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On and Off Screen: Women's Work in the Screen Industries

WILEY

The price of motherhood in the Irish film and television industries

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Abstract

This study describes the gendered challenges that mothers face when working in Irish film and television industries. Data were derived from a snowball sample of 44 mothers located in multiple genres of film and television production. The key findings are first, there is a systemic bias against mothers, not just a gender bias against them as women but an additional and more specific bias against them as mothers; second, there is evidence that mothers internalize the marginalization that comes from their maternal status. Many of the respondents accepted the inequality and maternal penalty they experienced as inevitable and "the way it is" and so made no demands that the industry change; and third, many mothers described various adaptations that help them to sustain their working lives, but they were rarely supported in those adaptations by the screen production industry. The impact and consequences of maternal inequality need to be examined and addressed further by industry in order to better include the voices of mothers in cultural productions.

KEYWORDS
film, inequality, motherhood, television

1 | INTRODUCTION

Despite the many social and cultural changes that have occurred in Irish society over the last 20 years and Ireland's relatively high ranking in *The Global Gender Gap Report* (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2010), Irish women still lag behind when it comes to equality in the workplace. Irish society has traditionally supported a home-based role for women and idealized the role of the "housewife" (Donovan, 2000). For women currently in the formal workforce,

challenging issues include high levels of gender segregation, an ongoing pay gap and gender imbalance in decision-making roles (NWCI, 2015). For women who are mothers there are further workplace challenges. There are declining numbers of employed women over the age of 35 years, a disproportionate child-care burden on women, low levels of state support for childcare, and extremely high costs (NWCI, 2009, 2015). In Ireland, "childcare is uncoordinated, variable in quality and the highest cost as a proportion of average earnings in the EU" (O'Hagan, 2012, p. 205).

With regard to media work more specifically, Ireland is also an interesting case because its record on gender equality in that sector is poor, relative to other European states. Women comprise approximately 30% of the workforce, lagging behind the European average of 44% female employment in programming and broadcasting in 2011 (EIGE, 2013, p. 16). Irish women constitute only 12% of decision-makers in media organizations compared with a European average of 32% (Ross, 2013, p. 31). In the film sector, the data mirrors the European situation where only "one in five films... is directed by a woman" (European Women's Audiovisual Network, 2019). Between 1993 and 2013, only 13% of Irish-produced screenplays were written by Irish-based women (Liddy, 2015a, 2015b). Screen Ireland statistics for films produced between 2011 and 2017 reveal that women comprise just 21% of screenwriters, 17% of directors, and 59% of producers (Screen Ireland, 2019). Although 2019 has seen an increase in women's participation across some categories the situation still reflects the Hollywood norm of excluding women, with only 20% of directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers being women on the top 100 grossing films in 2019 (Lauzen, 2019, p. 1).

Under recent policy changes aimed at improving gender equality (Liddy 2020a, 2020b), gender data are now gathered in the Irish film and television sectors. Moreover, key industry organizations have engaged recently with broader concerns for diversity of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability in Irish screen industries (Radió Telifís Éireann 2018; Screen Skills Ireland, 2019). However, currently, there are no data available for the number of women who are mothers working in either the film or television industries. This dearth of data perhaps speaks to a lack of concern about the inclusion of mothers in the Irish production workforce. This article seeks to explore the experiences of mothers as a subset of women working in Irish screen production. The study goes beyond examining gender inequality as a unified experience for all women in film and television work and seeks instead to ask whether there are particular and unique experiences of additional inequality that accrue to women as a result of their family status as mothers in the Irish screen production sector.

1.1 | Gender inequality in work and screen production

The definition of "gender" used in this study agrees that it is a social construction (Oakley, 1972) and a structure that incorporates social and cultural meanings and expectations surrounding people who identify as men and women (Lips, 1998). The social construction of gender means that individuals and social groups ascribe traits and status to individuals based on their gender identities (Blackstone, 2003). Some of those meanings define women in stereotypical and essentialist ways as, for instance, "nurturing" while men are seen as "leaders" (Blackstone, 2003). These stereotypical role allocations create expectations that women and men act in gender-congruent ways and each are punished if they defy societies gendered expectations (Eagly, 2007). Gender stereotypes subsequently come to underpin key gendered differences in political, economic, social, and cultural experiences (Bem, 1983; Fausto-Sterling, 2012). Gender differences in society are relevant for women who are engaged in formal work generally (Blair-Loy, 2003; Acker, 2006; Stone, 2008; Wajcman, 2004; Williams, 2005) as well as for women who work in creative industries.

