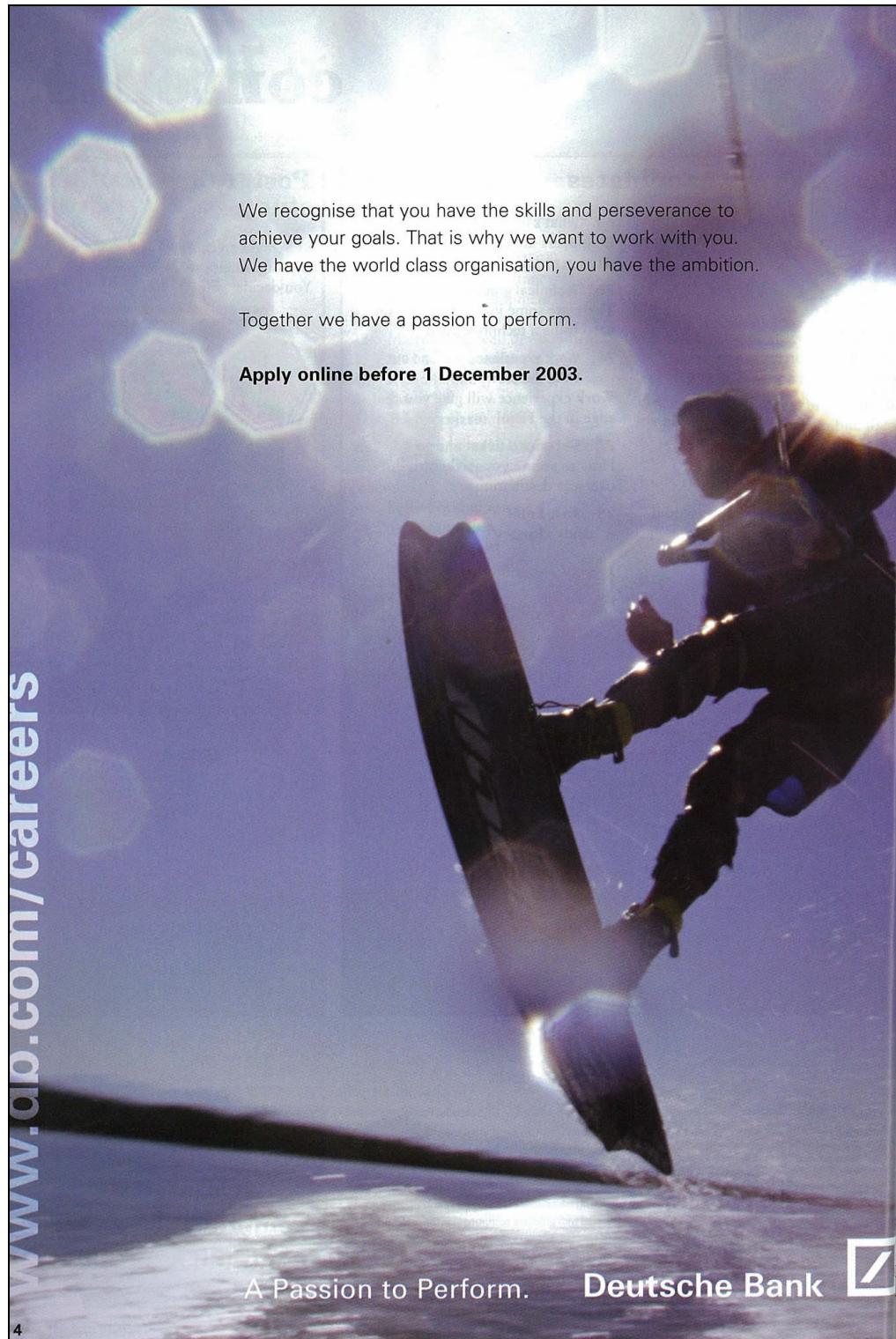


Figure 6.6. 'A passion to perform', Deutsche Bank recruitment advertisement. *Target IT 2004* (Deutsche Bank, 2003/2004: 4).

Once again, one is struck by the contrast of this representation in relation to discussions of the geeky image of the digital industry worker in the academic literature and public policy documents that I have discussed above. The figure presented here is caught in motion and in a demanding physical activity. No digital technology or any built environment is in sight.

Activity, an ambitious and persevering attitude, and passion are bound up together in this advertisement and signal the desirable worker that the Deutsche Bank is addressing. Unlike a number of other advertisements that I discuss in this chapter, the individual here is not presented as an existing worker. Rather, there is an interplay between the text and the silhouetted visual image which suggests that the figure in the picture is the reader himself. Again, addressing ‘you’ the reader, this advertisement hails (Althusser, 1971) the prospective worker.

Edward Barratt (2003) has documented the interpellation of enterprising individuals through similarly constructed recruitment advertisements of a UK bank. He describes advertisements which represent individuals engaged in psychically active or challenging activities (such as mountaineering and hitch-hiking in a desert). Barratt argues that through these kinds of recruitment practices the bank inveigles the appropriate applicants in a kind of narcissistic seduction, holding up a desirable self with which they might identify, and then promising that the bank’s environment is one in which their identity can be fully realised. Similarly, the Deutsche Bank advertisement invites the reader to see themselves as the figure presented, to find fit with the organisation, and to respond by making an application. The kind of worker this advertisement speaks to is the goal-oriented and ambitious person. In particular, passion is highlighted. This is not a sexualised passion, but rather a passion for the work offered and this is underscored through the repetition of the statement ‘A passion to perform’.

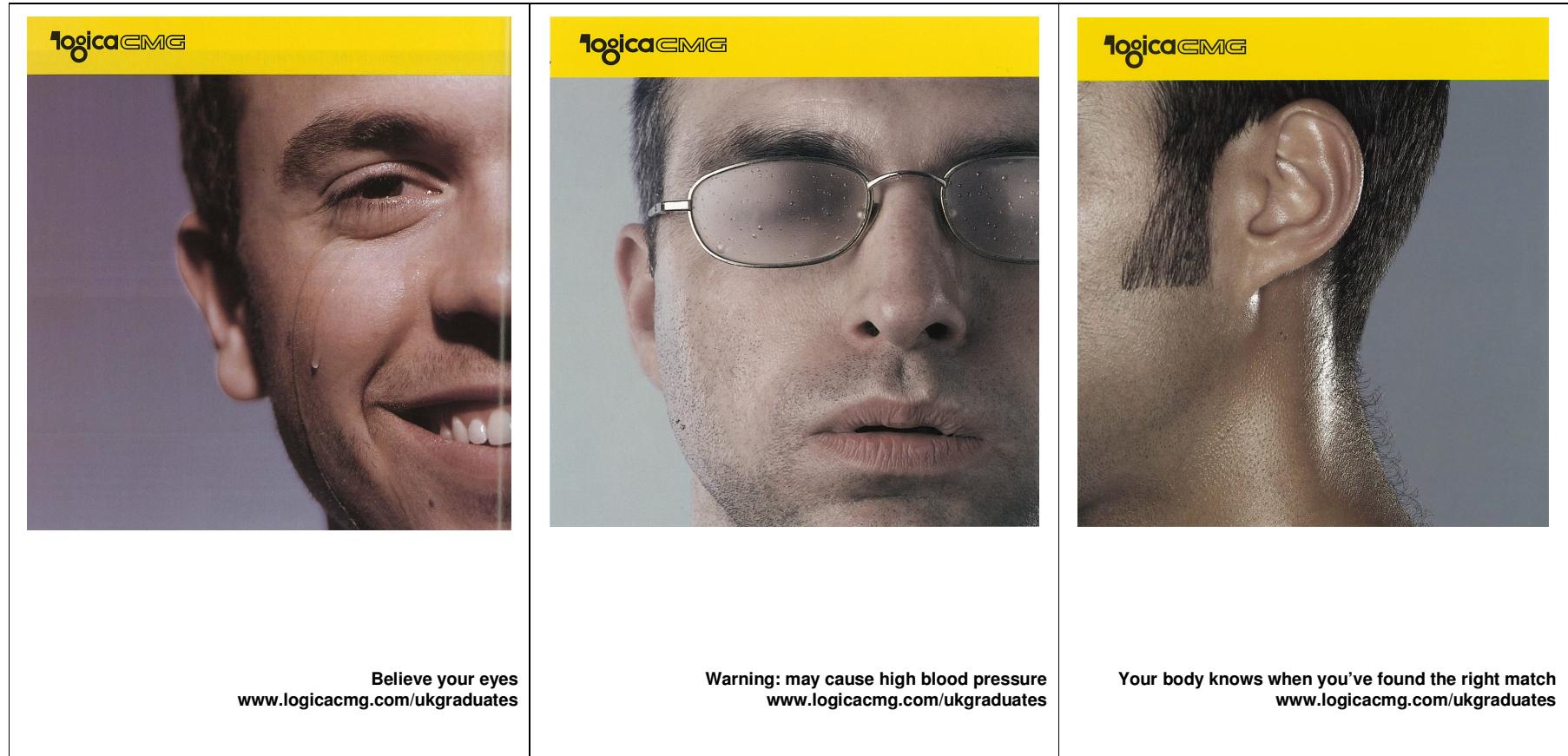


Figure 6.7. Logica recruitment advertisements. *Inside Careers: Information Technology* (Logica, 2003a: 52 & Logica, 2003b: back page), and *Target IT* (Logica, 2003/2004: back page)

The passionate digital industry worker was presented in a quite different way in a series of advertisements from multinational IT services and consulting firm, Logica (Figure 6.7). I found these advertisements in several graduate recruitment magazines collected from the computing science area of my university. Like Figure 6.6, these recruitment advertisements dislocate the individuals from their workplaces and emphasise how they *feel* about their work. The advertisements present Logica, and perhaps the digital industry generally, as a stimulating environment for passionate workers, but they do not do this through depicting active workers. Rather, these advertisements portray and refer to physiological sensations including tears, sweat, blood pressure, hearing or the feeling of hair standing up at the back of one's neck. This is done by providing a close-up of some aspect of a white male's head: two show part of a face and the other an ear and side of a neck. Each photo is accompanied by a one-sentence phrase and the web address for the firm. No other information about the firm or the available work is provided. Like Figure 6.6 these advertisements address the implied viewer directly and rather than skills, interests or education, these advertisements emphasise the importance of 'fit' or a match between the firm and what the viewer might *feel*. This is emphasised particularly in the third of these advertisements in which it is suggested that potential workers will feel their match with the organisation through bodily sensations.

The one recruitment advertisement representing a female character in this cluster was a recruitment advertisement for the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS, 2003) (Figure 6.8a). This advertisement, found in a graduate recruitment magazine, plays on *The Matrix* film trilogy (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999; 2003a, b). It reproduces a version of the advertising poster for the second film, *The Matrix Reloaded* (Wachowski & Wachowski, 2003a) which shows close-ups of two of the central characters in the movie (Figure 6.8b).

The main protagonist of the film, Neo, is a computer programmer by day and a hacker by night. At the beginning of the story Neo finds out that what he thought was

‘real’ was actually a computer programme which keeps humans in a dream world so that they can be mined for their heat and energy by complex machines. Neo is then drawn into a battle against the machines, and in the process becomes a strong and agile martial arts expert. Thus, he is a computer programmer turned hero action figure. The movie sequel continues the story and sees Neo and his friends pursuing freedom for humans. Given the widespread popularity of *The Matrix* film trilogy, the specific relation of the content to digital technologies, and the release of both the second and third *Matrix* movies during 2003, this advertisement is likely to have been immediately recognisable to an audience of young graduates interested in work in the digital industries.

Like the characters in the movie, the figures in this advertisement are dressed in dark, high-necked attire and mirrored sunglasses. Their faces are lit in a cool blue glow and strings of words run down behind them listing a range of different operational units of RBS. Reflected in the protagonists’ sun glasses are four symbols of professional work life: the RBS logo, clusters of computing workstations, a black UK taxi cab, and two suited people walking down some stairs.

In bold, the text across the middle of the advertisement reads ‘Once you’re inside, anything’s possible’ and in the left-hand bottom corner is the phrase ‘Make it happen’. In these statements, the advertisement addresses the implied reader directly and tells them that they are in charge of creating change. The smaller text then lists a series of activities: ‘creating, designing, coding, testing, communication, influencing, delivering, integrating’. The repetition of the gerund *-ing* suggests the active nature of the work at RBS. There are a number of elements of this advertisement which suggest that the simple presence of a woman in this type of representation is not sufficient to challenge gender stereotyping of the active and heroic digital industry worker. Firstly, the woman in this representation (and in *The Matrix* series) plays a supporting role to the main protagonist. In the recruitment advertisement she stands slightly



Figure 6.8a. 'Make it Happen', Royal Bank of Scotland recruitment advertisement. *Target IT 2004* (RBS, 2003: 71).

behind the male figure. Secondly, she is dressed and presented in the same way as her male counterpart. She is acceptable in her action-figure role because she displays the

appropriate markers of masculinity (cropped hair, serious mouth, plain clothes). The association between active heroism and masculinity and the indirect link made with expertise in digital technologies is therefore not disturbed by the female's presence in this representation.

The small print in the recruitment advertisement provides a third piece of information relating to the gendering of the digital media worker in recruitment materials. Here, and, as I will show below in other representations of women digital media workers, the reader is told that there is a variety of opportunities available within the organisation. Rather than reciting an emphasis on passion and focussed drive of workers as other advertisements in this cluster, here 'anything is possible' and applicants do not need to have a technical background to enter the organisation.

The reader is told that 'all you need is a 2.1 in any subject, incredible martial arts skills optional'. This type of emphasis on the breadth of opportunity was far more common in careers and recruitment literature picturing individual women or groups of workers which included women. The most common type of representations of this kind were of workers as business professionals. This is the third cluster I want to consider before drawing my analysis of representations of workers together.



Figure 6.8b. The Matrix Reloaded, 2003 (Warner Bros, 2009).

Digital industry workers as business professionals

In stark contrast to representations of casual and cool, or active, passionate and heroic workers, a third type of representation of workers I found was of professional

business people in the sector. In these kinds of advertisements, workers are presented in tidy attire (often suits) and more often in twos or threes, although individual workers are also profiled. Female figures in this type of representation appeared to be wearing make-up, and the men had closely cut hair. Often such representations depicted workers in a workplace environment, although they did not generally show workers engaging with any digital technologies they might use in their work. The 'business professional' was the most common type of portrayal of workers in which women were presented. Women were pictured alone in the context of a worker profile style of advertisement, or as part of mixed-gender pairs or groups of workers engaged in discussion or activity.

A graduate recruitment advertisement for Schlumberger provides an example of this kind of representation (Figure 6.9). In this, three people are gathered together participating in a conference call. The advertisement presents evidence about the work of the organisation from an existing project manager, Samantha: 'It's bringing ideas from around the world to life before your eyes'. The advertisement illustrates the kind of work environment of the firm and asks the reader to consider joining the organisation. This is reinforced through the direct address to the reader: 'Are you ready for our world?' (Schlumberger, 2003/2004).

As in *The Matrix* advertisement above, the small print in this advertisement states that 'all kinds of degrees have a place here'. There is no mention of technical skills or opportunities. This advertisement also states that the firm is an equal opportunity employer. This type of statement was presented in a number of the materials I gathered and was most commonly found in advertisements which pictured non-white workers. Sometimes I found such a statement in advertisements depicting white women, but never in advertisements that pictured only white males. From this we might discern that equal opportunities are seen by organisations to be salient only to women and non-white workers.

Schlumberger | world ready :

"It's bringing ideas from around the world to life before your eyes."
Samantha, Project Manager

All kinds of degrees have a place here. With 80,000 employees in over 100 countries, we find solutions for major clients in oil & gas, energy & utilities, finance, transport and healthcare. We're the world's leading supplier of Smartcards, winners of the prestigious Management Consultancies Association Best Practice Award 2002 and official Technology Partner of the International Olympic Committee. Broad, deep and stable, we're growing quietly and confidently. Explore our excellent graduate training programme. Are you ready for our world?

Schlumberger is an equal opportunity employer worldwide. www.slb.com/careers

Schlumberger

Figure 6.9. 'Bringing ideas from around the world', Schlumberger recruitment advertisement. Target IT, 2004 (Schlumberger, 2003/ 2004: 29).

A second set of advertisements produced by the international consulting firm, Deloitte also depict the business professional (Figure 6.10a, b). However, in this case individual workers are profiled. While these two advertisements were found in different graduate recruitment magazines they appear to be part of the same recruitment advertising campaign. In the first advertisement a woman called Nikki is presented as the worker of interest (Figure 6.10a). She sits at a low table with a male colleague or client. Both are presented in professional business dress. The woman is in a dark suit with a red shirt, the man in dark suit pants and a shirt and tie. The man holds his pen at the ready above a set of documents. In bold, a quotation from Nikki is written: 'There's nowhere that offers greater breadth of work'.

Similarly, in the second advertisement the worker is quoted as stating: 'There's a huge amount of cross-over between technology and business' (Figure 6.10b). In this Laura-Anne Cooke is leaning against a white wall. She is dressed in smart attire and her hair is loose. Like the image of Nanami, the 'IT girl' (in Figure 6.1b), Laura-Anne is presented in a non-specific space, a hallway. This advertisement presents the worker in a traditionally feminine and somewhat sexualised way. Laura-Anne's hands are slightly tucked behind her; she smiles and looks at the camera tilting her head down. This representation is reminiscent of a traditional image of the 'wallflower' at a dance, a pretty female waiting to be 'picked'.

These advertisements associate women workers with the scope and breadth of opportunities for individuals interested in IT. The wide-ranging opportunities in this company are highlighted in the listing of a range of careers on each advertisement which includes: IT, tax, consulting, advisory, actuarial and chartered accountancy. Thus, these advertisements highlight a wide range of specialist professional roles, rather than roles requiring hybrid workers as discussed in Chapter 5. Each also state that Deloitte is a fast-paced firm and demanding of its workers and both also underscore the support and development provided to workers to achieve in this context.



"There's nowhere that offers greater breadth of work."

Nikki Lloyd, Maths graduate.

For someone with a strong interest in IT, professional services simply offers more scope and career options than you'll find elsewhere. By joining Deloitte, you'll be working with a fast-paced firm that makes many demands but one that also values your contribution. Our people have the support, training and development they need to progress.

Why not find out more about how to apply by visiting our website? If you have the skills and attitude we're looking for, it will be time to start talking.

Careers available:

- IT
- Chartered Accountancy
- Tax
- Consulting
- Advisory
- Actuarial

Academic criteria:

Varies by service line:

- A or B at Maths and English GCSE or equivalent
- 22-26 UCAS points or equivalent
- 2:1 or 2:2 degree

Locations:

- Nationwide

Deloitte

Stonecutter Court, 1 Stonecutter Street, London EC4 4TR.
Freephone: 0800 323333.

<http://graduates.deloitte.co.uk>

Deloitte & Touche LLP is an equal opportunities employer.

Figure 6.10a. 'There's nowhere that offers greater breadth of work', Deloitte recruitment advertisement. *Inside Careers: Information Technology 2003/2004* (Deloitte, 2003b: 82).



"There's a huge amount of cross-over between technology and business."

Laura-Anne Cooke, Commerce and Business Economics graduate.

For someone with a strong interest in both IT and business, there's no better market than professional services. By joining Deloitte, you'll be working with a fast-paced firm that makes many demands but one that also values your contribution. Our people have the support, training and development they need to progress.

Why not find out more about how to apply by visiting our website? If you have the skills and attitude we're looking for, it will be time to start talking.

Careers available:

- IT
- Tax
- Consulting
- Advisory
- Actuarial
- Chartered Accountancy

Academic criteria:
Varies by service line:

- A or B at Maths and English GCSE or equivalent
- 24-26 UCAS points or equivalent
- 2:1 or 2:2 degree

Locations:

- Nationwide

Stonecutter Court, 1 Stonecutter Street, London EC4
Freephone: 0800 323333.
<http://graduates.deloitte.co.uk>
Deloitte & Touche LLP is an equal opportunities employer.

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Figure 6.10b. 'There's a huge cross-over between technology and business', Deloitte recruitment advertisement. *Target IT 2004* (Deloitte, 2003a: 20).

These representations of workers align with public policy statements discussed above which assert that greater acknowledgement of professional and non-technical roles will widen access to women workers. Indeed, one journalist writing about women in IT in one of the graduate recruitment magazines I collected, referred to Phillip and Trinh's (2001) report on image makeovers and then stated that 'even coding jobs require good communication and, occasionally the wearing of a suit' (Nickels, 2004: 70). In these public policy documents and popular commentary, the profiling of women as savvy business people is seen to potentially disrupt the historical image of the geeky male digital industries worker.

However, these representations do not challenge the association of technology and technical expertise with masculinity. Rather, they reinforce and reproduce this association by presenting women's participation in the digital industries through other elements: broad educational backgrounds, client-servicing, business orientation. These practices position women as communicators, professional and business-like, but most importantly *re*-position them as not technically focussed. This is done through the emphasis of a breadth of (non-technical) interests and skills that graduates might possess when women are represented. Such careers and recruitment literature seem to attempt to allay women's fears that they might need to have technical skills.

Crucially, many of the representations which depicted casual and cool and active, passionate and heroic workers, also explicitly rejected the image of digital media workers as business professionals in suits. In the previous chapter I described how some of my interviews contrasted marketing and management 'suits' with workers who had technical and creative skill and with their own creative ambitions. One interviewee contrasted 'wearing suits' and 'coming in at nine' with his ability to be creative and come up with good ideas when he was 'messing around' (JM: 215). Another interviewee jokingly said of a creative software developer colleague that 'the day he wears a suit is the day he dies, or vice versa' (GH: 14–17). Other academics and

commentators have described how the ‘suit’ is used to symbolise the ‘non-creative’ by individuals who see themselves as working as creative workers (e.g. Bilton & Leary, 2002; Negus & Pickering, 2004; Nixon, 2003; Parrish, 2005).⁴⁹ The suit or other formal business attire acts as a symbol of professionalization, of corporate orientation, and limited creativity or technical skill. Yet, the formally dressed, besuited worker was the most common way in which women were presented in the careers and recruitment literature I analysed.

