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Title	Reflexive practice, the “turn to care” and accounting for feeling: The things we talk about with our friends
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Publication date	2020-11-01
Original Citation	Aust, R. (2021) 'Reflexive practice, the “turn to care” and accounting for feeling: The things we talk about with our friends', Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media, 20, pp. 119-134. https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.20.09
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	10.33178/alpha.20.09
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Download date	2026-10-30 07:12:35
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/10996



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Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media
no. 20, 2020, pp. 119–134
DOI: https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.20.09

Reflexive Practice, the "Turn to Care" and Accounting for Feeling: The Things We Talk About with Our Friends

Rowan Aust

Abstract: *This article examines methodological techniques and considerations during life-story interviews with female friends and acquaintances for research on television production. It reflects upon the nuances at play during such interviews in which the interviewer is positioned simultaneously as a researcher and an ex-television producer–or what has long been identified as an "insider" (Caldwell)–while simultaneously understanding television work within a framework of a contemporary "turn to care". Understanding television work in the context of care raises specific considerations: to what extent should the emotional, experiential engagement of being an "insider", amplified by a discussion of care, be used as part of this work? The discussion of care often focuses subjects on where care is not applied to them, particularly in the lives of freelancers as freelancing denies a structure of care due to its atomised and individualist construction. Meanwhile, conversations about care emphasise the emotional load demanded, which is often revealed as overwhelming. What are the responsibilities of the researcher in opening up subjects in this way; where should the work of the "insider" stop and are the methods balanced by the usefulness of the findings?*

Introduction: The "Turn to Care"

The potential for care within British television production practice has been widely examined and discussed in the last decade. This discussion, itself indicative of a problematic lack of care, has been sharply forced by abuse scandals, but also more broadly focused as the industry has foregrounded issues of equality diversity and inclusivity (EDI).[1] These dual aspects are considered here as constituting a "turn to care" in television production. This article firstly considers the context of the turn to care, and then methodological techniques for uncovering the ramifications of the turn as experienced by women in the industry, as well as how their experiences suggest what remains to be addressed in a substantive practice of care.

The context of the turn to care has received massive publicity. Globally, this has been most visible in the revelation of abuse: the Weinstein scandal and the #metoo movement, while in Britain the Savile scandal received huge coverage. In the British television industry, attention to the care of workers has been expressed at the BBC in its post-Savile investigations, Respect At Work and the Dame Janet Smith Report, as well as in pay parity in its Gender Pay Gap monitoring, reflecting the concerns of the #timesup campaign. In parallel, examinations concerned with EDI include: industry bodies Skillset and Raising Films (Dent) on the punitive impact of parenthood on (particularly women's) careers; thinktanks have focused on skills gaps and failures in understanding workforce constituents as potentially obscuring inequalities (Bakhshi, Freeman and Higgs; ScreenSkills), and identifying "factors [which] impact on the well-being of the individual whether in employment or seeking to enter the workforce" (Carey et al. 2). Class inequalities have been foregrounded (O'Brien, Brook and Taylor) and the mental health of film and television workers has been shown to be in crisis (Melanie Wilkes).[2] 2020's Covid-related collapse of television production has highlighted systemic inequalities and

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inducted the industry-wide Coalition for Change, with the aim to improve "chaotic" working conditions but with, as yet, no instructions on how improvements will be made (Amini and Kumar).[3] The background discussion suggests how care is lacking; in the current terms it means not being abused and not being excluded because of race, gender, (dis)ability or sexuality. These are defensive, not active measures while the way(s) in which care could be enacted remain undescribed. Using Joan Tronto's "four phases" summation, a full caring practice involves recognition, then action, then the giving and receiving of care (105). As per Tronto, the measures taken by the television industry only fulfil the "recognition" phase of care; a full process of care remains incomplete because no definitive measures have been put in place.



Figure 1: WFTV supports Coalition for Change. *WFTV.co.uk*, 2020.

