

ORGANIZING CREATIVITY: A DESCRIPTION AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS  
OF COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION ON THE SET OF A  
PRIME-TIME TELEVISION DRAMA

by

Kara Jolliff Gould

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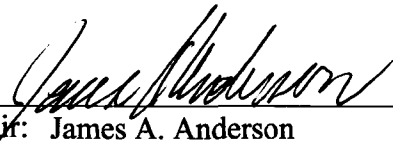
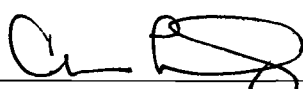
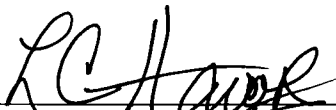


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of a dissertation submitted by

Kara Jolliff Gould

This dissertation has been read by each member of the following supervisory committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

<u>5.4.2006</u>	 Chair: James A. Anderson
<u>5.4.2006</u>	 Ann L. Darling
<u>5.4.2006</u>	 Leonard C. Hawes
<u>5.4.2006</u>	 Robert K. Avery
<u>5.4.2006</u>	 William C. Siska

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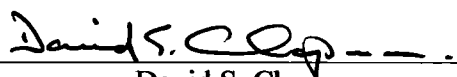
October 3, 2008  
Date

  
James A. Anderson  
Chair: Supervisory Committee

Approved for the Major Department

  
Ann L. Darling  
Chair/Dean

Approved for the Graduate Council

  
David S. Chapman  
Dean of The Graduate School

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines communication and collaboration among members of a film production crew producing a U.S. prime-time television series. It employs a social action approach to studying the daily collaborations of lower-level production workers engaged in the production process. It is a response to existing scholarly work on the production process, which typically has been approached through interviews with those in the upper echelons of the hierarchy, such as producers and directors.

The study focuses on the collaborative efforts of ordinary film production workers, despite scientific management's role in deemphasizing the significance of their everyday creative contributions. It also documents the typical shooting day for a film crew shooting episodic television at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The project provides empirical evidence that despite the hierarchical, scientifically managed structure of contemporary film production crews in the U.S., crew members at lower levels of the hierarchy can and do make substantial creative contributions to the final product produced. As importantly, it also shows *how* crew members are able to accomplish this work given the constraints and structure of management. Through the use of inter- and intradepartmental creative collaborative circles, some with fixed and some with flexible memberships, workers are able to collaborate with others throughout the hierarchy to improve the final product, increase production efficiency, or both.

This study has a number of implications for the television and film industries, as well as media production education, and any scientifically managed creative organization. Experienced lower-level production workers often have a wealth of knowledge and expertise beyond their own crafts from which the entire production can benefit. A clear understanding of how collaborative circles work in production settings can facilitate increased collaboration regardless of position and can encourage innovation in production.

Educators in television and film production can use this study to help students learn how some film production workers collaborate creatively with one another despite a strict organizational hierarchy. Future research may compare the practices of other media production crews to the one studied here, and may also explore potential differences in collaboration between union and nonunion crews.

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## ACRONYMS AND TERMS USED

### *Acronyms*

AC	Assistant camera
AD	Assistant director
CGI	Computer-generated images
DGA	Director's Guild of America
DP	Director of photography
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
HDTV	High definition television
HMI	Hydrargyrum medium arc iodide; a flicker-free light source balanced to match daylight color temperature
MOW	Movie(s) of the week
MPPC	Motion Picture Patents Company
OS	Over-the-shoulder shot
PA	Production assistant
POV	Point-of-view: a shot as though seeing through the eyes of a character.
SFX	Special effects; for example rocking an airplane to simulate turbulence; a device for clouds, etc.
UPM	Unit production manager

### *Terms Used*

Best boy: Assistant to gaffer (head electrician).

Boom operator: Holds the boom microphone at the end of a large pole; the microphone is held above actors' heads and out of camera range.

Call sheet(s): See Appendix F.

Closed set: A set that is closed to visitors.

Craft worker: a worker skilled in a specific task in filmmaking such as working with props, electric, etc.

Day players: Workers hired for a single day at a time.

Departments: (See separate listings, chapter 4.)

- Art department
- Camera department
- Electric department
- Grip department
- Hair/makeup department
- Locations department
- Operations department
- Production department
- Props department
- Sound department
- Special effects (SFX) department
- Transportation department
- Wardrobe department
- Other departments

Gaffer: "A lighting electrician on a motion-picture or television set" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 2003). Typically, the gaffer is the head electrician on the set.

Green screen: refers to the electronic chroma key process in which a particular background color (such as green or blue) is used during shooting, then electronically replaced by another background image in post production.

Grip: "Stagehand" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 2003).

Key grip: The head of the grip department.

Mic grip: Microphone stagehand.

Props: Short for properties. If an actor handles an item in a scene, it is a prop; things that are not handled are set dressing(s).

Second second assistant director (AD). Assists the second AD. See Figure 1 (page 73 herein) showing the hierarchy in the production department.

Set dresser: A person who "dresses" the set (pictures on the walls, flowers on the mantel, etc.). This is different from the props person.

Setup: "[4]a. A camera position from which a scene is filmed; also the footage taken from one camera position; [4]b. The final arrangement of the scenery and properties for a scene of a theatrical or cinematic production" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 2003).

Sides: See Appendix F.

Sitcom: Situation comedy (such as *I Love Lucy*).

Steadicam™: A portable camera support device that has a large mechanical arm attached to a brace. Allows the camera operator free movement while providing a steady shot. For example, the camera operator may need to walk backwards while shooting in order to face the actors.

Take: "(Noun): A scene filmed or televised at one time without stopping the camera" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 2003).

"Wrap": Completion of shooting.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*The light is low. The clamoring of production equipment accompanies the commencement of a new "setup"<sup>1</sup>— film and lighting equipment must be rapidly moved from one set to another. The second-story sound stage is a virtual obstacle course, with cables snaking across the black wooden floor. There are four different sets on this stage today, and at least one more in another building south of town. All were constructed for this single episode of a weekly dramatic television series. It will take 12 days to shoot.*

*Supervisors speak quiet commands to the gaffers (electricians) and grips (stagehands) through short-range radios, who listen through earpieces as they work. They're working to light a male "extra" sitting in what looks to be a 10-foot rectangular box with a small cut-out window on either side. Upon closer inspection, a faux aircraft instrument panel may be seen inside, along with two low wooden benches, one near the instrument panel, another further back. A child's picture book lays open nearby; clearly visible are drawings and photos of a 1920s aircraft. The crew is preparing to reenact portions of Charles Lindbergh's first transatlantic flight.*

*The 35mm film camera is moved into position, as electricians, grips, camera operator and assistants discuss the setup with the director and director of photography*

---

<sup>1</sup> For a definition of this and other terms used throughout, see Acronyms and Terms Used.



*(DP). The control panel must work! It must show the correct time and altitude.*

*Additional crew members are assigned to monitor correct settings as the first assistant director (AD) tries to figure what time the clock should read. New York time? Paris? What time was it when Lindbergh said he grew tired, hallucinated? How many miles had he traveled? What time did he start? How fast was the plane? The AD hastily does the math aloud.*

*A special effects supervisor discusses with the grips how the rectangular box may be rocked to simulate aeronautic turbulence as the actor playing the pilot lurches inside. A large fan blows dry ice, cloudlike, past one side of the box as the grips practice and refine their virtual turbulence. They take turns, some moving the box, others standing back to see how it looks. The director walks over and silently nods his approval.*

*The camera is ready now, the lights are set, all is quiet as the guest star appears for a final, brief rehearsal before shooting. The actors, camera operator, and his assistants rehearse as the grips violently rock the "aircraft." The camera is positioned to capture the actor's right profile through the "aircraft window," and painted flats on the opposite side of the plane evidence blue skies behind the "clouds." The rehearsal is finished, and shooting begins. The grips rock the box more violently than ever. "Not so much! Cut the turbulence!" The director shouts, and the rocking lessens in the next take as the clouds continue to stream by. The film is cut, the camera readied for a reverse angle on the other side of the aircraft, and shooting begins again. After 2½ hours, the aircraft shots are finally finished, ahead of schedule. All seem satisfied as the company begins setup in a small, completely fabricated but strikingly realistic set dressed as an opulent hotel room of the 1920s.*

*What they don't know is that they will be shooting all of those airplane sequences again. One of the producers doesn't like the clouds. The clouds must go. The director is irritated with the absentee producer. But with actors and crew, he is patient. They will all stay late to finish.*

### *Statement of the Problem*

The film and television production process involves the creative and collaborative efforts of professionals performing a variety of creative, organizational, and technical duties. "There are so many different people involved in actual production," write Lindheim and Blum (1991), "that their roles are often confused or overlooked" (p. 40).

The most popular video and film production textbooks (Burrows, Gross, Foust, & Wood, 2000; Compesi & Gomez, 2006; Mamer, 2005; Zettl, 2004, 2006) explain the individual function of each video or film production position, but their major focus is on equipment—how each piece of equipment works, and how to use it. As an educator teaching television production to college students, I have realized that one of the greatest challenges for students involves learning about these roles, and how to work together creatively on a production. Students report, and often complain, that the collaborative aspects of production are the most challenging (Gould, 1998). In textbooks, the topic of how crew members collaborate creatively on a production is typically addressed in just a few pages if at all (Mamer, 2005, and Zettl, 2004, make the best efforts, at two and 4½ pages, respectively).

To complicate matters, television programs in the U.S. not broadcast live are shot on either film or video; the shooting styles and crew structures from each medium

are different, since they grew from different industrial traditions. Thus, different production textbooks favor different traditions, and offer descriptions based upon those traditions. None of the textbooks cited above offer detailed explanations of both traditions, or how the traditions have begun to converge, even though job titles and crew positions traditionally used in film production (such as grip) have crossed over into the lexicon of video production.

The shooting style of video production grew from that used to create early live, and later (after 1955) taped television programs. This studio-based style had evolved from radio production when the major radio broadcast networks (CBS, NBC, and ABC) moved their entertainment programming to television in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Thus, crew structure and management for such productions resembled radio crews, and this tradition lives on television today in live-produced news, sports, special programming (such as awards programs, comedic and musical specials) and taped programs such as game shows and reality-based entertainment programming, daytime drama, and, until recently, situation comedies.

Programs for television shot on film, however, utilize production techniques of a different tradition—one developed and perfected by the U.S. motion picture industry prior to and during that industry's famed "studio era," traditionally taught in film schools but not in radio/TV or broadcasting departments of U.S. colleges and universities.

Since the development of high definition television (HDTV) and video in Japan in the 1980s, the film and television industries have been moving toward a technological convergence; many professionals today find high definition video comparable in quality to film. The development of digital nonlinear editing, pioneered

by George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic and later sold to the founders of Avid Technologies, Inc., began impacting the broadcast and video production industries in the early 1990s, and soon was adopted by many the film production industry as well as film schools.

The program I observed for this study was shot on film, but was edited digitally on the Avid Film Composer to allow for easier insertion of visual effects. Video equipment known as "video assist" was used to provide instant playback capabilities, so recently-shot scenes could be evaluated before film stock was developed and digitized. It should be made clear, however, that the production process I observed and analyzed for this study was a film production process utilizing video for instant playback and postproduction. The film production process was one adapted for television in the 1950s by film studios looking to profit from the new medium of television (Hawes, 2002).

Textbooks are not alone in giving the collaborative aspects of the film and television production process short shrift. Academics have largely ignored the media production process as an object of humanistic and scientific study (although see Lynch, 1973; Nielsen, 1985; Pekurny, 1980; Saferstein, 1991).

Why this dearth of inquiry into the daily collaborations of film production workers? It may have to do with a management style popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century known as scientific management (Taylor, 1911). With its focus on efficiency and a division of labor, this approach de-emphasizes the creative roles of lower-level workers, while glorifying the contributions of producers and directors. Once this management style was applied to filmmaking, producers became "managers," and directors, "supervisors." Creative decisions were attributed to those in management positions. This trend is reflected in the scope and focus of much of the journalist and academic

literature related to creative aspects of film and television production. Such works tend to focus not on the contributions of lower level workers, but on creative decision making by producers, directors, and occasionally cinematographers. This lack of regard for the contributions of lower level production workers was reflected in the puzzlement of the publicity director of the production I observed for this study, when she wondered aloud why I needed to continue observing on-set week after week. "Doesn't everyone just do the same thing every day?" she asked.

This study will answer her question with a clear-cut "No." On set, an observer is faced with a myriad of activities. Production team members work together simultaneously to create solutions to problems while working to complete their particular assigned duties. Routine tasks must often be performed in new ways to fit changing circumstances in scripts, weather, talent, available equipment, and so forth. This organizational complexity provides an extraordinary opportunity for studying creativity in a cooperative endeavor. While producers, directors, and writers often fight over the right to "authorship" of television programs and films, I argue that such works are authored not just jointly between producers, writers, and directors, but *collectively* among the production crew members. As Mamer (2005) writes:

The major tenet . . . that the director is the "author" of the film . . . has led to a significant misunderstanding about the role of the supporting crew members. It would seem unnecessary to repeat the cliché that filmmaking is a collaborative art, except that few people truly understand what it means: Every crew member is faced with decisions large and small that contribute many elements to a film. If they do not bring some measure of creativity to these decisions, the project as a whole will suffer. (p. 309)

### *Purpose of the Study*

This is a qualitative study of the daily workings of a film production crew shooting a popular weekly drama for network television. How is it that film crews for television and motion pictures work? How do crew members work together creatively within a hierarchical crew structure? As noted above, media production textbooks offer much technical information, but very little instruction as to how crew members actually work together to accomplish the production of a film or television program. The purpose of this study is to help fill the void of scholarly works which address such questions, and to do so through the observation and analysis of the daily workings of a production crew shooting film for television.

It intends to contribute to existing theories of collaboration and organizational work groups by examining what creative collaboration means for a film production company, and to do so in three significant ways.

First, the study looks at the film production process from a historical perspective and considers the early history of current work practices. With whom did the earliest filmmakers work? When and how did film crews evolve from the cameraman and director/camera approaches, to a full, scientifically managed division of labor? While Staiger (1985d) points out that the "assembly line" approach to production could not be applied strictly to filmmaking (as it was to the production of a mechanical product such as Henry Ford's Model "T"), the process was conducted and approached in that management tradition to the greatest extent possible. How was scientific management implemented in the film industry in the early days?

Next, the study describes the typical workday in the shooting phase of production for a popular weekly television drama shot in the U.S. around the turn of the

21<sup>st</sup> century, and includes a description of departments and crew positions. This description includes episodic writings that provide insight into crew members' everyday work and sensemaking activities, and sets the stage for the presentation of data and data analysis.

How *do* crew members work collaboratively to manage the creative process and achieve production goals? What does the term "creativity" mean for this film production company, and who is expected (and allowed) to engage in the creative collaborative process? What meanings do crew members have for their jobs, and how do they make sense of their work as they endeavor to produce a television drama as a team (while still within a traditional, hierarchical management model)? What are the work performances that are expected of them, and that they expect from one another? How *do* crew members work collaboratively to manage the creative process and achieve production goals?

The study draws from field note data to answer these questions through the analysis of observed film crew interactions and collaborations on set. The analysis of film crew communication includes a description and analysis of basic rules and practices with the group's organizational communicative processes, and also considers the role that the hierarchical, scientifically-managed film crew structure plays in the collaborative process. It maintains that despite the traditional hierarchical crew structure, production workers at all levels contribute to the creative process during shooting, and it posits the notion that these contributions occur through creative, collaborative groups or "work circles" which are described in detail.

Results will offer insights into crew member creativity, collaboration, work team, and management issues in media production organizations. They may aid in the

development of teaching techniques that will help students learn to function creatively and collaboratively within their own student work groups, and eventually, media production organizations. The study will also have implications for any organizations in which members regularly engage in collaborative creative work

### *Project Overview*

From its inception, the main goal of this project has been to study the communicative, creative, and collaborative organizational practices of a film production crew. To accomplish those ends, as background preparation, I attended a week-long seminar at the Maine Film Workshops on unit production management and first assistant directing. Knowledge gained was critical to my fieldwork experience, because it allowed me to gain information and knowledge related specifically to film production crews. As a former video freelancer and college instructor of television production, I was already familiar with production techniques and approaches specific to shooting video for television. My time in Maine allowed me to broaden my perspective to include the management processes, skills, and crafts traditionally used in shooting film-for-television.

Following my actual fieldwork, however, I felt the need to explore the organizational history of the film crew as a way to inform my own sensemaking activities about film crew members and what they do. After an exhaustive search, I found that while many books have been written describing the typical responsibilities of various film crew members, fewer focused on the study of how motion picture production crews developed and evolved over time. Those that do, however (Bordwell, Thompson, & Staiger, 1985; Kindem, 1982), offer significant insight into this evolution,



and some (such as Hawes, 2002) work to explain how film production management worked to begin producing film for television in the 1950s. This history represents the roots of telefilm, production which I observed in my fieldwork. So I supplemented my observations and field notes by surveying the organizational history of the film crew. This glimpse of the changing makeup of the film crew in the United States, from motion pictures' beginnings circa 1893, through the decline of the studio system and the advent of television in the 1940s and '50s, led me to examine the influence of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century management trends on the motion picture production management over the years. I found that such trends eventually influenced production management of episodic television (which was the context of my film production field work).

I place this historical glimpse of film crews at the beginning of Chapter Four, directly following theory and methods, because I trust readers without strong backgrounds in the industrial history of film (and I have learned there are few experts, since most film scholars focus on the films themselves) will come away with insights that will help them better understand my sometimes jargon-laden observations as well as my theoretical conclusions and the implications of the study. Once the section is complete, I move back to my data analysis with new insights regarding the historical, economic, and institutional constraints that impact the working lives of film production crew members today.

Next, I examine the makeup of the particular production crew I was observing. How is this production crew structured? Who does what? What are the shooting crew's daily work and social routines? How closely do artifacts such as organizational hierarchy tables, crew lists, position descriptions, and so forth, reflect the actual workings of the film crew *in practice*? These questions are answered to further inform

readers as to the daily actions within which the organizational sensemaking of film crews is situated. The results of that descriptive work are included in the second half of Chapter Four as a precursor to my interpretation of the field data (Chapter Five), in which I analyze particular activities of crew members in an effort to better understand, and theorize about, how their creative collaboration works on this set.

### *Research Questions*

This project allows for the exploration of several pertinent research questions. The first, simplest, and most obvious of those was "who does what?" Because film and video production methods for television change with technology, periodic descriptions of the production process are informative and necessary for purposes of education, analysis, and of course, history.