Conclusion

The representations of workers that I have analysed in this chapter provide evidence of a shifting image of the sector as called for in the public policy documents (e.g. Phillip & Trinh, 2001; Haines, 2004a). Indeed, in the careers and recruitment literature I examined in this chapter there was little evidence of the mythological ‘geeky’ male worker (Margolis & Fisher, 2002). I have shown that workers were variously represented as: casual and cool; active, passionate, and even heroic workers; and as business professionals and communicators. I have also traced the appearance of many women workers represented within these ranks of ‘new’ kinds of digital industry workers.

As I have noted, recruitment advertising is generally designed to extend the pool of appropriate applicants, to present the organisation in a positive light, and/or to demonstrate the changing nature of the digital industries (DTI, 2005a). However, such organisational artefacts can also produce unconscious or unanticipated effects (Mills, 1995). It is my contention that representations of workers in careers and recruitment literature perform gender and inequality through rendering certain kinds of workers intelligible. This process occurs through the repetition and sedimentation

⁴⁹ The division between the suits and the creatives has even been explicitly discussed in UK writer David Parrish’s (2005) book titled *T-shirts and Suits; A Guide to the Business of Creativity*. This book was widely endorsed in the creative industries in the UK. The forewords in the original version and re-print were written by the current Minister for Creative Industries, James Purnell (2005 edition) and Shaun Woodward (2007 edition).

of practices which constitute norms for working subject positions and who will take these up. My analysis has identified the recurring representation of women at a distance from their technical workspaces and as interacting with people rather than digital technology. Women's varied backgrounds and non-technical abilities, rather than their technical expertise, were highlighted.

Gender is performed in careers and recruitment literature by the marginalisation of women workers from the most valued subject positions in the digital media sector, and their repeated association with positions of less value such as the 'business professional'. Thus, while Puwar (2004) describes women attempting to don 'ill-fitting suits' in her analysis of gender and race in the British civil service, my analysis suggests that in the digital media sector, suits are specifically fitted for the female figure. But, unlike the British civil service, formal appearance and business attire in the digital media sector connotes the devalued, non-creative worker.

In UK public policy documents and much feminist research on women's participation in the digital industries, there is a strong emphasis on issues of sector image and the need for changing the image to attract and recruit more women workers (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Greenfield et al. 2002; Phillip & Trinh, 2001; Siann, 1997; Turkle, 1988). Thus, it is of note that to date I have found no examples of feminist research looking at careers and recruitment literature in the digital industries. The materials studied in this chapter provide little basis for the hope expressed in the public policy documents that new, varied and more fashionable images of digital media workers (e.g. Millar & Jagger, 2001) will deconstruct and transform unequal gender relations in the digital industries. Rather than showing an 'undoing' of gender, these recent representations of digital media workers constitute a 're-doing' of gender through new practices (Butler, 2004).

In this and the previous chapter I have explored articulations of work and women's participation in the digital media sector which differentiate women from normalised and idealised working subject positions in the sector on the basis of skills,

motivations and roles. I have suggested that practices of marking out women as 'different' from valued worker positions are likely to contribute to inequality in this sector. In the following two chapters I analyse articulations in public policy documents, critical research literature and my interviews which emphasise the creative value of workers who demonstrate some forms of 'difference' and those who contribute to the workforce diversity of the sector. I do this in order to consider further the implications for gender in/equalities of the repeated differentiation of women workers from others, and also to analyse further the increasing emphasis on creativity in the digital media sector.

CHAPTER 7

NORMS OF DISTINCTION FOR CREATIVE WORKERS

In this chapter I shift from a broad focus on work and workers in the digital media sector, to consider specifically the ‘creative workers’ who are said to populate this sector (e.g. DCMS, 2001; Florida, 2002; Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999, 2001). My purpose in making this shift is to draw attention to the increasing emphasis on creativity in this work domain and to consider how this shift is related to gender. Specifically, I explore a third articulation in key discursive sites in the digital media sector which links the creativity of workers with their ability to demonstrate some forms of ‘difference’.

‘Difference’ is a complex term which is at the heart of questions about the doing of gender and it is also employed in disparate ways in the digital industries. In feminist scholarship ‘difference’ is recognised as a highly political term (e.g. Delphy, 1996; Irigaray, 1995; Trinh, 1987; Spivak, 1987). But, I argue in this chapter that the concept of difference is depoliticised in the digital media sector and is reified as a valuable form of human capital, a resource, or an individual creative quality.

I provide support for this contention by drawing on my analysis of data from three discursive sites. First, I explore key public policy documents regarding work in

the creative economy (e.g. DCMS, 2001b; NESTA, 2005; Robinson, DfEE, & DCMS, 1999) and women's participation in the digital media sector (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Greenfield, et al., 2002; Millar & Jagger, 2001). I then analyse critical organisational research on knowledge and creative work (e.g. Cederström & Fleming, 2007; Fleming & Sturdy, 2006; Nixon, 2003, 2006; Nixon & Crewe, 2004). I analyse this literature as part of the discursive field of the digital media sector, rather than simply use it to frame my analysis. I argue that while these examples of research take an explicitly critical orientation to how 'new' kinds of subjects are produced in the creative economy, they nevertheless contribute to the reification of 'difference' as a form of human capital (e.g. Fleming & Sturdy, 2006; Nixon, 2006). Finally, the third set of data consists of my interview material in which interviewees described themselves and others as creative workers. In addition, I explore the ways in which my interviewees identified women workers as 'different' kinds of workers. By bringing a feminist analysis to bear on these discursive sites I seek to disrupt the taken-for-granted conceptualisations of 'difference' as an individualised and creative quality of digital media workers. I argue that the ways in which the concept of 'difference' is used in the digital media sector is pivotal to the gendering of the ideal creative digital media worker. In the remainder of the thesis I will drop the cautionary quotation marks I have used around the term 'difference' above, in the assumption that my critical orientation to this term is understood.

Valorising difference in the creative economy

Since 1997 a number of UK Labour government policy makers and commentators have declared that the future of the British economy is dependent on individual workers and their ability to think differently and creatively (e.g. DCMS, 2001b; NESTA, 2005; Robinson, DfEE, & DCMS, 1999; Hutton, 2007). For example, a report on Britain's creative industries by the DCMS (2001b) states: 'Creative thought lies at the heart of almost all cultural activity ... and it lies increasingly at the centre of

successful economic life in an advanced knowledge-based economy' (p.5). Although, none are likely to dispute that creativity originates in individuals' thinking and ideas, the processes of attribution of creativity to individuals are always socially and economically situated (Pratt & Jeffcut, 2009). Thus, from a feminist perspective there is a need to consider how creativity is mobilised in accounts of work and workers in the digital media sector.

I show below that in key public policy documents, creativity was associated with a worker's ability to demonstrate different forms of thinking and deviance from the status quo. Furthermore, a number of these documents specifically identified women as inherently different and thus as potentially valuable creative workers. I will discuss these two practices before I go on to analyse related critical organisational research.

Creative thought is defined by the DCMS (2001b) as thinking that deviates from what might be expected, from the norm. Individuals who 'think laterally', and who can demonstrate 'original thinking' are deemed to be creative workers (DCMS, 2001b: 12). Similarly, in a more recent commissioned report for the DCMS Creative Economy Programme, Hutton (2007) states that:

Firms can benefit from people who are prone to follow their inner attitudes and dispositions instead of following any organisational *weltanschauung*. They are, in the words of Sutton, 'low self-monitors': unbound by social norms, often indifferent to external cues and sometimes abrasive and even obnoxious'. (Hutton, 2007: 141).

In this statement, individuals who challenge the status quo, have different approaches, and deviate social norms are seen to produce creative ideas and thus benefit organisations. Elsewhere, Sir Ken Robinson, leader of the UK government commission on creativity, education and the economy in 1998⁵⁰ has argued that to be creative, individuals must never take things for-granted, that they must 'think differently' and also 'behave and act differently' (Robinson, 2007: online source; see also Robinson, 2001). Robinson (2009) re-articulated this point in his recent book on

⁵⁰ The major report from this commission was: Robinson, DfEE, & DCMS, 1999.

creativity and innovation, in which he titled his second chapter, *Think differently* (p. 27).

In these public policy contexts, attributions of ‘inner attitudes’, differences of thinking, and deviation from social norms become valorised and held as proxies for creativity. Similarly, in public policy documents looking at women’s participation in the digital industries specifically (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Haines, 2004a, b), there are clear linkages made between women workers as ‘different’ kinds of workers and creativity. Women are presented as having different backgrounds, as seeing things differently, and as having a ‘different voice’ (DTI, 2005a: 25). In addition, Haines (2004a, b) argues that because women are different from most (male) workers in the digital games industry, they will be assets to companies and thus, may be at an advantage in the labour market. She points to digital games companies which are actively seeking to employ women because of their potential alternative contribution to games development. Haines states that women are an ‘added bonus’ for digital games companies because they have ‘different preferences’, a ‘different way of communicating’ (Haines, 2004a: 12) and can give a ‘different view of things’ (Haines, 2004a: 6). The positive implications of these proposals from Haines and the first George report are made all the more weighty in the context of the second George report (DTI, 2005b). In this, low retention rates of women in the digital industries are partially explained by highlighting a lack of recognition and valuing of their contributions.

In Chapters 5 and 6 I have discussed the ways in which public policy documents pertaining to women’s participation in the digital industries articulated the need to recognise and accommodate differences between men’s and women’s skills and motivations (e.g. DTI, 2005a, b; Greenfield et al, 2002; Haines, 2004a, b; Phillip & Trinh, 2001). But my argument here is that such documents also encourage organisations to harness differences associated with women for creative purposes. This dual focus on women’s differences can be linked to broader shifts in how gender

issues in organisations have been theorised in academic literature since the 1970s. Attention has shifted from social justice initiatives to promote gender equality by addressing and balancing differences between men and women (e.g. through training or developing fairer recruitment methods), to valuing and managing differences in order to enhance organisational outcomes, particularly in engendering creativity (see Kirton & Greene, 2000; Liff, 1999 for useful reviews of these shifts). In the latter approach, difference becomes reified as a valuable individual quality and resource which women and other workers might use in their work.

The apparent valorisation of difference I have identified in these public policy documents is firmly bound in articulations of the benefits of 'workforce diversity' for creative work. I separate my attention on difference (addressed here) and diversity (addressed in Chapter 8) in order to tease out the perceived creative benefits of individual differences for workers and of workforce diversity for organisations in the digital media sector.

Strategic distinction and creative workers

A public policy focus on individual difference as a resource for business is perhaps not surprising in the context of the sweeping neo-liberalist agendas which characterised the Conservative Thatcher governments and successive Labour governments in the UK. Individualisation, entrepreneurialism and market logic have been at the cornerstone of economic and social public policies within the UK for more than 30 years. But, it is important to note that the conceptualisation of difference as a valuable form of human capital can even be identified in recent critical research pertaining to knowledge and creative economies. Moreover, despite explicit intentions of the majority of critical researchers to critique emergent economic and social relations, issues of gender are often marginalised or overlooked in this field of study. In this section I analyse the work of two prominent UK critical scholars who study creative and knowledge work. I argue that in their analyses of the formation of 'new' kinds of workers in creative and knowledge work domains, difference is largely

formulated as a characteristic of self-expression and as an individual resource. At the same time, their attention to issues of power and gender is at best partial.

The relationship between attributions of creativity and how workers present themselves at work and are perceived, has been explored by a number of critical organisational researchers (e.g. Alvesson, 2004; Fleming & Sturdy, 2006). One study relevant to my project is Sean Nixon's (Nixon, 2003, 2006; Nixon & Crewe, 2004) research on the London advertising industry. Nixon argues that his advertising executive interviewees were engaged in strategic and purposeful practices to shape their creative worker identities. He states:

The cult of creativity... formed part of the cultivation of a distinct habitus in this "talent-led" field of cultural production in which speaking the language and pursuing signs of creativity was central to the successful shaping of an identity at work (Nixon, 2006: 89).

Specifically, Nixon found that the advertising creatives in his study were perpetually engaged in 'strategies of distinction', to mark themselves and their work teams out from others in the industry. Nixon (2003) found that the creatives he interviewed presented themselves as constantly striving to 'think differently' in the 'pursuit of newness' for their advertising campaigns (Nixon, 2003: 84–87; see also Nixon, 2006). In this way, new and creative ideas and products were seen to be developed by 'different' kinds of workers. Thus, to be outside of the norm was seen to be important for the creative workers in Nixon's study.

Nixon (2003) draws on Freud's phrase 'narcissism of minor difference' (cited in Ignatieff, 1994) and Keith Negus' (1998) notion of 'slight different-ness'⁵¹ to describe the ways in which his group of interviewees re-iterated and over-emphasised very minor differences between themselves and others in the industry. Hence, Nixon's white male creatives narrated a range of quite small differences between themselves and their peers, colleagues and competitors including differences of generation, skills, motivations, passions and differences in appearances or style.

⁵¹ Negus has published widely on his research of the UK music industry and creative industries (e.g. Negus, 1998; Negus, 2002; Negus & Pickering, 2004).

Nixon's analysis provides an interesting contrast with some of my previous discussion in this thesis. I have argued in Chapters 5 and 6 that women might be at a disadvantage in the digital media sector because they tend to be distinguished as 'different' from idealised and normalised digital media workers. I have suggested that the repeated presentation of women as 'non-technical' and as socially oriented workers might render them unrecognisable as workers with integrated technical and creative skills. But, in Nixon's analysis – along with the public policy documents discussed above – being 'outside the norm' is deemed to be desirable and advantageous. Nixon (2003) argues that difference may be strategically performed by workers in creative work domains for specific purposes. The tension between these views of difference begs the question of which norms can be transgressed and what kinds of difference can be performed to mark creativity?

In his account, Nixon describes difference as something workers can choose to display or not. He does not consider whether *all* workers are able to perform certain differences for strategic purposes. Thus, while Nixon argued that his interviewees were engaged in strategic distinction on the basis of only minor differences, it is unclear whether articulations of differences between men and women could be construed in this way. It may be precisely because Nixon's interviewees otherwise fit the normalised image of the advertising creative (as white males), that the differences they manifested or performed were deemed only minor deviations and were associated with creativity.

Nixon is himself concerned with gender relations in creative work, and elsewhere he identifies gendering processes in the London advertising industry in which creativity is discursively linked with youthful forms of masculinity (Nixon, 2003). However unfortunately, Nixon stops short of integrating his theorisation of strategies of distinction with an analysis of gender or power. He explicitly describes strategies of making (minor) distinction as important for creative workers, but he does not consider differences which have been associated with gender and which are often

more difficult to deploy strategically. Furthermore, the degrees of difference to which he implicitly refers in his discussion of 'minor difference' are not explained.

Another cluster of research regarding the importance of difference in contemporary knowledge workplaces is provided by UK scholar Peter Fleming and colleagues (Cederström & Fleming, 2007; Cederström & Grassman, 2008; Fleming, 2006; Fleming & Spicer, 2007; Fleming & Sturdy, 2006). Fleming et al. apply the phrase 'norm of difference'⁵² to identify processes within organisations which promote and normalise the expression of difference by workers whilst maintaining strict parameters of acceptable behaviour (Cederström & Fleming, 2007; Fleming & Sturdy, 2006).

These authors assert that management identity controls of the 1980s and 1990s enforced fairly uniform organisational identities. They argue that, by contrast, in recent years many organisations have explicitly encouraged self-expression amongst their workers (Fleming & Sturdy, 2006). For example, in their study of a communications organisation in Australia, Fleming and Sturdy (2006) found that fun, frivolity and 'just being yourself' were not only encouraged, but were required and enforced by the organisation (Fleming, 2006; Fleming & Sturdy, 2006). The authors argue that this shift in management approaches, although ostensibly empowering of workers, actually represents a new modality of identity control. Celebrated worker 'authenticity' and difference are brought under the managerial gaze and regulated (Fleming & Sturdy, 2006: 13). Fleming and Sturdy (2006) illustrate their argument with a description of a critical incident in their study involving disciplinary action against a worker who deviated beyond the implicit boundaries governing the organisational 'norm of difference'. This incident involved the immediate termination of the employee's position because he pushed the

⁵² Although the phrase 'norm of difference' is widely used in statistical analyses it is less common in sociological or organisational analyses. Richard Hardin (1999) has used the phrases 'norms of difference' and 'norms of exclusion' in a sociological analysis of norms of community and society, particularly in regard to race and ethnicity.

suggestion that he should just be himself by bringing cannabis cookies to his workplace.

Fleming et al.'s studies are relevant to my research in that they critique liberal and seemingly emancipatory discourses relating to the creation of 'new' kinds of subjects in knowledge work. Moreover, I draw attention to their research because the concept of a 'norm of difference' offers a useful construct for my work. This concept relates to my interest in how difference is constituted, valued and endorsed as an aspect of creativity within the digital media sector.

Nevertheless, like Nixon, these authors view 'being different' as manifested and performed through self-expression. Fleming and colleagues assume individual agency when describing workers' performance of difference. In their discussion, Fleming and Sturdy (2006) refer to the 'celebration of difference' and the 'celebration of diversity' which have absorbed 'liberalist motifs in relation to minority groups such as gays, ethnics and others often disenfranchised in western corporate settings' (2006: 11). They state, in an ironic tone, that organisations now take the position that 'difference along these dimensions [referring to dimensions of race, ethnicity and sexuality] should not be suppressed in favour of a singular "white-male" norm, but openly encouraged and used by the firm' (Ibid.). These authors argue that the 'celebration of diversity' openly promotes the free self-expression of workers, and they identify it as an invocation to workers to 'be themselves', 'have fun' and 'be playful'. However, Fleming and Sturdy fail to note a crucial aspect of these developments, that difference as self-expression may not be the same as the difference attributed to some groups of workers on the basis of race, gender, sexuality or other social demographic groupings. In Fleming et al.'s analyses, differences associated with minority groups and disenfranchised others, are equated with individualised differences related to personality, beliefs and behaviours. Hence, Fleming and his colleagues use a very limited notion of power, implying that monitoring and censure for the wrong kind of

deviation applies equally to all workers, and that all workers can resist, or negotiate corporate power in similar ways.

In these respects, Fleming et al. depoliticise the concept of difference, except insofar as it pertains to the power relations between management and employees. The use of a depoliticised notion of difference is exemplified in Fleming and Sturdy's (2006) treatment of sexuality within organisations. These authors argue that, through an organisational culture based on a 'norm of difference', forms of queer sexuality were simultaneously promoted and brought under the managerial gaze. Nevertheless, in their published account there was no reflection on the fact that it was only particular expressions of gay male sexuality that was permitted and valued within the organisation. The approach taken by Fleming and his colleagues do not explore power relations around gender and how these may shape the meaning of difference in these work contexts.

In summary, the constructs of 'strategies of distinction', 'narcissism of minor difference' and 'norm of difference' as developed by Nixon, Fleming and colleagues offer useful but limited perspectives on the ways in which difference is produced and evaluated within organisations. Given feminist analysts' extensive consideration of power in the making of difference (as discussed in Chapter 2), it is striking that power and gender relations are generally not considered in these 'critical' research texts. In the following section, I argue that there are clear consistencies between the public policy and critical research reviewed here and the practices employed by my interviewees in their discussions of creative workers.

Strategies of distinction in the digital media sector

Without exception, all my interviewees described their own work as different from that of others in their industry. The phrases used by my interviewees to describe their work included 'it's different, definitely' (MG), 'un-typical' (DK), 'pretty individual' (PW) and 'not following on from what's been done before' (HG). Each of these

comments asserts the distinctiveness of the interviewee's work in comparison with that of colleagues and competitors. Thus, rather paradoxically, distinguishing one's own work from that of others (from the norm), *was* the norm in my interviews. Furthermore, through such characterisation my interviewees sought to distinguish not only their work, but also themselves, as creative. For example, Josh explained the importance of distinguishing oneself in his field:

The creative industries are really, if you are any good, you might get ideas off other people but it has to be different from other people if you're really going to be any good, if people think you are good (JM: 207).

In this comment Josh identifies the ability to think differently as the capacity through which one gains recognition for being 'good'. Put another way, workers are measured as 'good' by the extent to which their work is different. Similarly, freelancer Matt explained that to be successful workers need the capacity to stand out from others:

I think anyone can be taught to do it [digital animation] but it is if you can stand out. And I think that's a big problem. Unless you find something that makes you stand out, you'll just be along with everyone else (laugh). You need to find something that's gonna to make you different. And that's what I'm looking for (laugh) (MG: 189).

Matt states here that technical expertise can be taught, but successful practitioners need to find something that 'makes [them] different'. Like Josh, Matt suggests it is not simply an individual's ideas or work that must stand out, but the worker themselves. Hence, the recognition of workers' ideas as novel and different become integral to their creative identity (see also Deuze, Martin, & Allen, 2007 for a related discussion of digital games developers working identities through their digital products).

My interviewees repeatedly engaged in a discursive practice of marking themselves as different in some way. Josh's and Matt's comments suggest that this practice is not simply a matter of self-description, but rather it has become imperative within their occupation. Indeed, as I will show below, in many cases my interviewees said active *effort* was required in order to come up with different and original ideas and to stand out. In this way, my interview material provides support for some of

Nixon's arguments regarding the importance of strategic differentiation for creative workers. In the next section I discuss the ways in which my interviewees distinguished themselves and other notable creative colleagues from the majority of workers in their fields by providing evidence of how they think, feel, and behave differently.