My work on care in the television industry has addressed the limitations of the turn, focusing on the inadequate nature of declarations of care in the institutional context and the potential for exclusionary practices through the focus on flexible working for parents. As such, I have paid close attention to intimate experiences of workers that has resulted in interviewees almost confessing their discord with the industry in which they work, breaching Gill's "internalisation of a felt knowledge"—that is, silently absorbed understanding and enactment of behaviour that is both externally deemed acceptable and expected (516). Even as the possibilities of caring practices are articulated around them, women, palpably frustrated, often emotional with careers still stymied by a lack of substantive change in their working conditions, are breaching these felt expectations. As discussed below, they articulate problems of class, their lack of agency, fear of reputational damage and their tenuous hold on leadership, as well as actual incidences of bullying and abuse. They admit to not having articulated these feelings, and they recognise, as per Tronto, that, while their own need for care might be recognised discursively by the wider industry, it has not been actively extended to them. Asking about such experiences is a way of understanding where care is still felt to be lacking.

The methodology employed here arose from years of talking informally while working in TV, of experiencing the lack of care for television workers and leaving the television industry, as many women do (Skillset) after the birth of my first child; therefore, some of these

exchanges came out of years of "worker chatter" (Stauff and Caldwell 53). To garner new interview subjects, I used a call-out on Facebook to identify friends and friends-of-friends who were willing to talk to me about their careers. Simultaneously, I directly contacted friends and ex-colleagues. Sometimes, the refreshed correspondence with women I had not spoken to for a while presented a new conversation; sometimes it renewed the topic. In all cases, women were assured anonymity through written and recorded measures. Long-form, life-story interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. In total, the excerpts presented here are taken from twenty-five specifically arranged conversations, interviews and email exchanges but are contextualised by years of discussions between friends. Taking a reflexive, empathetic position allows for an intimacy and confessional model that uncovers experiences that otherwise, in more formal settings, might remain unstated. In understanding that women often share between them knowledge otherwise concealed, and that this concealed knowledge constitutes strong evidence of a need for care, it is this—the things we talk about with our friends—that holds valuable, informative potential.

If the need for a structure of care in television production is so far only recognised/discursive and not structurally practiced, the difficulty of applying care to television work must be considered. Television work is collaborative but also hierarchical, with seniority determining both production practice and possibilities of caring in any given project. It is work of commonalities, but the specifics of those commonalities are innumerable. The common processes are pre-production, production, post-production and exhibition. The procedures within the processes are defined by innumerable selections: personnel, technology, genre, platform, budget, while each specificity increases the variables of how the work is done. It therefore becomes work of feeling, bounded by notions of undefined propriety; how each worker feels the work "should" be done. The "should" effects the variables of possible workflow by indices of experience, with some experiences carrying more weight than others. Therein also lies the barrier to a structure of care; those given most weight to their experience are those who dominate the processes of making television, while simultaneously being those the least likely to require care in terms of equality, diversity or inclusivity because they are more likely to be white, middle-aged, able-bodied, middle-class men (Eikhof and York). So, despite the address(es) to care in television production, those most responsible for the institution of any new caring practices have the least experience of their need. Interviews here confirm that care is not being instituted, and that this lack is deeply felt.

Additionally, the accumulation of discussions pertaining to care in the British television industry emphasise its status as progressive, and yet women report their working lives are untouched by the potential benefits of these strategies—for example, women without children are left without the benefits of flexible working extended to parents (Aust 2021). Gill describes creative industries workers' identities as being situated "at the vanguard of social change" ("Unspeakable Inequalities" 514), combined with the emphasis on women's "free choice" in a context where "gender [is] consigned to the past" (522). The old sexism, in these terms, is banished, yet Gill detects changed forms of equally pernicious sexism. Similarly, women interviewed here do not have either structural or cultural recourse to report their dissatisfaction, and when they do they are reluctant to employ such measures; dissatisfaction it is rendered "unspeakable" (511). The previously unspoken frustrations presented here represent, on one level, Caldwell's "worker chatter" (53), but with the contextual understanding that the freelance structure, where precarity is tallied with reputational management (Lee, "Networks"), the fear of being "that woman" overrides even talk among colleagues; as such, much of what is reported here takes on the quality of breaching taboos.[4]

Television Work as "Structure of Feeling": Articulation of Emotion as Indicator of Change