Many writers have established that gender impacts on workers' experiences of creative industries and screen production in particular (Banks, 2018; Conor, Gill, & Taylor, 2015; Handy & Rowlands, 2014). Various global and national research projects on gender and media find "persistent patterns of inequality in terms of under-representation, glass-ceiling barriers to advancement and low pay (in relation to men)," which still remain

firmly embedded in media work (Ross, 2013). These inequalities operate at a structural level determining what roles women can or cannot assume in industry, how they "should" fit into the routines of production and they operate also at a cultural level, shaping beliefs, and values within media production, which remains largely masculinist (Liddy, 2016; O'Brien, 2019).

With regard to the structural gendered factors that shape film and television production, role allocation and routines of production are important mechanisms in deciding who is included or excluded. Gender affects educational opportunities and therefor entry routes for women into creative work (Gill, 2002). Role allocation on entry to both film and television industries is also determined in part by gender stereotypes (Gürkan, 2019; Hesmondalgh & Baker, 2011). Guerrier et al. (2009, p. 494) argues that stereotypes about women's perceived "soft skills" shape the work that women get. But while soft skills are key to teamwork and collaboration, they are not valued as important to production "work" meaning that women's contributions are less valued than the technical work undertaken predominantly by men (Guy & Newman, 2004). Women are therefore horizontally segregated into lesser valued support roles in production while men dominate in more prestigious technical roles (O'Brien, 2015).

In addition, vertical segregation of men into leadership positions within industry also privileges them and disadvantages women. On entry to industry men are assumed to automatically have potential for leadership and so progress through industry hierarchies faster than women who are required to prove their ability before they progress (McCracken, 2000; Steiner, 2015). This means that media leadership is predominantly male (Liddy, 2020b; O'Brien, 2017). As a result of the vertical segregation of women out of management roles, many of the routines of film and television production still privilege a masculinist point of view, in terms of content and normative approaches to narrative and direction (Banks and Steimer, 2015; Henderson, 2011). This underrepresentation of women in leadership perpetuates the structural factors that produce and reproduce gender inequality.

As well as facing structural obstacles, women also face a significant barrier to equality in the form of the culture of media production, which is predominantly masculinist. Media industries are heavily informalized with large cohorts of freelance or contract workers and interns (Grindstaff, 2002; Regan Shade & Jacobson, 2015). In response to informalization workers depend more heavily on networks to secure "gigs" (Ursell, 2000). But networks are often homophilic (Ibarra, 1992). Because male workers dominate in industries and in senior positions, they are more likely to enjoy networks that help them find work (Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2012). These networks can then act as barriers to women (Blair, 2001; Walby, 2011). These experiences of a culture of exclusion come to shape women's subjectivities. Gill and Scharff (2011, p. 8) argue that gendered experiences of work under neoliberalism "get inside" women so that they become self-enterprising and strategizing in order to make themselves marketable. In the end, all of life becomes a "pitch" for work (Gill, & Scharff, 2011, p. 249). Scharff (2018, p. 89) notes that these neoliberal logics make gender inequalities "unspeakable." McRobbie (2016) underpins this by pointing to the particularly pernicious "utopian thread" of self-realization implicit in creative work and how it leads to this internalized self-blame and disappointment when things go wrong.

These gender inequalities, well documented in the international creative industries literature, are also relevant for Irish women in film and television production (Liddy, 2016; O'Brien, 2019). However, there are other unique and additional inequalities that accrue specifically to women's who are mothers, which add to the gendered burden and risk further excluding women who are mothers. In short, within an overarching context of gender inequality, it is additionally difficult for women who are mothers to sustain themselves as film and television workers, in ways that will be described further below.