But, my interviewees also referred to some important norms from which there could be no deviation. Organisational and client requirements were described by my interviewees as constraining their originality and different ways of working. These two practices drawn together portray creative workers as needing to actively produce difference but within a range determined by organisational and client norms. I discuss these practices below before I go on to consider how women workers were described by my interviewees as 'different' kinds of workers.

Thinking differently

In the second half of the interview schedule my questions focussed on issues of creative work and creativity. These included questions such as, 'Think of someone who you see as really creative. What attributes do they have?' or 'When have you been/are you most creative?' As discussed in Chapter 5, interviewees' descriptions of ideal digital media workers were of those who had technical competence but who could also 'think different'⁵³, or 'think outside the box'. Here I consider in more detail these latter 'creative' capacities of digital media workers which were repeatedly identified by my interviewees.

In the following exchange Grant describes a 'highly creative' colleague working within Human Computer Interaction (HCI) studies:

⁵³ The phrase 'Think Different' was popularised by an advertising campaign designed to lift Apple Inc. out of years of poor performance in comparison with leaders in the field such as IBM (Jobs, 1997). Apple urged their audience to 'think different' (in their computing purchasing preferences) and they linked the slogan to creativity and achievement through carefully selected texts and images of a number of well-known artists, political activists and leaders.

SPT Think of somebody that you think of as really creative. Can you describe them for me?

GH ...Basically he's done everything, he's a mathematician, but he teaches, at the moment he does HCI...so he's got a lot of experience to draw on which I think is important. Having that, the building blocks for creativity. What he can do is he can process them in very interesting ways. He can view things from a very different perspective, I think that's important as well, being able to find an alternative and non-conventional angle on something is really important. To be able to look, think outside the box (laughs). Bit of a cliché but yeah, looking at things from a different perspective (GH: 209).

Grant begins by describing his colleague's diverse experience and technical expertise.

According to Grant, his colleague's rich background provides the building blocks for creativity, but this needs to be processed in order to be of value and use in the sector.

Grant's account resonates with the emphasis in recent research on creativity as the capacity to process and translate knowledge and information in a knowledge economy (Despres & Hiltrop, 1995; Pyöriä, 2005; Reich, 1993). He employed comparative terms such as 'alternative', and 'non-conventional' to characterise his colleague's creativity.

Grant was not my only interviewee who described creative individuals with reference to their deviant thinking. Harry described his own creativity by identifying his feeling of separation from everyday organisational processes when he is programming:

The only way I can explain it is that my head's on another planet. You know, I'm on a completely different world to what's going on... (HS: 86).

Harry generates the impression of a creative mind which is separated from its work environment. But his account also connotes madness or insanity. Similarly, another interviewee, Laura, alluded to her and her colleagues perceiving the world differently. Laura attributed her organisation's success to their 'quirky way of looking at life' (LC: 56), as she explained:

We all live very happily on another planet. A well-developed, quick sense of humour is one characteristic, as is the ability to see everyday things in a strange light. Exaggeration is another useful trait, especially when it goes so far you can't even remember the original starting point. (LC: 65).

Laura asserts that she and her colleagues are successful because they have an alternative perspective on the world. She highlights three dimensions of this: humour, seeing things in a strange light, and exaggeration. These concepts connote the peculiar, funny and strange and indicate the importance of viewing accepted objects and ideas from alternative perspectives.

Many of my interviewees switched between two conceptualisations of creativity which have been positioned in opposition since at least the time of Plato and Aristotle (Negus & Pickering, 2004). They conjured creativity as either an innate capability, and of emerging spontaneously from an individual (as above), or as a capacity which one develops through concentrated learning, practice, and/or effort. Just under half of my interviewees reported that they cultivated their capacity for creative thinking. For example, in a discussion of his own creative work process Crispin stated:

I research, a lot. I describe the way I work as someone pulling a bow and arrow. Like, I do, it takes a long time to take target on, but when I release it, it's quite quick for me actually to execute the final thing. It takes me, say for instance a month long project, it's like I spend nearly three weeks researching it and the last week actually producing the work (CH: 132).

In contrast with popular views of creativity as divine inspiration or as a ‘natural’ talent, in this comment Crispin emphasises the explorative and preparatory *work* involved in his creative process. In the interview he went on to explain in more detail the various techniques that he used to come up with different and original ideas. He said:

Sometimes I purposely merge opposites to get things, I look at what's opposite from what I'm trying to do so I get a different angle on it as well. Different, different techniques, to come up with original [ideas] (CH: 139).

In this case, original thought is achieved through *work*.

Another interviewee, Hamish, also described the practices he had employed to keep his creativity ‘close to the surface’:

I think everyone has creativity in them, some perhaps more than others or some perhaps just have it more close to the surface than other people. But I think everyone's creative [hmm]. Just ah, some people just don't use it. I guess in the design sense there is just people out there who don't

put the time into actually being creative when they're doing the work...when I was working for myself I was um, I'd always do something every couple of days. I dunno, just a picture or a doodle or a painting, whatever, just to try and try and, just play around. I felt that was probably really beneficial to keep, to keep it close to the surface (HG: 109).

Hamish's comments contrast a natural capacity for creativity which he attributes to *all*, and the need to engage actively and purposefully in play time to generate creativity. In this comment, Hamish distinguishes creative individuals as those who devote effort to realise their creativity.

Other interviewees provided accounts of the long hours and extensive effort involved in realising creativity in their work. For example, Matt suggested that he was the most creative '2 hours before my eyes water shut, when I start getting tired' (para. 127). Mark said 'this is no longer a nine-to-five job. It's a 12–12, soaks up all your time' (para. 68). Fraser complained that 'it all crops up in my mind even when I'm away from it... It crops up and I think God, I need to find a new way of doing that, or doing that' (para. 132). Extended working hours is a theme widely discussed in research on the digital media sector (Gill, 2009b; e.g. Jarvis & Pratt, 2006; Perrons, 2003). In the specific context of my interviewees' discussions here, extensive effort and long hours is identified as part of coming up with new and different ideas and thus distinguishing oneself as creative.

To summarise, my interviewees repeatedly associated creativity with non-conventional and different thinking. Being slightly mad and insane was presented as a highly desirable attribute for workers in creative domains. My findings relate to Fleming and Sturdy's (2006) analysis of the importance of demonstrating one's inner self, or one's authenticity. However, creative thinking also required work. Clearly, when creativity is discussed in the context of paid work, an emphasis on the labour involved is not surprising. Workers need to demonstrate that they are earning their money. Nevertheless, my interviewees did not just foreground the hard work or long hours required, they also highlighted the difficulty of being creative and the need to employ techniques designed to help them think differently. Thus, thinking different is

presented as requiring active effort. This becomes important when considering how women are presented as 'different' kinds of workers (as discussed below).

Feeling different

Within my interviews, individuals did not only distinguish themselves and other creative workers through reference to differences of thinking. The second way of distinguishing creative workers was to emphasise how they *felt* differently about their work.

The emotional dimension of creative work has come under the scrutiny of researchers in recent years. Creative work has captured theorists' imaginations as an area of employment in which passion, love for the work, and social recognition are valued by workers more than monetary gain (e.g. Shorthose & Strange, 2004; see also my discussion in Chapter 5). In addition, the tendency for digital media practitioners to rationalise long working hours through an emphasis on their enjoyment for their work has been widely acknowledged (see Banks & Milestone, 2007; Gill, 2002; Jarvis, 2002; Perrons, 2003). Related patterns emerged in my interviews.

For example, Brigitte became particularly animated when describing her obsession for developing interactive digital media art pieces. She explained that the passion she felt for working with digital technology compensated for the time demands which drew her away from her family and social life:

[The work] is really something that makes me really, really enjoy life and just think that everything's wonderful and when I am not doing it makes me a miserable person (BD: 130).

Brigitte emphasises enjoyment and passion in her work and other interviewees also described how passion for work was a distinguishing characteristic of particularly creative workers in this sector. For example, in a discussion of the attributes of creative individuals in the digital media sector Crispin stated:

I think, anyone's got the ability to be creative, but I think those that are very or exceptionally creative tend to be people that are, what's the word? I get this thing of passionate or obsessive about things (CH: 149).

Elsewhere Crispin explained that he tells his junior staff that, if 'you don't love what you do, then you shouldn't do it'. Crispin's implies that passion is a requirement for creative digital media workers. In a related discussion, Daniel, stated that many of the applicants to his firm are formally qualified but do not have the 'x-factor' required for success as a creative digital media designer. He remarked that the majority of applicants 'just want to know how much they will be paid, but we want to employ those with passion, those that want to do the work just because they love it' (DK: 31). For Daniel and Crispin, creative employees stand out because of their passion and love for their work.

Other researchers have identified workers' strong emphasis on passion for work in the digital industries as a gendered form of engagement with technology (e.g. Kleif & Faulkner, 2002; Sellen, Murphy, & Shaw, 2002). Elisabeth Kelan (2007) found in her study of the Swiss information technology sector that there was a tendency for her male interviewees to emphasise their love of, fascination for, and fun they experienced with technology. In contrast, her female interviewees were more likely to describe technology as a tool. In my research I did not find such gendered patterns. Both my male and female interviewees emphasised their enjoyment and love of working with new technologies and they associated this with creativity. For example, Laura described her entry into animation work as the result of her fascination with film technology. For Brigitte, the digital artefacts which she and her colleagues created were crucial to her engagement with digital media work. In fact, Brigitte asked if she should bring some of her digital projects and props along to the interview so that I could see what she does. Thus, my interviewees generally did not demonstrate gendered patterns of reporting their own passion for their work and for technology. But, when talking about others in their industry a number of interviewees did identify passion as something that distinguished notable male creative workers. I discuss this point further in regard to how women workers were described as 'different' kinds of workers below.

For some of my interviewees play was an important source of creativity in their digital media work. They referred to their creative work process as 'messing about' (JM), or 'just letting yourself relax and, play' (HG), or as 'goofing off' (HS). These phases suggest pleasurable unconventional activities, but which could generate creativity. One interviewee, Josh, stated that the only good ideas he has ever had have come from messing about:

You're just playing around with ideas and that's when you do it, is in your spare time, you're just wasting. That's also why um, a lot of, you know lots of teenagers come up with loads of ideas, 'cause they're just a bit spoddy and geeky in rooms somewhere just playing around with computers and they come up with bright ideas...every good idea I've ever done has been when I've been messing around in the evening (JM: 215).

Josh projects the figure of the technical individual who is young, geeky and socially inept, and he associates this figure with good ideas, fun and playfulness. As the foregoing discussion indicates, it was common for my interviewees to associate creativity with passion and with enjoyment when 'playing' with technology. These comments link thinking and feeling differently about digital media work with behaving differently. I explore this last way of describing 'different' kinds of creative digital media workers in the following section.

Behaving differently

My interviewees often cited examples of different and even odd or erratic behaviour when discussing their colleagues' creativity. For example, Harry described one of his previous bosses as the most creative and also inspirational individual he could think of. In response to a follow-up question, he highlighted the unconventional thinking and behaviour of his former boss:

SPT Can you describe what was so inspirational?

HS ...I've never met anyone who viewed the world in the way he did and I've never met anyone who was off his head you know as much. I mean when I was a member, there was a load of balloons on the office floor one day, and I mean he was a director of a company and he just runs and dives and jumps on them, you know (para: 118).

Harry begins by commenting on the rather intangible features of how his colleague viewed the world, describing his colleague as 'off his head'. This links to my previous discussion of my interviewees' references to slight insanity as a marker of creativity. In order to exemplify his remarks, Harry refers to his boss jumping on a pile of balloons. In this case, differences in thinking are seen as manifested in behaviour. For Harry, his former colleague's behaviour was particularly notable given his position of authority as organisational director.

Grant similarly described his colleague's creativity by providing examples of his unusual behaviour:

...He's um, he's just mad, he's like a stereotypical mad professor. But he's still quite young, but he's like he's just pure hair, he's just like long hair, long hair, beard, moustache and he's like, he has unparalleled in my experience, ability to think about things...And the most impressive thing is, he doesn't just do it quietly, he'll talk his way through it. So you'll sit there and what's, someone described him once as, a raw brain, and like, you get that feeling 'cause you can almost touch, touch the brain and feel, feel the thinking. Because when he thinks he talks through it right, and it's really hard to follow (GH: 209).

Grant describes the way that his colleague presents himself and looks. He invokes the image of 'a mad professor', a familiar archetype which was discussed in Chapter 6. Images of brilliant but mad professors with wild greying hair and moustaches (for example, the iconic images of Einstein or Doc in the movie *Back to the Future*) are established cultural stereotypes. Moreover, Grant draws attention not only to the unconventional nature of his colleague's thinking but also to the way in which he performs his thinking (out loud). He followed his comments above by describing his colleague sitting in his room alone audibly arguing with himself.

Both of the individuals that Harry and Grant described conformed to worker norms in this field in that they were male and white. They were also both at senior levels of their respective organisations. It may well be that *because* these individuals were in high status positions and conformed to worker norms in the industry, that their deviant behaviour could be read as *minor* creative difference, rather than being dismissed as outrageous and/or unacceptable.

The foregoing interview extracts demonstrate how the evaluations of a worker's creativity became associated with specific individualised behaviour and performances. The question then becomes not 'who has creative talent', but what activities performed by who, become recognised and legitimatised as creative? (Negus & Pickering, 2004). This is a crucial question because in industries which characterise themselves as 'creative', decisions relating to recruitment, compensation, promotion, allocation of projects and work organisation involve perceptions of the creativity or the potential creativity of individuals (Styhre & Sundgren, 2005).

Norms of distinction

My interviewees also described a tension between the need for actively demonstrating difference and original thinking with pressures to produce work in accord with organisational requirements. For example, as discussed above Josh asserted that creativity comes from 'wasting time' and 'messing around'. But at the time of the interview Josh reported that he was feeling some pressure to conform in his workplace. He worried that organisational demands about how he did his work would restrict his creativity:

And this is what pisses me off. You know, we were talking earlier about, they're going to make us, want, sooner or later they'll be saying, 'I think you should be wearing suits', and they're already saying 'come at 9.00, go at 5.30pm', and every, every good idea I've ever done has been when I've been messing around in the evening. And I don't get paid for that, and you know, that's stuff that's made a big difference to the product (JM: 215).

Josh emphasised his anger that his preferred relaxed and playful way of working was not deemed acceptable in his work place. His dilemma at the time of our interview was how to respond to the demands of his employers to conform to their standardised work norms and yet maintain his creativity.

In another example, Matthew provides a discussion of tensions between his creative aspirations to produce different and original work and client demands:

SPT Is there a typical kind of person who works in the digital media field? What kind of characteristics do they have?

MG ...As long as you've got an artistic mind, like, you can put that down either on paper or through software but ah. Not .. it depends on what you're doing, because not necessarily imaginative, 'cause, I say, I used to be, I'm not now. I think I've been programmed away from that now, um, but that does help. 'Cause if you have a really creative mind, you're, you'll definitely appeal to more people {yeah}. But, at the moment sometimes it's bad for you 'cause you just start going way off what they originally... let your mind take over (laugh). {Right}. So, ah, in a way it's good now 'cause right, I'm sticking at the products so, it's good, I'm limited there. I can let my mind run riot and just go with the flow when I'm working... sometimes it works, they'll like what you come up with, but other times you, it's good to stick to what you've been told (MG: 173).

Here Matt describes the difficulty in coming up with something which both fulfils the client's brief and which also results in something that he feels will stand out. Matt describes his capacity for creativity and thinking differently as delimited by organisational requirements.

Crispin also explained the careful management involved in balancing organisational goals and his creative work. He suggested that only slight deviation from an obvious idea was the best strategy:

SPT What promotes your creativity? What do you need in place so that you can be as creative as possible?

CH ...The one thing I've learnt over the years, and even when I was at college, was the obvious thing done well always works. You know what I mean by that? If, usually the first thing you think of is what you need to do, but you need to give it a bit of a twist to make it original... If you lose track of the original essence and simplicity of the idea, you've really lost it already because people outside are not going to be thinking on the same level as you (CH: 138).

Crispin's comments are interesting because he presents creativity in terms of slight deviation from what might be expected ('the obvious thing', 'the first thing you think of'). Crispin's method was to take an initial idea and give it a twist. Importantly, he acknowledges that changes made should not result in too much deviation from the simple and obvious idea. Crispin contends that managing this is difficult and that it has taken him some years to learn how to realise this balance. Crispin and Matt both emphasised that creative design works and is valued only if it fits within specific organisational and project requirements.

In their comments, the demands for and development of creative, original products were also presented as closely linked to their professional and creative identities. For example, Matt described himself as 'programmed away' from free creative ideas and Crispin underscored his process of learning. In this sense, the specifications of client demands become incorporated in the shaping of the self. As these comments suggest, part of the skill of a creative worker is the careful management of making only minor deviations from expectations.

In the preceding sections I have identified a common discursive practice employed by my interviewees of marking oneself and other workers as creative through emphasising an array of differences. My interviewees highlighted the ways that they and other workers came up with different ideas, possessed deep passion for their work and behaved eccentrically. My analysis offers some clear parallels with Nixon's (2006) findings. Nixon described creatives as those who tear up industry norms, and produce quirky and distinctive campaigns. He also pointed to the tendency of his advertising executives to emphasise minor differences in order to distinguish themselves within a sea of generic creatives.

The second practice I identified in my interview material also links with Nixon's suggestion that individuals in creative work domains strategically demonstrate only minor distinction. My interviewees provided examples of the ways in which individuals who would otherwise fit the figure of the normalised worker, deviated from norms and how they developed creative and different ideas within the boundaries of organisational expectations. Thus, my interviewees portrayed themselves as involved in the negotiation of 'norms of distinction'. In contrast to Fleming et al.'s (Cederström & Fleming, 2007; Fleming & Sturdy, 2006) notion of the 'norm of difference', the term 'distinction' is pertinent here as it is a term that can be used to indicate a quality of an individual or object (e.g. 'She is a woman of distinction') as well as the activity of distinguishing (she makes a distinction between...). Thus the phrase 'norms of distinction' underscores the ways in which

creative differences are constructed, marked out and managed rather than simply being seen as inherent qualities of an individual.

While there are clear resonances between my findings and those of Nixon (2003) and Fleming and colleagues (e.g. Cederström & Fleming, 2007; Fleming & Sturdy, 2006), there is a need to go beyond their analyses. Nixon's conceptualisation of minor difference relies on implicit assumptions regarding first, how advertising workers fit the normalised figure of the creative worker, which elsewhere he identifies as a masculine, male and white figure (Nixon, 2003), and second, on how they deviate only marginally from this normalised figure. Nixon does not consider how major and minor differences might be distinguished. Similarly, in their analysis of the 'norm of difference' Fleming and his colleagues neglect to reflect on whether there are circumstances in which the 'performance' of difference is out of an individual's control and whether different kinds of difference are equally valued. To analyse these issues I now consider how my interviewees described women workers as 'different' kinds of workers and the links they made between women workers and creativity.

Women as 'different' kinds of workers

A final step in my analysis in this chapter is to consider how differences attributed to women workers are incorporated into discussions about their creativity. According to the George (DTI, 2005a) and Haines (Haines, 2004a, b) reports, being a woman within the digital media sector marks one out as different and, thus, as a potentially valuable contributor to the creativity of a digital industry workplace. This argument was also mobilised by some of the female digital media practitioners I encountered during my fieldwork. One setting in which I was confronted with this contention was in the, Sexing the Scene: Women and the Cultural Industries Conference which I attended in 2004 and which was organised to present the results of a European Social

Fund (ESF)⁵⁴ investigation of women in the cultural and creative industries in the North West of England. Approximately 80 delegates attended this event, including Estelle Morris who was then Minister of State for the Arts for the UK Labour Government (2003–2005) and a number of other prominent figures from the creative industries, including researchers and policy makers. The project which was the focus of this event had been developed to identify the challenges confronting women working in a range of creative industries including music, performance, art, design, digital media, film and fashion. Concerned with issues of access and barriers to employment and careers, the project was conceived mainly in a liberal feminist framework.

The seminar was up-beat, with a focus on women's successes and achievements in the creative industries, rather than on problems. In one notably celebratory discussion, the argument was advanced by one participant that because the music, design and film industries were generally dominated by men, to be a woman working in these fields 'is an asset because you are something different' (Liz Birkbeck, Bubble Media, a digital media and advertising firm in Manchester). A number of successful women (in terms of reputation, financial success and their position at top levels of organisational hierarchies) working within music and digital design industries endorsed this assessment. They described the advantages of being women in the creative industries, highlighting how they were seen as different from the men in their respective fields. In these comments women were said to stand out as distinctive. But in contrast to the interviewee's comments presented above regarding *creative* differences, theirs is not presented as an active difference of thinking, feeling or behaviour, nor even of different skills (as discussed in Chapter 5). These women

⁵⁴ The ESF is a structural funding programme which was set up to help 'reduce differences in prosperity across the EU and enhance economic and social cohesion' (ESF, 2007: paragraph 1–2) through development of employment opportunities. Funding goes to those countries and regions which are considered to be relatively economically disadvantaged. The North West of England has been identified as such a region.

practitioners emphasised that 'being' identifiably and visibly different from the normalised worker brought advantages and distinguished them in their creative work domains.

A number of my interviewees similarly indicated that 'being different' from the male norm was often an asset for women workers. For example, in response to a question about differences between women and men, one interviewee commented that he did not really think that there were any differences between these groups of workers. He added that the only exception was the fact that 'she'd have her womanly instincts to help her along, if she's doing something that she wants to appeal to her fellow woman kind' (MG: 200). In contrast to the individualised notions of creativity based on actively thinking differently or being passionate, the kind of difference Matt refers to here is a form of instinct attributed to a biological category of people, 'women'.