The notion of breaking taboos needs to be understood in two ways. Firstly, that the idea of complaining when a turn to care is, discursively, happening, goes against the expectations placed upon women in the television industry. While women report guilt at not speaking up, at not foregrounding their lack of care, working practices operate to encourage women to stay invisible and maintain the production culture as is. This is expressed here through gratitude for work, an unwillingness to confront gendered expectations and compete with men, to adapt to the needs of different colleagues or adopt diffusional roles so that productions run smoothly. They must invisibly, seamlessly, perform the permitted visible roles; visibility is disciplining. All of this rebuts care and exemplifies how television places the onus on the individual to enact change because in a highly precarious, individuated industry, the turn to care is consequently individuated.

Secondly, working in television is a peculiarly sensory, total undertaking. This is why the discursive context of television presses upon workers so intently; when a worker describes problems they experience, it is therefore articulated through that discursive context, which here is feeling of the lack in a turn of care. Television work is total because it loops around and through the workplace, social and domestic life; work necessitates networking and long hours as normality (Lee, "Ethics"; Percival; Ursell; Zoellner) and extends into the home through the act of watching the television itself. The hours that a worker can devote are potentially innumerable: as work is completed a new contact, project and contract are sought. Work is urgent and unstable, and workers must adapt to changing conditions in order to find new work, whether it be through seeking a new commission, understanding new programming trends or new technologies of use. Workers identify with "being" of production work (Mayer 18–19), as Tom Burns identified the "BBC type" (45), where television workers understand their place in the world through the prism, labours and "conduct" (45) of their work. It is work of "feeling", understood instinctively. Understanding the precarity of freelance television work and its dependence on the "vendible identity" (168), Gillian Ursell describes how television identities "are forged and reforged in fields of social interaction and practice […] human agency lies precisely in the individual's efforts to manoeuvre around, outmanoeuvre and/or employ instrumentally and selfishly the normative and organizational parameters preferred by others for one's performance" (166).

This "performance"—the need to be (or appear as) vendible—cannot be fixed because its variables are legion, but instead becomes sensorial, here understood as akin to Williams's "structures of feeling". Williams describes this as being "concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt […] specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships; not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity"; these are untethered thoughts and feelings which speak to "a social experience which is still in process [*sic*]" (23). The need for "performance" within an unset sensorial milieu is the context in which the women quoted in these interviews, aware that they are breaching an untethered, undefined boundary, articulate their discomfort and upset.[5]

The undefined boundary in the context of this article is that of the recognition by the industry of the need for care, but the limitations of its activity. It is possible to see the insights below as demonstrative of Williams's "process"; that the frustrations articulated are cause for optimism, suggesting a new hunger for agency. Anne O'Brien reported in 2015 that, "self-regulating practices mean they [media workers] fail to recognise their own subordination to

work as anything other than an intrinsic feature of their creative labour" but many of the responses here (260), because of the post-Savile, post-#metoo awareness of industry discourse around abuse and lack of care, are indicative of an emergence out of this internalised subjugation.

My collection of these responses might be enabled by my insider/friend/academic status, but it is certainly due to fortuitous timing: the "process" these women are within is one of anger, rising out of the discursive context of care. One indicator of this anger is the number of "fucks" spoken throughout the exchanges. Helen Wood analyses "fuck" as an articulation of the "politics of irreverent rage", suggesting "its increasing ubiquity might be a symptom of more hopeful shifts in the denial of regulatory power" (610). There is, therefore, cause for optimism. However, this anger is tempered by guilt, frustration and shame. One woman said:

> There's just so much about TV that I love, I understand, but it's massively, hugely affected my confidence. […] I feel grateful because I've done something that I've always wanted to do. I feel I've been in positions that money can't buy, sitting in a room interviewing a music artist about their influences; being backstage at a gig. When I was at XXX, I was interviewing massive artists. It's, like, this is stuff that I could only dream of. […] When you get down the nitty-gritty, that's where it's very short-sighted because at this stage of my career, I should be feeling the most confident that I feel; not going back to square one where I have to prove myself. I think that's got quite a lot to do with age. I think this is possibly a lot of things that maybe women my age also experience, whether they're in whatever industry, but all I've really ever known is TV. (19 September 2019)