When I began the study, I decided on a grounded theory approach to data collection (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Because grounded theory refers to a process of generating theory inductively, at the outset of a study, research questions are formulated which may or may not be applied appropriately to the observational data since it has yet to be collected. Once data are collected, research questions may be reformulated depending on whether or not the data actually inform the original questions posed. Thus, in a study utilizing grounded theory, research questions are often revised, refined, reformulated, or even eliminated following data collection.

In my prospectus, I identified the research questions which I would keep in mind as I engaged in participant observation in the field. Many of the questions I originally posed were relevant during and after the field collection process. Others, however, were not answered by the data, and had to be revised and/or discarded.

The questions whose answers were informed by the data I collected in the field were:

1. How is this production crew structured?
2. Who does what on set?
3. What are acceptable ways of crew behavior and communication, both verbal and nonverbal?
4. How clearly defined is the division of labor? How strictly enforced is it, and by whom?
5. Is it acceptable to overtly question the decision of a superior? If so, how and when?
6. How are power and control exerted on set?
7. What is the sense that various crew members make of their jobs, the jobs of others, and the organization?
8. How do crew members view their own collaborative practices?
9. Does the hierarchical crew structure allow for the improvisational creativity that must occur in particular instances, and if so, when?
10. What part do these and other related practices (such as acts of individual invention and improvisation) play in the creative, collaborative process?

Questions which could not be answered by the data included:

11. Under what circumstances and/or conditions is resistance practiced among media production professionals in the workplace? What is the function of such resistance?
12. How might crew members resist the controlling aspects of the formulaic television drama?

13. How do crew members view their own organizational practices and those of others within the organization?

While I did gain some insights regarding power and control within the hierarchical crew structure, resistance was less observable from my perspective during my time in the field. Thus, this study does not address resistance specifically.

Other questions that came up as I analyzed my data were more specific to daily interpersonal interactions on set. They include:

1. What are the rules of interpersonal communication, and how do they relate to the crew structure and organizational hierarchy?
2. What are acceptable ways of crew behavior and communication, both verbal and nonverbal?
3. Who may make a bid to speak, and when?
4. How are the reciprocal implications of power (Anderson & Englehardt, 2001) activated through daily work routines?
5. What conclusions can be drawn about the organization, the nature of creativity, and collaboration, based on my answers to the questions above?

These research questions established the parameters for the literature review that follows in Chapter Two. Specifically, that chapter surveys the literature on film crew collaboration, from works published in the popular press to academic works including books, journal articles, and dissertations, to show how no other studies have approached this topic from the same perspective as I do in this study. The review also includes works on creativity, collaboration, and power in organizational settings.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE/THEORY

This chapter reviews literature related to the creative collaboration of film and television production crews, first from the popular press, then from the academic fields of communication, film studies, economics, business, and sociology. Then, it turns to literature related to theories of communication, creativity, and collaboration that offer theoretical insight into the collaborative work process, and are consistent with my own perspective, informed by my theoretical approach, social action theory. This review makes clear that while collaboration is often discussed in relation to film and television production, the process is rarely dealt with directly in a substantive way. When it is, discussions often focus on how collaborative processes might affect the content of a film or television program (Bordwell et al., 1985) or how particular management styles better suited to permanent organizations might be applied in companies created temporarily for the sole purpose of producing a particular film or television program (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1998). These purposes are in contrast with those of this project, which describes and analyzes the collaborative processes involved in the production process with the goal of better understanding how collaboration occurs on the set within, and despite, the hierarchical organizational structure of U.S. film production crews.

*Works Related to the Television and Film Production Process*

*Popular and Trade Books*

Books and television programs that focus on the industry tend to report on celebrity actors, producers, and directors and their latest programs and films, rather than on the production process. Ever-popular "Making of . . ." documentaries have acquainted many viewers with the most astonishing technologies used on some of the more special effects-laden productions, but the everyday routines that comprise the production process are rarely examined, as such works tend to focus on key decision makers, celebrity actors, and public and private controversies related to the film.

Books of the "career-information" genre offer more information about what production people do than any other sorts of books published in the popular press. Some offer overviews of film and television production (Brouwer & Wright, 1990; Taub, 1994), while others (Alves, 1991; Crisp, 1996; Preston, 1994; Rowlands, 1993) focus on specific production roles. Some, in an effort to describe the challenges of production management, also provide information on the day-to-day duties of many different production workers, since such knowledge is helpful for managing the entire process (Gates, 1999; Patz, 1997). I used these works to further enrich my understanding of the current division of labor and specific crew position responsibilities that are dominant in the contemporary film industry.

One popular introductory guide to film production crews is Taub's *Gaffers, Grips, and Best Boys* (1994). Taub collected essays from experienced film production people (including director John Carpenter) in which each person describes his or her role in production, and recounts numerous personal experiences in the process. While the collaborative process among film crew members is not explored in any great depth,

the book provided detailed descriptions of each position that allowed me to compare what I had learned regarding crew positions at the Maine Film Workshops with Taub's descriptions. It helped confirm my understandings of what particular crew positions entail.

*Working in Hollywood* (Brouwer & Wright, 1990) is another collection of essays by various film production professionals concerning what they do. This book included more information on how a professional in one particular production position interfaces with other production positions: that is, how much workers must depend on each other, work together, and so forth. Although such sections are fairly short, they do provide a glimpse of crew interaction and collective creativity. This book supported the idea that collaboration among film crew members would be worthy of further study. It also introduced the notion that small groups of crew members work together on different production tasks at different times, an idea that is central to the understanding of film production work that my study provides.

To further prepare for my observations on the film production set, I looked to *Surviving Production: The Art of Production Management for Film and Television* (Patz, 1997). In it, production coordinator Deborah Patz outlines in great detail the duties and responsibilities associated with production management. Since production coordination involves every aspect of a production to some extent, brief descriptions of various production positions are included. The most detailed descriptions, however, are of the duties of the production office staff: the unit production manager, production coordinator, secretary, accountants, and office production assistants. In the early stages of this project, I was not certain whether or not I would have access to the production office staff for observations. In the end, I did not (although I did visit more than once),

so Patz's book offered me a perspective on what was happening when on-set personnel such as directors, assistant directors, and so forth, communicated by way of cell phone or radio with the office.

### *The Academic Press*

In academic circles, there is not much scholarly research centering on the production process. In their book *Under the Stars*, Gray and Seeber (1996) lament that so little has been written in general about the production workplace. "While a voluminous bibliography could be constructed of books, articles, and popular press devoted to the artistic side of this industry" they write "almost no attention has been paid to the people who work in it" (p. 1). Of academic books written on the subject of production (excluding textbooks), many in the field of communication tend to focus on the work of producers and/or directors only. Newcomb and Alley's *The Producer's Medium: Conversations with Creators of American TV* (1983) is comprised of a series of interviews with prominent TV producers about their work. Broughton's *Producers on Producing* (1986) takes a similar approach, as does Cantor (1988). Kuney's *Take One* (1990) brings together interviews with several television directors who speak about their unique role in the production process. Keyton and Smith (2006) examine power struggles in the production of a prime-time television program, but they focus mainly on producers and directors as well.

Other humanistic critics have focused on content form, meanings, and audience analysis, while social scientists have looked mostly at how exposure to media content might affect individual viewers and society at large. I looked for qualitative studies that focused on the processes of shooting television and film through either observation or



interviews. I found 12 principal works to inform this study of television and film crew collaboration: in the fields of communication, film studies, economics, business, and sociology. Next, I identified works related to creativity and collaboration that would inform this study at the theoretical level. Finally I discuss theorists whose works speak to the role of power in communication, particularly collaborative communication.

### *Communication*

Articles by Lynch (1973) and Pekurny (1980) are the earliest published in the communication field that describe some aspects of the professional television production process from the perspective of an academic observer. In "Seven Days with *All in the Family*": A Case Study of the Taped TV Drama" (1973), Lynch focuses on direction, camera blocking, and the production schedule used in the shooting of this top-rated Norman Lear program, and offers detailed descriptions of production.

Pekurny (1980) looks at the production process of *Saturday Night Live* during the production of three episodes. In addition to chronicling the production schedule, this work focuses on the now-defunct broadcast standards department at NBC, and its alleged "special treatment" of *Saturday Night Live* (that is, allowing program content to include elements considered by some to be objectionable). The production crew is alluded to only briefly. Also, this particular program is shot live. The genre of television drama, which this study explores, utilizes film rather than video, which requires a somewhat different production process and a substantially different crew structure, more akin to theatrical motion picture crews than studio television crews. Still, these two early studies served as evidence to me that academia has recognized the significance of an academic treatment of the production process.

Another communication scholar, Nielsen (1985), takes a historical approach in his dissertation, entitled *Motion Picture Craft Workers and Craft Unions in Hollywood: The Studio Era, 1912-1948*. His is not an observational study, but he does use qualitative methods as he interviews former film crew members about labor issues related to their work in the early days of Hollywood film production. His historical work helped me gain a more informed perspective on labor issues, and particularly informs this work in Chapter 4.

Smith and Keyton are scholars (Smith in business, Keyton in organizational communication) who have observed the production of prime-time television in the U.S., although they tend to focus on the producer level rather than the production crew. Their 2001 study of how a producer worked to maintain power in a production organization shows how storytelling within the script of a television program can entertain while at the same time reinforcing the producer's power position. While I do not seek to link program content with the production process in this study, Smith and Keyton (2001) (as well as the aforementioned Keyton & Smith, 2006) have worked to establish the relevance and importance of studying communication within television production organizations.

### *Film Studies*

While I have found no observational studies of the film and television production process in film studies literature over the past 25 years, Staiger (1985b, 1985d, 1985e, 1995) has analyzed the production process (through the study of past interviews and production company documents) as a way of possibly linking what she terms the Hollywood "mode of production" with the *content* of Hollywood films—the

most common object of study. In Bordwell et al.'s *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* (1985), the authors seek to link the style of film content to how it was produced, and the conditions (economic, social, organizational) under which it was produced, using interviews, archival materials, and analyses of the films themselves. Staiger (1985c), who focuses on the mode of production, offers an extensive treatment of the division of labor in film and its origins in 18<sup>th</sup>-century economic theory (Braverman, 1974; Smith, 1991), which I explore in Chapter 4. Although Staiger does not fully explore on-set collaboration, she implies in her analysis that there is more collaboration on film production sets than one might expect in a scientifically managed environment.

In her introduction to her edited book, *The Studio System*, Staiger (1995) points out inherent difficulties with the idea of the auteur in film, then calls for an observational study of crew member interactions on set to better understand the collaborative process of filmmaking. She writes:

To anyone who has watched a film being made it is obvious that a whole set of rules about personnel interaction are operative, such as who may talk with whom, when, and about what. . . . A study of the sociology of the work process has not yet been attempted. (p. 6)

Balio's work (1976, 1990) also played an important role in shaping the foundation of this study. His edited anthology, *The American Film Industry* (1976) provides key information on the film industry, past and present, including important information on film management in the early years. Another anthology, *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (Balio, 1990), provides background on the different ways the film industry attempted to adjust after the advent of network television.

Finally, Christopher Anderson (1994) provides important information concerning how the film studios ultimately learned to profit from the medium of television—by creating television divisions, and implementing studio-era management techniques in order to produce series television on film cheaply and profitably, as in the case of Warner Brothers Television. This transfer of film industry techniques to television perpetuated many of the conventions of the Hollywood studio system, including management style, crew structure, division of labor, job descriptions, and so forth, and this was evident on the set I observed.

### *Economics*

Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974) also provides helpful background for this study. Braverman critiques scientific management and its division of labor (advocated early on by Adam Smith in 1776, and later by Taylor, published in book form in 1911), which was widely adopted by early 20<sup>th</sup>-century industrial management, including film production management. His description and critique of the implementation of scientific management over the past 100 years is crucial to this study. Some other industries have since moved away from this approach, but it is still intact (although always in modified form, Staiger argues) in the film and television industry. This approach de-emphasizes (and sought to eliminate) creative decision-making on the part of individual lower-level workers (Taylor, 1911) for the sake of efficiency. Yet my data show that such lower-level decision-making was common on the set I was observing, despite the management model implemented.

## *Business*

In the field of business, there are a couple of works I found particularly relevant. In their 1998 article, "Paradox in Project-Based Enterprise: The Case of Film Making," DeFillippi and Arthur make clear the need for studying project-based work, since it is increasingly more common in contemporary society, and involves different interpersonal and management dynamics due to the temporal nature of the organization. Film and television work is largely project-based, and even though the television series I observed was produced for several years, it was a project-based enterprise; when the program was cancelled, the production company folded. While DeFillippi and Arthur do not focus specifically on collaboration, they highlight the fact that project-oriented organizations present different challenges for management. They find that "human and social capital" is more important in temporary organizations, as freelance workers come together to work on particular projects.

One might tend to think that a more horizontal management model would be most appropriate for creative industries; after all, the model has been adopted in a variety of industries, and, as Ostroff (1999) notes, is being adopted by companies in a variety of industries, such as Ford's Customer Service Division, Xerox, and OSHA. Ostroff's book, *The Horizontal Organization*, presents what he sees as the shortcomings of the hierarchical approach to management that has been around since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. "It is increasingly apparent that the long-favored vertical model is, by itself, no longer capable of meeting all the different needs of business," Ostroff writes (p. 6). He believes the approach has inherent weaknesses that the horizontal approach does not. Ostroff's work is important for this study because in it,

Ostroff defines horizontal management, then describes several weaknesses often attributed to scientific management—the same commonly-held assumptions that often lead people to assume that film and television production crew workers do not have significant creative input. These include: 1) focusing on "functional goals" rather than "value and winning customers"; 2) the loss of key information as it traveled up and down the lines of authority; 3) the "fragmentation of performance objectives" (as manifested in the division of labor); 4) the expenses of administering and coordinating "overly fragmented work and departments"; and 5) "the stifling of creativity and initiative of workers at lower levels" (Ostroff, 1999, pp 6-7).

The last complaint, the stifling of creativity at lower levels, has particular application to this study, which focuses on creativity and collaboration. It is ironic that in the largest creative industry in the world (as measured by revenues and numbers of workers), the U.S. motion picture/television industry has not sought to reorganize its production management system based on the well-documented weaknesses of its system of managing film production crews. Does this mean the problems of implementing scientific management in other fields do not exist in the film and film-for-television industries? Not necessarily. For some reason, the industry has found it practical to continue such management methods but many others have abandoned them. Because this project focuses on film crew practices and how the work of the film crew is accomplished, Ostroff's summation of the major criticisms of the management method employed on the set of the crew I observed (scientific management) will serve as an appropriate point of departure for a discussion of my data. The fifth, particularly, will be used as a lens through which to view film crew management and employee practices,

including the issues of creativity, collaboration, power, control and resistance inherent in those practices.

Another significant contribution to the business literature is one that offers exemplars of effective collaboration project-oriented groups. Bennis and Biederman's *Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration* (1998) takes a narrative approach to the study of collaborative human action. Coining the moniker "Great Group" to describe a successful collaborative work group, the authors examine the creative collaboration of several such groups, whose projects ranged from developing the Apple computer, inventing the atomic bomb, and running Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential election campaign, to, not surprisingly, collaborating on animated motion pictures (project development during the early days of Walt Disney Studios). "Filmmaking is collaborative almost by definition," they write (p. 6). Their study of Disney's animation department, based on interviews with staff members, emphasizes the collaborative nature of filmmaking, and explores issues related to worker satisfaction despite the fact that workers who collaborate on animated films are usually less well-known than their live-action counterparts. What specific management methods were used in the organizations that spawned these Great Groups?

Bennis and Biederman do not focus on those; rather, they concentrate on what allowances managers need to make in order for such creative collaborative groups to be effective. They need creative freedom, isolation from mundane peripheral tasks, and an effective leader who understands that managing creativity can be likened to "herding cats." Bennis and Biederman's emphasis on collaboration as a phenomenon which occurs among group members, rather than within each individual, encouraged me to continue an interactional, rather than cognitive, approach to the study of media

production collaboration. The book also offers rare examples of creative collaborative groups within creative hierarchical organizations, such as the Walt Disney animation studio.

### *Sociology*

In his dissertation, *Collaborative Work Processes: A Comparative Study in the Network Television Production Industries of the United States and the United Kingdom*, Saferstein (1991) sets out to examine the collaborative production processes of multiple television dramas in the U.S. and the U.K. As I do in this study, Saferstein uses ethnographic methods to observe the on-set television production process. (He observes on the sets of four different television programs some shot on video, some on film.) Although his title implies a systematic study of film production crews' work processes, in reality he focuses on collaboration in postproduction sound editing, not in the shooting or the production phase itself, which is the focus of my project. Also, his approach to collaboration is through what he calls *social cognition*, and he asserts that matching mental models is key to the creative collaborative process.

Saferstein does make some observations that supported my initial interest in this project; he notes that workers he interviewed reported a high level of creative collaboration in the production process. "This study examines how the discourse processes and social cognition central to collaboration affect the social organization of enterprises," he writes (p. xiii). He finds collaboration as much of a constraint to innovation as bureaucratic hierarchies. (In my view, collaboration can result in increased innovation, but that is not what this study explores.) He asserts that while it seems that workers in each phase of production have some autonomy, they are



constrained by the fact that their work must connect with that of others in the end. He further revealed his ideological stance by maintaining that the collaborative mode of work on the sets he studied blocked workers' views of larger social or political issues, such as "the social or political implications of the resulting television programs" (p. xv).

The Saferstein study concludes that there is "A constant shifting of authority in collaborative modes of work" (p. xiv) on set, despite the hierarchy, an assertion which my data bears out. My analysis of that shifting authority takes an interactional sensemaking, rather than a social cognition approach, and finds meaning in crew members' interactions, and their interpretations of their own interactions, rather than in Saferstein's "mental models," which he asserts workers attempt to match in their efforts to collaborate on a television program.

### *Theories of Creativity and Collaboration in Organizational Settings*

Most academic literature in the field of business takes a behaviorist or cognitivist approach, and focused on individual and team creativity in corporate settings (see Peters, 1994; Robinson & Stern, 1997). Research and commentary on what it means to be creative in a media production organization is rare.

For a less individualistic approach to creativity and collaboration that is consistent with my theoretical position, Weick's approach to organizing is appropriate. While Weick, not unlike many scholars of his time, has cognitivist roots, his theories are not essentially cognitivist. In his seminal work, *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (1969), Weick emphasizes the social constructedness of organizations, and places sensemaking squarely in the center of organizational activities, just as social action theorists do. Weick calls organizational structure the "structure of mutual

expectation maintaining" (p. 3), and thus asserts that making sense of organizational actions is a continuous process, and central to organizational life. Although in his definition of sensemaking, "assembling ongoing interdependent action into sensible sequences that generate sensible outcomes" (p. 3), Weick uses the terms of cognitive, objectivist social science, it is clear that his approach is more actional than cognitivist. He holds that making sense of various behaviors within an organization is what organizing is all about. His theory of sensemaking and its role in organizations shares social action theory's roots in pragmatism and social constructionism, and makes sense as a perspective through which to frame an observational study of communicative practices within an organization.