Another one of my interviewees proposed that creative and highly skilled designers tend to be very good at multi-tasking, working on multiple screens and quickly shifting from one to another. He observed, 'they're doing like ten things, which for a man is hard but women can do it really easily' (DK: 80). Here, multi-tasking skills are presented as innate for women, but much more difficult for men and requiring work. The association of men with the *cultivation* of creative skills and women with innate capacities has implications for the ways women are valued as creative workers. Here, women workers are associated with 'natural' differences, not the active yet minor differences which are taken as proxies for creativity in this sector.

Christine Battersby (1989) offers a useful analysis which is relevant to this issue. Battersby developed a study of the gendering of creativity and genius in European literature and arts since the time of ancient Rome. She noted that during the Romantic period, creative genius began to be attributed to men who exhibited traits which had been traditionally identified as feminine, particularly those associated with emotionality and sensitivity. She contends that, by contrast, when the same skills

were exhibited by women, these were regarded merely as natural markers of femininity rather than of genius. Lisa Adkins (Adkins, 1995, 2002) has developed a related set of arguments in her study of recent developments around work and employment in the UK and other Western societies. Adkins is mainly concerned with new forms of service work which have been seen as requiring feminine skills of social competence and emotionality. She found that men who demonstrate such skills are seen to be engaging in work, whereas women demonstrating these traditionally 'feminine' skills are regarded as just being women.

Battersby's and Adkin's research highlights that attributes which have come to be associated with women do not necessarily have equal valence for men and for women workers. In interview references to women as 'different' kinds of workers, women were seldom figured as agents involved in active and strategic processes of thinking differently, feeling or behaving differently. More often when women were described 'thinking differently', it was on the basis of their membership of a (gender) group which was regarded as innately or socially different from the normalised male digital media worker. In contrast, male workers who were seen to 'think differently' were depicted as actively performing their difference.

As I discussed in Chapter 5, my interviewees presented women as different insofar as they had valuable skill sets, including social, communicative and artistic skills. Yet, in discussions that focus on the creativity of workers, traits specifically associated with women were sometimes described as inappropriate or irrelevant. For example, in a discussion about why there were fewer women than men within the digital media sector, Harry stated that 'messing around' was a distinctly male behaviour and that women ceased their playfulness as they matured:

I've noticed I've got nieces and nephews, my nephews will just play the Play Station all day, whereas the girls, once they hit the ages of 15, all of a sudden, 13, 14 they'll play the Play Station all day and they hit 15 and all of a sudden it's, they want to go out and meet lads and I don't know it's just, they'll change all of a sudden. They'll have a go but, you know 10 minutes here, 20 minutes there, they have all their interests, they go to other interests. Whereas, blokes, I was playing computer games when I was a teenager and I still am now and I will be when I'm 70 probably

because. Well, I don't think lads grow up do they? I don't think they grow up as well. So our natural instinct is to carry on messing around for the rest of our lives. Whereas, girls seem to be more serious and, um, I wouldn't say serious, but ah, I don't know what the word would be that I'm looking for, it's a difficult one. Without upsetting some people (winking to me and laughing) (HS: 143).

In this comment Harry instantiates a clear gender binary involving the both of us. He identifies himself as one of the lads, referring to their 'natural instinct', and states that he will be playing games until he is 70. In contrast, Harry again hails me as one of the girls who are more serious and who he hopes to avoid upsetting. Harry associates messing around and never growing up with men and masculinity. Women, in contrast, are seen as growing out of their child-like playfulness and becoming more serious as they get older. In this account, different approaches of young men and women to digital media are related to gender-specific patterns of social and physical development.⁵⁵ Harry suggests that young women begin to be defined by their sexual identity in contrast with young men who stay child-like. Women's skills and interests are essentialised in these comments and although Harry also essentialises men's playfulness, crucially this is a trait that he and others I interviewed directly associated with creative distinction (as above).

Similarly, in the quotations below Crispin describes women as 'different' but not in ways which would make them intelligible as valued creative digital media workers. He contended that women were:

Very good at managing themselves, that's their strengths, um, they just work very well really, they're just very effective about what they do, they just get on with the job, you know, they don't mess around, guys can get a bit distracted (CH: 98).

Crispin went on to state:

I think um, [women] seem to have a different strength really, the men and the women, you know, men tend to get a bit more tunnel vision about things and get into things more than the women, the women don't

⁵⁵ Ron Eglash (2002) has previously argued that female exclusion from technological work occurs through the 'opposition between nerd sexual formations, which focus desire into male antisocial forms, and female youth gender formations, which emphasize strong sociality' (Eglash, 2002: 58).

seem to, they're more chilled about work I think, they are not as, I can't describe it really (CH: 98).

In these comments women as 'different' from men are described through a variety of contradictory ideas. In the first statement women are said to be 'good at managing themselves', 'very effective' and as 'just getting on with the job'. These comments could imply that focus and drive are distinctive attributes of women workers. But in the second statement women are described as 'chilled about work' and as not getting 'into things' as much as men. Crispin's comments demonstrate how individual speakers can successively employ a number of contrasting practices pertaining to a single topic. Crucially, in each of Crispin's statements the traits and behaviours attributed to women are distinguishable from those most of my interviewees associated with creativity. My findings suggest that apparently gender-neutral 'creative' attributes such as unconventionality, playfulness, focus or obsession are implicitly associated with male workers. A hierarchy of differences related to the creativity of workers is produced in such comments in that 'women's difference' is not attributed high creative value and rather is taken to distinguish women from the normalised worker in this sector. In this respect there appear to be 'norms of distinction' for creative workers operating in this sector which perform gender. Thus while women are identified as 'different' they are also gendered and traits associated with them become devalued.

In my analysis so far I have identified some contradictory discursive practices employed in discussions of differences related to workers in the digital media sector. In the public policy literature and interviews, difference is taken to be an individual resource which is seen to mark one's creativity. In some cases, naturalised notions of 'women's difference' were employed to distinguish women as creative digital media workers. But in the last section, I showed that the differences which were attributed to women could also be used to separate women from ideal and normalised workers. These findings suggest that there is a hierarchy of differences operating in the digital

media sector. I now present a final illustration of some of these interplaying constructions of different kinds of differences in the account of a single worker.

Laura distinguished herself and her all-women digital animation company from others in the industry in the following exchange:

SPT Have you seen or experienced any evidence of discrimination for any reason within the work that you do?

LC Not personally. Of course we've had to struggle to be taken seriously because we started very young, and there was quite a lot of patronising going on in the early days. Now we've come out of that and we'd say being women is probably a strength for us because so many animators are men and people like something a bit different (LC: 46).

Laura's reply to my question appears to challenge any assumptions about gender discrimination within the industry. Laura acknowledges that age was a factor which created difficulties for her and her colleagues when they established their company. By contrast she cited 'being women' as a positive marker of difference within the industry. Men and women are constructed as different and, because the sector is male-dominated, she suggests her women-only organisation is recognised as distinctive. Her comments are strikingly similar to those offered by the women practitioners in the research event I discussed earlier in this chapter. Laura does not invoke her and her colleagues' ability to think, feel or behave differently, and rather presents a naturalised form of 'women's difference'.

In a follow-up question, I then asked Laura whether she saw any differences between the women and men working within the animation sector. She responded:

As a generalisation, men have a more outgoing, exaggerated style of creativity, whereas women focus on a gentler, more quirky style. But that's very general. We are three women but actually we have more in common with how men do things. Despite having over 150 festival screenings under our belts, we've never had a film shown at a 'women's festival' [quotation demonstrated by interviewee], because in their opinion we don't make women's films. And we agree! (LC: 67–69).

After identifying distinctions between male and female styles of work, Laura then contends that the three women in her firm have 'more in common with how men do things'. Thus, on the one hand, Laura proposes that being women is a strength of her

organisation as it makes them different from others within a male-dominated industry. Yet, in her latter comment, she asserts that her firm's digital products should not be categorised as 'women's animations'. She underscores the ways in which they fit more closely with work produced by normalised [male] digital media workers.

While Laura's comments may appear to be contradictory, it is useful to consider these in the context of my earlier discussion of the importance of distinguishing oneself in this sector and of the limitations of such practices. Both sets of comments mark out difference and distinction within a specific discursive context. The first set asserts distinction in relation to the male-dominated domain of the digital media sector. The second asserts the distinction of their creative work when compared with that of a designated group of women animators.

In a follow-up email exchange with Laura, I raised a question about what Laura meant by 'women's films':

SPT I am intrigued by the point you made about your animations not being shown in women's film festivals. I wonder what kind of films are considered 'women's film' and also what is the point of women's film festivals if they are not to show films made by women?

LC I can't really comment on women's films in general, but I've certainly seen a lot of 'women's animation'. The subject matter tends to be personal, and usually involves issues such as childbirth, relationships and female neuroses! I think women's festivals don't see the point in screening films that could equally have been made by men (LC: 3 follow-up email).

When Laura situates herself within the category of women workers, her ability to stand out is easily attributed to being a woman within a male-dominated industry. But, this becomes problematic in discussing the grouping of women animators. She portrays women's animations through a very narrow framing of essentialised versions of women's interests and femininity and she thus dissociates herself and her firm from these. In this case, 'being' a member of a different gender group is not emphasised as an important distinction.

Conclusion

The ability to distinguish oneself from others is valued as a hallmark of one's creative value in the discursive sites considered in this chapter. However, I have contended that this assessment has to be interpreted with reference to feminist scholarship which has argued that notions of difference are crucial to the construction of gender (e.g. de Beauvoir, 1949; Delphy, 1996; Irigaray, 1995). I have argued that gender in the digital media sector is performed through the identification of 'different' workers as pivotal creative agents in this work domain.

I have explored discursive practices in public policy documents, critical research literature and my interviews which articulate links between creativity and workers' abilities to perform difference. The constructs of 'strategies of distinction', 'narcissism of minor difference' and 'norm of difference' as developed by Nixon, Fleming and colleagues designate difference as an active, strategic and volitional form of individual self-expression and human capital. A similar argument can be made with regard to the propositions presented in key public policy documents, pertaining to individual creativity. In line with the critical research literature and the public policy documents, my interviews associated creativity with an individual worker's activities of thinking, feeling and behaving differently.

At best, these academic and public policy articulations present only a partial picture of how difference might operate in the digital media sector. I have argued that there are 'norms of distinction' related to creativity. These are shaped by organisational expectations and by expectations regarding the activities that men and women workers engage in. Hence, my analysis challenges claims in public policy documents that because women are 'different', they will stand out and be recognised as creative and valuable workers in this sector (e.g. Haines, 2004a). There are a number of complexities which suggest such a relationship is not necessarily straightforward. First, in all the discursive sites I analysed 'creative differences' are identified as actively performed differences which are minor enough not to deviate too far from

expectations. In contrast, difference attributed to women is seen to be immutable and natural and thus, not minor nor necessarily active. Secondly, attributions of creative differences are governed by ‘norms of distinction’ based on organisational boundaries but also gender norms regarding expected qualities of female and male workers. Thirdly, in contexts in which there is an equal participation of men and women, or where women outnumber men (as in Laura’s group of ‘women’s animators’), ‘being’ a woman does not enable one to stand out as distinctive or creative. Thus, claims of difference based on ‘being’ women in the sector rely on the maintenance of the status quo in which male workers dominate the sector. In this regard, even if there are potential gains for individual women in invoking their difference as a form of creative distinction in specific contexts, doing so does not necessarily realise a transformation of gender relations within this sector. These three complexities set up tensions about whether and how women workers might strategically perform difference in the digital media sector as a means to mark themselves as creative.

In this chapter I have argued that only some forms of individualised difference are seen to mark the creativity of workers. Further, I have demonstrated that much public policy rhetoric and academic literature on creative work does not adequately detail the ways in which different kinds of difference are recognised and evaluated in the digital work sphere. Notions of difference are central to discussions of workforce diversity (Liff, 1996; Noon, 2007), such that in popular and broad conceptualisations of diversity every worker is seen as different (Zanoni & Janssens, 2003). While I have attended to the individualisation of difference in this chapter, in Chapter 8 I evaluate the ways in which various groups of ‘diverse’ workers are said to contribute to shared creative work processes in the digital media sector.

CHAPTER 8

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND CREATIVE WORK PROCESSES

In this chapter I investigate a final articulation found in the digital media sector which revolves around a diversity/creativity⁵⁶ relation in which workforce diversity is said to contribute to and enhance creative work processes. In particular, I consider how specific groups of 'diverse' workers are identified by policy makers, academic researchers and my interviewees as contributing to creative work processes.

Business development objectives and social justice concerns merge in UK public policy articulations of diversity/creativity relations. Workforce diversity is identified as one of the many factors which may contribute to creative work processes in organisations (e.g. Culture North West, 2006; DCMS, 2005; Hutton, 2007), and increased diversity in workplaces is advocated for on the basis of creative business benefits (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Haines, 2004a, b). In the digital industries specifically, policy makers have presented the potential creative benefits of workforce diversity as part of building a 'business case' for increased participation of women workers in this work domain (DTI, 2005a).

⁵⁶ I employ the phrase 'diversity/creativity relation' throughout this thesis to denote the idea that workforce diversity contributes to creative work processes.

But in recent years, critical analyses which question the methods and potential outcomes of diversity business case approaches have grown in number and range (Wrench, 2002, 2005). Critical scholars have argued that diversity business case approaches constitute a ‘soft option’ in that organisations and managers are persuaded to promote equality, rather than being legally required or institutionally mandated to do so (e.g. Jones, Pringle & Shepherd, 2000; Wrench, 2002). Others have argued that diversity business cases may obscure or reduce attention to issues of power and moral arguments for greater equality in employment (e.g. Grice & Humphries, 1993, Humphries & Grice, 1995), and/or reify differences associated with demographic categories based on ethnicity, gender and so on (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). All of these arguments are important and have been well made, but there remains minimal research which critically interrogates the specific articulation of a diversity/creativity relation within diversity business case approaches, or indeed how such articulations might perform gender in the digital media sector. Moreover, there is a lack of clarity in public policy about what the creative process in the digital media sector might involve and how diversity might contribute to it. My analysis helps to tease out some of the assumptions in articulations of the diversity/creativity relation.

In this chapter I explore academic literature, public policy documents and interviewee accounts of the creative work process, to illustrate when and how notions of diversity and gender are employed in the digital media sector. First I consider how the concept in workforce diversity is employed in organisational research on creative work processes in organisations (e.g. Bilton & Leary, 2002; Leonard & Swap, 1999; Moody et al., 2003). This discussion is important because critical researchers have not made sufficient links with this literature as part of their interrogation of business cases for diversity. I outline some important tensions in academic literature on the creative work process including the distinction of individual and group differences and the value attributed to various kinds of diversity. Using the academic literature as a frame, I then examine when and how the notion of workplace diversity is used in

selected public policy documents addressing the creative economy, and women's participation in the creative and digital industries (Culture North West, 2006; DCMS, 2005; DTI, 2005a; Haines, 2004a, b; Hutton, 2007; Hunte, 2005). I demonstrate continuities between the policy documents and the academic literature on creative work process in organisations.

I then analyse my interviewees' descriptions of creative work processes in their organisations. I pay special attention to how my interviewees referred to different forms of creative engagement between 'diverse' groups of workers. As I will show, while references to working with a range of people for enhanced creativity were common in the interviews, the concept of 'diversity' was only directly employed in the specific context of discussions regarding women's participation in the sector. My argument deriving from my analysis is that gender is performed in articulations of a diversity/creativity relation by the repeated specification of women's contribution to creative work as marginal and indirect.

Conceptualising diversity in creative work

In recent years, a burgeoning interest in organisational creativity and innovation has gone hand-in-hand with an increasing attention to workforce diversity in organisations. Academic research on organisational creativity has argued that: diversity is an important driver of creativity in organisations (e.g. Bilton, 2007; Gassmann, 2001; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Kearney, Gebert, & Voelpel, 2009; Kurtzburg, 2005; Richard, 2003; Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007), and in this respect can 'provide the basis of competitive advantage' (Bassett-Jones, 2005: 169; see also Friday & Friday, 2003; Milliken & Martins, 1996). An influential book *When Sparks Fly; Igniting Creativity in Groups*, by Dorothy Leonard and Walter Swap (1999)⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Leonard and Swap's (1999) text is a popular book in the field of organisational creativity research. It has been translated into Portuguese, Chinese, Korean and Spanish, and when re-issued in paperback in 2005, was awarded 'Best Book on Creativity' by the European

exemplifies this approach found in mainstream organisational research on creativity. Following Jerry Hirshberg's (1998) research on creativity, Leonard and Swap argue that the key way in which a diversity/creativity relationship occurs is through 'creative abrasion', in which uncomfortable differences between individuals within a group feed creativity. They suggest that 'creativity flourishes when the unusual is expected and dissent is welcomed' (Leonard & Swap, 1999: 21). Another example of this type of argument is provided by Chris Bilton and Ruth Leary (2002) in their widely cited article, *What can Managers do for Creativity?*⁵⁸ Bilton and Leary contend that the presence of 'the other' within the workplace may contribute significantly to creativity:

Creative thinking requires an engagement with 'the other', with unfamiliar people and types of thinking. Homogenous teams, while ensuring quick solutions and instant consensus, do little to stimulate creative thinking (Bilton & Leary, 2002: 57).

Elsewhere Bilton (2007) refers to the value of 'creative tension' between strangers or unfamiliar people and states that 'it is clear that individual diversity and dissonance can generate innovative ideas and new frames of reference' (p.41).

There is a general proposal in this field of literature that diversity, unfamiliarity, and even tension between workers is important for creativity. But, there is significant debate regarding the contribution of 'different modes of diversity' to the creative work process (e.g. Moody et al., 2003; Muhr, 2006). Thus, while Bilton and Leary initially invoke abstract notions about the beneficial interaction of any 'unfamiliar' others, when explaining this process they refer to a specific and mutual engagement between individuals who provide different roles and functions such as 'artist vs manager', or 'innovator vs adaptor', rather than diversity based on social categories such as race, gender, age and so on. Similarly, Leonard and Swap (1999) are very careful to

Association for Creativity and Innovation (a professionalised association for promoting excellent creative practice, <http://www.eaci.net/index.php>).

⁵⁸ This article has been influential in UK research on creative work in part because it was published at a time when a great deal of research attention to creativity in organisations was beginning to build in the UK.

emphasise that valuable diversity within the creative process is *intellectual* diversity. These authors argue that cultural differences of background, ethnicity and gender may provide intellectual diversity that leads to *creative* abrasion, but that this is not always the case. They state: 'you can't judge the intellectual diversity of your group by looking at the members' (italics in original, *Ibid*: 34). More strongly, Leonard and Swap suggest that 'visible cues of difference among group members (gender, race, age) frequently merely add abrasion without creativity' (Leonard & Swap, 1999: 28).

Thus, a complicated and inconsistent pattern of desirable and undesirable outcomes pertaining to different 'modes' of diversity are discussed in this field of literature (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Moody, et al., 2003; Simsarian Webber & Donahue, 2001). A number of meta-reviews of team creativity research distinguish 'immutable', 'readily detectable', 'visible' and 'surface-level' diversity on the basis of social demographic groupings (gender, race, age, disability), from 'in-depth', 'task-oriented' and 'informational' diversity based on perceptions of individual differences (e.g. Joshi & Roh, 2009; Mannix & Neale, 2005; Moody, Beise, Woszczynski, & Myers, 2003). Indeed as above, Bilton (2007) refers to these kinds of diversity as 'individual diversity' (p. 41). Diversities which are seen to be based on individual differences of function, role, education, skill, attitudes and beliefs are thought to be strongly and positively correlated with creativity in work groups. In contrast, the former set of 'visible' diversities, seen to be based on demographic group membership, is regarded as less job-related (Moody et al., 2003) and is associated with 'negative attitudes toward dissimilar others and negative performance consequences' for teams (Joshi & Roh, 2009: 600). Leonard and Swap (1999) cite research evidence to argue that age diversity leads to low levels of integration, that mixed-sex groups offer statistically insignificant benefits to creativity and that the support for the creative benefits of mixed-ethnicity groups is inconclusive.

I want to highlight three important points relating to this research to take through into my analysis of public policy literature. First, the processes by which

diversity are seen to contribute to creativity are processes of *abrasion* and *conflict* between workers. As I show below, these antagonistic forms of interaction between people are quite distinct from how women are seen to contribute and interact with others in digital media organisations.

Second, many forms of difference have been placed together under the banner of workforce diversity (Mannix & Neale, 2005), but only some of these are linked to creativity. Organisational researchers have distinguished individual and group diversity and have argued that the latter, 'visible' or 'immutable' diversity is much less likely to enhance creativity than the former 'invisible' diversity' (e.g. Milliken & Martins, 1996; Moody, et al., 2003). The distinction between different kinds of diversity in this body of research literature challenges business cases for increased women's participation in the digital media sector based on a diversity/creativity relation (discussed below in the context of public policy documents). It would seem that workers who are seen to be members of a dominant and normalised demographic categorisation in the sector, i.e. young white male workers, are likely to be evaluated in terms of how much they contribute to 'deep' and 'informational' diversity. But the question is begged, if a worker is perceived of as 'readily detectable' or 'visible' as diverse on the basis of a demographic categorisation, e.g. a woman worker, will she also be identified as contributing 'in-depth' and informational diversity?