Gill's "labouring subjectivities" rings through this comment (516), where the cause of the collapse in confidence and misplaced expectations is placed anywhere except with television, which instead remains a site of gratitude. Identification with and loyalty to the industry are foregrounded. Georgina Born argues that these "webs of loyalty, trust, mutuality and commonality" have eroded as a consequence of the "BBC's declining commitment to its employees" with its "increased use of freelancing" (210).[6] Freelancing, despite its inherent precarity, is in fact articulated positively, with interviewees expressing gratitude for its "freedoms" (19 September 2019; 17 September 2019). The process of identification with the industry remains one of conciliation and gratitude.

The sense of gratitude is key. There is a class dimension, where those who understand themselves as "lucky" for working in television express gratitude for being part of an industry that has offered them a conceptual escape from an imagined possibility of remaining where they came from. I echo this gratitude in interviews. Gifts are given in an act that recalls the sensory memory of gratitude for being in telly; thanks for being allowed into an elite industry are echoed by my thanks for acknowledging my questions, while these women exude a sense of gratitude for being listened to. One woman, both working class and northern, recalled:

> I think about some of the times when, working Christmas Day, literally wiping the arse of [reality TV star's] kids for like probably a hundred quid for the day. But actually thinking, God, I'm just so lucky that I get to work in television […or…] I would be getting calls from contributors at 2, 3 o'clock in the morning to go, you know, they'd been arrested or something […] we've all got these absolute horror stories. And yet television is like an abusive relationship. Like we all go "God, can you believe that we

> did that". And yet, I'm yet to find anything that I would want to do more. (6 March 2020)

She went on to qualify this accession to constant demands through an imagined other life:

> before I started in telly, I worked with young offenders, and I knew I never wanted to do that, just kind of fell into it because I just needed a job after I'd come back from travelling and bumming around. But like that's like real jobs. (6 March 2020)

Gratitude for being allowed into this "relationship", however abusive it might be, remains foregrounded by the presence of what might have been if television had not offered an escape from the "real jobs" associated with life before television, of life still within originating class conditions. In the following extract, the interviewee's qualification of "male" director did not come from a discussion of the different class constitution of female directors, but from an awareness that the subject and I, friends for over a decade, share similar class origins. Therefore, in a consideration of methodology, our shared understanding enabled this shortcut of "Ed and Tom" as indicative of the prevalence of a particular kind of middle-class white man with a specific education. Class is described as central to the dissonance of how television work is understood in terms of "feeling" and the isolation of being a minority:

> I keep joking that all male directors are called Ed or Tom and they really are […] on this [current project] we've got another PD starting on Monday, he's called Ed. Of course he's called Ed! It's not even a joke. […] I think I only know one male director who's a bit more like me, a bit lower middle class. Not Oxbridge, not Tom or Ed. (17 April 2020)

Operating within this environment, she describes the particular modes of gendered discourse demanded of her amongst the Toms and Eds. As with gratitude, the gendered and classed performance described here is a maintenance of normativity; an activation of the turn to care demands ending this normative behaviour as women move towards dictating the terms of their work in ways that allow them to respond to their own needs. The extract below is relatively unabridged to illustrate the constant nature of and the palpable exhaustion caused by these demands, or as she terms it, the "flipping":

> I'll take a day when I was working on a doc with a with a male director, so we were co-directing the same doc. […] So in the, when I first kind of come in the office to the female AP, I have to be super like, "hey, how you doing?", like, really chummy, really like on the level. Very friendly, very kind of pally. When the male director comes in, even though we are on the same level in terms of the hierarchy, I then have to switch back to almost being his AP, supporting him, listening to his boring stories, flattering his ego and sort of putting myself on the back foot, doing the kind of "justs" and prefacing everything with, "oh, it might be a crazy idea but […]". Then when the male exec comes in the room, I switch because I'm actually the director and I'm supposed to be in charge of things, so I have to switch to being quite confident, but not too confident because you don't want to overstep anybody's mark. And then [one] afternoon where there was a viewing with me, my editor who was male, the other editor of the other part of the doc, who was male, the other director who was male and the exec who was male. And in that room, I had to jump between so many personas because I had to not pretend, I had to show that I knew exactly everything about music as much as they did and more, so I had to be one of the boys and keep up with all the in-jokes and namedropping and