1.2 | Motherhood and creative work

There are a relatively small number of studies that explore how mothers are excluded from creative industries. Wreyford (2013) discusses how maternity leave proves problematic for women trying to sustain careers while

working on a freelance basis. Wreyford's (2015, 2018) work on screen writing notes that informalized work practices and network-based recruitment disadvantage mothers who cannot easily access recruitment opportunities. Wing-Fai (2015) examines how women suffer the effects of care-work responsibilization but notes that, in addition, mothers are precluded from highlighting that inequality. Maternal exclusion is "borne heavily, often without support, by women, who often feel they must not talk about these issues" (p. 61). Berridge (2019) similarly explores the maternal care work burden through an analysis of the UK activist organization Raising Film's website testimonials. Berridge (2019, p. 464) observes that women's testimonials at times reinforce subjectivities that emphasize self-regulation or self-responsibilization, and only sometimes do the testimonials critique the punishing nature of film work's demands to suppress the challenges of care. However, these critiques by mothers, Berridge (2019, p. 464) argues, do not amount to a call for structural change or accommodations for mothers but rather they serve to reinforce a "deep attachment to care (which) is seen as *their* responsibility." Dent (2016) notes the devalued position of mothers in the creative workforce and the limited number of role models available. She notes that successful working mothers are seen as unnatural and de-feminized, because of the submergence of maternal identity. But that the alternative models available to working mothers are either an occupational downgrade or total withdrawal from the industry (Dent, 2016, p. 243). This "option" of withdrawal from work is reflected internationally, whereby women artists and creative professionals cite "unpaid care" as a significant cause for abandoning their "creative pathway" (UNESCO, 2014, p. 82). O'Brien (2014) also notes that the lack of acknowledgment of motherhood duties can push women ultimately to make the "choice" to quit by departing from their careers.

This article seeks to add to the motherhood in creative industries literature, which documents problems of maternal recruitment (Wreyford, 2013), self-responsibilzation by mothers (Berridge, 2019), the silencing of mother's family identities (Wing Fai, 2015), and which documents their invisible withdrawal from screen production industries (Dent, 2016) by identifying new and additional dimensions of inequality that are experienced only by mothers. It adds to the body of knowledge by outlining how mothers in the Irish screen production industry internalize an additional marginalization based on maternal status, which they perceive as inevitable. A further key and original contribution that the article makes is to note that mothers adapt in a number of ways to "compensate" for their maternity. However, mothers are rarely supported in those adaptive endeavors by an industry that remains "blind" to the demands that motherhood places on its workers.

2 | METHODOLOGY

This research is situated within an explicitly feminist media studies paradigm and uses a gendered production studies approach, which questions the patriarchal power structures that are exercised through the practices, culture, and traditions that shape media content in gendered ways (Banks, 2018, p. 157). Data were derived from qualitative, semistructured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews conducted by the authors between 2015 and 2018, with a purposive snowball sample of 44 women. The sample included above the line creative producers, as well as middle-ranking operatives and low status administrative workers who were located within multiple genres of film and television production. All of the women self-identified as mothers and all had been employed in screen production for at least 5 years. Motherhood was defined by the researchers as a "fluid, multiple and constructed activity" (Dent, 2016, p. 62) that incorporates divergent and multiple concepts of what a mother is (Jeremiah, 2006). In-depth interviews were useful for exploring detailed and individual perspectives on the core issue of motherhood and allowed for long and complex responses, generating rich data (Bertrand & Huges, 2018, p. 98). The questions that were asked were about experiences of motherhood and creative work. Open-ended questions addressed women's experiences of pregnancy, maternity leave, the return to work postleave, approaches to childcare, involvement of others in care-work, and perceptions of changes to work roles, practices, and values since becoming a mother.

For analysis, all interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and anonymized. Confidentiality was assured and any information that could reveal the identity of any of the participants was removed or changed. Transcriptions were coded for concepts derived from the literature and additional codes were generated through repeated use by the respondents. Codes were clustered together by the authors to generate themes and those themes were analyzed to create findings outlined below. A key consideration when examining the results is the extent to which theoretical or empirical generalizations about motherhood in film work can be derived from a small-scale interview-based case study in Ireland. While such studies provide opportunities to produce important exemplars, generate practical context dependent knowledge, and have merit in their proximity to studied realities (Flyvbjerg, 2006) extrapolating globally on the basis of a small, nationally specific sample is not possible, and so the research makes no claims at this level. This research offers an in-depth qualitative reflection on mother's working experiences in the Irish film and television industries that may well prove relevant to and provoke further research and analysis in other European states.