For Weick, sensemaking is retroactive: we work to rationalize the past, in an effort to come up with a view of reality that makes sense. Such retroactivity is at work in this study in two ways—first, film crew members exhibit such action through interviews, specifically through explanations of how things work; second, for me as a researcher, the very act of writing this dissertation, analyzing data, then theorizing in the tradition of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory is a retroactive sensemaking process.

Weick's technical definition of organizing as "a consensually validated grammar for reducing equivocality by means of sensible interlocked behaviors" (p. 3) evidences his social constructionist, interpretivist leanings, since grammar is said to be "consensually validated," and sensemaking, or the reduction of equivocality, occurs through "interlocked behaviors" which, of course, may be either actional or discursive (p. 3).

In *Sensemaking in Organizations* (1995), Weick moves even further away from strict cognitivism. His overview of the "historical roots" of sensemaking is a virtual intellectual genealogy which he traces directly to the pragmatism of James (1950) and the notion that "truth happens to an idea." Weick sees sensemaking as inherently retrospective and social, citing Mead (1934) on social process versus the individual mind. Weick continually weaves social constructionist and interpretivist influences into his account of how scholarly thought on sensemaking has developed over roughly the past century. Although Weick does not call himself a hermeneutic empiricist, he has obviously had some of the same influences as scholars from that camp. Milestone works include James (1950, first published in 1890); Mead (1934); Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939); Selznick (1949); Berger and Luckmann (1966); Schutz (1965); Garfinkel (1967); Blumer (1969); Giddens (1976); and Putnam (1983), many of which influenced the development of social action theory as well.

The brand of hermeneutic empiricism to which I ascribe has been influenced by the action-based language philosophies of Wittgenstein and Bakhtin; pragmatism (with roots in Dewey, Mead, Goffman, and others); social constructionism as posited by Berger and Luckmann (1966) (influenced by Weber and others, including Mead); structuration theory (Giddens, 1986) and social action theory (Anderson, 1996a, 1996b; Schoening, 1992; Schoening & Anderson, 1995).

While Wittgenstein, in his earlier works (such as the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 2001) held to an objective empiricist view that included adherence to a correspondence or picture theory of meaning, he later abandoned this view in favor of a philosophy that held meanings to come about through "language in use." (See *The Blue and Brown Books* [Wittgenstein 1960] and *Philosophical Investigations* [Wittgenstein,

1968].) Wittgenstein uses vivid examples to illustrate his idea of "language games," a view that considers particular rules for language use and social interaction in given instances. Of course, the rules of these language games differ from context to context, organization to organization.

Bakhtin's theory of dialogics (1986) may also be considered a "social" action based language philosophy. Bakhtin rejected traditional linguistic approaches that held that meaning was in (and thus could be extracted from) the basic structural elements of the sentence (grammar, syntax, etc.). Bakhtin held that meanings were in language use, particularly dialogue. The utterance is of great importance to Bakhtin; its origin is not simply from the individual, but from the community as well. Each utterance carries with it other voices. Meanings come through convention and interaction as well as dialogue (Schoening, 1992); speech genres help us manage the multiple potentialities of meaning that exist in speech. Ultimately, however, for Bakhtin, the way to manage meaning is through face-to-face speech communication, dialogue in which each person may ask questions, offer meaning alternatives, and so forth, in order to negotiate meanings between people and somehow communicate despite multiple potentialities of meaning. Traveling over to the Other, that is, imagining oneself in the position of the other person with whom I am speaking, is important for understandings to be somewhat shared, Bakhtin maintains. These ideas influence how I understand the ways in which organizational reality was being constituted through interpersonal interactions on the set I observed, and how I understand the concept of collaboration. As Clegg, Hardy, and Nord (1999) note, collaboration necessarily involves trust (Luhmann, 1979), but power relations are rarely discussed in connection with trust, when they are actually embedded in it (Luhmann, 1979). Fox (1974) writes "We've got to trust them mean[s] in fact 'We

don't trust them but feel constrained to submit to their discretion.' This simply describes, of course, a power relationship" (p. 95).

Collaboration within and between organizations requires a level of trust, but Clegg et al. (1999) maintain that since many collaborative initiatives are not voluntary, trust, and of course power relations, pose serious challenges for the collaborative effort (Blumer, 1971; Laumann & Knoke, 1987; Pasquero 1991).

Power relationships are necessarily part of organizational life, and management structures and techniques legitimize particular power relationships within an organization. In Bakhtin's view (as in Heidegger's, 1962), we are born into a system of language and thus don't invent everything we say; Bakhtin (1986) grants agency but also holds that it is constrained by cultural and social realities. So while the film crew members I observed interacted in various ways from day to day, and were free to improvise, it was not an absolute freedom; the organizational structure, along with the traditions of the film industry, constrained their interactions. So as collaboration occurred, it was in the organizational context of a scientifically managed, hierarchical organization. Both the interpersonal and organizational aspects of collaboration must be considered.

The social constructionist view laid out by Berger and Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) (with roots in Weberian sociology as well as Schutz) influences this work as well. (Weber is credited with being one of the first to consider social action to be a worthy object of study.) Berger and Luckmann (1966) write that human reality (including organizations and societal institutions) is not objective, but is socially constructed. They also imply that those in power would like to obscure the social constructedness of reality, to maintain their positions of power.

All of these theorists contribute to my understanding of social action theory. Other key social action scholars include Giddens (1986), Sigman (1987), and Hodge and Kress (1988). As a social action scholar, I am interested in the meanings of action in social context (or to use the language of Hodge and Kress, "social semiotics") local, community-produced and shared meanings, expressed through both discourse and social action routines. (The implications of social action theory for methodology are reviewed in the next chapter.) The film production process has a rich organizational and social history, replete with distinctive discursive characteristics and meaningful patterns of action. Such meanings and how they are produced creatively and collaboratively within a scientifically managed organization are the main focus of this study.

#### *Making Sense of Power on the Film Production Set*

As in many organizations, the crew practices involved in the production of film for television (as well as for theatrical release) are highly complex and difficult to make sense of for the casual observer. (This became obvious to me after "hanging out" [Anderson, 1987] on a film set for two days to decide if it would make a suitable research site.) Because I had researched the structure, makeup, and management of film crews in advance, I knew more of what was going on initially than an uninformed observer would have from a technical standpoint. What I was there to observe, however, were the actual communicative, creative, and collaborative aspects of crew members' professional lives. It became apparent to me the very first day that a full exploration of these aspects of film crew life would require an understanding of power relations on set.

To objective empiricists, power is an attribute one can possess. For Saferstein (1991), a cognitive positivist who conducted an examination of collaboration in the

postproduction editing phase of producing series television, power is an object to be wielded, something you either have or you do not. Clegg et al. (1996) note that in the past, power has been seen as the ability to make people do things (see also Weber, 1978). This modernist perspective, however, and the hierarchical, scientific management that first grew from it, does not acknowledge the complicated, complex, fragmented social world in which we human beings reside. I looked to the writings of Hawes (1977, 1998), Giddens (1986), Clegg (1975, 1989), Deetz (1992), plus Anderson and Englehardt (2001) for theoretical guidance on power and how it works within organizations.

Hawes (1977, 1998) emphasizes the powerful role conversation plays in our construction of reality; our communication constitutes our world. Such communication, however, does not only constitute *what* our world is; conversational activities also are implicated in how our world works—that is, who has the power. Hawes (1998) commenting on the writings of Volosinov, writes:

It's not a matter of experience organizing utterances; rather, the reverse. Utterances organize experience. And it is the immediate social situation and its broader sociocultural milieu that determine, from within themselves, the structure of each utterance. (p. 288)

This phenomenological perspective is similar to that of Giddens (1986), who drew from his own readings of Husserl (1950) and Heidegger (1962), among others, in the development of his structuration theory. In contrast to structuralism, which holds that structures (whether societal, institutional, or cognitive) produce (and determine) action, Giddens posits that action is structure; our actions structure our organizations, personal interactions, and so forth, and those in turn affect our actions, which in turn recreate or change existing structures, and so forth. Power, for Giddens, is "the capacity

to achieve outcomes," and that capacity resides in this duality of structure—both structures in society and individuals with agency work to perpetuate what we know as social reality, including the reality of power relations.

Clegg et al. (1996) point out that while Marx and Weber saw power as domination, and traditional management theorists see it as legitimate authority, neither camp has recognized the necessity of social context for power to exist—a context Giddens sees as an imperative. Clegg et al. see power not as a positive or negative, but “as the medium necessary for responsible, collective action” (p. 623).

Edelman (1964, 1977) builds on Giddens' definition of power by maintaining that power not only results in outcomes, but also works to constitute the meanings of such outcomes. So power comes into being through human action, on the macro as well as micro level. Even everyday life is permeated with the political, as Deetz (1992) notes.

Building on the work of Giddens, Clegg, Deetz, and others, Anderson and Englehardt (2001) note that power is not unilateral, but reciprocal; the less powerful as well as the more powerful are personally implicated in their power relations, and bear some responsibility for their participation. A desire to not participate in socially reified (and constantly reenacted) structures of power would require the cooperation of both the least and most powerful, as there are some advantages and disadvantages to each position. On the film crew I observed, hierarchical power (authority) existed, and was manifested through the granting of “higher-level” and “lower-level” crew positions. “Higher-level” workers were paid more, and were more likely to be responsible for the supervision of others, as well as for their own work. The “higher-level” crew members on set were constantly busy; the others had more “down time.” It is conceivable that



some of the lower level crew members might covet the position of director or director of photography, but others would not want those positions due to the intense and constant pressure of such work. (One particular director, a man in his 40s, drank liberally from a bottle of Maalox throughout each day, as some would nip from a flask of alcohol.)

If power is reciprocal, rather than monolithic, then objectivist assumptions about it are not helpful in understanding its complexity. Doing fieldwork on a film set, however, provides an opportunity to examine how power works in a particular production setting, and the complexity of its relationship to communication, creativity, and collaboration.

#### *Power, Communication, and Collaboration*

One goal of this study is to explore the power various crew members have to communicate and collaborate creatively on the set. It is often assumed that in a scientifically managed environment, the mental power will reside with management, rather than with workers. I saw from my first day of observations that workers were contributing intellectually and creatively every day. Yet the modernist treatment of power that is evident in Saferstein's work (the only other social scientific study that exists on the film-for-television production process) fails to explain how workers collaborate creatively within a system that assigns authority to hierarchical power. How workers are allowed to contribute and collaborate creatively, and how they are constrained, are relevant questions, and the answers may provide empirical evidence and insights in postmodern theoretical definitions and explanations of power.

Weick (1979) defines creativity as "putting old things in new combinations and

new things into old combinations" (p. 252) and asserts that such activity pervades organizations: it is required of each person every day, regardless of the job position, as they continually work to make sense of the organization. Creativity is inherent in sensemaking, then, as people analyze the past and creatively construct reasons or rationale for things that have happened.

For Weick, organizing is inherently creative and improvisational, a view consistent with the social action position. Human acts (both actional and discursive) are made sensible socially through action routines, but individuals improvise such routines in various ways. Weick writes specifically of improvisation in organizational settings (1969, 1979, 1989, 1995), comparing it to musical jazz. Organizing, he maintains, is "laced with the unexpected" (1989, p. 243). Organizational members must be ready to make sense of any anomalies, any irregularities or surprises. The sensemaking interactions of production crew members are laden with power; how might such power be understood in this context?

Eisenberg and Goodall (1993) also consider creativity an integral part of organizing. They describe creativity as "interpretations of meanings," a view that affirms a sensemaking, "dialogic" self that is constructed through our conversations and interactions with others (Bakhtin, 1981; Blumer, 1969; Goodall, 1991; Hawes, 1999). Eisenberg and Goodall (1993) make clear their agreement with Weick, Clegg, Hawes, and others that organizations are socially constructed and maintained, a basic tenet of a social action approach to organizations and this particular research project.

The film production crew provides an extraordinary opportunity for studying collaboration and teamwork as well as creativity. Producers, directors, and writers have fought over the right to claim "authorship" of television programs and films, I argue that

such works are authored collectively—each crew and cast member contributes to the final product. How crew member contributions are negotiated, validated, resisted, and incorporated into the production process has yet to be researched. Existing research on creative collaboration in organizations certainly informs this project. Some of the most insightful comments, and important questions, regarding the challenges of fostering creative collaboration in a hierarchically managed organization come from Davis and Scase (2000). They write:

Often there will be organizational tensions [in creative organizations] but these have to be accommodated if creativity is to be utilized for organizational purposes. In general, [creative] employees express creativity in ways which contrast sharply with formal models of organization. They value their personal autonomy (independence), behave in nonconformist ways (displaying divergent thinking, unorthodox ways of doing things) and thrive on indeterminacy (the ambiguities, unpredictability and the uncertainties associated with the exploration and the implementation of their creative ideas). Each of these characteristics is in sharp contrast to converted management principles of efficient organization. How then do companies structure the work processes to incorporate employee autonomy and creativity, while at the same time ensuring control and coordination? (p. viii)

This study partially answers that question with a description and analysis of how creative work gets done in one particular creative organization. In the case of this film production organization, workers are organized hierarchically, but as the data collected show, workers work within and beyond that vertical structure—they are organized into departments, yet work collaboratively, interdepartmentally, as well—on a daily basis. It is in these groups, or collaborative circles, both intra- and interdepartmental, that the onset creative collaborative work happens.

### *Conclusion*

Although there are no other studies exactly like this one, there are academic works in the fields of communication, film studies, business, and sociology in which the

authors approach questions similar to those I posed in Chapter 1. In addition, organizational literature related to sensemaking in organizations, creative collaboration, work groups within organizations also inform this study. The most fundamental difference between this work and those most similar (particularly Saferstein, 1991) is its theoretical positioning; the interpretive, social action approach I take in this study is in contrast to the individualistic cognitive approach taken by Saferstein in sociology, and others in organizational literature (Getzells & Jackson, 1962; Guilford, 1987; MacKinnon, 1978; Robinson & Stern, 1997; Schank, 1988; Simon, 1988). I will explain the methodological approach that I used for this study in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This dissertation uses inductive, qualitative methods to examine the collaborative and creative aspects of film crew communication on the set of a U.S. prime-time television drama. This examination is framed by an investigation of the history of film crew structure and management, since it has been assumed that work crews in scientifically managed arts such as American film production are closer to assembly line workers than artists or craftsman with creative input. In reality, the lived experiences of film production crews involve almost constant communicative, creative, and collaborative processes which have not been addressed, much less theorized, in social scientific or humanistic literature.

In this chapter, I offer a rationale and justification of my general approach and methods, then explain how I gained access to the research site and why it proved suitable. Next, I detail some of the difficulties I encountered securing continued access to the set of a popular television program. I follow with a description of the qualitative methodologies used in the study, plus participant information and details about the nature of my own participation and observation on the set of this production. I then discuss my procedures for data collection and data analysis techniques (coding).

### *Methodological Rationale*

This study uses participant observation to provide a detailed description of the day-to-day practices of a film crew shooting for a highly rated, prime-time, hour-long dramatic television series and to examine the communicative practices of crew members as a way to better understand and theorize how creativity and collaboration work within a traditional, hierarchically structured film crew setting.

My methodological assumptions are those of hermeneutic empiricism with a theoretical grounding in social action. Social action theorists embrace qualitative, ethnographic research methodology as a way to conduct research through participation in the reality of a particular community. As Schoening (1992) notes, this view has roots in phenomenology (Husserl, Heidegger); pragmatism (James, Mead, Goffman); interpretive sociology (Weber, Luckmann) and action-based language philosophies (Wittgenstein, Peirce, Bakhtin).

Communication, produced through social action, is central to human life, so the meanings produced are understandable through systematic, educated methods of observation (Anderson, 1996b). My approach to the study of a film production crew is one that recognizes sensemaking as central to the organizing process. In this approach, I do not assume that meanings in organizational life are self-evident; they are constructed socially through everyday work practices and routines. Since meanings are the object of study, and are produced collectively through interactions, participant observation allows the researcher the opportunity to approach and begin to understand the meanings that members of a particular group or organization (in this case, a film production crew)

create and maintain. It also allows researchers to gather large amounts of data which can result in the crafting of rich descriptions of human life, for the purpose of creating or furthering theories about social life.

Lofland (1971) notes that the sorts of questions qualitative researchers ask are different, and clearly distinguishable in their approach, from those of quantitative investigators. "What kinds of things are going on here? What are the forms of this phenomenon? What variations do we find in this phenomenon? That is, qualitative analysis is addressed to the task of delineating forms, kinds and types of social phenomena" (p. 13). Through observing crew members' mundane, everyday communication (sensemaking), both discursive and actional, the researcher can come to understand more about how it is that this group organizes itself (see Atkinson, 1990; Contractor & Whitbred, 1997; Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993). Thus, qualitative methods are particularly suited to this study. And because the meanings created in social context are locally situated, and not discernible in advance, a grounded theory approach (which will be discussed later in this chapter) is useful.

#### *Site Information and Access Issues*

For this study, I spent approximately 203 hours observing a film crew producing several episodes of a popular dramatic television program. This particular site was chosen on the recommendation of the executive director of the state's film commission, who aided in establishing contact with the production company. The film commissioner's endorsement was undoubtedly the key factor in my gaining access to the set. Upon review of my credentials and request for initial set visits, I was invited to observe for 2 days on

an introductory basis, despite the usual closed-set policy. The access I was granted was remarkable; I was told this set was typically closed to visitors. Crew members, although suspicious at first, became friendly and helpful over time. The director was informative, gracious, and invited me to come back any time he was directing (which I did, during the following season). I observed, took notes, and interviewed several crew members about their work. I determined that because the production company took an approach to filming this program that was typical for 1-hour, American prime-time television drama, and both crew and management seemed amenable to my presence, I would choose this production as my field site for this project. (I have since learned that access to the set of a prime-time dramatic program that I was granted is extremely rare.)

Following my initial crew observations, I expressed interest in returning for further extended visits during the next television season. At first, my request was met with puzzlement, and a bit of suspicion—why would I need to come back, if workers were merely performing the same tasks day after day? After explaining more about what I saw as the complexity of the production process, the company's publicity department encouraged me to call back in July or August (after the summer hiatus) for details and final approval by the executive producers. I sent a thank you note to the producers immediately following my initial 2-day visit.

After several months of negotiations, it was agreed that I would observe several episodes that season, which began in August and ended in May. There were several difficulties that delayed the start of my observations. I was first scheduled to visit the next August, but the production was shooting out of town, in a desert area chosen for its



similarities to desert environments in the Middle East. The publicity director called it an "uncomfortable set," and said it would not be appropriate for me to visit—September would be better. (Later I got the distinct impression that the crew had not been pleased with their hot outdoor working conditions on that episode—perhaps I was being kept from witnessing the malcontent of a hot and dusty crew.)