Finally, power is seldom considered in organisational research pertaining to the creative benefits to diversity (Noon, 2007), even while language derived from feminist and critical race research is employed in this field. We can see this in Bilton and Leary's (2002) use of the phrase 'the other'. This phrase echoes fuller philosophical discussions of subject formation in which the dominant subject is defined through its relationship to what it is not, to its Other. But in Bilton and Leary's account there are no dominant or secondary subjects. Simply, *all* can act as 'other' to that which they are not, and *all* are potentially creative subjects. As I have previously discussed in

Chapter 2, theoretical discussions of difference and 'otherness' have been pivotal in gender and race studies (de Beauvoir, 1949; Delphy, 1996; Said, 1978; Trinh, 1987). In this regard, some feminist researchers find the concept of difference itself problematic because they argue that it necessarily leads to oppression of one group by another (e.g. Delphy, 1996; Trinh, 1987). Others suggest that it is not difference per se that is the problem, but rather, the problem is a lack of mutual recognition and status between differentiated groups (e.g. Günther, 1998; Tyler, 2005; Woodfield, 2000). Feminist theorists who take this second approach imagine that there may be circumstances in which difference does not perform inequality (Irigaray, 1987), and explore possibilities for relationships of difference founded on mutual recognition (e.g. Tyler, 2005). These three issues help to frame the public policy documents and my interviews regarding a diversity/creativity relation in the digital and creative industries as I discuss below.

Workforce diversity in the creative digital industries

Promoting diversity in the digital and creative industries

Without a diverse workforce of creative and technical talent; without a diverse range of strong stories from all sections of our society...our [digital and creative] industry is less likely to be innovative and creative (Hunte, 2005: 5).

The benefits of diversity: ...Improved creativity, innovation and problem solving (DTI, 2005a: 25)

There is a wealth of anecdotal evidence that many companies are actively seeking women employees to bring diversity to the workplace and to the creative process (Haines, 2004b: 11)

Developing the creative economy

The fact is we have a diverse population, diverse micro-cultures, varied and vibrant creative industries. Now the global business climate has moved so that this diversity has become our particular advantage (DCMS, 2006b: 2).

The creative industries depend on diversity for their success (Hutton, 2007: 138).

The diversity of an open society stimulates creativity. New ideas spring from the melting pot of people of different cultures, nationalities, backgrounds (Culture North West, 2006: 14).

The quotations above are drawn from public policy documents written for two primary purposes. The left column of quotations is drawn from documents with a main aim of promoting equality and workforce diversity in the digital and creative

industries, and of increasing women's participation in these industries. In contrast, the column on the right represents documents which address the economic development of the North West and UK more broadly through the promotion of the creative economy. Despite these varied orientations, there is clear overlap between the two sets of statements. All of the quotations refer to a significant relationship between workforce diversity and creativity and suggest that business objectives may be met by increased workforce diversity. Workforce diversity is seen to 'improve', 'enhance' (DTI, 2005a: 9), and 'stimulate' (Culture North West, 2006: 14) creativity. Indeed, in some cases, creativity is said to 'depend' on diversity (Hutton, 2007: 138) (see also DCMS, 2001b; Robinson, et al., 1999). In this way key public policy documents written for economic development on the one hand, and enhancing equality for all workers on the other, are part of a shared discussion. This is important because when articulations of a diversity/creativity relation are analysed more closely, the link between such rhetoric and increased equality and participation of women is not necessarily supported. I consider these documents together in order to develop a contextualised analysis of how women workers in particular are valued as potential contributors to diversity and thus to creative work in the sector.

A set of three related discursive practices can be identified in public policy documents regarding the digital and creative industries and women's participation within these:

- 1) Workforce diversity contributes to creativity in the digital and creative industries.
and
- 2) Women 'bring' workforce diversity into the digital media sector.
thus
- 3): Women are valuable workers because they contribute to creativity through their diversity.

As I discuss below, this set of arguments are presented as part of a coherent and logical business case for increased women's participation in the digital industries (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Haines, 2004a, b). The business case for diversity is said to be an

essential component of increasing the quality and quantity of women's participation in the digital industries. For example, Haines (2004b) states:

Ultimately, companies will only change in order to improve the bottom line. A growing number recognise that the days of the passionate hobbyist are drawing to a close, that growing budgets in a global mass market will need professionalism, openness and diversity. It is a business case (p. 14).

The DTI (2005a) report similarly states: 'The 'business case' for diversity is the evidence needed to convince companies to consider investments in mostly intangible human capital assets' (p.23). Thus, there is an explicit and intentional conflation of business benefits and social justice concerns in these documents as a means to enhance gender equality in the digital industries. In this regard, an interrogation of business cases for women's participation in the digital media sector is important.

The first practice listed above (1) involves declarations that workforce diversity contributes to creativity in the digital and creative industries. This argument is recited in much recent UK policy rhetoric regarding the economic performance of the creative industries (DCMS, 2006b; Hutton, 2007; Purnell, 2005a, b) and is demonstrated in the quotations provided at the start of this section. This approach is clearly linked with the organisational creativity research presented above. The importance of this argument for the UK creative industries is exemplified in the Creative Economy Programme (CEP), launched by the Labour government in 2005 (Purnell, 2005a). In documents relating to the CEP, diversity is identified as a 'key driver' and one of seven core 'issues that make a real difference to the productivity and growth of the creative economy'⁵⁹ (Purnell, 2005b: online source; see also DCMS, 2005, 2006b). In these documents, 'diverse' individuals are positioned as resources for business.

The second point is that in public policy documents women are commonly represented as a group of workers who supply workforce diversity to the digital

⁵⁹ Other areas identified as part of the Creative Economy Programme (CEP) are skills and education, competitive intellectual property, technology, business support, infrastructure and evidence (Purnell, 2005b).

industries. For example, in her commissioned research on women's participation in the North West digital games industry, Liz Haines (2004b) states that women 'bring their diversity to the workplace' (p.4). The George report (DTI, 2005a) refers to 'women, ethnic minority individuals and other diverse groups' who could potentially contribute to organisations (p.24). In this way, 'diversity' becomes attached to women and other marginalised groups rather than to the collective organisation. While documents on the creative industries often include gender as one form of diversity (e.g. Hutton, 2007), this practice was only found in the documents I analysed regarding women's participation in the digital industries. In this regard, gender diversity is seen to be held by women, not men.

The third practice which builds on the previous two, involves statements which suggest that as 'diverse' workers, women contribute to creativity in the digital industries and are therefore valuable workers for the sector. Again, this argument was more commonly found in public policy documents with an explicit focus on women's participation in this domain. For example, the DTI (2005a) report states, that 'improved creativity, innovation and problem-solving...are some of the benefits women can bring' (p. 9). Haines (2004b) reports that the diversity that women 'bring' contributes 'to the creative process' (p. 10).

Together these three practices form an articulation of diversity, creativity and women's participation that appears to be consistent and have an internal logic. However, even in public policy documents which present clear statements of a diversity/creativity relationship, it is noted that 'there is a complex and critical relationship between creativity and diversity' (Hutton, 2007: 138). Pertinent to my research objectives, there are issues to be considered including *how* diversity is seen to contribute to diversity, in what ways might women 'bring' diversity to the digital media sector, and what value is attributed to 'women's diversity'?

The first complexity relates to the how diversity is seen to contribute to creativity. As I have shown, research literature regarding creativity in organisations refers to

‘creative abrasion’ (Leonard & Swap, 1999) or ‘creative tension’ (Bilton, 2007) between a diversity of workers. Similarly, in his analysis of building a better creative economy in the UK, Hutton (2007) proposes that diverse workforces contribute to creativity through promoting ‘competition’ between a range of ideas.

In contrast, women’s contribution to creativity in the George and Haines reports highlight that women do not simply contribute their ideas but also *balance* and *civilise* the workplace. For example, the first George report (DTI, 2005a) states:

The Benefits of Diversity...

ii.iii.iii Improved creativity, innovation and problem solving

Women can contribute because of their broader life experiences and responsibilities and provide a different ‘voice’. Enhanced creativity, new viewpoints, challenging accepted views, learning, flexibility, organisational and individual growth and the ability to adjust rapidly and successfully to market changes are some of the benefits women bring.

Women’s presence in the boardroom is said to lead to more civilised behaviour and sensitivity to other perspectives as well as a more interactive management style (DTI, 2005a: 25).

Women workers, cast as *other* to the norm, are seen to constitute difference and, through this, add to the diversity of the digital media sector (DTI, 2005a). In this quotation women are said to contribute to creativity through two means. First, through adding in different ideas, skills and views into the work process, and to offer a singular ‘voice’ which is different to the norm. Second, women are described as providing a ‘taming’ or civilising effect at senior levels and thus are positioned quite separately from the ‘diverse’ workers in organisational literature who are said to add to the abrasion and tension within creative work places. In this type of portrayal, women contribute to the environment in which creative workers can operate effectively, rather than contribute directly to creativity. This is in line with arguments from some creativity theorists who have noted that ‘ingredients’ such as workforce diversity can influence the organisational context of how workers interact and operate, and this in turn affects creative outputs (Hackman, 1987; Oldham & Cummings, 1996). In the public policy documents presented above, women are described as either a kind of input factor which can contribute to the creative output

of the digital industry workplace or to contribute indirectly to creativity in the digital industries through facilitation of others' work processes.

As in the organisational research literature on creative work processes, the second complexity in public policy documents is that not all 'modes' of diversity are said to be fruitful for creativity. In this regard, Hutton identifies 'cognitive diversity' as the key component to enhanced creativity, rather than gender, ethnicity or age diversity which may simply serve as potential 'proxies' for cognitive diversity (p.138). For Hutton, cognitive diversity is more closely associated with groups of diverse workers based on skills, interests and dispositions, than it is of mixed groups of women and men. He states that creativity tends to emerge from 'differentiated pools of scientists', those who are 'low self-monitors' (Hutton, 2007: 140), and a whole host of 'deviants, heretics, eccentrics, crackpots, weirdos and good, old-fashioned original thinkers' (Hutton, 2007: 141). These statements also connect with my discussion in Chapter 7 about the importance for workers to demonstrate certain constrained deviance from the status quo.

Alternatively, workforce diversity is often associated with differences and interactions between groups of workers from divergent demographic backgrounds (see Litvin, 1996 for critical discussion). Indeed, the concept of workforce diversity was originally popularised in regard to the increasing proportion of members entering the labour force from traditionally marginalised demographic groups including women and ethnic minorities (e.g. Judy, D'Amico, & Geipel, 1997). This approach is found in the George and Haines reports in which the concept of diversity is used to refer to differences between groups of female and male workers. Thus, characterisations of women's contribution to creativity in these documents sit in tension with the ways in which public policy documents regarding the creative and digital industries and organisational creativity research construct a diversity/creativity relation. Of note, in a later discussion in the George report about potential disadvantages of diversity including 'increased conflict', 'reduced

understanding' and 'communication breakdown' (DTI, 2005a: 26), no reference to women workers was made and rather a very broad notion of diversity was employed. While consistent with the report's emphasis on the superior communications skills, facilitation and balance that women are seen to provide, the distancing of women from these potential disadvantages also distances them from creative forms of diversity which are associated with abrasion and conflict.

The concept of gender slips in and between the public policy documents and organisational literature which discuss a diversity/creativity relation. Sometimes counted 'in', gender diversity is seen to be produced by the addition of women workers to organisations and is seen to contribute to creativity (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Haines, 2004a, b) and is sometimes used as a proxy for creative cognitive diversity (e.g. Hutton, 2007). At other times gender diversity is not explicitly highlighted as an aspect of creative diversity (e.g. Bilton & Leary, 2002; DCMS, 2006a), or is associated with negative organisational outcomes (e.g. Milliken & Martins, 1996; Moody et al., 2003). Thus, business case approaches which integrate business aims for enhanced creativity with the political aim to redress gender inequality in the digital industries (DTI, 2005a; Haines, 2004a, b) constitute a precarious approach. The potential outcomes and value attributed to the diversity women are thought to 'bring' are highly variable. In the next section I explore how my interviewees working in and around the digital media sector invoked notions of diversity in relation to their creative work and I explore how gender was performed in these discussions.

Engaging diverse workers in the creative work process

In this section I explore how my interviewees described their individual and shared creative work processes because it enables me to illustrate when notions of diversity and gender emerged in these discussions (and when they didn't) and in what ways. I then tease out in more detail my interviewee discussions of women's participation in creative work. As above, links between workforce diversity and creativity are

repeatedly stated in public policy documents and organisational research on creativity. It is therefore of note that this was not the case in my interviewee discussions of their creative work processes. Nevertheless, notions of workforce diversity were referred to in the specific context of discussions about women within the digital media sector.

I would often ask my interviewees in the second half of their interview: 'How do you promote creativity in your work?' or 'How do you promote the creativity of others?' My questions assumed that creativity could be developed, and they urged my interviewees to articulate their working models of creativity. Three types of creative work process were described by my interviewees. Interviewee discussions of the creative work process often began with mention of their own creativity and, as I have foreshadowed in Chapter 7, this involved the consuming of information from a variety of places in order to 'think differently'. But of particular relevance to my discussion in this chapter is how my interviewees emphasised their engagement with a diverse range of others as part of gathering and consuming information to promote their individual creativity. A second approach taken by my interviewees was to present creativity as an output from collaboration between two or more peers. Interviewees who presented this type of account depicted a mutual exchange between specific groups of workers. A third creative work process was identified only in discussions of women's participation in the sector. Consistent with the policy documents outlined above, my interviewees discussed the facilitation of creative work by women workers through their ability to provide the 'right balance' and a 'nicer atmosphere' to their organisations. I discuss each of these three ways of describing creative work processes in more detail below.

Individual creative workers consume as much stuff as they can

When asked about the promotion of creative work processes in their organisations, my interviewees often began by describing individual creativity (their own or others) and highlighted the importance of consuming a variety of informational inputs.

Daniel's response to my question about what promotes creativity in his workplace provides a useful exemplar of this type of approach:

We get like magazines and stuff, you know, different magazines, 'Marketing Week' on the marketing side you get all those sort of campaigns and stuff. The more sort of industry stuff, which doesn't really, um.. What interests me is the whole, (pause), you know I read the 'Common Investor', 'The Spectator', to me they're just as important [as] reading like magazines about design and technology. Um, you know, so I don't know how to try and, I think everyone here tries to consume as much as they can so, you know, read lots of different books on lots of different subjects so it's, more input the greater the output, as far as I'm concerned. If you know about more different subjects then it helps with the creative process (DK: 128).

Daniel provides an individualised account of the creative work process. He refers to individual workers' attempts, but also implicitly to their responsibility, to expose themselves to a range of information to help them develop their creativity. Specifically, he suggests that individuals need to go beyond industry relevant sources and include a variety of texts in their reading.

Crispin also pointed to the importance of consuming a variety of information in the creative process. He opened his discussion on the promotion of creativity in his firm by saying that he had been 'employed to improve the creativity'. Crispin suggested that he improved his organisation's creativity by being creative himself. He further developed this line of discussion when responding to a question about whether he saw himself as a creative worker. He stated:

Yeah, I definitively have a mind that's very um, stuffed with so much stuff. I just, the stuff that comes out of it is so bizarre sometimes ... just 'cause I open myself to a lot of influences so you know (150-151).

Crispin presents his aspirations to take in, and take on, a massive amount of 'stuff' and uses this catch-all term to highlight the potential usefulness of any available input for his creativity.

Interviewees' descriptions of creativity as a process of information consumption resonates with academic analyses which have argued that creativity originates in the individual (e.g. Amabile, 1996; Bilton & Leary, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; de Bono, 1993; Florida, 2002; Howe, 1999; Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999) and that

‘creatives’ ‘synthesise many bits and fragments of information from the media to make their own big picture’ (Ray & Anderson, 2000: 8). In such accounts individual workers become the processing unit in a creative input-process-output mechanism (Hackman, 1987). This approach is directly demonstrated in Daniel’s comment that the ‘more input, the greater the output’.

These accounts of the creative process help to explain the context in which notions of workforce diversity emerged later in the interviews. Information said to promote creativity could be of any type and from any place: ‘different subjects’ (DK), ‘lot of influences’, ‘so much stuff’ (CH), ‘different places’ (JM), and ‘anything’ (BD). As Justine Riley playfully stated: ‘Inspiration comes from all kinds of places, experiences, friends, eating cheese at bedtime’ (JR: 58). From this perspective, anywhere, anything, and any person may be a potentially useful resource to be consumed by the creative digital media worker. Comments from Josh (JM) and Brigitte (BD) provide further support for this finding:

The creative thing can come from anything. Sitting around talking about something, a new technology comes up, you go to a conference and you see how somebody’s using something and you think about how that could be used in the arts. So arts festivals, or like being hammered at the Revolution [a bar and night club] and just talking crap and somebody going ‘that would actually be a good idea (BD: 185).

I’ll just say how I think [unclear] do design, is you think about things from lots of different angles and you take input from all sorts of different places, and you’re continually referencing backwards and forth with your client (JM: 197).

Brigitte mentions that her ideas are fruitfully tested and reinforced by exposing them to others. For Josh, ‘thinking different’ is important, and he suggests that part of this process is taking input from different places and engaging with others (specifically clients). In a later comment Josh further described the way in which he was creative through his engagement with others:

[I] try to bring in different things I’ve seen from different backgrounds. You know, ideas from friends who, or programmes, friends who are nothing to do with tech-, with my job area, and programmes which are nothing to do with my job area, you know if you see on the television. If I did think of myself as creative then that would be the reason why, is the diversity of stuff that I do out of work (JM: 220).

In each of these comments interviewee descriptions of consuming information for creativity were extended to include people as important sources of diverse information.

Related to these ideas of an input-process-output mechanism in the creative process, over half of the interviewees explicitly identified brainstorming as a useful work activity. Brainstorming was seen to expose creative workers to a proliferation of ideas. For example, Crispin described the practice as 'one of the most powerful tools' for creativity (CH: 135) and Harry identified brainstorming as an essential work process:

Brainstorming, that really gets my creative process moving! ... In fact I think brainstorming is a must, for all projects to get people motivated and get creative. Because it's the old thing, you'll get people seeing things from a completely different angle (HS: 145).

Brainstorming as discussed here can be aligned with a consumption model of the diversity/creativity relation. Brainstorming is said to provide divergent perspectives which broaden the input into the work processes of individual creatives. Harry suggests that brainstorming feeds different ingredients into his creative process. In this way of discussing a diversity/creativity relation my interviewees establish a consumer of information (the creative worker) and fodder to be consumed (diverse information, a range of individuals etc).

A final striking example which connects creativity with an individual ability to consume diverse information is provided by Gregory. A co-director of a Manchester based digital media start-up, Gregory described a creative team work process in which his company drew on the participation of a range of workers from various occupational roles within his workplace. Here it becomes apparent that not all actors in such an interaction are of equivalent status:

I do a lot of idea-based stuff, possibly stuff above my station. Um, and we have got lots of ideas, everybody has lots of ideas, it's not a monopoly, you know, people that put themselves as creative tend to think that they are the only people that can come up with ideas, which is terribly, terribly arrogant of a lot of people. Ah, I tend to find that depending on where people are and their experience, everybody is creative at some level, you know, they really are. At Protocol we used to

ah, we used to a drag in, the acc..you know, idea sessions, we used to drag in the accountant, the receptionist, if the courier came in we'd say 'well we haven't got it ready yet, so you better sit down and contribute' and it's amazing the people, from their unique points of view, can come up with the most startling insights, and you wouldn't have thought of it in a million years (GK: 54).

In this discussion Gregory begins by indicating the high status that he associates with ideas and creativity. He presents himself as eligible for this high status even while he indicates that he may not be of that 'station'. However, he then quickly asserts that everyone has ideas. This comment echoes an often recited platitude which is found in recent government policy rhetoric that 'Everyone is creative' (DCMS, 2001b: 5).⁶⁰ However, Gregory quickly establishes some qualifications to his remarks. He suggests there may be different levels of creativity which align with individual characteristics such as 'where people are and their experience' and their unique point of view. Moreover, by his dragging in of the receptionist, accountant or courier into his account, the contribution to creativity of these individuals is distinguishable from that of the creatives in his firm. Their apparent lack of fit or difference is valued as something out of the ordinary and as feeding the creative process of others. Thus, while Gregory suggests that 'everybody is creative', the creativity he associates with the receptionist or courier is not so much a valued aspect of their work, or their ability to think creatively, but rather a by-product of their coming from, in this case, different classed positions and occupational types. They provide input for the thinking processes of Gregory's creative workers.

There are two main points to make before moving on to consider more closely how my interviewees identified workforce diversity in shared creative work processes. The first point is that the most common way that interviewees talked about creative work processes was to place the individual worker at the heart of creativity. Interviewees described themselves or other creative workers as using all kinds of

⁶⁰ This statement also relates to recent calls from creativity theorists and commentators to move beyond individual genius theories of creativity (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Negus & Pickering, 2004).

information to stimulate their own creative thinking. Written material, new technical artefacts, working with colleagues, social banter and friends were all identified as potential sources of information. This links to the second point, that people of different backgrounds or with different ideas are often positioned as potential input for creatives' thinking rather than as creative themselves. Thus, even when a sharing of ideas between people was described, as in discussions of brainstorming, the individual creative worker's ability to process, take in or develop ideas of others was emphasised. In this way, a differential status is set up between 'creatives' and others. Nevertheless, not all interactions in creative work were seen to occur between workers of different status. Many of my interviewees also described more collaborative, interactive and mutually shared processes of creativity.

Peers collaborate for enhanced creative output

A number of my interviewees referred to formal practices employed in organisations to increase collaboration and thus promote creativity. For example, Daniel explained a new strategy to promote creativity in his firm which involved project teams of two or three employees working collaboratively on small research and development projects outside of their commissioned projects. He stated that his purpose in initiating these teams was '...to encourage [the workers] to sort of interact with each other, explore new ideas and also for a team to work together...' (DK: 84). He explained that this was important because he felt that often interactive designers 'are just geeks and all they want to do is code...'cause that's their world' (DK: 86). There is an important difference in the kind of engagement that Daniel describes here and the consumption model of the creative process, including brainstorming, outlined above. Daniel positions his interactive designers as collaborators in a shared and cooperative creative process.