> talks of guitars and sound engineers and whatever else. But then I had to flip back when they started telling dirty jokes because I'm the only girl in the room and there are five men in the room and for some reason it is a law that, if five men are in a dark room waiting for something to happen, they fill that space with dirty jokes. […] But then when the archive producer came in to tell me that some of my archive wasn't ready, I then had to flip forward again and be in charge but also still really nice because she's the archive producer and she's a woman. […] So you're constantly flipping between where the power should be. I mean, I know that the power should be my power. You never have the fucking power. You've got to pretend to have the power when you're the director. But still, don't overstep the mark. (17 April 2020)

The exhausting constancy of self-monitoring and self-regulating behaviour is evident, alongside the gendered nature of each of these described encounters, while the notion of power remains paramount. How is power performed and held? How is power achieved? Despite the visibly successful career as a director of documentaries, the subject felt her power was a pretence. Power—agentic authority and an absence of self-regulation—is elusive. The work that is done here involves instinctive maintenance of the felt experience of working in television. The revelation of such gendered work is itself gendered, enabled by the friendship between myself and the interviewee, our understanding of our shared lack of power when we worked together and the sense that this was nothing we did not know—we have shared such intimacies before. But, within this understanding is a hope that sharing this information in a new context might serve as a subversive act, that sharing in this space might achieve something useful out of the everyday understanding of a lack of power.

Power, and the lack thereof, is echoed even in situations where women detect a cultural shift that is theoretically beneficial to them, but one which still remains exclusionary of them, and additionally echoes Gill's "dynamic […] agile" ("Unspeakable Inequalities" 511) sexism:

> nobody wants to think that women are getting on because of their looks or their ability to flirt with an older man, because that is completely and utterly such a cliché, horrific, so casting couch, sounds like that kind of relationship, even if it isn't. […] And I think that's possibly why women don't get those opportunities, because it could be seen like that. I'll give an example. So [senior executive] undoubtedly fancied me at one point, told me he loved me. Have I got any fucking work out of it? (14 April 2020)

The anger at the shifting, still unbeneficial landscape described here may be tonally ironic, but it reveals a very real frustration with the visible monitoring of women and the potential to be seen negatively. It echoes the sensorial totality of life in television, the pressure that the self-discipline demanded by the conditions of public labour extends fully into the sphere of intimate relations; for women at any rate, as the onus reported here is on the inevitability of refusal, not the inappropriate nature of the asking. Furthermore, the interviewee reported a favouring of younger men by the "menopausal woman" figure, referring to female executives, thereby advancing men's careers in a way that echoes the casting couch and is again exclusionary to women. She went on:

> I sound really horrible [but] yes, menopausal woman flirts with a younger, intelligent man. There's no doubt about it. […] there's a currency there that the female, the menopausal female, for lack of any other way of saying it, can offer a younger male researcher that doesn't work the other way. Because the assumption still is that we are treated equally and our work should stand on its own merits, but it's so much down to

> personality and so much down to other people feeling good or getting something out of that situation. (14 April 2020)

These intensively gendered interactions, in which favour towards younger men, inflected with the possibilities of sex—of "feeling good"—echoing gendered power hierarchies, are intertwined with the consciousness of sisterhood and reputational management and are indicative of an apparently progressive cultural shift that in practice remains antithetical to equality. This insight, as with above, emerged because the interview was an intimate experience, with myself and the interviewee being friends and ex-colleagues. It would not have occurred without both the personal affinity and professional distance between us. In addition, neither of us occupy positions of power as she describes, despite us both being of menopausal age; there is, therefore, an implied admittance of our own relation to the hypothetical women. The knowledge of these relations demand yet another mode of self-regulation that prevents a full expression of the self: she doesn't want to seem "horrible" and goes on to say:

> You don't want to be doing that to other women. You certainly don't want to be doing that to other women who could potentially give you work. You don't want to be seen to be that person. And secondly, you don't want to be bitter about the fact that you haven't managed to achieve [the career status] other women have. (14 April 2020)

There is, therefore, another unspeakable notion, this time around the behaviour of older women favouring younger men, and the resistance to feeling against women and the potential for sustaining reputational damage while doing so. It is a subjectified resistance that manifests in a reticence against disclosure for a fear of being "seen"—or being seen to be acting against women—with the irony that so much of the very visible care work revolves around the concept of inequalities being reported and therefore "seen". A BBC workplace analysis, for example, specifically designed to encourage women's careers, lists as one of its stated intentions that "everyone should be encouraged to speak out when they see bad practice" (MacKinnon 3)

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The reticence to be seen is reported elsewhere as a fear of asking for better working conditions—for "help"—even when a male equivalent is working under more generous circumstances. A freelance BAME PD said of making one episode of a three-part series, where the other directors were one man and one woman:

> it takes a lot for me to ask for help, actually. […] you think you're failing and you just keep going […] I was doing a project at [channel X] and a guy, another producer, slightly less experienced than me, he didn't even carry anything, he didn't even drive, and I was being asked to self-shoot [as well as driving]. I actually refused to self-shoot for some parts and it was just like outrage [from the channel] I would say, "well, [male PD], he's not driving and he's not shooting." [and the channel would say] "Just ignore, ignore that! That's a separate case." But I know from experience, [if] you don't ask for help, you will fail because there's so much coming on to you. […] I thought this project was under control like I just couldn't, I couldn't do it. I couldn't shoot two VTs in a day plus travel. I just thought "I just can't put myself through it, I just thought, [male PD] is not, and [male PD] is going to do a beautiful job and I cannot see myself doing a beautiful job" and then there's another PD, a woman, who's gone off home with a breakdown. Didn't make me popular, I just thought, well, I can't see any other path, but I'm going to ask. […] But I know how this whole thing works further down the line. [Male PD will] have a beautiful show. […] And I know how they say "oh, look at the final product" [because] that's how people will judge you. (1 May 2020)

The deeply felt, internal debate over any sort of protest at inequality is clear and expressed as "failing". Equal is the knowledge of possible personal and professional consequences, both at speaking out and not speaking out.

Emotional toll is accepted as part of the job; as another woman reported "[…] when you've already been doing [TV work] for years as a woman and a BAME one at that, [it] really starts to take its toll on you emotionally and mentally. I'm struggling with it all at the moment and am finding myself teary most days and my confidence is on the floor […]" (Aust 11 February 2020). There is also the wish to forget and the regret at possible failure to act. An ex-television director said of her most recent time at the BBC in 2012–13:

> D: I was actually directly bullied. And then the next year I was just witnessing it around me, and the BBC decided to have a bullying review [Respect at Work, 2013] And, I didn't come, I didn't go to them.
> RA: Why?
> D: I don't know. I'm really ashamed saying that to you now. I just didn't… I don't know, is it that thing that you want the next job and you want to be thought of as not having made a fuss and you just don't want to? Maybe it was too painful as well. I wanted to move on. (10 March 2020)

What this extract cannot show is the silences in between the interviewee's words. She did not necessarily want to admit to having been bullied or not reporting it. What is arguably more revealing is her self-blame and sense of shame in not reporting, rather than asserting the potential institutional failure by the BBC at not making employees comfortable enough to report abuse—or, of course, ensuring there was no abuse to begin with. It also suggests that even in the post-#metoo context, even in a confidential context, such an admittance remains shameful or disloyal.