When I called in September, however, I was told later in the fall would be better. The publicity director also questioned, again, why I'd need to come back for an extended period, and I explained that I needed time to figure out what everyone was doing, in order to study how they worked together on things. I also mentioned that I needed extended time to meet my doctoral requirements. Given the company's ongoing relationship with the state's film commissioner, negotiations continued, and it was agreed that I would return for a longer period of time. My first opportunity to observe came during a time in which I was out of town (Thanksgiving week), so I was rescheduled to visit in late January. I also believed this might make access to consecutive episodes easier, since in December shooting would be interrupted by the holidays.

In late January, I was dismayed to be put off again, this time until March. I was scheduled to observe the entire episode, and even given directions to the location of the set, when my access was pulled the day before. One of the production's guest stars insisted on a "closed set" (onto which no one would be allowed, except those needed to work on the show), and this stipulation was part of her contract. Then, my return to the set was delayed again due to the particular director who was to direct the next episode. I began to wonder if I would ever have the opportunity to return to the set.

I was assured that my time would come, however, and about 2 weeks later it did. I was told I could observe an entire episode, directed by an award-winning industry veteran who was a favorite of the cast and crew. When I inquired about multiple episodes, which would be necessary to collect the volume of data I needed, my liaison (the publicity director) told me that I probably could, but that we should take it one episode at a time with the producers.

At this point the project was at significant risk, but having invested significant preparation time in the project already, I decided to gamble and agree—knowing that if, for some reason, my access were to be revoked too soon, I would have to abandon the project as proposed.

Each episode required, on average, 10 to 12, 10- to 14-hour days of shooting, so I had originally requested alternating episodes to allow time for site note and field note writing at the end of each 12-day period. This was not possible, however, since my access to multiple episodes was not even guaranteed. Once I gained access to the set I was determined to stay as long as I was permitted. So, I observed the production of three consecutive episodes, shot from March to May 2000

Continued site access was negotiated constantly as I worked to establish sufficient rapport with cast, crew members, and management to remain on the site. (Some directors prefer no visitors, and "spies" on set from the television network and the press are common, so my presence was sometimes questioned and negotiated tediously despite the memo that was sent to employees concerning my status as a graduate student and explaining in general terms the nature of my research.) While on set, I was granted almost

unlimited access to crew members, from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy. This access was not without contest, however. I almost lost access to the site just a week after I began.

I had spent the week observing, taking notes, interviewing and meeting as many people as I could, including the executive producers and unit production manager (UPM). One day, given the opportunity to meet some of the executives in charge of production, I jumped down from the scaffolding where I was sitting next to the key grip, and nearly hurt myself—but didn't. Still, it was a close call, and it happened in front of the UPM and some other executives. I ignored what had happened, and shook hands with the UPM graciously; he was an older man with white hair and a white beard. I met the network executive in charge of production then as well. I saw the UPM at lunch, and we chatted briefly about my project; he was not particularly friendly. "He's just busy," I thought to myself.

Since we were at the end of the first episode, I realized I needed to talk with my office contact in publicity about continued access for the next episode. She recommended that I write the producer a thank you note in which I thanked him for his assistance thus far, and asked for continued access. During our conversation, I casually mentioned that I was pregnant (with twins) and that I wanted to work as continuously as possible in order to finish before my due date. (The pregnancy, 3½ months along at that point, was not yet obvious.) The publicity director said, "That's it! That's perfect. That's what I'll tell him [the producer]." She evidently thought he'd like the fact that I was pregnant. "He's kind of an old-fashioned guy," she said. "I'll tell him you want to hurry and finish before you

get too big." I thought her reasoning seemed strange, but was relieved and happy. In my journal that night, I wrote, "I never thought being pregnant would actually help with my fieldwork."

I could not have been more wrong.

When I talked to publicity the next day, I was told that the official word had not come yet; I should just go back on set, and not worry about "official" approval at that point. But about an hour after arriving on set, I was told by a production assistant that I was not to observe anymore, and that I should leave immediately.

I left the set, and returned to my car, where I immediately called the publicity office on my cell phone. I was told the executive producer did not want me on set anymore because I was pregnant. The producer was trying to have a child, I was told, and this was a sensitive issue. He would not want to have anything to do with my getting hurt on set. Panicked, I began to consider what to do. I figured that my near-accident on set earlier in the week had not helped the situation, and my pregnancy had probably contributed to my slight lack of balance. After consulting with my dissertation director, it was determined that I should try to alleviate the producers' concerns with some sort of insurance. I tried Workers' Compensation, but that is only for paid employees, not for visitors or unpaid participant observers.

I consulted my attorney, who said what I needed was a hold harmless agreement to ensure that I would not sue the production company or the television network if I were to get hurt. I also spoke with an insurance agent, who found a 30-day accident insurance policy that is similar to what foreign correspondents use when they go to dangerous

places. It would cost \$500, but he thought submitting a copy of my health insurance policy might be enough to ease the minds of the production executives, if I were to sign a hold harmless agreement.

I called publicity again, and was pleased that my contact called me right back (that had not always been the case). I explained my idea about a hold harmless agreement and proof of insurance. My contact said she really couldn't do anything else; if I wanted to write to the producer again I could. I told her I appreciated all her help, and that I understood there was only so much she could do. But I also told her that I needed to try to figure out how I might be able to come back, because otherwise I really wouldn't have a project. She mentioned the possibility of my coming on as an extra, but I told her I didn't feel comfortable doing that after they had told me I shouldn't be on set. She reiterated that I should write to the producer again, and request that I be allowed to return if I sign such an agreement and present proof of insurance. So I did. Those agreements are found in Appendix A.

In the letter (see Appendix A), I noted that I had experience on sets previously, with lights and other heavy equipment, and that my personal obstetrician had approved my involvement in the project. I noted that if allowed to return, I would be willing to sign a hold harmless agreement, and that I was comfortable with the risks associated with being on set. I told them I had spent "the past 10 months preparing for this research project with your set in mind. If I can't return to your set," I wrote, "starting over on a new project would require a new project proposal, committee approval, etc, and set me back at

least one full year." I also included a copy of my vita so that the producers could learn more about my background.

Fortunately, at least one of the production executives found my materials compelling. The executive vice president for production read all the paperwork and said to publicity, "So we've committed to doing this." "We kind of agreed to see her through this," the publicity director responded, and the executive continued, "It would be a shame to set her back . . . however many years just for a few days." The publicity director explained that the producer who was denying me access was "kind of the protector and father figure of the group." This other executive was not as worried, evidently. I was allowed to return.

#### *Participant Observation and the Researcher's Position*

As Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) write, "participant observation" involves a researcher entering a social setting, usually "not previously known in an intimate way," and "participating in the daily routines of this setting, develops ongoing relations with the people in it, and observing all the while what is going on" (p. 10). They go on to explain that the second step in the process is for the researcher to write down observed experiences, to create a written record of participation in "some initially unfamiliar social world" (p. 3).

While the intricate details of the film set I observed were new to me, I did some preliminary research in order to be able to better make sense of the social world I was to observe. In addition to having had some video production experience, and reading about the film production process, I had been exposed to film production work as an extra a few

years before. The most valuable preparation I undertook, however, was attending a week-long professional film workshop in Rockport, Maine, 18 months prior to my first on-set observations. This workshop, designed to teach professionals and educators how to work as unit production managers and first and second assistant directors, proved invaluable as it provided a way for me to acquaint myself with some industry jargon, job titles and descriptions, plus personnel issues (such as how to deal with union contracts). Training in the workshop included coordinating a fictitious "shoot," scheduling workers, shots, locations, lunches, breaks, and so forth. Participating in this workshop allowed me to focus on learning film production job titles, responsibilities, and crew management techniques which would be part of the set I would later observe. The setting was still "fresh" in my mind when I first arrived on set, as I had previously worked on film production processes only in the classroom. Yet I was able to avoid asking the questions which would seem the most "obvious" to crew members, such as what a first assistant director does. I entered the field site better informed regarding the differences between film production and video production crews and sets, which allowed me to come to a general understanding of what was going on sooner, so I could then focus on new details which were unfamiliar. As Anderson (1987) noted, it is important as a researcher to participate as well as to observe. The nature of my participation in this production is somewhat unique to this field site and should be noted.

As an ethnographic researcher, time spent at the field site is devoted to observing, learning more about the situational context of the action (in this case communication) I am researching, and interacting with crew members. Because social meanings come

about through interactions (Deetz, 1992), I actively participated in the process crew members engage in each day. I did not have a specific job title or job function to perform, but I realized while on set that in film production, most people are performing their specific job function only part of the time. The remainder of the time (more than half, for some participants) is spent waiting—hanging out with other crew members, cast, and so forth. My participation in that aspect of the film crew's work was active, and through this "hanging out" I came to learn more about the participants, their work, and how they communicate.

### *Research Participants and Interviews*

While I was free to observe the activities of any film production workers on the set, those who were the active research participants were those who consented to talk with me. I purposely sought interview sessions, formal or informal, with as many workers as I could, and made sure I spoke with at least one or two workers from each department on the set. Following my initial two-day visit, and prior to my subsequent return, a memo was circulated to the crew explaining that I was a graduate student doing research, and that I would soon be returning to the set for more observations. After my formal introduction by management, only a few crew members refused to speak with me. One department head, however, would only recount that someone on crew had once said too much to a visitor, and was later demoted after that visitor published the worker's negative comments in a high school newspaper. Needless to say, that department head never spoke with me for an extended period, although several within his department did.



More than 100 people were on set some days, fewer on others, depending on the number of extras needed. There were 30 core workers who were there every day (this number includes security, food and craft services, but does not include office support, as those workers were not “on set”). Eight more crew members (many department heads) were on call, but not on set daily, as they were engaged in preproduction activities for the next episode. Nineteen others from the transportation department would join us for meals and snacks, and were on-site, but were not typically on set. I had a couple of casual conversations with them over granola bars and bottled water.

During my time on the set, I usually interacted with the principal 30 crew members, along with the actors and stand-ins. I conducted a total of 17 formal interviews with crew, actors, and stand-ins, and engaged at least 27 others (whose duties ranged from security to transportation to providing food for the crew) in lengthy informal conversations and discussions during meals and periods of “hanging out,” while workers there waited for their turns to resume their job duties. On any given day, there would also be from two to 12 or 14 actors with speaking parts, 7 stand-ins, and sometimes scores of extras—usually anywhere from 10 to 40, but on some days as many as 100.

#### *Data Collection and Tools of Analysis*

Daily observations, along with informal conversations and interviews with crew members between scenes, during lunch, snack breaks, and so forth, allowed for the development of site notes, which were written down in a small notebook. My experience as a journalist proved helpful as I was able to take notes, verbatim, as I listened to the person I was interviewing. I was allowed to speak with and observe each department

during working hours, since film crew work is organized in stages, and not everyone is working at a given moment. Descriptions were typewritten nightly following daily observations. Following each episode, site notes were reviewed and transformed into field notes. Those notes were then analyzed using methods that were discursive (discourse and conversation analysis) and actional (such as performative protocol analyses). Iconic analysis was also used to make sense of artifacts collected (memos, call sheets, selections from scripts known as "sides," etc.) in order to come to a measure of understanding concerning the meanings of various elements of the social action routines within the context of their use by crew members. The goal of these analyses is to contribute to a better developed theoretical understanding of human communication, creativity, and collaboration on film crews managed by scientific management techniques (the dominant management approach in the U.S. film and film-for-television industry).

The research claims of this study are descriptive of observable action and community meanings, which lead to the theorizing of communication, collaboration, and creativity among film production crew members. Once formal analyses were complete, I constructed episodic writings in an effort to make sense of particular happenings in light of my developing theoretical claims concerning the way crew members work and interact to accomplish their goals. (Anderson 1987; Atkinson 1990; Emerson et al., 1995; Jackson, 1987).

#### *Interview Protocols and Limitations*

Formal interview lengths ranged from 10-45 minutes; some interviews were done in two or three parts due to the relatively short duration of breaks between scenes for

some crew members. All interviews were notated verbatim, by hand, into small, spiral-bound notebooks. While audiotaping interviews would have been preferable, no recording or photographic devices of any kind were allowed on set due to copyright and proprietary concerns.

There were a few interview questions common to almost all interviews, and these are compiled in Appendix B. Beyond the first few, interview questions varied, depending on the crew position of the individual being interviewed. The common questions were chosen because of their relevance to the research questions of this study. Since the goal of this work is to better understand the human communicative, creative, and collaborative processes involved in film production, several questions relate to collaboration, creativity, and communication.

Anonymity was promised to the entire film crew I studied; thus pseudonyms and limitations on the inclusion of personal information for those I interviewed and observed are thus utilized in this study.

### *Data Analysis Justification and Procedures*

#### *Grounded Theory*

Rather than creating a hypothesis and testing its validity, or entering my field site with a critical perspective looking for appropriate ways to illustrate or support that view, I utilized the principles of grounded theory explained by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their classic work, *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, and further elaborated in Strauss and Corbin (1998).

Grounded theory is a reasonable choice for the hermeneutic empiricist, since it involves the development of theory based upon the data, rather than using data to prove or disprove a preformulated hypothesis. As data were analyzed, other theories, such as the sensemaking theories of Weick (1995) and Clegg's theories of power (1989) were used as lenses through which to view data; their assumptions are implicit in my position as a researcher. Grounded theory prioritizes lived experience; rather than making ethnographic observations "fit" within a predetermined theoretical box, grounded theory advocates and allows for the construction of the "box" around the ethnographic observations themselves. It aids in the task of this project to theorize and conceptualize how, through communication, creativity, and collaboration are present even at the lower echelons of this scientifically managed film production endeavor, despite the traditional assumption that scientifically managed production does not allow for such crew interaction at the lowest level of the hierarchy.

#### *Procedures for Implementation of Grounded Theory*

Grounded theory is the approach of choice for this hermeneutic empiricist project, since it involves generating new theories from data inductively. As Borgatti (2005) writes,

The phrase "grounded theory" refers to theory that is developed inductively from a corpus of data. If done well, this means that the resulting theory at least fits one dataset perfectly. This contrasts with theory derived deductively from grand theory, without the help of data, and which could therefore turn out to fit no data at all. (p. 3)

To implement grounded theory, a researcher examines and re-examines a body of textual data, codes data by dividing them into categories, and looks at their interrelationships (Borgatti, 2005) for the purpose of generating a theory to explain the data. I engaged in extensive coding for this study.

### *Coding Procedures*

There are three main phases of coding in grounded theory, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998): open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Having written down my site notes in the field, I worked to compose my field notes by making sense of the site notes through the composition of narrative and episodic writings. I then coded my field notes using qualitative research analysis software, WinMax99. I organized each field note file according to the television episode observed, and then coded each line of each page of field notes. In the process of open coding, I selected and named various categories into which various bits of data could be placed. This involved setting up an electronic list of codes, then selecting each code separately and assigning it to particular lines of text. WinMax would then indicate the coded lines by color as well as by the code name. Examples include categories for instances of particular human action, such as crew collaboration, and for topics of conversation, such as complaints about management. Appendix C lists the codes, their frequencies, and the number of lines coded for each. Coding sheets were formatted at 60 lines per page. There were a total of 16,748 coded lines in my field notes. By looking at this list of categories, I was able to get an overall view of the phenomenon about which I would theorize. (See Appendix D for sample field notes.)

I then revisited the texts weeks later to ensure coding consistency (Lindlof, 1987).

Several codes were added and modified during the reexamination process. Data were coded according to themes, concepts, and informational topics. Memos were created regarding possible theoretical threads, data were reexamined, and some coding refined. Work of theorists such as Weick (1984, 1989, 1995, 1998) and Clegg (1975, 1989) along with scholars Bennis and Biederman (1998) were used as tools in this process.

I then moved on to the next stage, axial coding. In axial coding, researchers look for relationships between categories and their subcategories. For instance, in the category titled "complaints," subcategories include "complaints about actors," "complaints about management," and "complaints about other crew." There were even subcategories of subcategories which relate to other categories, such as issues related to power, autonomy, and creativity included in crew member complaints. I looked at specific instances in which these categories and subcategories related to one another to further interpret what I had observed.

The final coding stage is selective coding, in which core categories are chosen that represent the central phenomenon of the study. Once these categories were identified, I looked at how they were related in order to begin developing theory. Themes identified included collaboration, creativity, power, status and job satisfaction. Data were then re-scrutinized and analyzed with the goal of better understanding how those themes relate to one another within the human endeavor of producing film for television. Overall there were more than 279 pages of coded field note text: 16,748 lines of data coded into 1,908 coded units in 55 open coding categories.

### *Summary*

Grounded theory, along with the interpretive, qualitative methods of hermeneutic empiricism, are utilized in this project to allow the examination and exploration of communication, specifically creative collaboration, as social action that occurs daily in the lives of film crew members at the site of study. Such creative collaboration has been neglected in previous studies of film production, due to the assumed effects of scientific management techniques on the communicative contributions of production workers. The categories and themes that came from my data became the basis for the development of a theory of on-set collaboration.

But first, Chapter 4 provides a glimpse of the evolution of film production crews over the past 110 years, and a description of the production process on the set I observed. It provides readers with an opportunity to learn more about the film production process, crew positions, and crew job descriptions, in advance of Chapter 5, in which I describe my theory of creative collaboration on a film-for-television production set.

## CHAPTER 4

### MANUFACTURING CREATIVITY: FILM PRODUCTION

#### MANAGEMENT AND CREW STRUCTURE

#### THEN AND NOW

*I say the cinema is an art, for it is the product of all the arts.* — Director George Melies

*It's all collaboration.* — Director, episodic television

In the first section of this chapter, I outline the history of film crew structure and management, to lay the foundation for the section which describes a typical day on the film production set I observed.

Some argue that one person, the director, or, in the case of television, the producer, is the author of a film. Others clearly disagree. Bennis and Biederman (1998) maintain that filmmaking is collaborative "almost by definition" (p. 6). Staiger (1995) maintains that workers on many levels have input in the creative process of film production (in what she calls the "Hollywood mode" of production, at least), and this study supports that claim empirically (see Staiger, 1985d).