Similarly, Flynn described her preference to work on projects with others because 'working in collaboration with other people...kind of balances [her work]' (FP: 137). Another interviewee, Grant, responded to a question about how to promote creativity

by suggesting that collaborative work was the best way to develop and realise creative ideas:

SPT I'm interested in what you think promotes creativity.

GH um (pause)..the initial inspiration is just you know, kind of waiting for it, but something I find really good is um, bouncing ideas with other people I mean that's, that's really nice. And I think it's kind of interesting because I get the impression a lot of artists are very, are loners, you know, that whole kind of..(pause)..didn't someone say that being a sculptor was the loneliest, loneliest job, but um, yeah, they work on their own alone, but that's, that's wrong surely? To work with other people and to um, be creative and use each other's skills and knowledge and ability, is surely the best way to come up with some of the, the best ideas and realise the best ideas. Um, so, yeah, that kind of collaboration is kind of nice (GH: 217).

As was common in my interviews, here Grant simultaneously employed multiple discursive practices related to the creative work process. His first reference is to divine inspiration. Evoking a romantic figure of the artist he situates the individual worker as the primary source of creativity. He then refers to creativity as a process of *consuming* information from a variety of sources including using the skills and knowledge of others to come up with and realise the best ideas. But he also employs a more interactive and collaborative version of the creative work process in which there is *exchange* of skills and knowledge between individuals.

Collaboration is a widely referenced model for the creative process within organisations (Abra, 1994; Muhr, 2006; Mumford, 2003), and it is highly salient in work in the digital media sector which is popularly characterised as having flat structures and project-based team work (e.g. Mamykina, Candy, & Edmonds, 2002). Later Grant stated that designers and implementers have different kinds of creativity, suggesting that designers are good with the big picture and that implementers liked the detail and liked to get their hands dirty.⁶¹ Grant continued and outlined how his distinction between workers was useful in his organisation's creative work processes:

⁶¹ The term implementers is another term for programmers.

So, so what will happen is, if designers and implementers work really closely together, there'll be discussions about how to do things and you'll end up with something that's better than either group could have done on their own. So the implementers will go 'well, we've been trying this, but what if we do this kind of thing?' and the designers will go, 'oh yeah, that will be great if you could just that, but if you could make it go further and do that as well'. And I've seen some really nice examples of where, kind of, designers and implementers work really, really closely together and they get that kind of vicious circle going. But obviously if you're doing both jobs you've got the vicious circle in your head (GH: 199).

Grant refers to a process of joint intellectual effort in which a range of workers collaborate together. This description is different from those discussed previously because it refers not only to a proliferation of different ideas but to the continual revision and feedback of ideas occurring between groups of workers. Specifically, Grant refers to a specific kind of occupational or functional variation of workers between whom there is a process of mutual exchange of ideas and expertise. Thus, despite Grant's re-centering of himself as the creative agent, in which he describes a productive cycle of exchange in his own thinking, this account also depicted interaction between workers who are equally involved in the creative process.

Cameron also described productive and creative work processes between functionally different groups of workers:

Within development teams you've always got people coming at it from different perspectives, whether it's programmers and designers coming at it from different perspective, whether it's technology people and content people coming at it from, also talking to the users so you've always got tensions going on within development teams, which adds to the creative process. 'cause, people are either trying to out do each other or, ah, get one over on each other (CR: 113).

In this, Cameron describes the value of the different perspectives provided by workers from the same two occupational roles as identified by Grant (Cameron uses the term 'programmer' rather than 'implementer'), but also between other institutionally or functionally defined roles such as user/designer. Here the different perspectives and competitiveness amongst programmers, designers and users is seen as producing tension. As in the organisational creativity research literature I have discussed above (e.g. Hirshberg, 1998; Leonard & Swap, 1999), Cameron's comments suggest that the

‘abrasion’ emerging from functional diversity is productive of creativity. Elsewhere, Cameron suggested that programmers and designers within his firm were amicably antagonistic to each other because each group thought their own work more creative than that of the other. In this case, the climate of competition and the desire to out do each other is considered to be part of the creative process.

In these interviewee accounts, collaboration is described as a shared and mutual exchange between workers of different functional groups who are of equal occupational status. Framed in the context of the academic analyses presented at the start of this chapter, these comments could be said to describe creative abrasion between sets of so-called ‘invisibly’ diverse workers (Bilton & Leary, 2002; Leonard & Swap, 1999; Moody, et al., 2003). But, explicit references to workforce diversity were context dependent. No mention of the concepts of ‘diversity’ or ‘workforce diversity’ were found in these discussions of collaborative creative work and shared creative processes between workers of different genders was not mentioned. Only after I had referred to women’s participation in the digital media sector did my interviewees introduce explicit and direct discussions of workforce diversity. As I discuss below, a third type of creative work process was presented in such discussions.

Women workers facilitate creative processes

Explicit references to the notion of workforce diversity were not only context-dependent but were also seemed to vary according to the level at which the speaker sat within the industry. Only those operating as part of a strategic network of actors involved in the development of the industry, made explicit references to the organisational benefits of workforce diversity. These included professionals who were working in training and regional development within the North West, and well-known digital media organisational directors in this region (see Chapter 4). For instance, Lucy, a director of a North West digital industries training organisation, argued that the diversity/creativity relation was widely accepted by organisational leaders as part of a business case for diversity, but she noted her difficulties in

promoting the link between these apparent beliefs and organisational change in recruitment practices to promote the employment of more women. She noted that digital media companies in Canada appeared to have grasped the business case for diversity and had recently been recruiting women game developers from the North West of England.

Patrick Jones, director of a regional creative industries development organisation also referred explicitly to the importance of a 'diverse workforce' for the creative industries of the North West. In particular, Patrick suggested that the geographical isolation, socially diverse population and the economic disadvantage of the North West as compared to the South West of England presented challenges but also opportunities because under such conditions he believed creative talent was incubated.

Two organisational directors operating at the strategic level of the digital media sector through involvement in industry development bodies also made claims regarding the benefit to creativity of workforce diversity. In the quotation below Daniel, describes the added benefits of diversity to creativity. This statement came after a discussion of how many women he had in his organisation:

SPT O.k. if we move on, um, maybe just think a bit more about the organisation. Would you say that, your organisation is typical of other organisations within the industry, or somewhat idiosyncratic?

DK I wouldn't like to think that we're typical. I don't think we are... Um, we started this thing because we actually believed in it, we thought it could be, you know to make great creative products, and to do things differently. Where I think some new media agencies are just there to make money. Not all of them. 'cause it was like the 'in' thing. Um, I think yeah, because we have a lot of women here as well it's, you know, quite different to a lot of new media companies that are all blokes. So, I think the end result of our products is different (DK: 101).

And that:

The more diverse it is [workforce] the more it just helps with the creative vision at the end of the day. Just different views you get, the better it is. It's just a big melting pot, which is great (DK: 105).

This quotation matches well with the public policy documents regarding women's participation in the digital industries which I presented above. It also provides support for a number of points that I have already made in this thesis. Daniel firstly associates 'doing things differently' with creativity and then distinguishes his firm by contrasting their own desire to make creative products with others' financial motivations. In addition Daniel suggests that his firm is distinctive because of the high number of women in his firm in comparison with industry norms (almost 40 per cent of his firm were women cf. 9–30 per cent in various sectors in the digital industries). Daniel refers to this as part of his contention that his company was not typical. Like other interviewees, Daniel suggested that creative vision and, ultimately, the creative product is enhanced or made better through the interaction of different views, but Daniel points specifically to the different perspectives that women bring to his firm.

The metaphor of the 'melting pot' employed by Daniel at the end of his comments is most often associated with the political and social framework within the USA developed during the 20th century which envisages immigrants as assimilating into, but also helping to constitute, a unique American culture. Thus Daniel's use of this phrase involves a kind of consumption process in which women are 'input' who add to the creative mix of his firm. But the melting pot model in the US context has attracted critique (Hage, 1998; hooks, 1981; Triandis, 1995). Critical commentators note that assimilation and integration policies of immigration are essentially exploitative; they secure the dominance of those in power (white colonists) and maintain the secondary subject position of immigrants as 'Other' who contribute to the mix but who must also fit in with established norms. Daniel's comments could similarly be read as positioning women as secondary and marginal to a normalised group of male workers and there is some evidence for this. Daniel positions 'blokes' against the category of women workers. The term 'bloke' in popular British vernacular denotes the 'common

man', often associated with rugged, informal, working class males.⁶² Because women are different to and fewer than these normalised male workers they are presented as valuable. But, in a later discussion of work roles and tasks carried out in his organisation, Daniel identified specific workers who he held to be of the greatest value:

SPT: Um, o.k., so, how large is Little Fishes in terms of staff?

DK: I think it's 15.

SPT: Right, right, is it=

DK: =But that's not all what you'd call creatives. So we've got, seven, including myself who actually like build, build it up.

SPT: Right, and then what do the other staff do?

DK: God knows, no, they do...ah..(pause)..

SPT: They look busy.

DK: Oh they are busy. They do like, project management, I won't split it down into everyone, but there's project management, client servicing, um, you know, down to finance as well, things like that (DK: 107–112).

Daniel's comments here exclude all workers other than his seven 'creatives' from the status of building up the creative products in their firm. In addition, despite his position in one of the three senior leadership roles in his firm he suggests he has no idea what his 'non-creative' employees contribute. This comment jokingly implies that the work of others outside of these creative roles is secondary or less important. Crucially, in seeming contradiction to his previous comments regarding the benefits of having a number of women in his firm, Daniel subsequently acknowledged that none of the creatives who work on developing digital products were women. In these latter comments the ways in which women may contribute to the creative work is limited to being facilitative of the creative work done by other creatives.

⁶² The term 'bloke' is thought to be derived from Shelta, a spoken language of Irish travellers and is used in the British Isles and British settler states (e.g. Australia and New Zealand).

A similar shift emerged in comments from Gregory. Gregory explained that it is productive for organisations to have an equal proportion of female and male employees because of the different ideas women have. He states:

You will come across companies, and it, there'll be loads of blokes. And it's like well, 'why are there so many blokes in this?' You know? It's just very, very odd. Um, and I think it's always a really bad idea. The sort of ideas as well that you get off blokes can be very, very different from what you get from women. Having that diversity is much better for getting creative ideas (GK: 191).

Gregory constructs women as proving useful input of different ideas to be consumed by his organisation. In a follow-up conversation regarding the presence of women in the digital media sector he presented a more facilitative role for women in creative work. He explained that his wife is a freelance designer and that when she works with their all-male firm 'the atmosphere is much, much, nicer' (GK: 196). In his interview Gregory went on to describe another organisation for which his wife works as a freelance designer:

She works with a design company, a very big design company that has traditionally been all lads, and it's so bloody laddy. You know it's like for God's sake. And ah, and they've actually said it's so much more pleasant 'cause Felicity's there. You know, and she's got other people in as well. It's just like, I think if you have all blokes in it, really it's just terrible, just terrible. Conversely, if it's all women in the same room, it's just terrible! (GK: 196).

There is a shift in Gregory's account from describing women workers as providing creative difference to an emphasis on women's potential to bring balance to an apriori masculine space. More specifically, Gregory attributes an enhancement of atmosphere, a more 'pleasant' work environment, to his wife's presence (and to the presence of women in work locations more generally).

In a similar approach to Daniel, Gregory describes the industry as being disproportionately populated by blokes and lads. My interviewees' presentation of digital media workers as blokey and lady subtly recites a popular fantasy of digital media start-ups in the 1990s in which the potential of a single young man with a bright idea was not seen to be limited by formal qualifications, background or

economic means.⁶³ Class and education of this 'common man' are seen of less significance than passion, motivation and creativity. Through the framing of the majority of digital media workers as blokes and lads, the difference embodied by women within the industry becomes not only a matter of gender, but also of professionalism, age and class. Indeed, within Daniel's and Gregory's comments, blokiness and laddishness appear to be somehow inherent in male participation in this industry and are set in contrast to the generic and 'very, very different' (GK) group of women. As I have argued elsewhere in this thesis, in such comments differences between men and women are essentialised and constructed as immutable, and the value of women workers within this sector are inextricably tied to normalising accounts of male participation.

Like the public policy documents discussed at the start of this chapter, these interviewees employed two main practices to present women's contribution to creative work processes: as an input to be consumed for creativity, or as facilitative for the creativity of others. Neither practice positions women in the more active roles of consumer or collaborator. Women are presented more often as those who facilitate or add to the creative process, rather than becoming directly involved in it.

Thus, in the apparently new and open domain of the digital media sector women workers are accorded a role which is remarkably consistent with historical notions of women as existing somewhere between the artist and the muse (Battersby, 1989). The process of framing women's participation in creative work through assumptions of gendered functions of facilitating, balancing or civilising, supports previous research on team work and creative work (e.g. Banks & Milestone, 2007; Ollilainen & Calasanti, 2007). But in my research this is produced not by an active denial of women's creative expertise by male workers (as Banks and Milestone, 2007 found in

⁶³ Consider as examples, popular accounts of the rise of digital media heroes such as Microsoft's Bill Gates and Apple's Steve Jobs (e.g. Burke, 1999). Florida (2002) asserts that this kind of heroic narrative of digital start-ups is also part of the myth of the new economy (Florida, 2002: 27).

their research), but through the association of women with different kinds of contributions to the creative process. Thus, women workers' contributions to creativity in the digital media sector are made intelligible through associations with traditionally feminised roles.

It is important to note that most of the comments I have described in the later sections of this chapter were from interviews with male workers. For these interviewees, women workers constituted the Other. In contrast, none of the female workers presented parallel discussions about the value of male workers as specifically contributing to the diversity or creativity in their organisation. Where female interviewees did describe the benefits of engaging with a variety of other people it was, without exception, in reference to working with people with difference skills or interests. Thus, male workers were not taken to constitute difference, nor were their contributions to creative work processes described through notions of gender diversity. Rather, normalised 'blokes' and 'lads' form part of the pool of workers who could potentially contribute to 'invisible' diversity through bringing their skills and functional knowledge to creative work processes.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the articulation of links between workforce diversity and the creative work process in the digital media sector. My aim has been to investigate the contexts and variable practices through which such links are proposed in order to consider the performativity of gender in this sector. This approach is crucial for understanding how shifts towards an emphasis on creativity in the digital media sector may or may not open up the sector for more women. My analysis helps to tease out how creative work processes are construed in the digital media sector and how women are seen to contribute.

In the academic literature and public policy documents I analysed, diversity is conceptualised as a resource for enhancing creativity in organisations. In my

interviews a slightly different approach was taken. My interviewees generally did not employ the concept of 'workforce diversity' directly in their discussions of the creative process. But they did refer to interactions with a range of people outside of their organisation who stimulated their own creativity. Two main forms of engagement emerged from these accounts. First, different kinds of people were constructed as 'input' to be consumed in the creative work process. Like magazines, movies and experiences, individuals from various backgrounds were said to provide varied information and ideas which creative workers could be engage with, process and translate. Second, a more collaborative form of engagement was described by my interviewees, involving groups of functionally diverse workers interacting, challenging each other and developing each other's ideas. I have argued that in contrast, women workers were more often cast in a third form of creative engagement. In both the public policy documents and my interviews, women were constructed as particularly valuable for their facilitative and balancing influence in creative digital industry workplaces.

My analysis challenges policy views that the diversity business case will be the primary means through which more women will be welcomed and enter into the sector (e.g. Holton, 2005). Rather than emphasising, as much critical research has, that diversity business cases obscure inequalities, or deliver only a 'soft approach' to enacting change (Wrench, 2005), my analysis suggests that there is a more pressing issue in that discursive practices which articulate diversity benefits of women's participation entrench gender inequality. Links made between gender and diversity in the digital media sector sediment a marginal status for women by specifying their contributions through traditionally feminised activities of facilitation and providing balance. As I have demonstrated, gender diversity is distinguished from other forms of diversity said to be more valuable for the creative work process such as 'functional', 'in-depth' and 'invisible' diversity. Hence, in these articulations, women are linked to diversity but crucially, they are not identified with creative diversity.

It is of note that explicit mention of workforce diversity only emerged in the interviews when women workers were made salient by my interventions in our interview discussions. This illustrates that gender and diversity are co-constitutive: in these contexts, diversity was produced through the entrance of women into our interview discussions. Thus, as in the public policy documents reviewed in the opening of this chapter (e.g. DTI, 2005a; Haines, 2004a, b), women are seen to hold diversity and 'bring' it in to the sector.

Finally, my research contributes to the feminist theorisation of difference and diversity and questions about whether notions of difference are always produced in relationships of oppression. I have illustrated that diversity associated with functional, and other forms of individual difference is related to shared and collaborative creative work processes. In this context notions of difference are produced through relationships of mutual recognition and all parties are accorded equal status. However, discursive practices which mark out women as 'different' kinds of workers do not involve mutual recognition with others and rather distinguish women as marginal to creative work processes. In these formations, articulations linking creativity, difference, and diversity in the digital media sector are unlikely to be transformative of positive change for women workers.

In the following concluding chapter I draw together the arguments made in this and the preceding chapters with reference to my original research aims. I then reflect on implications of my findings for policy makers and consider possible directions for future research.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis began with a paradox; at the same time that political and popular commentary claimed that 'there [had] never been a better time for women to enter and prosper' in the digital industries (Millar & Jagger, 2001: 29), gender inequalities persisted. In the preceding chapters I have argued that apparently positive articulations and constituent discursive practices which weave together notions of gender, creativity, difference and diversity play a vital part in the maintenance of gender inequalities in this work domain. My analysis contributes to a growing field of critical research on the creative and digital industries in the UK, in which there remains very few analyses of gender (although see Gill, 2002, 2009b; Bill, 2009; McRobbie, Tams, 2003; Banks & Milestone, 2007).

In this concluding chapter I pull the threads of my argument together to provide an overview of how gender was performed in the North West digital media sector during 2001-2007. I firstly review my analytic approach and then outline three overarching practices of gender performativity which can be derived from my analysis. These consist of: 1) the simultaneous articulation of change and continuity in the sector; 2) the proliferation and regulation of legible working subjects; and 3) the marking of a hierarchy of 'creative differences' in the sector. My research also

holds implications for UK policy makers and I consider these before I finally identify potential areas for further research oriented towards the positive transformation of women's working lives.

Analytic approach

Butler (1993) has argued that gender is produced through repetitive discursive practices which reiterate certain sets of norms. The interrogation of discursive practices seeks to expose the concealed norms, conventions and systems of meaning in order to disrupt and trouble them (Butler, 1990). I have drawn from Butler's theory of gender performativity to analyse, in detail, how gender is performed in the specific context of the digital media sector. My research is based on the belief that studying discursive practices is crucial to understanding persistent inequalities between men and women in this work domain.

My analysis of multiple articulations allowed me to 'trouble' discursive moments when change regarding women's participation in the digital media sector was identified and advocated. I distinguished and interrogated four articulations:

- The notion that skills required for digital media work are changing, and that women workers are particularly likely to have such skills.
- The idea that the image of the digital media sector needs to change to attract more women (and that it is changing).
- The association made between a worker's ability to demonstrate some forms of difference and their designation as creative workers.
- The claim that workforce diversity contributes to creativity and that women contribute to diversity in the digital media sector.

I have analysed these articulations across multiple sites including public policy documents, careers and recruitment literature, a digital industries training event and interviews with individuals working in the digital and creative industries. My multi-sited design is unique and is based on the investigation of repetition and recitation across discursive sites. It contributes to the development of discursive analyses of gender in work and organisation studies by demonstrating how ideas about women workers are repeated across the discursive field of the digital media sector in ways

which sediment gender inequalities. For example, in Chapter 6 I showed that much public policy documentation and liberal feminist research identified issues of attracting and recruiting workers as significant and even pivotal to increasing women's participation in the digital industries, yet there remained minimal analysis of recruitment methods in this domain (DTI, 2005a; Haines, 2004a; Phillip & Trinh, 2001; Siann, 1997; Wilson, 2003). In my study I have contrasted public policy calls for an 'image makeover' of the sector with textual and visual representations of workers in recruitment and careers literature. In so doing, I have argued that changing images of workers in the sector as called for by public agencies are unlikely to contribute to greater gender equality if they continue to attempt to 'fit' the image of the sector to stereotypical views of women's interests and skills. In this case, my multi-sited approach enabled me to critically investigate tools for recruitment and consider how recruitment practices in the digital media sector might contribute to greater gender equality.

In each of the preceding four chapters I have explained how discursive practices perform gender across a number of discursive sites. Stepping back to review my findings, three overarching processes of gender performativity can be discerned. I discuss these below.

Performing gender in the digital media sector

1) The simultaneous articulation of change and continuity

The promise of change in the digital media sector is embedded in every aspect of this study. I began this thesis by presenting my own expectations for growing equality between men and women within work and employment. I chose to explore the digital media sector which is situated in a 'highly charged and rapidly mutating' creative economic context (McRobbie, 2002b: 523), because I wanted to understand why apparently positive and progressive accounts of new forms of work seemed inconsistent with ongoing inequalities in the creative economy (Gill, 2002).

Moreover, I positioned my research in relation to other feminist investigations of gender and women's participation in the digital industries by indicating that my specific remit would be the investigation of the changing formations of the sector and in particular the increasing emphasis on creativity within it.

My analysis delineates important patterns of change within the digital media sector. In Chapter 5 I illustrated the shifting expectations regarding appropriate skills for this work domain. I showed that workers in this field are increasingly required to possess creative skill in combination with technical and business skills. Thus, individuals in this sector are expected to be 'hybrid workers'. My findings align with other research which has claimed that the concept of 'skill' is increasingly used to denote a broadened array of attributes and capabilities (Grugulis, 2007b). In addition, I have argued that there was a hierarchical ordering of skills conducted by my interviewees in which creativity and technical skills were regarded as valued requisites, while business skills were attributed less significance.