Shame, loyalty and gratitude, expressed to varying debilitating degrees, are interconnected affective functions that are the emotional expression of these gendered experiences, rendered unspeakable by the fear of being outside the realms of television normativity. This normativity, contingent on reputational management, is ever present and expressed through a fear of being "that" woman who is "bitter" or it "feel[s] a bit mean to say, but it's the truth!" or "being really neurotic", all emphases used throughout the interviews as notions of abjection.[7] This extends into the possibility of being the subject of conceptual eye rolls, of someone who might make demands of the production team in order to fulfil caring responsibilities—a key part of the "recognition" phase of care—even when allowances are made available. This woman recalled her first job after her child was born, where she rejected the possibility of allowances for fear of being othered in this way:

> Although the mums were allowed to leave, there were eye rolls, like "God, we have to pick up that work because they've got to get home to their kids." And I felt so paranoid and under pressure [but] I didn't want anyone to be rolling their eyes about me. (6 March 2020)

The spectre of the monstrous other, the abject, lesser woman, undone by a failure to self-regulate, be present, of being visibly dependent upon others, is omnipresent. It is tantamount to failure; the fear of reputational damage, even when confident of being correct in behaviour, is paramount.

Television normativity and self-regulation are amplified by the freelance context. As one interviewee put it, freelancing equates with "being completely without any sense of anyone looking out for you at all" (6 March 2020); freelancing denies a structure of care because of its atomised and individualist construction (Lee, "Ethics"). Discussion of care in a freelance context often focuses subjects on the situation in which care is not applied to them, revealing the emotional load demanded of women in television, who must simultaneously be multiple things: professional and intimate, open and withholding. Women are expected to care, not for their own families but in the workplace and for those around them; for the "Tom and Eds".

As the quotes above suggest, this is work that is ongoing and present and often overwhelming for women, but they have no recourse to complain. In the next quote, a woman describes the negotiation she made, demonstrative of the intersection of age and gender, in order to be able to direct her first hour, a significant step in the career path of a television director:

> it was when I was going from producer to being producer director and the exec made me a Faustian pact and said, "look, I need you to be a producer on this project, and backseat drive the director because the director's also the presenter. He is in his 60s. He shouldn't really be directing because he's not very good. But we need him as the presenter, so you need to direct him to direct the film. If you do that, I will then give you your first hour to direct." […] I was the only woman on a crew consisting of a male director/presenter in the 60s and then four men in their 50s who did absolutely fuck all, beyond fuck all […]. And then I had to tell everybody what to do, but then also be everybody's skivvy. So you're both mother and wife, basically you're everything. (17 April 2020)

The hierarchies at play here include seniority of age, position and/or gender, which make up constituent parts that oscillate throughout encounters. To get a programme on air is a team effort but within that team is a complex display and deployment of knowledge, position, status, hierarchy and rank, foregrounded and collapsed as required, which in this case resulted in the gendered situation of the woman being "everybody's skivvy".

Where might there be recourse to discuss these problems within television? The freelance context again works against verbalising any problems within the industry, because:

> If you're on a project alongside your peers, you're up against them. The freelance community, it's competitive even when you're working alongside people that you know [and] sometimes you even you're up for the same jobs. It's managing who you can talk to and you can't necessarily talk to the people you're working alongside, [because] you're competing with them. Maybe sometimes you can. But that's a tricky thing. I mean, somebody put me in touch with a docs group. And the woman who's running that started a rate card, so people are putting down their rates, or at least they can see what people are getting paid. But […] the big thing will be if men put down what they get. (1 May 2020)

Although the punitive aspects of freelance competition and the necessity for men to share information such as rates are foregrounded, this example also makes mention of the collectivising that can mitigate against the problems of isolation and as a means of introducing caring practices. The current Covid-19 crisis has engendered groups such as the Television Freelancers Task Force (TFTF), a Facebook group started in April 2020 as a reaction to the

collapse of film and television production in the pandemic context (Taylor) (as well as the aforementioned Coalition for Change). TFTF is self-described as "a group of industry freelancers, brought together to campaign for fundamental change within the industry. Our mission is to standardise working practices across the industry, review and regulate employment methods and improve the health and wellbeing of all freelancers". This online collectivising indicates a shift in awareness—as much production shut down, television workers have had their lack of structural protection brutally revealed to them. Part of the TFTF are the women of Share My Telly Job (SMTJ)—Natalie Grant, Lou Patel and Michelle Reynolds—who have campaigned for years for job-sharing to be a standard mode of television work, having had their lack of protection, in line with many women, brutally revealed to them after they had children (an additional irony is noted of it taking a pandemic for the television industry to understand what is normalised career disruption for women). In its design of enhanced possibility for television workers to mitigate against the demands of long hours and the many facets of precarity, the expression of SMTJ is one that Jilly Kay and Sarah Banet-Weiser term "Respair [being] a hope that recognises the need for care, for mutual support, for the never ending need for collectivity" (608). In other words, this research and the proposals of groups such as TFTF and SMTJ indicate that, in order to activate the caring practices offered by the discursive context of the television industry, those who control the television industry must engage with the suggestions of those more embedded in its everyday feeling.