Longtime Hollywood writer, director, and producer Philip Dunne highlighted the collaborative aspects of filmmaking in contrast to misconceptions of single authorship:



The entire premise [of the auteur theory] was based on ignorance [and] lack of information. If John Ford was the supreme creator of *How Green Was My Valley*, then who was Darryl Zanuck [the producer], me [the screenwriter], Richard Llewellyn who wrote the novel, or William Wyler, the director who prepared the script for production with me? *Pinky* is now called a film by Elia Kazan. But Kazan came in [as director] at the very last minute when John Ford had to drop out. Kazan was assigned on a Saturday and started shooting on Monday. And he didn't change one word that was in the script. (Lee, 1987, p. 110)

Yet the misguided idea of the auteur persists. Why? I posit that one reason the attribution of authorship to collaboration is resisted is due to the confluence of early film's history and the scientific management theory that came into vogue when motion picture production was just beginning to industrialize. This management theory deemphasizes the lower-level workers to the glory of the supervisory class (the director and producer in film and television, respectively). To support this argument, I trace how U.S. filmmaking moved from true auteurism (the artisanal one-person, one-camera endeavor) in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and very early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to utilizing a crew of divided labor, and finally (as much out of economic necessity and theatrical tradition as anything else), to a scientific management approach that remains today. As this argument plays out, I introduce the standard U.S. film production crew by describing crew positions, departments, and detailing duties. Finally, I offer a general description of the standard, everyday operational routine of the film production crew I observed to acquaint readers with the contemporary process, and to further explain the structure of the scientifically managed film crew.

#### *Early Filmmakers: From Artisans to Scientific Managers*

The early filmmakers were mostly inventors and entrepreneurs who produced movies almost single-handedly at first (Gomery, 1991). By the late 1890s, individual

production crews had increased to a handful of people in some cases, but many filmmakers were still using what Staiger (1985b) calls the "cameraman system." Under this approach, one camera operator, typically male, "organized, directed, photographed, and edited most of the firm's product" (p. 117). Audience demand for high quality motion pictures grew rapidly between 1905 and 1915, and box-office receipts continued to climb. Motion picture equipment was constantly being refined, and new devices fashioned, to aid in the production of movies. New techniques and technologies required additional workers, as did longer and more complex films.

The first formal division of labor in the U.S. film industry began around 1907, between the director and camera operator (Staiger, 1985b). Motion picture directors, freed from their camera operation duties, were now responsible for organizing the shoot, directing the camera operator, and coaching the actors. Film directing circa 1906 remained a monumental task (Staiger, 1985b).

After the tasks of director and camera operator were separated, the next significant division of labor in the film industry was between director and scenarist (writer). In the earliest days, writers and scripts were not necessary even for narrative films, which were so short that simple sketches and scenarios could be conceived and planned by directors without scripting. But around 1908, the standard length of feature films increased, and it became increasingly difficult to work with only a concept or even an outline of the action for longer films (although some directors continued to do so). At this point, "story" or "scenario" writers were hired to create scripts that provided the details necessary for longer productions.

These more detailed scripts necessarily complicated the film production process, both artistically, technically, and logistically. Additional crew members were needed to

produce a greater volume of longer, more complicated films, and exhibitor and audience demands were pushing narrative filmmakers to create a greater number of films in less time. Exhibitors wanted contracts with filmmakers to guarantee the delivery of new film prints on a regular basis. Film production companies needed such contracts to remain financially solvent, but were not accustomed to producing as many films annually as exhibitors required. To provide enough films for these outlets, companies needed to produce films year-round, and winters in the northeastern U.S. were too severe for this. As a result, some film companies moved to Florida, then later to southern California when the ill effects of high humidity on film stock and equipment became evident. But even year-round shooting, one film at a time, would not meet demand. To do that, film companies needed to shoot several projects simultaneously, while maintaining the relatively high quality and established visible language audiences had come to expect from American films. Producing high-quality films quickly was, and still is, extremely difficult. Filmmakers needed to employ new production and management practices to meet demand.

Staiger (1985b) writes:

In both location shooting and studio production, the cameraman system—as of that period—was not able to supply films in mass production. That the firms should shift . . . to a detailed division of labor follows the economic example set by many other profitable industries. The cameraman system did not die out as such (Hal Mohr describes working in it for a small firm in 1913 and it continues today), but by sheer weight of capital investment another mode and system began to dominate the film industry after about 1907. (p. 117)

By 1910, it was clear that one filmmaker and a handful of assistants simply could not complete the longer, more complex, high-quality films audiences had come to demand. Even if they could have, the work would not have been accomplished quickly enough to continuously support a production company financially. Just as in the theatre,

multiple workers, whose work was divided and coordinated by the director (and later assistant directors and producers) could. This new approach would be heavily influenced by current management trends which minimized the opportunity for creative input among lower-level workers, and sought to concentrate creative decision making at the highest levels of the hierarchical system it established.

*Late 19<sup>th</sup> - and Early 20<sup>th</sup> -Century  
Industrial Management Trends*

In 1908, Henry Ford revolutionized the automobile industry with the mass production of his Model "T". The success of Ford's fast, efficient assembly line approach garnered international attention and was heralded almost immediately as the epitome of industry efficiency. Soon, other industries, including the film industry, began emulating Ford's methods, the roots of which go back to the 1770s and the writings of Adam Smith. In his book, *The Wealth of Nations*, he linked economic growth to an increase in the division of labor (Smith, 1991). Those working under such labor divisions, Smith asserted, became experts at their individual tasks and did not waste time switching from task to task as workers under the artisan model did. Smith advocated fair wages, yet worried whether the methods he advocated would promote boredom in workers. Still, by the 1820s, Smith's division of labor was common in European manufacturing, and was in its infancy in the textile mills of the northeastern U.S. (Hill, 1996). Between 1850 and 1900, the industrial revolution was almost fully realized in the United States, with detailed divisions of labor and mechanized processes for manufacturing goods previously crafted by hand. This revolution prompted the development of new theories of industrial management, the most prominent of which was Taylor's "scientific management," rooted in his observations as steel company

foreman in the 1880s and 1890s, which he began writing about in various papers published beginning in the 1880s (Trumbore, 2003).

*Taylor: Scientific Management*

Taylor's scientific management is often associated with, and even defined by, the concept of increasing efficiency through a division of labor. But Taylor also emphasized control by management of to the point of “*the dictation to the worker of the precise manner in which work is to be performed*” (Braverman, 1974, p. 90; emphasis in original). As Staiger (1979) notes, this approach leads to the separation of the planning of work from its execution. Ideally, such planning, if effective, results in all significant decisions being made on paper, ahead of time. Such preproduction work by management removes workers from key decision making processes, thus keeping them from participating in the production process from start to finish. Marxists have argued (both at the time and since) that such a process alienated workers by robbing them of job satisfaction (Braverman, 1974; Staiger, 1979). This method of production management certainly was in direct contrast to the traditional artisan approach, in which craftsmen conceived of a product, then created it—with involvement from start to finish.

In an effort to increase efficiency, proponents of scientific management soon began advocating and implementing strict, detailed divisions of labor across all major U.S. manufacturing industries. By breaking down production processes into tiny parts, management sought to maximize production, and with it, profits. Taylor and his followers employed Adam Smith's ideas concerning the efficiency of a division of labor and advocated higher pay as an incentive for continued work. Taylor believed that the

best assembly-line workers were the least intelligent, but were highly motivated by incentives. He considered potential worker burnout less of a threat than the dissatisfaction of being underpaid. His methods were credited at the time with increasing industrial profits.

### *Early Division of Labor in the U.S. Film Industry*

The U.S. motion picture industry division of labor began, probably not coincidentally, at about the same time as Ford's industrial breakthrough—around 1908. It did not happen overnight, and does not appear to be the result of a single decision or venture of one major industry player (despite prominence of Thomas Ince's management efforts, which I will address below). Nor does it appear to stem solely from a desire by producers and/or financiers to simply apply the latest fad in industrial management to filmmaking.

Rather, the development of division of labor in the motion picture industry appears to have begun out of practical necessity, as well as show business tradition. It was the answer to the practical problem of creating high-quality films quickly, and the ultimate solution to the financial problems early filmmakers faced. Its success indicated that the motion picture industry in the U.S. could be financially viable over the long term.

As Staiger (1985b) notes, the first divisions of labor were primitive, but during the next few years, the influence of additional workers from another creative business, the theatre, would heavily influence the form that a detailed division of labor in the film industry would take.

*The Influence of Theatrical Tradition  
on Film Crew Structure*

When the U.S. motion picture industry itself was still in its infancy, the American theatre industry had utilized a division of labor for decades. Nielsen (1985) writes that the impact of the declining theatre industry on film production is rarely studied or discussed in film history literature, yet it was significant. As the popularity of films exhibited in theatres increased, theatrical jobs steadily decreased (Nielsen, 1985). The employment of job-hungry theatrical workers greatly aided in the development of a division of labor in film production; in doing so, it furthered the development of the film industry itself.

Organized theatre had been part of the American scene since the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Bernheim, 1964; Nielsen, 1985). By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the typical American theatre company had expanded to include specialists—mechanics (who built and operated stage machinery), prop, electric, transportation, and carpentry men. A more detailed division of labor developed as owners sought to increase efficiency while working on multiple shows. Some workers stayed in scene shops, designing, building, and painting sets and props, while others went on the road (Nielsen, 1985).

Many of these theatrical workers hired for films were unionized already, especially in New York. Unionization encouraged a division of labor, through the use and enforcement of very specific job descriptions to protect workers from exploitation. Nielsen (1985) notes that according to its historical records, the Theatrical Protective Union, No. 1, organized in New York in 1892, advocated a strict division of labor, 8-hour work days, varying rates of pay for specifically defined duties, and an end to worker interchangeability such as actors doubling as carpenters or stage hands.

As cheap "nickelodeon" theatres began to develop, theatre attendance began to dip. Theatrical employment opportunities for workers became more scarce and those in film more plentiful. Nielsen (1985) points out that by 1908, separate motion picture machine operators' charters (union chapters for film projectionists) were organized in several U.S. cities, including Los Angeles. Theatrical specialists such as set dressers, costumers, and property people, some of them union workers, marketed themselves to filmmakers. Subsequently, many film production crew positions (properties, scenic design, art direction, acting, directing, costuming, etc.) were "transplanted" to film production. The fact that these theatrical workers already identified themselves with particular crafts and job positions advanced the transfer of theatre crew organization to film crews (Staiger, 1985b). The employment of theatrical workers in motion picture production was a boon for the workers themselves as well as film industry. Stagecraft artisans, actors, and directors could work on films when no theatre jobs beckoned, and many found better wages in the film industry and never returned to the theatre. Others moved back and forth easily between the two.

#### *D. W. Griffith and the Birth of an Industry*

As the demand for motion pictures increased, the pressure to industrialize motion picture production increased. Ultimately this led to the contract studio system whose legacy still shapes the contemporary film crew. The studio system began to mature between 1913 and 1920 as many companies experimented with methods of mass production (Staiger, 1979).

According to cinematographer Karl Brown (1973), director D. W. Griffith worked with a fairly elaborate contract system (a precursor to the studio system) as



early as 1913. When Griffith took over the old Kinemacolor studio in Hollywood, he reportedly kept under contract stagehands, carpenters, a prop man, film lab technicians, at least four directing assistants, a cameraman (today's director of photography), an assistant cameraman, and other technical workers (Brown, 1973).

Nevertheless, Griffith's approach to filmmaking was to work on one film at a time, making him vulnerable to the vagaries of the box office. When *Intolerance* failed, he had to work for many years to pay off debts incurred while making the film. Over time, Griffith found that his one-picture-at-a-time approach was not profitable, and as Nielsen (1985) notes, Griffith's struggles show that a detailed division of labor alone did not increase efficiency enough to improve the profitability of motion pictures over the long term. Still, Griffith's previous financial success with *Birth of a Nation* showed that an increased division of labor could make possible the production of complex, feature-length motion pictures that could make money.

#### *Thomas Ince and Scientific Management*

Thomas Ince has been widely known as the figure who took the "division of labor" in filmmaking to a new level and ushered in what became known as the studio era. A former actor who had become impatient with the scarcity of acting work, Ince is often heralded as "father" of the studio system (Staiger, 1979). Ince's seaside studio, "Inceville," is often referred to as the first film factory, and most film historians hold Ince responsible for the industrialization of film (Silver & Ward, 1992). Ince's main contribution, Staiger (1979) notes, was the innovative approach to planning motion pictures that he developed and began using a few years before he established Inceville. This approach, which employed principles of Taylor's scientific management, would

greatly increase efficiency in the so-called "mass production" of motion pictures. It would also create very real differences in power, both social and economic, between so-called "craft workers," "creatives," and management.

It was apparent to Ince that the demand for narrative motion pictures of a satisfactory quality had become greater than most production companies could handle. Shortly after he began directing he began meticulously planning his productions on paper ahead of time. Ince developed the continuity script—the arrangement of a motion picture scenario outline or script out of sequence (juxtaposing scenes which took place in the same locations so that they might be shot consecutively to consolidate production work and save time). Such scripts not only separated key decision making processes from the production work itself, but allowed Ince to maintain control of scenes he would not even be directing. He would shoot several scenes from one film simultaneously, directing one scene while other directors were assigned to others. By 1915, he had retired from directing and began overseeing several films at once as a producer, or as he called himself, "Director-General," supervised nine directors, with five or six production units shooting at a time (Staiger, 1982).

Ince used the idea of the "standardization" of the film production product to promote the quality and uniformity of his films. According to Staiger (1982), such advertising and publicity made Ince a brand name in the eyes of the public. Although his career was cut short by his death in 1924 at age 43, Ince had made his mark: the implementation of scientific management in filmmaking through the use of continuity scripts continues today.

*Film Crew Structure: 1920s On*

By the time of Ince's death, the composition of film crews was not standardized across the industry yet, although several of the most prominent crew positions from that era remain so in film production today. Accounting and other archival business documents are the principal records that exist of rank-and-file film crew workers even through the early 1920s, and those documents vary in detail; they tend to include amalgamated daily costs rather than breakdowns by crew position. Since this era predates the Social Security Administration, employers were not required to keep specific records on so-called day players who would "pan" the studio gates each morning (Nielsen, 1985) for work paid by the day. Thus, the task of describing the "typical" crew of the time period remains challenging. On-screen film credits had expanded somewhat by this time, but still typically included only the actors, director, producer, writer, photographer (or cinematographer), editor, and musical composer, until industry-wide unionization brought with it rules for crediting of workers in the 1930s.

By the late 1930s, the film crews for motion pictures produced under the studio system looked very much as they do today (digital effects artists are the most significant additions to production credits since the 1930s). The crews, then and now, included producers (often credited as "production"), director, writer, cinematographer, editor, and musical composer, as before, plus the additional credits for grips, gaffer (or "chief electrical"), electricians, art director, set decorations, costumes, sound, photography effects, makeup supervisor, wardrobe, props, music score, conductor, and so forth, as well. (See Appendix E for representative crew lists from various decades.)

### *The Studio System in Transition*

By the 1950s, television had begun competing with radio and motion pictures for the attention of the public. The major motion picture studios were losing money, and most could no longer afford to keep as many contract players and crew members as in the past. Thus began the decline of the studio system that lasted, arguably, until the early 1960s, when it was finally replaced by a freelance deal-making system in which producers selected material, secured financing, and worked with other producers and agencies to package actors, directors, and other crew to work together on a project-by-project basis. This system eventually led to the director becoming preeminent in the feature film business, with complete control over creative decision making once hired (Toeplitz, 1974). When it became clear to film producers that the best way to compete with television was to join it, several prominent motion picture studios established television production divisions. The vestiges of the motion picture studio system were still evident after that time, however, in the production of film for television, particularly episodic series, such as the one observed for this project decades later.

### *Film for Television*

Live programming dominated programming on television in the 1940s and early 1950s, which may have been due to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) favoring of radio companies over motion picture studios in the television licensing process (White, 1990). Radio executives and sponsors, now working in a new medium, were accustomed to producing live programming and transferred as much of the radio production model as possible to television.

Still, film had been used on television almost from the beginning, although sparingly at first (Hawes, 2002). The movie studios themselves had been involved in radio broadcasting since the 1920s, most notably through radio adaptations of prominent feature films for promotional purposes, and had hoped to get into the television business. Their applications for television broadcast licenses were not granted by the FCC (White, 1990). So studios that were determined to profit from television, such as Warner Bros., had to be content with the idea of producing content (known as "telefilms") for the television networks and their advertisers.

*I Love Lucy* (which was shot independently) debuted on film in 1951, and became one of the first filmed television shows. By the late 1950s the Warner Bros. studio was producing hundreds of hours of programming every season for episodic television, and using its own organizational infrastructure from its "film factory" days during the studio era to do it. The studio system for producing motion pictures was waning, but the production methods perfected during the studio era (producer-based scientific management) were very effective in producing episodic television. Movie studios formed television production divisions and kept even tighter production schedules than they had during the heyday of the studio system. Anderson (1994) writes:

Major studios often had been described as assembly lines, but the analogy was never more appropriate than during the late 1950s at Warner Bros. Television, where the series truly seemed to consist of interchangeable parts. (p. 269)

Anderson notes that some critics even felt the stars of the various Warner Bros. series were interchangeable.

### *Implications for This Study*

The system used to produce television drama was developed under the Hollywood studio system, which implemented a version of scientific management to maximize production output and profits. It appears that when the film industry adopted scientific management, its values of efficiency and financial success were equally embraced. Planning became the key to success and that success carried the attribution of creativity. The map-maker replaced the explorer in importance.

Though films had returned to the preeminence of the director, in television, the producer has remained in control of production. The producer-based production management system, which had been successfully utilized (in terms of profit and productivity) under the studio system of film production to produce hundreds of films annually, remains in place today in television, with the exception of reality programming (including news) and a few videotaped sitcoms. The divisions of labor, crew structures, job descriptions, and film production methods of studio-era feature films remain as well.

### *Departments and Crew Positions on the Set I Observed*

One major contribution of this study is to provide a description of the production process involved in a weekly television drama. This introduction to and general description of the film production process accounts for a particular one-hour prime-time dramatic television shot in a western U.S. state in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with mostly nonunion crew. Only actors, directors, unit production manager, and assistant directors were union-affiliated. During the time of my observations, the

program was ranked in the top 10 most watched television programs in the country according to the Nielsen Media Research organization.

For this project, I observed the day-to-day operations of one fully functioning production crew whose task is to produce a 52-minute filmed television drama on a weekly basis. As a researcher, I had access to the film production process both in studio and on location. Several crew members did describe preproduction planning and postproduction editing processes in interviews with me, I did not observe preproduction meetings or postproduction editing sessions firsthand. Nevertheless, a general overview of preproduction planning processes and postproduction editing work based on interviews with key production personnel is provided to give a better understanding of the context within which the practices of film production crew members occur.

The series crew membership was stable, with the exception of the directors who were hired on a per-episode basis, and occasional "day players" hired to fill in for workers who might be sick or taking a day off for personal reasons. The program featured regular cast members as well as weekly guest stars, thus the crew worked with both familiar and unfamiliar actors on a regular basis.

A working film crew is divided by different crew positions according to the work for which each crew member is responsible. On this particular television drama, there are 14 departments represented on set. Below is an overview of the various departments I observed and the crew positions involved in each. A more thorough explanation of each department will follow in succeeding sections.