Although I have foregrounded changes occurring in the sector, I have also identified patterns of continuity; these processes are not disconnected. Indeed, I have shown that persistent gender inequalities are produced through articulations of change in the sector. Hence, within public policy and interviewee articulations of changing skill requirements for digital media work, the skills attributed to women workers did not shift far from traditional notions of feminised skills including 'non-technical' skills, communication, facilitation and client servicing skills. Even when my interviewees attributed women with creativity it tended to be in terms of domestic and 'non-technical' creativity (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6 I traced similarly traditional and feminised characterisations of women workers in visual and textual representations found in careers and recruitment literature. Women were represented as workers who came from a range of backgrounds and who could fill a breadth of specialist 'non-technical' and business oriented roles. Thus, in

articulations which attempt to explain women's fit within a changing sector, gender is fixed.

My findings challenge much liberal feminist research and public policy which claims that women's degree of access to digital industries employment will be determined by the fit between industry requirements and women's interests and capabilities (e.g. Greenfield et al., 2002; Newton, 1984). A more complex picture is presented of the prospects for women's access to employment at all levels of the digital industries. What matters, is not so much whether women possess the right skills, but rather the properties of skills which are attributed to women. In the context of rapid change, the attribution and fixing of specialist and naturalised skills to women undermines expectations about the opening up of the sector to women. In this respect, inequalities not only persist, but are continuously re-produced in articulations of new and shifting work contexts.

2) The proliferation and regulation of legible working subjects

The second overarching process involved in the performativity of gender is the dual proliferation and regulation of working subjects in the digital media sector. Research for this thesis has revolved around questions about the ideal digital media worker. Recent UK public policy documentation has focused on individual workers in the digital and creative industries whose skills, attributes and talents are foregrounded as the drivers of national economic growth and regional regeneration in the UK (Banks, 2007 e.g. DCMS, 1998, 2001a; Feddy, 2006). Scholars have recently identified new 'breeds' of workers in the UK creative economy with labels including: knowledge entrepreneurs (Leadbeater & Oakley, 2001: 17), creative entrepreneurs (Tams, 2003), and digital artisans (Barbrook & Schultz, 1997) (amongst others). Moreover, feminist researchers have argued that such workers are being produced through specific organisational structures, processes and cultures, and that they construct a gendered

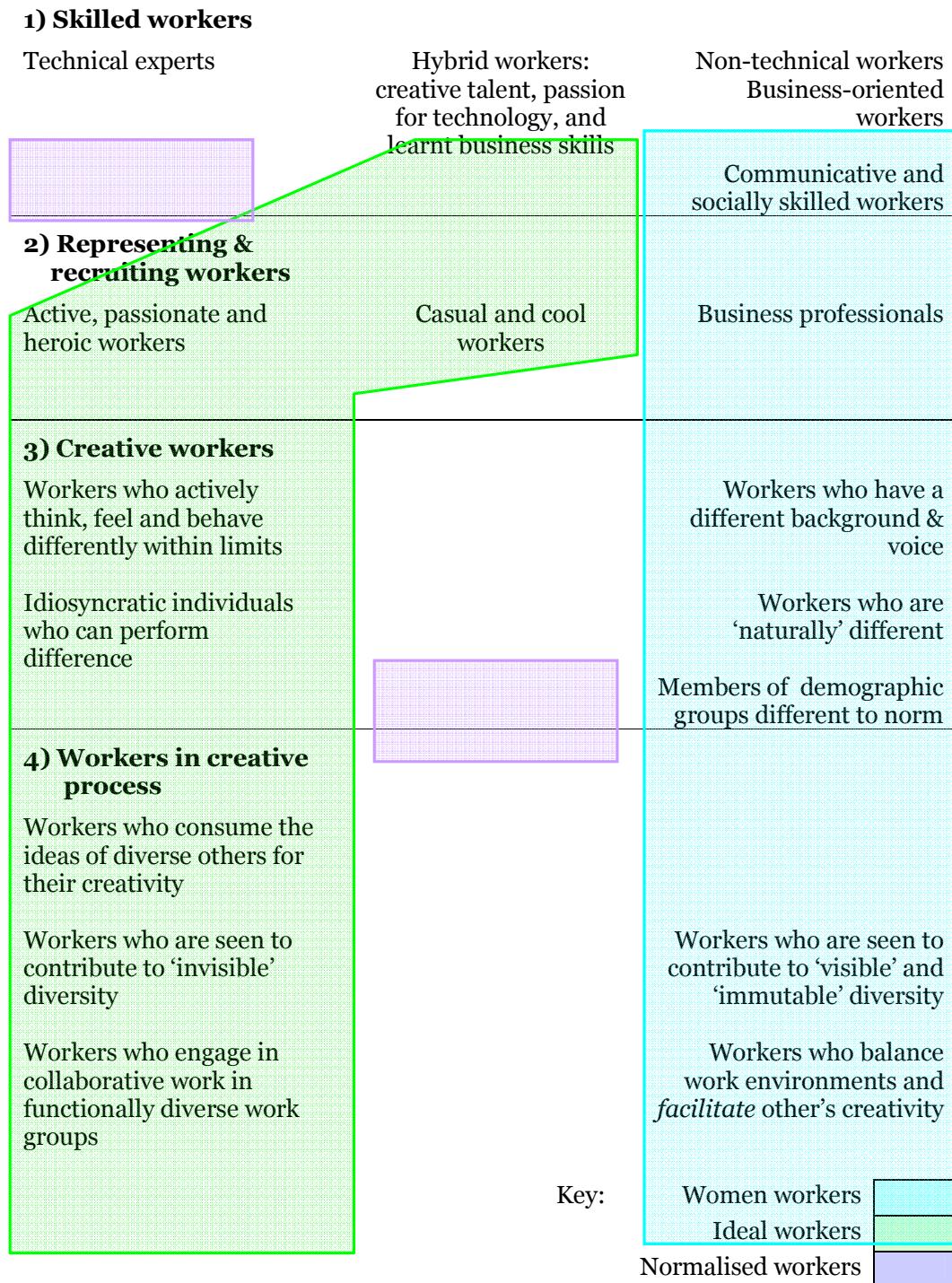
idealised working figure against which all other workers are evaluated (e.g. Tams, 2002; Peterson, 2007; see my discussion in Chapter 3).

My research contributes to this burgeoning field of inquiry by identifying the kinds of workers who are said to operate in the UK digital media sector. As I discussed in Chapter 5, workers are presented as important resources for national and regional economic development. I have also shown that there is not one type of 'ideal' digital media worker against which other workers are compared, but many. Drawing together my findings related to each of the four articulations, a typology of 'new' workers can be identified.

Figure 9.1 presents the host of digital media working subjects which have been identified in my study. The singular figure of the male technical 'geek', once seen to dominate the digital industries (Margolis & Fisher, 2002; Turkle, 1984), is accompanied by ranks of 'new' kinds of workers. However not all individuals are seen to legitimately fill each of these subject positions. Rather, digital media workers are produced in what Butler might describe as a 'grid of legibility' (Butler, 2004: 42). Reading Figure 9.1 horizontally, I have placed a number of working subject positions in relation to each articulation I analysed. The worker subject positions which were most valued and attributed high status are shaded in green, those worker subject positions which were normalised in the sector are shaded in purple. The shaded area in blue indicates types of working subjects which women were most often associated with. There is of course, potential overlap between these groups, but the repeated differentiation of women from some of the most valued subject positions recites and sediments their difference, and marginalises them from the majority of normalised and idealised workers within the sector.

In this grid women workers are rendered legible, presented and made understandable by their positioning in worker subject positions such as the 'business professional' and in regard to specialist communication and non-technical skills.

Figure 9.1 'New' workers for the digital media sector



But in contrast to other work domains, in the digital media sector formally dressed, business professionals tended not to be valued very highly and were contrasted with higher status creative and technical workers (see Puwar, 2004 for contrasting discussion about gender in the British civil service).

In the materials I analysed, women were consistently identified as a specific group of workers and different practices were employed to talk about them in public policy documents and my interviews. For example, in Chapter 6, references to equal opportunities and the breadth of opportunity in careers and recruitment literature were always accompanied by visual representations of female workers. In Chapter 8, I traced in my interviews and public policy documents how references to facilitation and balancing processes were only made in regard to how women workers might contribute to creative work. By contrast, male workers were rarely referred to as a distinct group of workers, but when they were, the skills and capabilities attributed to them were associated with normalised (technical geeks, casual and cool workers) and ideal (crazy, playful and creative) digital media workers.

My analysis helps to refine and develop previous feminist work on the 'ideal worker' (e.g. Peterson, 2007; Tams, 2003). First, it suggests that there may be a range of ideal and normalised workers in the digital media sector against which women are contrasted. Second, in feminist analyses of ideal workers, notions of 'normalised' and 'idealised' workers are not typically distinguished. In my analysis the distinction is important because even subject positions such as the 'technical geek' which are not necessarily 'ideal', still provide a normalised and valued form of participation in which male workers, but not female workers, are seen to legitimately take up. Third, my analysis suggests that identifying specific traits attributed to such workers appears to be less important than tracing the processes involved in their differentiation from women workers.

3) The marking of a hierarchy of ‘creative difference’

So far in this chapter I have explained gender performativity by identifying two processes in the digital media sector which make difference. I now consider the concept of difference more directly and outline gender performativity in the shifting strategic deployment of difference and diversity as proxies for creativity in the digital media sector.

As I have discussed in Chapter 2, the link between gender and the making of difference has been important in feminist scholarship. But the concept of difference is given another meaning in the digital media sector and the creative industries more generally in the UK. Some forms of difference attributed to individuals have become valorised and linked to creativity in these domains. In this process, difference becomes reified as an individual attribute and a form of human capital for workers (e.g. DCMS, 2001; Heeley & Pickard, 2002; Leadbeater, 1999). Indeed, I have shown that my interviewees were engaged in strategic differentiation when presenting themselves as creative workers, including statements that ‘being women’ was a basis for self-promotion and distinction in this male-dominated sector.

I have argued that through the process of reifying difference as an individual resource, the concept is depoliticised. Difference becomes something which can be strategically performed, rather than a construct which is wrought through power relations. This type of formulation of difference can also be found in critical scholarship on knowledge and creative work (see my analysis of Fleming, 2006; Fleming & Sturdy, 2006; Nixon, 2006 in Chapter 7). The individualisation and marketisation of difference obscures a hierarchy of difference and diversity related to creativity in the digital media sector.

In my discussion it was important to distinguish between how the concepts of difference and diversity were used in various contexts in the digital media sector, and I separated my analysis of these concepts respectively in Chapters 7 and 8. The distinction I have made is important in teasing out how workers’ ‘performance’ of

difference is attributed creative value in this sector. For example, while some differences are seen to be active and minor and are read as markers of normalised workers' creativity (discussed in Chapter 7), such differences did not position these same workers as contributing to workforce diversity (discussed in Chapter 8). References to 'workforce diversity' in the interviews emerged only in discussions of women in this industry. But, as my analysis of skill requirements and representations of workers (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6) demonstrates, women not only 'bring' difference and diversity to the digital media sector, they also bring gender. Women were presented as 'different' workers with specific natural, immutable and feminised skills, motivations and forms of creativity and they were ascribed the distinct role of facilitating and balancing creative work processes. Through these practices women's differences were not identified and positioned as 'creative differences'.

My analysis contributes to feminist theory regarding gender and difference in new work domains including service and knowledge work (e.g. Tyler, 2005; Woodfield, 2002). I have shown that articulations of the creative benefits of difference and diversity elide an analysis of inequality. In this process, a hierarchy of difference operates, but is obscured.

Above I have discussed three ways in which discursive practices relating to work and workers in the digital media sector perform gender and I have outlined how my findings contribute to and extend current research on work in the creative economy and feminist analysis of gender, work and organisation. In the following section I consider what the implications of my research might be for policy makers.

Making better policy

From the start, my intention was that my research would be relevant to policy makers working in the areas of creative and digital industries employment. Although I have not sought to make recommendations for policy-makers, a core aspect of developing

an integrated analysis of various discursive sites was the hope that I might contribute a fruitful dialogue between policy makers, practitioners and academics.

I have argued that apparently progressive and positive statements about women's differences and their distinctive participation in the sector entrench gender inequalities, rather than disrupt them. In this context it is difficult to think how things could be changed, how gender might become 'undone' in this sector (Butler, 2004). Gill (2002; 2007) has recently acknowledged the difficulty in generating a language through which issues of gender inequality in new forms of work can be challenged and disrupted. She argues that the language tools themselves found within the creative industries are gendered. In this regard, I have shown that by drawing on the concepts of difference, diversity and creativity which have long been implicated in the performativity of gender, public policy documents designed to help increase the participation of women workers often themselves reproduce gender inequalities. The challenge then is for researchers and writers in public agencies to develop a constant awareness of how assumptions and norms relating to gender might be reproduced in their processes of knowledge production. As Butler has recently stated:

When we try to discern the intentions of policy makers, we have to consider the language they use is not always the language they have made. So, then, we have to say in what crucible of language such intentions are formed, and, are the workings of the crucible, strictly speaking without intention? It seems to me that even as one uses a certain discourse to effect certain ends intentionally, one is also used by the history of that discourse, its formative practices, its ways of foreclosing the field of what can be intended or said (Judith Butler interview cited in Davies, 2008: 190).

Discursive practices of policy makers are not produced in isolation to form novel accounts regarding work in the digital media sector. Rather, they are inextricably tied up with shifting practices in academic literature, industry operations, and broader social, cultural and political regulatory norms. Hence, social relations are endlessly reshuffled in the creative economy and it is difficult to track and critique these developments (McRobbie, 2002a).

In this thesis I have provided detail about the discursive construction of workers and particular skills and subject positions which are valued within the sector. But the

most valuable contribution my work makes towards better policy making is not a current picture of what is happening now, of the ‘state of the art’, but rather a demonstration of what happens when an awareness of the performativity of discourse is absent in public articulations of change. The importance of considering power relations in policy documentation became clear as I have successively moved between the public policy documents and interviews. For example, in Chapters 7 and 8 I showed how the concepts of difference and diversity were discussed in this sector in broad terms which contrasted with how these concepts were associated with women workers. My research establishes a call to public policy makers to reflect on taken-for-granted notions about what gender is and to try and avoid perpetuating stereotypical ideas about the kinds of characteristics that women might possess.

Further research

Throughout my research I have maintained a focus on how gender is performed in the North West digital media sector. But I have shown that the performativity of gender is brought into dialogue and mediated by shifting conceptualisations of difference and diversity in this work domain. A key question raised by my analysis is how do other processes of differentiation, related to ethnicity, sexuality, class, age and dis/ability, interact with those producing gender in the digital and creative industries? Research to address this question would need to attend to when and how different kinds of difference and notions of diversity are called on in creative work domains. For example, gender, ethnicity and sexuality are often referred to in policy and popular commentary which identifies a diversity/ creativity relation (e.g. Florida, 2002; Fleming & Sturdy, 2006). But, the same cannot be said for dis/ability or age. This raises the question about whether these latter aspects are construed as ‘creative’ and if so in what ways? In addition, investigating the intersectionality of processes of differentiation in creative work could enrich our understanding of the performativity of gender, as well as other axes of differentiation (Gill, 2007). For example, in

Chapter 6 I argued that white women, and men and women from ethnic minorities are differentiated from normalised workers through their representation in sexualised ways. Moreover, as I have discussed in Chapter 3, research from a number of countries provides evidence that there may be distinct and potentially comparable intersectional formations of race and gender in the digital industries in various national contexts (e.g. Derbyshire, 2003; Egash, 2002; Egash & Bleecker, 2001; Stephen & Levin, 2005; Varma, 2007).

A second fruitful avenue for research is the consideration of how gender and difference are produced through workers' access to professional and social networks in the digital and creative industries. The potential importance of networks in relation to the gendering of the digital media sector was highlighted in Chapter 4. Using the snowballing method to recruit participants I identified a distinct network of regional developers, trainers and organisational directors which operated at the strategic development level of the digital and creative industries in the North West. In order to gain access to individuals in arguably more vulnerable positions including freelancers, lower level employees and women workers, I had to pursue a second chained sample. This finding raises two important points. First, there is a methodological issue to consider relating to the choices that researchers make in trying to access participants in this type of networked industry. There is a need to reflect on how choices about methods shape our research samples and thus, our knowledge production processes. The second point is that individuals are variously located within personal and institutional networks that extend far beyond organisational boundaries. As such, there would be considerable value in conducting further analysis of the way that networks figure in workers' careers within specific contexts. Attention to personal and professional networks, how they are developed and how workers construct and move through their networks would be useful in teasing out the contextual specificity of the performativity of gender in the digital media sector. Indicative research in the UK has indicated that there is much to be

learned by investigating social and professional networks in creative work domains (see Richards & Milestone, 2000 on the Manchester creative industries; Nixon, 2003, on the London advertising industry; and Tams, 2003 on the Sheffield creative industries).

This proposal links to another avenue for further research within organisations regarding discursive practices involved in employers' evaluations of creative workers and creative products. In some interviews with organisational and unit directors I found evidence that a complex notion of 'fit' guided recruitment decisions. For example, two interviewees referred to employing 'people like us' (Daniel) and people 'just like me' (Crispin). But, a more common practice of my interviewees was to identify valuable creative workers by their ability to demonstrate difference. Taken together these findings suggest that there are important processes by which senior managers and prospective workers must negotiate the level of 'sameness' and 'difference' that is required of digital media workers.

Towards the transformation of women's working lives

Feminism is a politics that is synonymous with 'causing trouble', critique and change. Feminist theorizing is directed at the creation of knowledge committed to changing women's lives (Thomas & Davies, 2005: 714).

This has been a feminist project in which I have cast a critical eye over pervasive articulations pertaining to work and workers in the digital media sector in the UK. I have done this in the hope of causing trouble for the apparent coherence of ways of understanding and producing workers in the digital media sector (Butler, 1990). Underlying my research is a 'politics of critique' (Lloyd, 1996). I have argued that the exemplification of how gender is performed in this sector has the potential to open up avenues for positive social change.

In this chapter I have pulled together the threads of my thesis to present my argument that even in the context of a proliferation of possible worker subject positions, produced in the shifting formations of the digital media sector, women

continue to be marginalised and differentiated from those most valued. Moreover, despite shifts which have valorised difference as a marker of creativity in this sector, differences attributed to women are consistently devalued and are seldom recognised as 'creative differences'. My analysis illustrates that articulations of change which do not identify and challenge assumptions about gender, reproduce inequalities between men and women workers.

It is only through the proliferation of critical and alternative accounts of gender in new work domains that the sedimenting effects of gender performativity might be disrupted, and changes may become possible. In this spirit I offer my thesis as a single act, a contribution, towards the positive transformation of women's working lives.

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APPENDIX 1. POLICY DOCUMENTS FROM UK LABOUR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Below is an indicative list of publicly funded grey literature relating to the key themes of this research published between 2000 and 2007. I drew my selected documents for analysis from this list.

Women's participation in the digital industries in the UK

All reports listed in this cluster directly discuss the participation of women in the digital industries in the UK (wholly or in part). The reports are all publicly funded by the UK Labour government, UK regional bodies or the European Union. I have listed them in chronological order.

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2004 e-skills. (2004). News in brief: IT insights. Trends and UK skills implications (Press Release). *e-skills website*. Retrieved 14 March 2006, from <http://www.e-skills.com/cgi-bin/go.pl/newscentre/news/news.html?uid=351>

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Hoshin (2006). *North West strategic review of skills provision: Digital industries sector final report (Strategic Area Review (StAR) commissioned report)*. Manchester: Learning and Skills Council & North West Universities Association (NWUA).

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APPENDIX 2. INTERVIEWEE BIOGRAPHIES

All personal and organisational names presented here are pseudonyms.

Business development and network brokerage

Trish Baker, Incubated Ideas, Manchester

Trish Baker was the director of a not-for-profit technology incubation unit and business development group situated in Manchester. Growing up working in her family's business within the North West region, Trish (in her mid to late 40s), had a long involvement in business and enterprise. Incubated Ideas was set up in the mid 1990s to help small business start-ups develop their creative and innovative products and bring them to market. The company specialised in supporting entrepreneurs developing high-end technology businesses. At the time of the interview was increasingly supporting organisations which produced and supplied software applications for emerging technologies. Her firm catered to organisations across the North West and offered services including: business planning and marketing; training in entrepreneurial skills; accountancy and company secretarial services; accommodation and low-risk finance.

Fraser Brown, Creative Industries Networks, North West City

Fraser Brown was in his early 30s and he worked as a network co-ordinator for Creative Industries Networks (hereafter referred to as CIN) situated in the urban area of a large city in the North West of England. Prior to this role he had run his own fashion design company. CIN was one of a number of organisations set up across the North West which specialised in supporting organisations in the creative industries in the region. CIN provided a free information service, business advice and promoted networks through a web presence, networking evenings, newsletters and professional development for individuals and organisation. Fraser was involved in large scale strategic planning and development of the digital industries, as well as working with

individuals to promote networks within and across all of the creative industries sectors.

Patrick Jones, Develop CI, North West City

Patrick Jones was in his early 40s and was the director of a strategic development group for the creative industries across the North West of England. Develop CI acted as a network brokerage and business development group within the creative industries. While Patrick was involved in industry development, he also self-identified as a creative worker citing a history of engagement with the music and media sectors of the North West since the early 1980s.

Training provision

Tessa Homer, Technology Train, Liverpool

Tessa Homer was in her early 40s and was the programme leader of a new media degree provided in a large university in the North West. At the time of the interview Tessa had recently moved back to Liverpool after living overseas for some years. Tessa had a background in film, television and video production and held a post-graduate degree in multimedia arts. She described her shift into working with computers as inevitable. The course offerings of Tessa's department had been expanding and, at the time of our meeting, they provided courses in the area of digital media and offered specialisms in areas including interactive design, mobile technologies, film and animation, TV, and games development.