3 | FINDINGS

This article established the nature of the burdens carried by mothers as follows: First, there is a systemic bias against mothers, not just a gender bias against them as women but an additional and more specific bias against them as mothers; Second, there is evidence that mothers had internalized the marginalization that comes from their maternal status. Many of the respondents accepted the inequality and maternal penalty they experienced as inevitable and "the way it is" and so made no demands that the industry change; and third, the original contribution of the article notes that many mothers described various adaptations that help them to sustain their working lives, but they were rarely supported in those adaptations by the screen production industry. Evidence of each of these findings on maternal experiences of film and television production in the Irish context are outlined in detail below.

3.1 | Maternal bias

Many mothers were clear that their family status was the source of prejudgments about them and their work, and in effect constituted a bias against them as mothers. The assumptions about mother's commitment to work occurred as soon as it was made known that a woman was pregnant. Mothers-to-be were often reluctant to announce their pregnancy. A producer recalled wearing a long scarf over her "bump" to conceal her pregnancy from her colleagues (M). Many respondents told stories about women they knew who hesitated to announce a pregnancy, particularly if they were not in senior positions. "I do think there are those women, who are not HODs, who say they don't want to let on they are pregnant in case they don't get a particular job" (N). A producer recalled showing up at an international film festival 6-month pregnant to the amazement of a funder who asked "What are *you* doing here?" (B). Another producer described her experience with pregnancy at work.

> It was really frustrating, during my pregnancy I worked just as hard as before, I was really careful not to go on about it and never to complain. I planned on taking six months leave and getting back to work the same as before. But there were a couple of women in the office who kept saying "Oh your life will change for ever, you won't want to be in here leaving the baby at home". It was as if they were setting me up to fail… it's as if mother's jobs are some kind of distraction, not necessary, not important. We needed my income and I wanted to work, but I felt like that somehow just wasn't acceptable… (A1).

Pregnant women were right to be wary of announcing their pregnancy as this revelation could result in very serious consequences for the women's working lives. Some mothers-to-be had their jobs terminated as soon as they

announced they were pregnant. One production assistant's contract was not renewed. "I'd gotten married, I was expecting my first baby, I'd told them I was pregnant, which was never said but I felt that it was the biggest mistake that I ever made… my contract just ended, and I never found out why…" (O). Another mother-to-be was offered redundancy when she told her employer she was pregnant. She recounted. "They sent an email looking for voluntary redundancies and I applied (but was) turned down for it… a few months later I found out I was pregnant… when I told them, the next day I was called up to HR, and was told that they had made a mistake about the voluntary redundancy…" (Q).

Even for relatively senior workers, they found themselves excluded from promotion because they were visibly pregnant. A senior series-producer, on a successful and long-running program described how "A vacancy arose for an Executive Producer for a strand of documentaries, and I applied for the post and another person was given the job… and then I went and challenged the commissioning editor and he said 'but sure you're pregnant'"(B). As the series producer observes about the situation "He's thinking 'Why would I give it to someone who's not available for six months?' but I was prepared to (shorten maternity leave to) make that work but he had never consulted me about it" (B). Various respondents described how pregnancy could trigger an immediate change in attitude toward them as workers, resulting sometimes in the termination or stalling of their careers because of a bias about mothers that the industry enacted.

Mothers-to-be experienced further negative impacts as soon as they needed to go on maternity leave. As one series producer recounted about the context of working in creative industries specifically.

> The problem is that there is always someone there to replace you. I had worked on a series for ten years, but I was due a baby and when push came to shove they replaced me, the show must go on I guess (F).

Getting back into work following maternity leave was also a challenge that women faced, with negligible accommodation from within the industry. A producer described getting back into freelance work after her leave.

> Due to complications with the birth I didn't get back to work for a year. This meant that I was totally forgotten about by the powers that be, by the people with the hiring power in each of the companies that I'd usually dealt with. So basically, I had to start all over again, contacting companies, ringing friends and contacts in the business telling them that I was available for work…

Other respondents noted that post maternity leave, their roles were changed, even when working for large organizations that were in a position to replace them for the period of their maternity leave. One senior producer on a permanent contract with a large broadcaster described "When I came back from my first leave, it was interesting they didn't really have a role for me…" (A). A news journalist similarly noted a change in attitude toward her.