- 1) The production department includes the unit production manager, director, first assistant director, second assistant director, second second (or third) assistant

director (see Figure 1 showing the hierarchy in the production department), key production assistant, set production assistants (two), and script supervisor.

2) The camera department includes the director of photography, camera operator, first assistant camera, second assistant camera, and loader.

3) The grip (stage hand) department includes key grip, best boy grip, dolly grip, and three to five additional grips.

4) The art department includes production designer, art director, set decorator, lead, buyer, two on-sets, four set dressers, art coordinator, art coordinator, and construction coordinator. (Only the on-sets are generally on set during a shoot. The others are working on sets for future scenes.)

5) The operations department includes craft services/medic, two craft service assistants, chef, and two chef's assistants.

6) The electric department includes the gaffer (chief of electric), best boy electric (gaffer's assistant), plus four other electricians.

7) The sound department includes mixer, boom, utility.

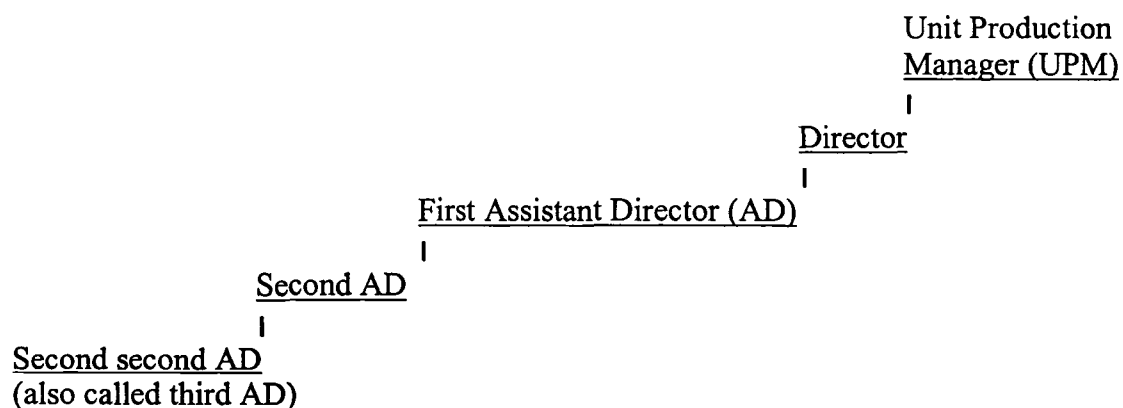


Figure 1. Hierarchy in the production department.



8) The props department includes prop master (head of props), assistant propmaster, set assistant, and props buyer.

9) The hair/makeup department includes the department head, key hair, and four other hair/makeup artists (some assigned to specific stars).

10) The wardrobe department includes the costume designer, assistant to the costume designer, and four other costumers.

11) The special effects (SFX) department consists of one specialist and assistants when needed.

12) The locations department includes the location supervisor, location coordinator, location manager, assistant location manager, set location, police and fire fighters when needed. (Off-duty police and fire fighters are often hired.)

13) The transportation department includes the transportation manager, captain, office assistant, drivers for the honey wagon (mobile restroom facility), electric truck, star trailers, makeup trailer, camera truck, fueler, prop truck, picture car, grip, several vans, wardrobe truck, and production trailer.

14) Other departments would include extras, talent production assistants (assistants to talent), talent security (probably animal trainers too when needed). ("Talent" refers to actors.)

### *Department Descriptions*

*Production department.* The title of this department might seem to encompass all crew activities, it actually refers to a specific group of workers who manage the production process (see list above). The production department fulfills a management function on set—it is responsible for making sure things get done. Upper management

(known as executive producers) hire the production department head, known as the unit production manager (UPM), to be responsible for hiring crew members and generally overseeing the set. The UPM may sometimes be on set, but usually not every day. The UPM's eyes and ears on set are the assistant directors.

As is common on television dramas, directors change from episode to episode. Directors for these series are often known as "hired guns"—that is, they are freelancers who direct one or maybe several episodes of a series each season. Directors who perform well will be hired again. The freelance director for television is in a difficult position, since producers have the final say in the television production process (as opposed to the process of producing a feature film, where the director has the last word.) The director also works closely with the director of photography, whose duties will be described later in this section.

The director is responsible for directing actors, actor and camera blocking, setting up shots, and getting the proper "coverage" (which refers to the variety of angles that must be shot of each scene.)

When shooting certain shots, such as people walking down a street, one might think a few "takes" (the term used to refer to an instance of filming a particular scene or shot) from the same angle may be the only shots necessary. If the audience is to see from the perspective of the people walking, another angle will need to be shot, and if the people are engaged in dialogue which the audience is to hear, close-up shots from each person's perspective are required. One simple scene may consist of many different types of shots: master (wide shot of the whole scene), close-ups, two-shots (two people in the frame), over-the-shoulder or "OS" shots (shot of one person from behind the other person, with sometimes just a small part of the second person's shoulder

showing), "POV" or point-of-view shots (seeing through the eyes of a character), dolly, panning, and hand-held shots (where the camera is in motion), and many others. In a complex scene involving multiple actors sitting around a dinner table, for example, the actors must "run" (perform) the scene many different times from many different angles just to satisfy the technical needs of the production—that is, to allow shots to be edited together later in a way that makes sense. In addition, sometimes multiple takes are required to get the desired performances from the various actors. Suffice to say, 30 to 40 takes of one scene are not uncommon. Sometimes take numbers are combined with letters as well to denote different angles of the same scene.

The director is responsible for making sure all angles are covered, but the script supervisor and director of photography will contribute as well if the director is about to miss an important angle. The director also decides how the coverage will be achieved—the camera may shoot from the left side, but from below or above? Will the camera move or remain stationary? Which direction are the actor's eyes looking? Is their "eye-line" correct? (When the scene is edited together, do the actors appear to be looking at each other?) These decisions are part of the nuances of directing, and how they are made will have a direct effect on the length of the workday. For example, the crew I observed told me that when one particularly perfectionist producer serves as director, days could go on as long as 16 or 18 hours. In general, because the crew is familiar with the standard practices of coverage, the grips and electricians know what to expect if a scene is to be shot in an ordinary way. They move quickly between shots, while specific directions or changes in the shooting plan are relayed to them by their department heads through short-wave radio headsets. (They are optional, however; crew members must pay for them personally if they want to use the \$80 devices.)

The director interacts frequently with producers and writers, both on-set and over the phone. People such as the executive producers ("showrunners" who often pen entire episodes themselves) their assistants, staff writers who have worked on the episode being shot, and the executive in charge of production may observe on-set for lengthy periods of time. (Having writers on set can be quite convenient—if a script turns out to be too long or too short, on-the-spot rewrites may be necessary. It can also be difficult, especially, if the writers are producers as well.) Because television producers are ultimately responsible for the content of their shows, the will of the director is subjugated by the producers, who often make suggestions throughout the shoot. One crew member tells me this is true for this show, and more so on this show than on some others.

Some people are led to believe that assistant directors are "directors in training," in reality the assistant director is a sort of producer. She or he makes arrangements that help things get done, but usually does not assist the director in creative tasks such as choosing shots. Rather, assistant directors (first assistant director, second assistant director, and third assistant director, or "second second" as those in that position are sometimes called) assist with the handling of the crew and extras so the director can concentrate on other responsibilities (such as the look and feel of each scene, continuity, directing actors, visualizing the script, etc.). Most assistant directors expect to move on to unit production manager and/or producer, rather than to the position of director. (Order of ascension is usually as follows: second assistant director, first assistant director, director, unit production manager; see Figure 1.)

The first assistant director (or "first AD") is the director's "right hand," helping things run smoothly and facilitating the shoot. The second assistant director (or

"second AD") assists the first AD, and the second second AD (also called third assistant director) assists the second and usually coordinates extras on set. The first AD serves communicative, managerial, and organizational functions.

"[Associate directors] are in charge of running the set so that the director can be creative without worrying about the time or gathering the people and props together" (Patz, 1997, p. 104). They communicate with the crew concerning schedules, lunches, equipment needed—anything deemed necessary for a successful shoot. The ADs also schedule the shoot, scene by scene, interfacing with the director, script supervisor, production office, and anyone else involved in shooting on a particular day. They are responsible for filling out forms, keeping track of union agreements, hours worked by talent and crew, scheduling "school" hours for minor children, and so forth.

The script supervisor (also known as "continuity") works alongside the director to ensure that lines are read correctly, that the script is accurately followed, and that there are no problems with visual or verbal consistency from shot to shot.

The key production assistant (PA) and the set PAs assist the director and ADs in any way necessary. They run errands, distribute call sheets (schedule for the next day's work), fetch food and do anything else the director and assistant directors need done.

*Camera department.* The director of photography (DP) is the head of the camera department, and is responsible for the photographic quality of the show and meeting the director's aesthetic goals. The camera operator is an extension of the DP. The DP will instruct the camera operator on how to get a particular shot when necessary. The first assistant camera operator (first AC) assists the camera operator directly; she or he also builds and breaks down the camera unit daily. The second assistant camera operator (second AC) assists the first AC as necessary. Or as one second AC described it, "I'm

the first AC's waiter." The second AC is also freer to communicate with the office than others in the department (Patz, 1997). The loader loads and unloads motion picture film and has special expertise in handling both exposed and unexposed reels. The dolly grip handles the camera dolly which supports the camera and rolls smoothly upon a set of track rails. The dolly grip is responsible for laying the track and for making sure it is level. During shooting, the dolly grip pushes the dolly and controls the hydraulic pedestal, working in tandem with the camera operator to move the camera.

*Grip department.* The grip position is one with which the public is not often familiar. The term refers to crew people who handle all lighting-related equipment that is not electric. Such equipment is used to cast and manipulate shadows to optimize set lighting. This includes stands and attachments for scrims (translucent screens or pieces of paper placed over light fixtures to diffuse the light they cast), the scrims themselves, gels (pieces of colored plastic used to color light), scaffolding, and so forth. Grips move set walls if necessary, and load and unload grip equipment, and keep track of it administratively. The key grip is in charge of the department.

*Art department.* The art department is responsible for designing sets that meet producers' and directors' requirements and those of the script. The production designer and art director work together on this. Most of the work is done in advance, although there are set dressers who work during shooting to maintain the look of the set.

*Operations department.* The operations department includes on-set food handlers (craft services and catering people) plus medics. On the crew I observed, the craft services person was also a medic. (This allows management to avoid hiring a medic on set who would sit and do nothing most of the time.) The term "craft services" has been used for years and describes food service that is provided for the crew, or

"craftspeople." On this set, the craft services provider prepares between-meal snacks and after-hours meals (usually not cooked on site, although there are a few hot dishes in the craft services truck, and occasionally there will be barbecue or sandwiches). A chef and two assistants cook and serve catered meals (usually breakfast and lunch) buffet-style. The craft service person as well as the chef drive their own vehicles in which they could prepare and often serve food to the crew. The craft services person also sets up tables outside the truck with healthy snacks such as granola bars, bananas, and the like. Bottled water is also provided.

*Electric department.* The electric department is led by the chief lighting technician, known as the gaffer. The gaffer supervises the electrician and works with the director, DP, and key grip to carry out the director's vision (which, in television, is influenced heavily by the producers). The electric department handles any lighting equipment that is electrical. Electricians set up the lighting equipment, run power to it, generate power when necessary, and are adept at handling various cables and auxiliary lighting attachments. They also handle the stands upon which the lights sit. These can range in size from relatively small to more than 200 feet in height. Electricians use a variety of tools that allow them to handle and maintain lighting equipment without being burned. They often work closely with grips, who handle the lighting equipment and accessories that are not electric.

*Sound department.* The sound crew is the smallest department on set. It consists of a sound mixer, who monitors and records on-set dialogue and subsequent overdubs and inserts for postproduction; the boom operator who holds a boom microphone at the end of a large pole (the microphone is held above actors' heads, out of camera range);

and a "utility" person who assists with audio cords, cables, stands, connections, and anything else the sound mixer or boom operator might need.

*Props department.* The props department on this set consists of four people: a propmaster, an assistant propmaster, a set assistant, and a props buyer. The assistant propmaster is on set and works closely with the set assistant to be sure all props are readily available when needed. The props buyer is the one who purchases the required props in local stores. (There is an important distinction that should be noted between props and set dressing: if an actor handles an item, it becomes a prop. Everything else is set dressing. This is true in theatre as well as film and television.)

*Hair and makeup department.* The hair and makeup departments on the crew I observed are combined. This would not be acceptable for union crew, I am told by one crew member; makeup and hair people would be separate. On this crew the department consists of a department head (his specialty seems to be hair but he knows makeup as well); a key hair person (who handles the stars and co-stars mostly), three general hair/makeup people, then another specifically assigned to one of the show's stars.

In addition to applying makeup and styling hair before an actor's scenes begin, several hair and makeup people are on set for touch-ups and adjustments throughout the day. (When the director is ready to go, the first AD may call "last looks" or "touch 'n go" to indicate that the hair and makeup people have one last chance to do touch-ups before shooting resumes.)

Because different actors may have different "call" times throughout the day (not everyone is needed for every scene, typically) they are scheduled to report to work at different times. Hair and makeup people often have different call times as well depending on which actors they are grooming.



*Wardrobe department.* The head of the wardrobe department is the costume designer. She has an assistant, plus four other costumers working for her. The wardrobe department has a large room in the production company's main building that is devoted to the sewing and storage of costumes. In addition, they have a trailer equipped with washer and dryer, mending supplies, and storage space for costumes needed when on location. The wardrobe department must make sure costumes are ready on time, fit well, and are clean and mended. They are also particularly concerned with continuity, since the script is generally shot out of sequence (that is, not in the order viewers will see it). Wardrobe people use Polaroid™ instant cameras to document how an actor is dressed in a particular scene so if shooting must resume for that scene after lunch or even on another day, they will have record of exactly how the actor looked so the look will match (hair and makeup people refer to these photos as well).

*Special effects department.* The special effects (SFX) department consists of day players hired on an as-needed basis. Day players are called for and paid by the day, rather than the week. (They are paid less, and aren't eligible for benefits.) SFX people do manual special effects, not those associated with the digital postproduction effects often known as CGI (computer-generated images). Effects associated with firing guns, fireworks, simulating vehicle movement, and so forth, are handled by the SFX experts. Usually one main specialist is hired with as many assistants as deemed necessary.

*Locations department.* The locations department is responsible for finding places to shoot that meet the demands of the script for that episode. If the art department does not build it, locations must find it, or at least something close that can be "dressed" to look appropriate. It is helpful to have area natives, or at least longtime residents, in the locations department since they know the area better than new people

or nonresidents. Location coordinator, location manager, assistant location manager, set location, police, firemen, and others are hired when and where needed.

*Transportation department.* The transportation department is comprised mostly of drivers responsible for driving vehicles carrying production equipment as well as star trailers, makeup trailers, wardrobe, and so forth. In addition, several vans are used to transport people back and forth to the set from "base camp." ("Base camp" is a term used to describe an area near the set where trucks may be parked, some equipment accessed, and the crew may gather for buffet lunches under a large tent.) When shooting in some locations, such as residential neighborhoods, it is not acceptable to set up "base camp" adjacent to the set, so a school or church parking lot (often several blocks away) may be rented and utilized for this purpose. Especially in foul weather, it is important for actors and crew to have quick access to the set from base camp via vans. But anyone who is authorized to be on set may use the van transportation.

*Other crew positions.* The "other" crew category (listed on the daily call sheet) includes extras, welfare (for minors), and computer operators used to generate effects for use during shooting (an outside company usually provides such services on this set). Special security people (bodyguards) and personal assistants to the stars fall under this category as well. Most, though not all, of the regular stars on this show have personal assistants on set.

#### *Preproduction Planning and Postproduction Editing*

While I did not observe the preproduction process firsthand, an account of those processes, which is the result of my interviews with an assistant director and several

department heads, will provide readers with a description of the context in which the actual shooting occurs.

Department heads should ideally attend such meetings, but they are usually held while the previous episode is shooting, so many department heads send a representative so that the heads themselves may remain on set.

The production meetings are held to let everyone preview the script for the next episode to see if there are any special plans that need to be made for effects, lighting, animals, and so forth. After the meeting, each department then makes plans concerning how to meet the requirements of the script. The script can change at a moment's notice, however, so even careful planning following a production meeting does not guarantee smooth sailing—crew members must be willing and able to adapt to any changes thrown their way.

Other preproduction work includes casting, scouting locations, set building (art department), and wardrobe. On this program, scripts are often written with certain high-profile guest stars in mind. Once the stars are secured, the script can be completed and the minor roles cast. Casting calls are held in Los Angeles (where another production office is located) as well as locally.

Location scouting is something that begins at the end of every episode and is done one episode in advance. To facilitate this process, the company's two first assistant directors work on every other episode. When the shooting of one episode is complete, the first assistant director for that episode moves off set to the production office, and another first assistant director (who has been helping to preproduce the next episode during the past few days) will come on to assist with the shooting of the next episode. The other first AD moves to the production office where he or she will spend

the equivalent of one episode's shooting schedule (usually 7-10 work days) helping to preproduce the next episode on which he or she will be working.

This arrangement has several benefits. First, set work can be grueling and days long (often 12-16 hours.) Alternating first assistant directors have the advantage of coming onto each episode fresh, having been working off-set for 7-10 days. Preproduction days can also be long, but are not generally as taxing physically as shooting days.

Second, freelance directors come and go throughout the season, so the directors benefit from a fresh and knowledgeable first assistant director who has knowledge of script requirements, casting, locations, and other pertinent details days before the director even arrives. (There are union rules that require that directors receive scripts several days in advance of shooting, but that rarely happens, on this and many other shows, I was told. By 2003, a Director's Guild of America [DGA] task force had been formed to address what DGA members call an industry-wide problem—late scripts in episodic television, particularly dramas.)

Third, the first assistant director can become intimately familiar with any special requirements a particular script might require. She or he can make suggestions that might make shooting easier, or at least be able to adequately prepare for potential problems. (This is most true, of course, when an episode's script is completed well in advance. When it is not, many of these preproduction benefits are nullified because there is only so much preparation that can occur without a completed script.)

The art department builds sets based on the script's requirements as well as budgetary constraints. If a suitable location for shooting may be found, then building a set might not be necessary, although set dressing still would be. Again, unfinished

scripts can cause difficulties, since sets must be built or locations found and deals for use negotiated.