Conclusion

This article presents evidence for the incomplete nature of the public "work" that aims to address issues of abuse as well as diversity, equality and inclusion in television and in the broader media and creative industries. This includes but is not limited to strategies across broader public engagement, such as #TimesUp, as well as policy and industry-led reports such as Respect at Work (BBC), within which ideas and ideals of care reside. These ideas and ideals have been widely discussed, as the short introductory review shows, but not adequately activated.

The discursive nature of this media-industries work does not account for the specificities of experience for women working in television, or how this experience intersects with other dimensions such as class, age and ethnicity. Therefore, the method used here, of a spectrum of intimate engagement through conversing, as opposed to reporting, enables the articulation of the peculiarities of each experience. In addition to examining these specificities, the analysis here reveals how television work encompasses many different roles and experiences, each which have different relationships to the issue of care.

The research presented here also suggests that the problems this public, discursive context illuminates, such as those of gendered marginalisation, are being actually built into the "feeling" of work in television and that this is something that needs urgently to be addressed. It may be that the collectivising that is emerging will help to draw attention to this; an increased articulation and therefore understanding of the specificities of the difficulties of working in television may be taking shape within the industry itself. Potentially, this can be taken in conjunction with the broader work as listed above, whether by industry, policy or academia, and integrated into an ethic of care that accounts for everyone.

Notes

[1] Although the work highlighted here is defined as "recent", as in being less than a decade old, Gillian Ursell has recorded that work tackling equality and diversity in television production in the US was completed as far back as the 1970s and also includes the formation in Britain of Women in Film and Television (WFTV) in the 1990s (Ursell, "Bearable Lightness" and "Television").

[2] Academic work on inequalities in the creative industries is abundant, but it is not presented here as applicable to the experience of the interviewees because of its academic context.

[3] The organisations signed up to the Coalition are BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 (ViacomCBS), Sky, UKTV, STV, Bectu, Pact, Film and TV Charity, ScreenSkills, The TV Collective, Share My Telly Job, Directors UK, Disabled People in TV, Viva La PD, The Unit List, Women in Film and TV.

[4] It is a marked quality of these interviews that women frequently "other" an imaginary, somewhat spectral figure of a woman who will complain, frequently citing her as "bitter". This speaks to much work on postfeminism, emotional labour, precarity, perfectionism and meritocracy in the cultural industries (Conor, Gill, and Taylor; Gill, "Cool"; Gill and Orgad; Littler; McRobbie, "Holloway" and "Notes"; Negra), which although not a focus of this article is an important clarifying context.

[5] The anthropological origination of "structures of feeling" (Highmore), shares an application to television production studies through Georgina Born, whose study of the BBC outlines a purpose of anthropological fieldwork in the corporation as revealing "gaps between principles and practice" and that one of the "marks of social power is how it enables those who hold it to determine the very framework of what can be said and even thought in a given social space" (15). While a comparative study of Born and Williams is not the purpose of this article, the revelation of these "gaps" and the idea of permission that stems from them is a conceptual context.

[6] Since Born wrote *Uncertain Vision*, the BBC has moved to a freelance system with BBC Studios, created in 2018 to bring "the BBC Group into line with the rest of the industry" (2018); BBC staff now bid against independent production companies to make BBC programmes.

[7] Quotes taken from three different interviews with freelance Producer/Directors: (1 May 2020; 17 April 2020; and 6 March 2020).

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Suggested Citation

Aust, Rowan. "Reflexive Practice, the "Turn to Care" and Accounting for Feeling: The Things We Talk About with Our Friends." *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, no. 20, 2020, pp. 119–134, DOI: https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.20.09.

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