> Sometimes women are treated differently when you return from maternity leave, it can be small things like a remark "oh you had a holiday" or "you've been gone" but it implies you're less committed. The result is you end up working harder just to stay in the position you were in before you went on leave. You have to ignore your life commitments just to show you're as reliable as a man (Y).

As another respondent noted a change in how she was treated by her editors "The first time (she returned from maternity leave) it was like I was dead. People think you're going to have another one and they don't want to give you any big assignments. They don't want to trust you with their material" (A4).

Beyond pregnancy and maternity leave, even with older children many mothers still described a clear experience of bias whereby as soon as it was made known they had children they were treated as if they were somehow

less committed to their film and television work. As one mother describes, her colleagues changed perception of her post-children, she felt they saw her as "flitting in and out whenever the mood takes" (C1). On occasion, mothers working in film and television even intentionally omitted to mention at work that they had children. Much as Cahusac & Kanji (2014; p. 57) found with regard to professional and managerial mothers, so too mothers in film "feel they must hide their motherhood, which in itself creates tension." One director reported having worked with a colleague for a 3-year period but only finding out after that time that the woman had children. That mother had said "Well I don't want to bring them into the workplace" and the director observed that it "was really horrible that she didn't feel she could talk about being a mother" (L3).

Women were vulnerable to the effects of the maternity bias during pregnancy, when taking maternity leave, on their return from leave and even later on in their careers when they sometimes occluded the fact of being mothers in order to avoid the bias that they believed they would experience. This maternity bias is one that is experienced by women in addition to the usual gender bias against women in film and television. This is a form of dismissal that is unique to mothers and shows that motherhood is an additional source of burden to women workers who already experience gender bias. Inevitably, this negative treatment was sometimes internalized by the mothers who experienced it.

4 | INTERNALIZING THE MOTHERHOOD "PROBLEM"

As outlined in the literature review above, research on gendering in the film and television industries has suggested that female workers are relegated to second class status, as expressed in the devaluing of narratives about women's lives, the showcasing of the male "star" director, the ubiquitous "boys club" and a gendered organizational culture (Liddy, 2020a). Women's experience of systemic inequality generates subjectivities that are often neoliberal and self-disciplining in response to challenges. Women strive to meet ever greater demands at an individual level, they adapt themselves to unfair systems, rather than address structural unfairness, and so they create themselves as perfect neoliberal subjects (Gill & Scharff, 2011). There is evidence that mothers also attempt to be perfect neoliberal subjects by internalizing the marginalization that comes from their maternal status and the negative position ascribed to them within the industry. These neoliberal subjectivities generally preclude access to collective bargaining, which could address the biases and discriminations that mothers endure. Most respondents accepted the inequality and maternal penalty put upon them as inevitable and "the way it is." Some were even apparently sympathetic to companies handling the "problem" of mothers in the workforce. As one woman explained with regard to maternity leave and with only a minor expression of ambivalence.

> A small company is harder at that stage, if you're running your own show and get pregnant by accident, you'll have to buy in a producer and you lose the fee.... Women are at a disadvantage but that's just nature. We're not doing anything wrong. I think it's a blip that you have to get over. It's the self -employed nature of small business, the government can't just come in and pay for a replacement producer (T).

She does not elaborate as to why the state could not subsidies the production of children but does express some hesitancy about her opinion. "I don't know, I've never sat down and thought about it before" (T). Respondents were slow to articulate a perspective that the status quo was a problem and so therefore also tended not to speak to the possibility of structural change. Mothers understood that requests for accommodations around childcare were unlikely to be met. Senior workers' occasional attempts to pursue a higher rate of pay for mothers to help defray childcare costs were usually met with a rebuff. "The answer is no, we'll find other people. There will always be young, motherless women. At the end of the day, money talks" (S). In short, unless women professionals had

carved out an exceptionally strong reputation by virtue of a large body of work, they believed they were largely expendable.

Women were slow to see motherhood as a social good that requires community support and a collective approach to facilitating mothers to work, should they wish or need to do so. Instead, motherhood was often framed by respondents as a personal choice or endurance test, in which women battled heroically and were sometimes triumphant and other times defeated. As one respondent articulated about career success.