Lucy West, Training Talent, North West City

Lucy West was in her early 40s and was the chief executive of Training Talent. Lucy had come to this role from a long career in and around the creative industries in the North West. She had worked as a music journalist and as a musician herself but had chosen to move into administration and directive type roles in order to support other creatives in the North West. Lucy's organisation specialised in providing training and development for companies, employees and freelancers working in a

range of media industries including music, film, TV production, and digital media across the North West. The organisation acted as a hub which aimed to develop links with other training organisations and businesses within the North West. Training Talent was also involved in supporting research relating to skills deficits and training needs for the media industries in the North West. At the time of the interview Lucy was over-seeing a number of access training programmes in digital media, one of which had a focus on developing the technical skills of women.

Organisation directors and digital media unit heads

The organisational directors I spoke to typically worked in small firms; four of the five directors represented companies which employed less than five workers. The other company employed 35 workers. The small size of their organisations meant that the directors were involved in the work of digital media production as well as planning the strategic direction of their companies.

Brigitte Davies, The Pixelators, North West City

Brigitte was in her early 30s and was a co-director of a small organisation, The Pixelators. This company developed and provided mobile applications, interactive art installations, advertising and live event services for clients. The Pixelators were also associated with the local university and received some university research funding to develop their projects. The organisation began in 2002 as a part-time venture for Brigitte and a couple of her friends and colleagues, but was gaining increasing recognition and funded projects. At the time of the interview her organisation had worked on interactive installations for events across the North of England including Cumbria, Liverpool, and Manchester, and also in London. The Pixelators included three core members and up to eight independent contributors with expertise in digital media production and more traditional arts in theatre, performance and fine art. Brigitte herself was a trained computer scientist but had also previously worked as an

entertainment journalist. Brigitte's intention was to continue to develop The Pixelators as a sustainable and independent entity.

Laura Cooper, Animated, North West Town

Laura Cooper was in her mid to late 20s and was a co-director of an animation firm with two others. Laura had no formal qualifications and was self-taught. She described her entry into the field as motivated by a fascination with what could be done with a bit of film and some imagination. Laura's organisation specialised in producing animation for advertising but they had also worked on a number of short animated films. Animated was established in 1996 when Laura and her colleagues were very young and worked part-time. Since that time it had grown into a business which employed three full-time staff and a number of contractors. The organisation had particular expertise in claymation animation but had in more recent years moved into digital media services including developing flash animations, web design and maya 3D. Although located in a small town in the North West, Animated had serviced clients from across the UK and to the USA and Europe. Laura aspired to build up enough organisational resources and support through their commercial work to help them make a full feature length animated film

Crispin Hill, MadCat Designs, Manchester

Crispin Hill was the director of a large multi-media unit in a marketing and branding company in Manchester. At the time of the interview Crispin was in his late 20s and had already worked for over nine years across the areas of graphic design, publishing and digital media. After high school Crispin gained a Higher National Diploma (HND) in graphic design and rose rapidly to senior management level. Looking for new challenges Crispin moved into digital media production in the late 1990s. The firm Crispin was working for was a family-owned business that had expanded quickly in recent years in the area of multi-media marketing. The company employed 23 designers and developers. Crispin led the strategic planning and development of new

digital technologies and services to add to the firm's portfolio of client services. He managed the distribution of work across all the developers of digital content in his firm including in-house and free-lance designers, programmers and animators. In addition, Crispin also continued to work as a digital designer himself. Crispin was thinking about starting up his own consultancy firm in the area of web architecture and marketing.

Tim Jones, Webs of Learning, North West City

Tim was in his late 40s and the co-director of a company specialising in e-learning, bespoke web-based training, and content management systems for training and learning within the workplace. Established in 2003, Webs of Learning was in its second year of operation at the time of the interview. While the company had undergone some significant challenges in the first year, it had gained stability. The company supported three full-time staff but contracted from a large pool of free-lancers specialising in areas such as educational design and animation. Tim had previously had a highly successful career in computer-based training provision in both the public and private sector. Tim had learnt his technical skills on the job as he moved up the hierarchy in public bodies but during this time he also completed a BA (Hons) in Business Studies part-time.

Daniel Kelly, Big Fish, Manchester

Daniel Kelly, in his early 40s, was the creative director in a medium-sized digital design organisation in Manchester specialising in interactive design. The firm was founded in 2000 and at the time of the interview employed 25 staff drawn from a range of occupations including marketing, art directors, project managers, programmers, designers and developers. Big Fish prided themselves on their innovative and experimental design approach in which they sought out new applications for emerging technologies and mixed off-line and on-line art practices including film, sculpture, craft and music into their designs. Daniel had never been

formally trained in the area of digital design. He described a moment when his father brought home a Macintosh computer as an 'epiphany' which triggered his recognition of the creative power of computers. Thereafter, while still working at a factory making printed circuit boards, he taught himself digital media design. He gained his first position in digital media design by turning up to a local digital media company with his portfolio of work. Since that time he had become a prominent figure in the sector having written a number of books and he was a frequent guest speaker at industry conferences in the UK and internationally.

Gregory Kiddey, Planet Ape, Manchester

Gregory was in his mid 30s and the co-director of a small digital media production company located in the northern quarter of Manchester, Planet Ape. The company described themselves as 'multi-platform digital content creators, inventing engaging content for both public and private sectors'. The firm was established in 1999 during the period of radical instability in the dot.com industry. The company survived these early years and had since developed as a well-known company which had gained considerable recognition in the online and international Webby Awards and UK-based Big Chip Awards. At the time of interview, Gregory's company employed three full-time workers (including Gregory and his co-director) and one part-time worker. Gregory was very active in promoting the local digital media industry through involvement in a number of formal industry networks. Gregory had trained as a graphic designer originally but had returned to university to study a degree in multi-media when he could not find work. He met his co-director while training and after working contract jobs for some time they decided to join forces and set up their own firm.

Cameron Reed, Readymade Digital, Liverpool

Cameron Reed was in his late 30s and a research and design unit manager for ReadyMade Digital. This organisation was engaged in a range of activities around

digital content creation and development. Having close ties with a local university, ReadyMade offered incubation services for new start-ups emerging out of the university, and some of their staff provided lectures within digital design courses. However, ReadyMade also developed innovative digital technologies in their own right, either as commissioned projects (in areas of games, animation, educational software, film) or as experimental development projects which can be sold on and developed in the local market. As a research and design unit manager Cameron oversaw the work of a team of designers and programmers who were involved in exploring new applications. Cameron did not have a background in digital media production but in theatre, film and visual arts. However, for over a decade he had been working in business development for technology companies.

Mark Pope, Big Company, Manchester

Mark Pope was in his late 30s and the director of a new media unit of a large national organisation called Big Company. Mark's unit was made up of approximately 25 employees housed in the Manchester premises of its parent organisation. Mark's new media unit developed the web presence of its company including the production of content and development of associated databases. The new media unit had undergone considerable expansion since 2001 and at the time of the interview was expanding further. Mark had been working in Big Company for almost a decade and prior to this had a background of working in various roles within creative industries in music, journalism and film and TV production. Mark taught himself his technical and software development skills.

Kevin Stark, Magenta Movies, Manchester

Kevin Stark was in his mid 30s and the director of a TV and film animation unit, Magenta Movies, within a larger digital media and animation firm based in central Manchester. The organisation was founded by two individuals in 1996 but at the time of the interview had grown to 35 staff, 25 of whom were digital animators. Despite the

size of the organisation Kevin suggested that in their organisation they 'fly by the seat of our pants' describing the firm as chaotic and, thus, having grown organically and having very few formal systems in place. The film unit had been established in 2003 with a major financial contribution from Kevin himself to create/work on feature length films. Although they had produced animation for a number of films made by other companies, the first major film that was being produced in-house was one that Kevin had written himself.

Penny Wright, Façade Designs, Manchester

Penny Wright was the co-director of a small digital content production firm, Façade Designs, based in inner-city Manchester. Although only in her early 30s at the time of the interview, Penny had already been in business for six years having set up as a sole trader in 1998. In 2003, Penny and a colleague formed a limited company. On leaving school Penny had gained a philosophy and politics degree but then went on to complete a year's course in multimedia for the creative industries at the Women's Electronic Village (a training and resource centre for women in digital media) in Manchester. Following this she had worked as a trainee digital artist funded by the European Social Fund through the organisation IDEA. Penny had also spent some time working in a record shop and she said music was her first love. While running her web-design firm she was still very involved in the music industry in Manchester and played regularly as a DJ in city clubs. Penny aspired to build a sustainable company which would allow her to work on a range of creative projects in music, web design, and fashion (T-shirts etc).

Employees, sole-traders and free-lancers

Matthew Glennie, Hotrod, Manchester

Matthew was a freelance digital illustrator working out of his mother's home in Manchester. Matthew was in his late 20s and had been working full-time as a freelancer for just under two years. Prior to this, Matthew had taken on free-lance

work part-time while he was employed as a car dealer. Matthew described himself as an illustrator and 'just a beginner' in the industry and described himself as under significant financial pressure at the time of the interview. Matthew outlined a stepped strategy for the next few years to position himself more firmly in the industry. In the future he wanted to start his own company. In this regard Matthew repeatedly mentioned the need to become known within the industry, to develop networks and contacts that he could draw on in his future work. At the time of the interview he was working on developing a large database of contacts to whom he was planning to send out a portfolio of his work in the following months.

Hamish Gowen, Parker Design, North West City

In his mid 20s, Hamish was working as an internet consultant advising small business owners on their web presence and was continuing to run his owner-operator web-design company on the side. Hamish described his entry into web design as an accident. During a final year project in his biology undergraduate degree he was required to develop a website to present his research results and through this he taught himself web design. He continued to develop his skills and after university set up a company on the basis of a single paid web design project. He developed his business for a couple of years and had gained some large clients, but at the time of the interview this had dropped back to a part-time enterprise as he had gained a full-time consultancy position. Hamish had taken the consultancy position because he had moved cities and thought he needed some stable employment while he built up his web-design business again in his new location. While he saw his current consultancy position as a good training ground, he aspired to return to his web-design business full-time and be able to hire some employees within five years.

Grant Holt, The Pixelators, North West City

Grant was in his late 20s and worked as a computer scientist in a local university as well as working part-time as a core member of a company developing interactive art

installations, and live event services for clients. Grant described his 'day job' as a computer scientist as dull, serious and his 'proper' work. In this role he was engaged in analysing systems and developing technology for dependability. In contrast, he described his work with The Pixelators as frivolous, engaging, challenging and 'technology heavy'. Throughout the interview Grant referred primarily to his work with The Pixelators. Grant described his entry into working on interactive installations as a kind of epiphany in that while he was getting bored with his 'serious' computer science there were lots of interesting and creative things that could be done with computers. After a series of one-off projects, The Pixelators had begun to develop and expand their repertoire and had developed a fully formed company which provided mobile applications, interactive art installations, advertising and live event services for clients.

Josh Munroe, Broken Valley University, North West City

Josh Munroe was in his early 40s and working as a developer of virtual learning environments (VLE) for staff and students at a university in the North West. Josh had been working in this university for 19 years at the time of the interview. He had entered the university as a young graduate with a computer engineering degree. His first position was as a systems manager for unix computers, he then moved into providing support for Macintosh users. In this latter role he learnt about working with graphics and design which then led him into his current position. Of all the interviewees, Josh was the only one to have been in the same organisation for more than ten years. This had meant that in more recent years he had begun to feel somewhat frustrated in terms of his employment mobility. While his knowledge of computing had kept apace with the emergence of digital technologies, he did not feel like he had the expertise to secure a good post outside of the university system. In the future he was looking to either shift to another position within the university or to leave. He liked the idea of setting up his own small business but did not have a clear focus on what this would entail.

Flynn Peters, Image Plus, North West City

Flynn Peters was in her early 30s and was a sole trader of a film and video production company in a North West city. Although an independent, Flynn's work often required her to contract between one and four others for specified projects. Her work was therefore a mixture between team projects and one-on-one consulting. Flynn was into her third year of business and her financial turnover had been building year on year. Flynn described herself as mainly a community film-maker in that much of her work was on funded projects. However, she also worked for private clients. Flynn had begun making productions with film in her university years when she was studying for an English literature degree. She then completed a foundation course in broadcasting and had worked in TV production in London for 10 years. Over this time she continued to work on film work of her own, and moved into video and then digital production and editing. While she was enjoying her work, in the future Flynn was planning to make a change by emigrating either to Australia or India.

Justine Riley, E-Futures, Manchester

Justine Riley was in her late 30s and at the time of the interview had recently resigned from a research and design role in a large multi-national company. The company offered e-services that include creative design, marketing, web solutions, bespoke business applications, architecture planning and e-business platforms. As part of a research and design team, Justine had been responsible for analysing business problems and current digital media provisions and coming up with creative solutions to these. The team was interdisciplinary, made up of technical, sociological, systems, usability and design experts. After working in this company for four years, Justine stated that she had recently resigned primarily because of what she saw as irreconcilable tensions between her responsibility to develop creative solutions and business-guided deadlines and specified outputs. Justine formal had a post-graduate degree in American studies and she thought she might move back into work with a more sociological or creative and artistic focus.

Harry Smith, ReadyMade Digital, Liverpool

Harry Smith was in his early 40s and was a senior programmer in a research and design unit at ReadyMade Digital, an organisation which engaged in a range of content and development activities. Harry had been head-hunted for his current position from a multimedia company in Liverpool where he was programming for educational game/software. Harry chose to move to his current organisation because he was given a wide scope to develop his own projects. Harry had worked in a range of jobs in his past, including touring in a band for over a year and selling advertising for a number of years. He said he had always been programming but until recently it had been 'bedroom programming', i.e. programming as a hobby. He suggested that he found it difficult to break into paid programming but now he was in his 'dream job'. Unlike the majority of my other interviewees Harry had no desire to run his own business, although he did hope that the digital game he was working on at home would get picked up by a large company.

Bob Taylor, ReadyMade Digital, Liverpool

Bob Taylor was in his early 30s and a senior designer in ReadyMade Digital. Bob's background was in illustration but he moved into digital media animation after a six-month bridge course which exposed him to a range of software packages for digital design. Bob began work for ReadyMade as a freelancer and then secured a permanent position at the organisation a year or so later. He had been there for six years. As a senior designer at ReadyMade Bob was often the project-lead on commissioned digital products taken on by the organisation. In this role he co-ordinated cross-functional team members but also developed the product himself. Bob said he was not ambitious for promotion or change of jobs but that he had two goals. One was to complete a fully fledged animation which he was developing by himself at home. His second aim was to keep 'abreast of the technologies'. He found this to be a significant challenge and tried to use his animation project to increase his knowledge in emerging technologies.

APPENDIX 3. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Example section of transcript from interview with Matthew Glennie:

SPT So you didn't go to university but you did computing and art at high school?

MG Yeah,..(pause)..I'm not one to be told what to do (laughing), that was it. {o.k.} 'Cause I actually went to college and it was college that killed university for me. 'Cause I think it was worse than being at school (laughing) ... so I thought, I can't do it for like three years being somewhere I won't like. 'Cause, there's nowhere, 'cause basically it was all London, and, ah, I don't like London at all, it's good to visit, but I couldn't stay there for three years.

SPT You mean that all the kind of computer arts courses that you wanted to do =

MG = Yeah, it's like, there's none now, up here I think the closest would be Loughborough or Liverpool now. But at the time there was nought. There still is nought.

Transcription conventions

Use of equal sign =

Indicates overlapping talking between interviewer and interviewee, e.g.
First speaker =
= second speaker

Use of curved brackets ()

Indicates non-verbal communication by the *speaker* including laugh, sigh, pause, etc. E.g. (laugh) or (pause)

Use of ..(pause)..

Indicates an elongated pause by speaker

Use of cursive brackets { }

Indicates very brief verbal and non-verbal interventions by 'non-speaker', e.g. {hmmm}, {laugh}, {o.k.} or {repeated word}. If the intervention by the 'non-speaker' was more than 1 or 2 words I moved to a separate line of transcription indicating change of speaker.

Reported transcription in this thesis document only

In this thesis I have added two additional transcription conventions to facilitate readability of direct quotations. These were not included in the original transcription and consist of:

The use of square brackets []

Indicates or explains to the reader what the speaker is referring to in their comment.

The use of three full-stops ...

Indicates when some portion of the transcription is edited out.

APPENDIX 4. INFORMATION SHEET

Digital Media in the North West Information Sheet

Sarah Proctor-Thomson
Lancaster University
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About the Project

In this project I aim to explore the processes of creative work in digital media. In particular I am interested in the paths that have led individuals into their current type of work, the processes involved in their daily work practice, and the products produced.

The data for this research is being collected by two key methods. The primary component (of which you are being asked to be a part) is made up of interviews with individuals working in a range of locations within the broad domain of digital media, this group ranges from digital media artists, film-makers, web-designers and software programmers. The second aspect involves analysis of the broader domain of creative and digital media industries of the North West of England, including policy documents, events and popular literature. Together these methods have been selected to help create a picture of work in this critical and expanding sector.

I plan to write up the research for my PhD at Lancaster University. As part of the research process a research agreement has been developed to ensure that all parties are in agreement in regard to confidentiality and dissemination of research (I will bring this along to our meeting).

What will the meeting involve?

I expect the meeting to run for approximately 1-1½ hours. On agreement, the meeting will be taped for the purposes of this research only. I have a number of key areas that I would like to cover in the meeting including personal experiences of working within the sector, the ways in which work in this sector is carried out and the dynamics of work processes more generally.

In addition, I am very interested in getting a good idea of exactly the kind of digital media you produce. If possible it would be great if you could make available some examples of your work that can be discussed in the interview.

My background

I am a researcher and doctoral student in the Institute for Women's Studies at Lancaster University. I have a background in leadership, careers research, psychology and women's studies. My current and previous field research focuses on the ways that people think about their work including issues of identity, creativity, equal opportunities, and organisational behaviour.

APPENDIX 5. RESEARCH AGREEMENT

Digital Media in the North West Research Agreement

The purpose of this research agreement is to make sure that you are informed about the objectives of the research, what it means for you and your right to confidentiality.

Confidentiality

I plan to write up my research in various forms including a doctoral thesis, practitioner magazines and academic publications, and will also present this material in academic seminars and conferences. Your name or your company's name will not be used in any of this published work unless agreed by you. My writing will pick up on general themes within the research but I may also present individual case studies. If your interview is used in a case study, I will show you what I plan to publish so you can change any identifying details.

Information about the research

As well as providing a general information handout on the project, I am happy to answer any questions (as long as it does not breach confidentiality for others involved). If you are interested I will send you a copy of your interview transcript and any published material from the research.

Consent to participation in research

I have been given and understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered. I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information I have provided from this project at anytime prior to publication.

Any other conditions to be written into the agreement:

Interviewee

Name:.....
Date:.....

Signature:.....

Researcher

Sarah Proctor-Thomson
Date:.....
If you have any further queries you may contact me at any time during the research project.
Please contact me at the following:
Phone: (01524) 593119 or (01524) 555 817
s.proctor-thomson@lancaster.ac.uk

APPENDIX 6. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Below are example questions which represent those I used to guide my interview discussions. Typically I would ask only some of these questions or ask them in various ways relating to the specific interview. However, I tended to use the same introductory questions for all interviews as a means to open up the session and I followed the general order of topics as below in all interviews.

Introduction

- Age, name, organisational title?
- Describe what you do in a couple of sentences?
- So what would be the 5 best keywords or adjectives that describe the work that you do?
- What would you say was your professional group if any?

Getting into employment

Example questions:

- How did you get to be doing what you are now doing? What factors fed into your decision to take up this kind of work?
- What type of schooling did you go through?
- Did you do any tertiary training? Was it related to what you do now?
- Have you thought about or tried other kinds of work? Were there any major differences between that work and the work you do now?
- Are there other things in your life that have contributed to your choices about work and specifically to engage in digital media work?

Current Work

Example questions:

- How many people are working in your organisation? What are the key roles that people carry out?
- Could you describe for me what you did yesterday? (Different kinds of activities). Is this typical?
- What are the critical issues for you in your own work right now?
- Have you any examples of work that we can look at?
- What are the main tools that you use in your work?

Needed attributes for workers in the digital media sector

Example questions:

- Can you describe the personal characteristics that are needed to be very successful in your field?
- Describe what makes a good designer? What makes a good coder?
- Is there a typical kind of person that works in the digital media sector? What characteristics do they have?

Creativity & Creative Work

Example questions:

- Think of someone who you see as really creative. Can you describe this person.
- Can anyone become creative? Is everyone creative?
- When have you been/are you the most creative?
- Do you see yourself as a creative worker?
- Do you think that creativity is increasing in the workplace? Why and why not?
- What promotes creativity in your workplace?

Equality issues

Example questions:

- Have you seen or experienced any evidence of discrimination against particular individuals or groups of workers in your workplace?
- How many women and men work in your organisation?
- Do you see any differences between women working within digital media and men?

Future Plans

Example questions:

- What are the external influences on your work or company?
- What plans do you have for the future of your organisation?
- What do you see on the horizon for your own career?
- What would you describe as your pastimes? Who do you spend leisure time with if anyone? Do you see any of these feeding into your work or vice versa?

RECAP: Can you think of any other issues that you think are relevant to this area? Is there anything you would like to ask me?

APPENDIX 7. INTERVIEW NOTES FORM

CODE:
Name of Interviewer:
Name of Interviewee:
Date of Interview:
Interviewee Contact details: _____ _____
Venue: _____ Research Agreement signed: Y / N
Interview length: _____ Technical Issues:
<u>General Comments:</u>
Related comments/ resources