Wardrobe is another preproduction function that hinges on script completion, but casting is an issue as well. The costumers must know who has been cast for an episode to get their costumes ready. Costumers often work late after an episode ends to get ready for the next, as they are generally busy with the episode currently being shot. When there's a break of a day or two between the shooting of consecutive episodes, costumers can use that time to shop for clothes and get ready for the shoot. If episodes shoot back-to-back, the costumers don't have the luxury of that time so they'll stay late after one episode wraps to prepare for the next. Occasionally one episode will "wrap" (complete shooting) in the morning and the next episode's shoot begins after lunch—a most undesirable situation for the costumers, who often must work the weekend before in order to prepare for the upcoming episode. "The grips think they have it bad," one costumer told me, "but we have it worse. We were up here [in the costumer shop] all day Sunday" because the company was wrapping one episode Monday morning and starting another that afternoon. She said they bought all the clothes for the many children in this episode at one particular department store because it was the only convenient one open on Sunday.

Crew members from other departments are often involved in preproduction as well. The gaffer explained that his assistant, who has the official title of "best boy electric" spends most of his time off-set, preparing for the next episode. He was hardly on-set at all when I observed, except when the gaffer had the day off. More often, he was working at one of the upcoming locations, as he did for several days when I was there, preparing lighting equipment for a shoot in a large, circus-style tent.

In other departments, department heads or representatives who attend the production meeting on behalf of the production heads can pass along information concerning any unusual equipment or production circumstances (such as sets, costumes or other special requirements) for which the script might call. Surprises on set (last-minute script changes or other changes handed down by producers) are not welcome but are taken in stride. For example, the gaffer was surprised to learn one morning that the next day's shoot would involve "green screens." ("Green screens" is a technique used when a different background is desired for the actors than the ones available on set. The green screen is replaced by another image in postproduction. This technique is often used when characters are riding in cars and scenery must appear through the car windows. It is similar to the technique used in local television weather reports that superimpose the meteorologist over a map or satellite photo.)

Lighting for green screens is different and requires special techniques and preparation. "Nobody tells me anything," the gaffer complained. "It wasn't mentioned in the production meeting." The shoot, scheduled for the next day, goes on, and the gaffer accommodates the producers' requirements.

Some individual departments hold their own meetings as well prior to certain episodes or scenes, but do not tend to generate a lot of paperwork. Locations and transportation, two of the largest departments, held the most department meetings while I was observing.

*Description of a Typical Work Day on the Set of a  
Prime-Time Television Series*

The preceding descriptions of relevant film crew history and management, plus current film crew practices (including information on departments, positions, and crew

member responsibilities) are intended to help readers learn what film crewmembers do, and acquaint them with some of the vocabulary of the film industry. They do not, however, sufficiently convey a sense of what it is like to work on or even observe the actual filmmaking process.

The following narrative, "day-in-the-life" of the production crew (an amalgamation of the days I observed on the film set of a prime-time dramatic series for television) is intended to offer a glimpse of the moment-by-moment, hour-by-hour work involved in shooting film for a television drama. Since the filming process often involves some crew working while others are resting, this description will focus mainly on those at work at any given time, to acquaint readers with the work processes of this crew. In addition, it includes descriptions of "hanging out," the activity in which those who are not working participate regularly, since the majority of crew members spend a good deal of time engaged in that activity on set each day.

#### *A Typical Day on the Set*

*It is early on a sunny spring morning. The transportation people are already here—they have driven the trucks full of production equipment and trailers for makeup, wardrobe, stars, and so forth to the new location and are ready to enjoy a catered breakfast. They are parked in the lot adjacent to a church, and breakfast (both continental and short order) is being served from a catering trailer. The drivers, dressed mostly in jeans and t-shirts, along with early-arriving production crew, laugh and joke as they eat under a portable tent pitched as a makeshift dining room for the crew this week. I join them for bagels, eggs, and juice. "So you made it for breakfast," audio technician Eric teases (I was late yesterday). "Of course, I told you I would*

*today," I reply. There's no real need for most crew to arrive for breakfast,, since craft services will provide an endless array of snacks to keep people going until lunch time, which must be no more than six hours after the first set call according to Screen Actors Guild union regulations.*

*I glance at my call sheet, a summary of the scenes to be shot for the day, along with location, crew, and cast information. (See Appendix F for an explanation of call sheets and sides.) Is the shoot at the church? There are discreetly worded signs pointing down the street; the color and shape of the signs are recognizable to the crew, but not to the general public. Attached to the call sheet is a map to the set location—a Victorian-era home in a middle-class city neighborhood. ("Base camp," the area where trailers are parked and the dining tent sent up, must be located here to avoid overcrowding neighborhood streets, I realize. As we finish our breakfast (several of us still toting cans of juice), I walk with Eric, an audio assistant, and some other crew members two and a half blocks to the home that will be our set for much of the day.*

*The home is a small but classic Victorian, with gingerbread-style trim and a plaque on the front porch designating its historic significance. It sits on a large corner lot, its green front lawn surrounded by a short, white picket fence. The neighborhood is quiet, except for our activities—most residents are likely at work or school.*

Crew call was at 8:00; setup is elaborate, but usual, and the highly practiced crew can do the work in less than 30 minutes.

*The yard has already been invaded by scores of grips and electricians working busily to set up for the 8:30 shooting start. The electricians run cables from the (relatively) small generators parked on the street in front to several power distribution boxes set up on the lawn. They pull cables to the large lighting fixtures they will use to*



*illuminate the front porch of the home. Meanwhile, grips work at the back of the house with metal stands and scrims (large frames with translucent cloth stretched over them). They are setting up for a scene in the home's kitchen, and will use the scrim to filter the bright sunlight streaming into the home through the kitchen window. Other grips set up video monitors with headphones, along with several director-style folding chairs, off to the side of the front yard.*

There is a video assist system attached to the film camera which allows the director to see a video image of what the film camera is shooting. The director, director of photography, and script supervisor usually monitor the action from this vantage point during actual shooting.

*A variety of folding chairs (mostly camp-style) are set up around the perimeter of the yard. "This is my chair, but you can sit in it when I'm working," stand-in Stella offers. "Aren't you tired?" Resistant to the notion that I might be more tired because I am pregnant, I deny this, but I appreciate her offer and thank her for it. The production company does not provide such seating, I learn, but anyone is free to bring a chair to sit in when not working.*

*It is now 8:30, and setup is complete. Everyone is waiting for the actors to show up—they are still in makeup. Crew members are chatting about the ice hockey game they lost the night before. (The crew fields a hockey team, coached by the DP, Fred, that competes in a local adult league. I was invited to attend that league tournament game, and did.) Now, people are complaining about the officiating, and arguing about how many people were ejected from the game (at least four or five from the crew's team). I join in, commenting that it was rather lopsided; the referees had four out of seven of "our" players in the penalty box at once.*

*The crew is ready to go, but we continue to wait. There are murmurings of difficult guest stars insisting on taking longer in makeup, but no direct accusations or loud complaints—only whispers. It is almost 9 am now, and the caterers, hair/makeup crew, and transportation workers have been here since 6:30. We are all anxious for the shooting day to begin. With a full half-day left after a one-hour lunch break at 2:30, it will be a typical long day—14 hours from shooting call to wrap.*

"Call times," that is, the various times certain workers need to arrive on set, vary greatly from day to day. They are distributed to the crew as part of a document known as a "call sheet." The call sheet is an 11-inch by 17-inch sheet of paper distributed at or near the end of each day for the following day. If things change overnight, a new call sheet is distributed first thing the next morning. Set production assistants (PAs) usually distribute the call sheets, which are delivered to them by someone from the production office. The call sheet is an agenda or "road map" for the day. It notes specific call times, set locations, scenes to be shot, necessary personnel (both cast and crew), and includes any necessary location details. (Maps to the set are often attached.) Everyone involved in the shooting process looks to the call sheet as a guide to what they are to accomplish that day. Personnel who are not on set daily look to it to find out which sets must be ready, which props will be needed, and so forth.

### *Shooting Begins*

*The actors finally arrive, 30 minutes late, in vans from the makeup trailer at base camp (walking two blocks might cause them to perspire and ruin their makeup and would take up more valuable time).*

*When shooting finally starts, the director begins with the three lead actors walking down the sidewalk, talking. Aaron, the camera operator, is using a Steadicam™ to prevent a shaky camera shot. The Steadicam looks like a large mechanical arm attached to a brace which Aaron wears. The contraption is heavy and looks difficult to operate. He must walk backwards while shooting in order to face the actors. He explains that if they don't use the Steadicam, the actors would have to walk on the dolly tracks (the dolly is a camera mount that rolls along on special tracks) so this is a better way to get the steady shot we need.*

*This has been a rehearsal; the actors walk this walk several times for camera and run through their lines. The audio crew is adjacent now, and audio technician Todd will walk alongside the actors, boom microphone in tow. Its cable leads to the head audio operator's audio cart, which holds reel-to-reel analog recording equipment. (Unlike a video camera, the film camera only captures the images. The audio department is responsible for recording the sound on a separate device. The two elements—film and sound—will be synchronized in postproduction.)*

*The sight of the audio crew tells me shooting is about to begin.*

*The director and the first AD confer. Director Alan is ready to start. "We have to wait for the train," someone says, as a whistle is heard in the distance. "Story of my life," the director says, to no one in particular. In five years [directing this show, intermittently] I've never actually seen a train, just heard them." Someone else suggests that maybe there aren't any trains at all, just some special effects guy in the distance causing trouble. "I can hear the trains from my house, but I can't see them" someone chimes in, as if to support the special effects theory.*

*As the shot resumes, Aaron moves backward with the Steadicam, while gaffer Don prepares to follow the actors as well, carrying a huge HMI [hydrargyrum medium arc iodide; a flicker-free light source balanced to match daylight color temperature] light on his shoulder with a scrim on it. It is a fill light for the actors, color-balanced to match sunlight and used to soften shadows, since the morning sunlight is highly directional. He's trying to keep the sun from creating a spotlight effect. The usual three-point lighting approach used in film is simplified a bit today, since the sun serves as the necessary key light. Fill light and back light are the only artificial lights needed, to soften shadows and differentiate the subjects from the background. With the angle he has on the scene, Don is accomplishing both functions with one large, soft light.*

*"Settle, settle please," first AD Trevor intones. (This is his version of the clichéd "quiet on the set!") The second AD, Adam, repeats the command from his position on the other side of the set. "Roll please," says the director calmly. "Rolling," the camera operator responds. "Speed," the audio operator adds, to let the director know that the audio recorder is now up to speed. "Slate!" Second camera assistant Ned holds the slate board in front of the camera and clicks it to mark the date, scene number, and take. "Action!" the director says quietly but within earshot of the actors.*

*The three actors walk along as they play the scene, led by the camera operator ahead of them. Gaffer Don plus Todd and Eric on audio follow alongside, careful to stay out of the camera's 16 by 9 ratio frame and watching carefully so as not to cast shadows on the actors. (Todd holds the boom microphone and Eric gathers cable as they go.) "Cut!" the director says emphatically but, not shouting. Trevor prepares the crew to do it again: "Same thing, only different," he calls. I ask Alex, the on-set location person, what that means. "It's a different angle on the same scene," he tells me.*

*All along, electrician Neil is holding cords for the light-wielding gaffer Don, as he walks with the actors. He switches to a smaller light now, since the sun is in a different place relative to the camera in this new angle. Camera operator Aaron plus Todd and Eric are in place, and they run the short scene again, and again, and again (12 takes in all; four each from three different angles). This scene is only five-eighths of a script page, about 40 seconds, but it still takes over an hour to shoot. I check my call sheet— nine scenes, eight full script pages to be shot today.*

During filming, certain crew members are working, and some waiting (or resting, depending on the crew member's frame of mind). Typically, when the camera is rolling, only the actors in the scene, the director, camera operator, audio mixer, and boom operator appear to be actively working. Actually, several others are working as well, but in monitoring capacities.

*Script supervisor Pam is listening to the dialogue for accuracy and monitoring shots for continuity purposes, the director of photography and gaffer are watching to see if the lighting is adequate, the locations people are working to control possible interference with the shoot. (People walking by, barking dogs, noisy neighbors, etc. Trains are uncontrollable from the set, unfortunately.) Chad from makeup is standing by, waiting to do touch-ups when necessary. Denise from wardrobe has her Polaroid; she shoots instant pictures of the lead actors before they go on, for continuity purposes. Virtually everyone else (personnel from the grip and electric departments) is hanging out quietly, waiting to assist with any problems that might arise.*

*Pam hears a flubbed line, and tells the director. He stops the action. They must shoot this portion of the scene again. I notice actors' marks, several X marks made with colored tape, on the sidewalk. They are color coded for each actor. The actors*

*move to these spots during the next take of the scene. The scene wraps; now they're moving their equipment for a scene in front of the house, where the series leads meet guest star Barbara and interact with her on the front porch. It is a large, old-fashioned front porch, and the front door is decorated with an oval ornamental glass.*

*Regular stand-in Stella, along with two others, is needed for lighting setup; she stands in the scene as Don and his electricians work with DP Fred to light her. She stands, statuesque, as Fred asks her to turn her head, then freeze. (I decide I am a little tired, and sit in her chair after all.) Stella's height and skin tones are close to those of the lead actor in this scene, so Fred's lighting should work for the star when she arrives from her trailer. Stella now moves to the actor's next "mark" in the scene, as Fred, gaffer Don, and the electricians move additional lights into place to fill unwanted shadows and soften the lighting on her face.*

*Camera rehearsal is next. After standing 20 minutes under the lights, Stella and the others look hot, tired, and ready for a break. First AD Trevor calls for the leads, so Stella and her colleagues are replaced by freshly made-up and rested actors. I get up to give Stella her seat. "Picture's up!" Trevor calls. The actors rehearse once before the take; they say their lines and move to their marks, while the camera follows. Something's not right; the gaffer speaks into his headset, and two electricians respond by adding another back light. (The guest star and her stand-in do not resemble each other much, so adjustments are necessary.) It's been 10 minutes for the leads now, but they still look fresh.*

*"Settle. Settle please." "Roll please." "Rolling." "Speed." The scene begins, and appears to be going well. Suddenly, camera operator Aaron stops the shot. "There's a reflection in the front door," he tells DP Fred. Fred uses his headset to quietly give*

*directions to the gaffer and electricians, who are on set within a few seconds to correct the problem. The director doesn't question the camera operator's decision; he seems glad someone noticed. The lighting is corrected within a few minutes. "Touch and go," Trevor calls, and the makeup artists dash onto the set for the quick makeup touchups needed for the actors. Shooting quickly resumes.*

*Grips hold a large scrim at an angle to block the sun. The regular lead actress tells the first AD that one of the guest stars, Barbara, a venerated, experienced actor, needs some makeup touchups. That is not all she needs, evidently. The scene is taking a long time to shoot because she keeps messing up, and her makeup is not holding up under the lights. "Where's Barbara?" someone asks, referring to the actor's absentmindedness. "She's been here all week and then today."*

*"She had too much fun at the hockey game," someone jokes (she had not attended the game). None of these remarks were loud enough for Barbara to hear. A veteran of stage and screen, the crew still respects her. Several will have their picture taken with her before shooting for this episode is complete. Still, the crew is frustrated, although they are trying not to show it. It is still relatively early, with several more setups left to do before lunch at 2:30, but people are starting to get a bit short with one another.*

*"Settle please, settle. Todd! Be quiet." The first AD calls an audio assistant by name. "Can I speak now?" Todd asks sarcastically after the take. "I had headphones on, I couldn't hear you." Aaron, the camera operator, appears at this point to inform the director that Barbara is looking straight into the lens of the camera (an acting faux pas.) "I don't know how to tell her," he says to the director. The director goes to her immediately. I can't hear what he's saying, but shooting resumes.*

*Things are going more smoothly now. But the sound of a lawnmower interrupts the workflow. "What's that?" director Alan asks, annoyed. "I'll take care of it." Alex, an on-set locations person, sprints down the street toward the sound. It continues. It stops. It starts again. As they wait, cast and crew crowd around the snack table craft services provides between meals. Healthy snacks such as bananas, granola bars, and bottled water are there, alongside the obligatory soda, candy, and cookies. Cal from hair and makeup uses a digital camera to record actors' hair and makeup looks for continuity purposes. Ned rests on the front porch swing, with Todd nearby in the wicker chair. The sound of the distant lawnmower dies out. Alex returns, and shooting resumes. I later ask Alex what happened. "I asked the guy if he could please not mow his lawn right now, because we're shooting. He said he can mow his own lawn anytime he wants and we can't stop him."*

*"But he stopped?" I asked.*

*"I paid him \$20. We carry cash."*

Meanwhile, the crew has been seriously engaged in the activity of "hanging out." Since waiting around is part of the job for almost everyone, hanging out or passing the time is an important element of the crew's work. Crew members read books, pass notes, or just rest, as do the stand-ins and extras. Actors wait around too, but they don't have to hang out on set for very long unless the weather is nice and they just want to do so. They have their own trailers where they can read, rest, or study lines, in privacy or with others should they choose to invite them in. Both cast and crew are free to wander about the set while they wait, as long as they are quiet. Some may wander to the craft services (snack) table, while others may leave interior locations to get fresh air, visit the craft services truck, or chat with co-workers in their own



department's truck (such as the grip truck, camera truck, etc.). Crew members often stash books, magazines and snacks in those trucks.