> It depends on guts and determination. If you have a really strong end goal then you can, with super human powers, balance and manage both. But you have to have a support system in place. I have parents who are unbelievably supportive... I'm showing my son (10 years) the strength of women and maybe when he's older he'll also realize it isn't fair (S).

A costume designer had similarly internalized a sense that motherhood was a "lost cause" in terms of career progression.

> Motherhood is probably the predominant reason why women are not excelling, in certain fields. You'll never succeed at the same level as guys for that very reason. It is intense what you're trying to do— juggling motherhood and juggling a career. If you are constantly saying no to things or attaching guilt because you're taking on too much work, you are never going to build up the same portfolio, the same level of contacts as a guy (S).

In sum, respondents did not see the status of mother as a social good and rather internalized a sense of personal and individual responsibility for motherhood. Mothers were simultaneously cognizant of the fact that the film and television production industries marginalized them because of their family status. Mothers had accepted this situation as fact and internalized a sense of motherhood as problematic, which was reinforced by patterns, experiences and observations from their own working lives. When asked what they thought needed to change, none of the respondents argued that society in general or the screen production industry in particular should be required to change its bias and approaches in order to incorporate or facilitate mothers as part of the workforce. The mothers saw the problem as *their* problem, rather than looking to the film and television industries as a potential source of change.

5 | RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

While mothers experience bias and internalized the negative impacts of that bias, nonetheless many of the respondents were very resilient and created various mechanisms to help them to survive in the screen production industry while also managing to mother. Many mothers cite various adaptations that helped them to sustain their working lives, but they were rarely supported in these adaptations by the screen production sector. The specific ways that mothers tried to adjust were by trying to "juggle" both care and work, by having supportive partners or networks of colleagues; by working on their 'own" time; by measuring time carefully and by working harder and faster when they had time free of childcare duties.

Mothers tried to stay in work by juggling competing demands between home and work that often resulted in them remaining in the industry for a period but being simultaneously profoundly frustrated that neither family nor work needs were being met. Mothers with small children conveyed the struggle to match a creative life with the demands of childcare, as this director observes "I'm normally torn between getting a good night's sleep so I'm fresh for them or writing at night when I have most of my ideas" (I). Similarly, a single mother who was also a television writer articulated her dilemma about the creative choice she is forced to make because of the demands of

motherhood. "My time is restricted by parenting duties. On both fronts, I can't afford to pursue creative goals…" (J). As well as attempting to juggle children and work by themselves mothers sometimes adapted by leaning on coparents to support them, but acknowledged that care was often seen as a mother's responsibility.

One producer described how she managed to stay working by having a coparent who supported her working life.

> You need a good partner who is understanding of it, my partner works in television too so he gets it. He picks up the slack when I'm busy and we have an au pair so we are not squeezed with childcare. Your co-parent needs to understand the commitment needed (B).

However, another producer observed, that even if a coparent participated in care work the organization of that work always fell to mothers "looking after the kids is understood to be women's responsibility, no matter what arrangement you have in place" (A1). She was clear that surviving in work "depends on *women* getting that balance right, having a partner who will take it on, a child-minder, or even better relatives that will give you total support to be able to get out to work" (A1). However, not all women were in a position to "get the balance right" if their coparent or immediate family members were not available or unwilling to meet childcare needs. In that case, some mothers attempted to continue in work by looking to colleagues as a source of support. As one DOP explains.

> If a woman is to return to work after having children or gets work while pregnant - she must already have a team of colleagues around her who she works with regularly and who will support her. If the woman does not have this support - she is unlikely to get work (K).

Again, respondents tended to adopt a neoliberal position on the question of motherhood and assume that the onus was on individual mothers to have supports in place, they did not propose that society or the industry could or should be reorganized to better accommodate motherhood and creative work.

Another way in which women tried to survive in their careers while mothering was to focus intensely on time and how it was spent. Using time carefully emerges in a lot of the accounts of how mothers articulated their survival strategies at work. Writers had a perception that they were "lucky" that they were unconstrained by the need to be on set and so had the freedom to work "in their own time." This freedom was however compromised for many writers or writer/directors who had children and as a consequence talked about being "restricted," "limited in time and space" (M), or having "limited mobility" (N). As one writer described the compromise of being "available" for work while mothering, "The last draft of a script I wrote at the kitchen table, regardless of what was going on around me, and I seem to have developed the art of filtering out all noise and distractions" (O). One mother of young children used a crèche on five mornings each week. She described her transition from writer to "full mum mode" as requiring enormous reserves of energy, commitment, and planning.

> What I do now is I actually have 9–1 available to me but I stop at 12 and I try to go for a walk or something because I need to go to transition from writer to Mum because I was working up to ten past one, speeding to the crèche with the project on my mind and they know when you're not there mentally (G).

Similarly, another mother had a window of opportunity while her children (5 and 8 years) were in school but there was a pressure to work harder and faster. As she said.

> (Motherhood) impacts massively on what I can do. When they come in they have homework and after school activities so that's the day gone… I often feel torn and frustrated. A lot of work is done after my kids' bedtime and I find this really painful as I'm usually tired and would rather just be flaked out in front of the TV (P).

Another writer echoes the idea that time is precious and mothers must compromise and juggle to sustain the duality of career and children. "Since becoming a mother I am more selective in the work I take on" (Q). School holidays were identified as particularly challenging for one writer/director as work revolves around a child's (13 years) school timetable. "School holidays are also a challenge as it becomes more difficult to fight for time, space and peace and quiet needed for writing and working" (R).

In short, mothers approached work and mothering by simply trying to juggle both, by treating time as a precious resource and by negotiating and managing support from coparents, family, and coworkers. Mothers spent energy on the careful choreography required to resolve the needs of their two roles, mothers used "the skill of juggling things" and being highly "organized" to make the combination of mothering and career "work." But the expectation that prevailed and remained was that women were ultimately responsible for care of children and this had a knock-on effect insofar as even mothers saw themselves as intrinsically "riskier" options than men.

For any woman in creative industry, the demanding masculinist work culture hinges on a gendered idea that workers must be completely available and that they will always put formal work first. This work culture disadvantages women by assigning them to certain roles and by undervaluing their point of view. However, the masculinist work culture doubly disadvantages mothers who have to negotiate gender inequality but in addition they also have to be completely available for work while simultaneously having disproportionate responsibility for caring duties. One mother who worked as a production assistant summed up the struggle succinctly "It's the sort of job that you have to do it all or nothing... then a lot of women leave, because it's very difficult to juggle it, that's what it came down to for me, family or job" (E). Despite women taking on the lion's share of the care-work in society, many mothers did not even question that status quo, they saw it as the inevitable price of motherhood and of working in an industry that is so prized. In reality for these women, as O'Hagan (2012, 2015, p. 77) suggests, their decisions about the ways they will combine motherhood and paid work "frequently amount to no more than a series of unsatisfactory trade-offs masquerading as choice".

6 | CONCLUSION

The key findings outlined above note that there is a systemic bias against mothers in film and television production work in Ireland and that mothers articulate subjectivities that have internalized their marginality and so see the status quo as inevitable. However, the paper offers an original analysis of the ways in which mothers are resilient and adapt in order to survive, but a key finding of the analysis highlights that these adaptations are largely invisible to industry, which does not support mothers working in the screen production sector. This research corroborates and expands upon other creative industry studies that have set out the additional inequalities that mothers face, in the form of prejudice or bias (Wreyford, 2013) and in terms of the negative self-disciplining and silencing that are incorporated into mothers' subjectivities as a result of their experiences of bias (Wing-Fai, 2015). The article adds to that body of knowledge by documenting how maternal bias impacts even during pregnancy and it shows the specific ways in which women adjust to the duality of demands from motherhood and work by showing that despite the significant bias against them, mothers are resilient and strive to maintain their careers while mothering. This latter finding has not been adequately examined in research to date.

Despite these new dimensions of understanding that the article adds to explorations of the impact of motherhood on creative work, there nonetheless remains a need to further explore the implications of excluding mothers from film and television production. Their exclusion is particularly problematic because cultural production in the form of film and television are enormously powerful platforms for the production of our understanding of social life and the place of motherhood therein. Film and television help to set the boundaries of imagined possibilities with regard to how women and mothers can be on screen, which maps back into the normative expectations placed on mothers in society. Film and television represents us to ourselves and if mothers' voices and experiences are systematically excluded from the production of those images then the representations themselves are fundamentally flawed and mothers' voices continue to be silenced.

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