*Several grips are joking with the electricians. The lead guest star's husband is visiting the set, and sits with her for a while before little kids from the neighborhood begin lining up to get her autograph. She signs for every child. Meanwhile Rebecca, the second lead's stand-in sits on the lawn in a camp chair, reading a book entitled The (Almost) Painless Divorce: What Your Lawyer Won't Tell You [Garden, 1996].*

*(Rebecca told me the other day that her husband thinks she's not home enough. She seems conflicted; she really likes her job, but says it's been hard being away from the kids so much. Plus, she lives about 30 miles away, so she has to drive a long way to get home.)*

*I chat with Chad from the hair and makeup department. He explains that veteran crew members in each department know what to do, and when, almost instinctively. "We relax, hang out, joke around, but we have our radar up [he holds his hands up to his head to simulate antennae]. We know what's going on and we can jump up and do whatever we need to do."*

*He says that in makeup, "You kind of learn when you need to be around." Sometimes he needs to be sitting with the director, other times not. He considers his department integral to a smooth shooting day, and tells me that makeup people see themselves as kind of special envoys to the guest stars they have every week. He continues: "As makeup and hair people, we see the guest first thing in the morning, and try to set the mood for the rest of the day." He said if the stars get that negative energy going in the morning, it can go on all day. "There's this energy especially with stars, and we can make it a good day or a bad day. We need to be personal and help them*

*with the things they need. Like Trevor (one of the stars) wanted to get his email today and couldn't. So Chad helped him." "I've worked on other shows where people have crises, departments feuding, hair and makeup, versus wardrobe," he said, "and on a hit show, at least this one, it's not like that. Crew and cast mix so everyone's friends and family, and it feels that way. It's like, people realize BS is just BS."*

*The next scene is being shot in the kitchen of the restored Victorian. There's a different feel to the shooting of this scene, because only a few people can fit into the small kitchen at one time. As I move into the living room, I realize there may not be space for me in here. Most of the grips and electricians are controlling lights from outside the house (the large light set up by the kitchen window early this morning is now in use) but the director, DP, script supervisor, and at least two audio people need to be inside, along with the two actors playing this particular scene. The audio people are crowded into the living room, and the director and DP peer into the monitor set up at one end of the kitchen, which runs lengthwise across the back of the house. The living room and kitchen are filled with lighting, furniture, and appliances as well as the large film camera, the operator, and one camera assistant (the other waits outside). There's not much room in here, Todd tells me. I can take a hint. I back up slowly, retreating out to the front porch.*

*The first assistant camera (first AC) is inside, helping the camera operator. As for the second assistant camera (second AC), he's outside with me. "I'm the first AC's waiter," he tells me. "I get him whatever he needs." We mill around in the yard, visit the snack table, and chat about our personal lives. Alex from locations has been following me around, trying to read my notes. "Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches," he reads over my shoulder, as I document some of the snacks provided on this day. He*

*knows why I am here, but is still intensely curious about what I am writing. "I want to read it when you're done," he tells me. We chat about his hometown in Orange County, California, and his college days at Biola, a "sister school" to my own undergraduate alma mater.*

*Shooting moves to the backyard now, where the lead guest star will do a scene with the veteran. But Nora, a young woman who is best known as a singer, flubs her lines. Director Alan tells her what he wants, but she seems to lack confidence—she keeps stopping and starting over. Then, a chirping bird ruins three more takes. Nora forgets her lines again. The chirping continues so loudly that Trevor throws an empty water bottle in its direction to scare it away. It worked. Nora is no better, however. Her acting coach, a middle-aged woman with dark hair, tells the director she'll talk to her. After her input, Nora does better. From then on, the director gives directions to the acting coach, who relays them to Nora. The inconsistent guest stars make the series regulars look very good. Comfortable, with familiar people in familiar territory, the regulars rarely forget their lines.*

Finally, shooting for this episode, and the morning, is finished. "That's a wrap!" the director calls. The first AD announces an early lunch. Determining when to break for lunch can be difficult for the first assistant director, since a multitude of factors must be taken into account. In this case, the first AD runs the risk of a mandatory evening meal, because the crew is scheduled to start shooting the next episode that afternoon, and another meal will be required if the crew shoots more than six hours after lunch. But lunch is the logical time for the transportation people to complete the company move to the next location, so an early lunch it is. It may mean going over budget, which happens (but is discouraged, of course).

*Now that shooting for this episode has “wrapped,” the lead actors are saying goodbye to the guest stars. (The leads need to leave to do audio inserts for the previous episode, which is currently in the post-production editing phase. Some of the lines have been rewritten since the episode was shot two weeks ago.) Crew members gather around the guest stars, particularly the elderly veteran, shooting Polaroids to post in their trailers, trucks, and other work places. (Drew, the craft services/medic, shows me the collection of photos with celebrities he keeps in his truck.)*

### *Lunch*

Lunch for some of the crew is longer than usual today, since a new episode will begin in the afternoon. Lunch is shorter for others, for the same reason. The transportation and locations people eat first, and quickly, as they have the responsibility of making sure everything gets to the new location, and suitably prepared. Others may take their time. A new director will be on for this afternoon, so this morning’s director relaxes at the lunch table. So does the first AD; there are two full-time first ADs on this show, and they alternate episodes. That way, whenever one is working to shoot an episode, the other is helping to plan, prepare, and schedule the next.

*Once shooting stops, the first AD announces the afternoon call time.*

*Today there is the usual salad buffet, plus broiled halibut, roast beef, and vegetarian lasagna, along with a variety of fruits, vegetables, and breads.*

*During lunch, I chat with Pam, script supervisor for this episode, who talks about real estate—she owns and manages several rental homes and duplexes. Several extras join in the conversation; there are only a handful today, so they mix with the rest of the company at meals. As we eat, I notice crew people checking their watches as the*

*call time approaches—these people are very professional, and rarely late. We all must allow extra time after lunch today to drive to the set for the afternoon shoot at a neighborhood park near a school.*

*The weather this afternoon is beautiful: Seventy degrees, light breeze, bright sunshine. (Bright light makes it harder for the crew to work, though; light diffused by clouds is usually easier.) As I arrive at the new location, the summery temperatures seem to affect the mood of the crew. People are happily slathering on suntan lotion and sun screen provided by craft services.*

*Most of the technical crew members are busy unpacking and setting up now. Brian, the first assistant camera operator (first AC), is reassembling the camera, which had to be broken down into its various parts and fit into heavy cases to be transported. The second AC is handing him parts as he needs them.*

*Eric, audio technician, is unpacking audio gear and helping to set up the recording cart. Grips are setting up poles and stands for scrims and screens; electricians are running cables and plugging in lights. Fred, the DP, and director Lenny are overseeing the activities. Kim, the script supervisor for this episode (she and Pam alternate), is reviewing the first scene to be shot. This scene will be the first of the afternoon, the fifth of the day. There will be three more after this.*

*Gaffer Don is friendly, a genuinely nice person. He gives me his call sheet and says I can keep it. "If you'll tell me what's coming up next," he adds.*

*Several kids on skateboards are the extras in the scene. They descend on the snack table between takes, taking handfuls of everything. Finally one of the craft services people has to warn them not to take too many snacks at once.*

*Wardrobe has been working overtime; assistant Amy tells me she worked from 3 pm until almost midnight yesterday (a Sunday) getting the wardrobe ready for the skater kids. Usually they have an evening between episodes, but this time they don't (since they were finishing one episode and starting another the same day). She says she believes that props worked all weekend as well.*

*First AD Trevor is worried that the main guest star, a boy of about 12, gets enough school while on set. State child labor laws mandate that he must get five hours a day of tutoring, and the anticipated move to another location later today means travel time may cut into schooling. (This means three locations in one day for the crew, who wrapped the previous episode this morning.)*

*Grips Teddy and Lon are using scrims to soften the direct sunlight. DP Fred lights the stand-in for the main boy; he will make adjustments if necessary when the skater kids, mostly extras, enter the scene. Rehearsals begin. The skater kids come by on their skateboards, stop, and taunt the main boy. Director Lenny tells the kids gruffly to come in faster, and do it again. They practice the scene several times, then shoot it 12 times from several different angles, using a Steadicam to follow the action. A special screen is held up next to the Steadicam to break the wind—the Steadicam's balance is delicate and even a slight breeze will jiggle the camera. Electrician Ed carries a large lighting instrument alongside as well. Boys on skateboards taunt the main character, more loudly this time. Lenny tells the kids to come in closer.*

*Lenny stays near kids (but outside of the shot) to direct them, so he can't see the monitors. He asks the camera operator how the scene looked. They're going to do it again. Now Lenny yells: "Mean! guys! Mean!!" The kids surround the boy once more, shouting.*

*"Cut! Print! Now we're in the courtyard!" the director shouts.*

*Now the crew is gathered near the back of a small courtyard and play area behind the school. In this scene, the lead boy goes and talks with the lead girl, even though the other boys are mean to her because she's heavy and not very pretty. This scene is long, almost two full script pages, and the young actors are professional, but by no means perfect. The multiple setups for this scene include a wide shot of the courtyard with all the kids in view, a two-shot (filling the screen with just the two main actors), then point-of-view shots from the perspectives of the young boy, the girl, and several of the taunting kids. That's five setups for this scene alone and it's 3:45 already.*

*The director finishes with the two-shot after seven takes, then the camera operator reports that he saw the boom microphone in the shot. "When?" The audio technician is frustrated; he thought the boom was out of the shot. They prepare for take eight. "I'll bet they do at least 35 takes of this scene," I think to myself, doing the math in my head.*

*Gaffer Don warns me about this new director. Lenny, Don says, is a screamer, "in case you hadn't already noticed." I have. Different crew members, especially some of the stand-ins, have been shooting him resentful looks whenever he screams "Quiet! Quiet on the set!" In calmer moments Lenny reminisces about working with stars such as Elizabeth Taylor in the 1950s and 1960s. He seems to keep people at arms' length, until he needs them, then he either tries to connect with them (as he did with one of the lead child actors, the girl, earlier) or he yells at them to do whatever he needs done. People don't seem to like him, but gather around excitedly when he begins spinning his tales of working in "old Hollywood."*

*As the afternoon wears on, gaffer Don talks on the phone. One of the other guest stars has been delayed; some shooting may need to be postponed. "If we work Good Friday, actors would need to be paid more. Would crew want to be off Friday and work Saturday instead?" Dave doesn't think so. The crew wouldn't get time and a half, since Saturday would be their fifth work day that week, not their sixth. Breaking up a holiday weekend is not desirable, but it is deemed necessary, so that is what will happen.*

*The scene is finally finished after 41 takes. I wasn't far off. The kids are finished for the day, but the crew has more than three full pages (with three full setups) left to shoot before wrapping for the day.*

*Craft services people come around with sandwiches on trays, since we've hours more before wrap time, or the obligatory dinner after 12 total hours (which wouldn't be until about 9:00 pm).*

*For the next scene, an adult guest star (a former talk show host and major celebrity) must play an emotional scene in which she has a soliloquy of sorts and contemplates suicide. Her lines include details of her despair over her dead husband; she has more than a page and a half of dialogue by herself before a series regular joins the scene.*

*She begins. Her lines sound good, but she stops herself. "I wanna start over," she tells the director. She begins again. She stops herself again. After six such takes in the first setup alone, the crew's frustration takes the form of looks, and sighs. The director consults with her to find out what's wrong. "It's the script, it's different." Lenny confers with script supervisor Kim. "It's new. Nancy [the producer] wants it." They try the scene again. When the actor gets to the line about her dead husband, she*



*flubs again. "I've been studying this script for 10 days, and it was always, Michael, Michael. Now it's Andrew, and I just feel like, where's my Michael?" "Call the producer," the director responds. First AD Trevor does. She comes on set. "There was a Michael Pennington in the New York phone book, so we changed it." The director explains the problem this has created for the inexperienced actor. "Okay, fine," the producer says. "My Michael! I have my Michael back!" the actor exclaims. The director is eager to try again, but wants a rehearsal this time. The next take is better, the next even better! "Let's go. Let's go," audio guy Eric intones, barely loud enough for the director to hear. Eric wants them to shoot now. "He'd better watch out," Eric tells me. "I've seen this before with amateur actors. If you let them emote too much in rehearsals, they won't have anything left for the take." Eric was right. By the time cameras were rolling, the actor's energy was gone (although she knew her lines now).*

*"Quiet on the set. Quiet!" First AD Trevor is uncharacteristically stern. "Don't move. Don't whisper. She needs to feel like she's alone. If you can't be quiet, go somewhere else for a few minutes." It took three more takes to get her delivery close to how it had been in rehearsals, then they needed at least three more takes for coverage—takes in which she would need to deliver her lines the same way, repeatedly. I am gaining a new appreciation for the professionalism of the series regulars. Their takes are typically stellar the first time, and virtually identical to one another.*

*When the scene is finally complete, the head of craft services, also the set medic, brings in pizza as the shoot goes on into the night. The crew chats less in the evening; people are tired, and have had ample time to catch up on the day's news. Talk turns to tomorrow's schedule and possible call times. It'll be after 10 before we have a clue about the schedule for tomorrow. Morale is down a bit because of the afternoon's*

*frustrations, but the crew perseveres. "We all work for Fred," second AC Ned says, referring to the director of photography, a man in his 50s who has been working on this show for several years. "Everything we do, we do for him." He is an encourager, a quiet voice of experience—the coach of the crew's hockey team. For an endeavor in which the lead on-set person (the director) is always changing, Fred is a constant. He is the voice of experience and reason, and when this "yeller" of a director is gone, he'll still be there.*

The "afternoon" finally ends at 10:30 pm. The crew can "break down" in half the time it takes to set up. The audio, lighting, and camera gear, as well as the stands, screens, and scrimms the grips handled, are packed into cases and trunks, loaded onto trucks, and driven away—all in about 15 minutes. "We're almost like the carnival," Todd tells me. "We come to your neighborhood, stay for a while—you might go in to eat lunch, come back out, and we're gone."

### *Implications*

For most of its history, film production, while a business, has been a collaborative art as well. The management system implemented around 1915 placed authority and responsibility in the hands of the producers, and purported, in the tradition of Taylor (1911), to separate production planning from its execution by concentrating decision making at the upper levels, leaving routine tasks for the routine workers subject to the division of labor (Braverman, 1974; Staiger, 1985a).

Although the management system (scientific management) allocates authority and responsibility to the producers, the production system in place since before 1915 (with labor divided in the theatrical tradition) distributes creative responsibility across all

positions—from director and DP to gaffer and grip. If Aaron, the camera operator, hadn't noticed the reflection in the front door that day, someone else might have—but likely much later, too late to correct the problem. The editor could cut it out, perhaps, but he might not have a good shot with which to replace it, which could harm the continuous look of the scene. If the director of photography Fred approves a poorly-lit shot, all the preproduction planning possible will not improve its quality. Even when wardrobe selects clothing for the actors and extras as late as the night before, their decisions affect the look of the motion picture.

There is no film without a producer or director, true—but there is no film without the work of the DP, grip, or makeup artist, either, and their creative contributions count. Crew members create, innovate, and solve problems within their own domain each day. Individually and in sum those efforts make a difference—both in the film's potential for profit (correcting mistakes is costly) as well as in its quality, whether the film is for episodic television or theatrical release.

CHAPTER 5  
COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION  
AMONG FILM CREW MEMBERS  
ON THE SET

Observation on the set was directed by the following questions: Who works with whom on this set? When and why? What is the nature of their relationship (supervisor-supervised, collaborators, creative workers, support staff, etc.)? How might crew workgroups be characterized? Who is allowed to speak to whom, and when? What permissions, if any, are needed? When, and on what grounds, are such permissions granted? Does the organizational structure seem to aid or hinder the communication process necessary for creative collaborative work? This chapter draws on the answers to these questions to describe and explain the communicative and collaborative practices I observed during my fieldwork on the set of this prime-time television drama.

*Communication and Collaboration on the Set*

I began by discussing the basic rules and practices of communication and collaboration on the film crew I observed to clarify which crew members actually work together. Although a film crew might casually be referred to as a "team," because they work together on a project, it is not a team for the purpose of this analysis. As Hackman (2002) notes in *Leading Teams*, not all groups of workers commonly referred to as "teams" actually function as teams. If workers do not rotate their duties, are not all

equals, and if middle management still exists, then the group of workers is not really a team, according to Hackman. There are some *functional workgroups*, however, which I will define as groups of workers who work together on the same project, but sometimes constantly, sometimes intermittently. The film crew I observed is composed of several collaborative work groups, which often co-act with one another. Many crew members are part of several co-acting workgroups, or collaborative circles, simultaneously. Some are working constantly, some intermittently—some before and during actual shooting, some just immediately before.

Only certain members of this crew work on a particular portion of the production at a time. This intermittence is somewhat consistent with an assembly line approach to production, with different groups of people working on different phases of manufacturing. Some workers take part in pre- or postproduction phases only, others in preproduction and production, others in production only, and still others in postproduction (film editing and special effects). I observed on-set workers during the shooting stage only.

#### *The Organizational Structure of the Film Crew*

The film crew I studied was structured with a strict division of labor, so the expectation would be for top-down communication, with department heads serving the "middle management" function, relaying communication from top management to their own subordinates. In such a strict hierarchy, some might expect little effort by subordinates to communicate "upward"; middle managers and supervisors would work to carry out the will of the management, and the lower-level workers would be expected to comply. We might expect efforts of lower-level workers to communicate upward

would be thwarted or not taken seriously. The management structure implemented on this set is a hierarchical, scientifically managed approach. Under Taylorism those making creative decisions about the product are typically separated from its manufacture (see Braverman, 1976; Staiger, 1985a). At first glance, this seems true of the production company I observed. As the call sheets (see Appendix F) show, crew positions are divided on call sheets between "above-the-line" (nontechnical positions such as producer, director, writer, actor, etc., and "below-the-line technical and crafts positions)." Above-the-line positions have traditionally been seen as the more creative, and "below-the-line" typically seen as technical or craft-oriented.

As Staiger (1995) makes clear, such a structure must be modified in certain ways for creative industries to be successful, since motion pictures and filmed television episodes, while "manufactured," have a uniqueness unlike that of a common, mass-produced widget. Indeed, the data bear out what Staiger has asserted, both above- and below-the-line workers have necessary creative input on this set.

*Creative Collaboration Work Circles  
(or Circles of Workers)*

On this set, all workers not engaged in "crew-support" positions are free to provide input. There is evidence that the production system has been modified for creative purposes through workgroups I call creative collaborative circles. Memberships are automatic for some, others are negotiated (and granted) on a regular basis, and still others, by lower-echelon workers, are negotiated (with varying degrees of success) on an as-needed basis. The description that follows addresses how that works in this setting, and uses episodic examples to demonstrate who communicates with whom, and

who works with whom regularly. It also addresses the roles of sensemaking and power in collaborative activities.

When considering this organization's implicit rules of communication, it is important to note that not everyone involved has the opportunity to work with everyone else. One interesting characteristic of the film crew as a work group is that different individuals work collaboratively on creative tasks at different times. Some workers only work in immediate preparations (such as on-set wardrobe and makeup people), others work almost exclusively when shooting (such as actors), and others (such as assistant directors) do both. Some people are merely co-acting—completing their small portion of the production alongside others who are doing their part—but others are collaborating creatively as they work to figure out how to shoot the next scene, and then do it. These temporary, recurring collaborative circles are hubs of communication and creative decision making on the set. Their memberships are fairly constant (though not entirely fixed), but regularly improvised.

Interpersonally, the communication rules on the set are mostly unspoken, except for the requirement that all are silent during shooting. (People do sometimes whisper during shooting, but only if they are so far away from the action that they believe they will not be heard.) "Settle" is often the command used, often followed by a (usually) gentle "Quiet on the set." Following such an order, no one speaks except the director, who then issues a series of short commands before falling silent himself.

Between takes, crew chatter is common, yet at least the implied consent and/or agreement of certain members (such as the director or director of photography) is almost always required for certain people to gain access to speak to those in the key creative circle. These key players may not choose to communicate directly with other

members of the crew, unless something is wrong, or unless a circumstance arises in which the input of certain other crew members is either sought or offered. At such points, other crew members make bids for entrance into the collaborative circle.

Creative collaboration circles form for reasons of utility as well as convenience. The most obvious ones follow departmental rosters. I refer to the work of such groups as intradepartmental collaboration. Others are interdepartmental, fluid, and improvised (see Weick, 1989, 1998). Still others are interdepartmental, but with a fixed core membership, as in the case of the key creative collaborative circle detailed below.

### *The Key Creative Collaborative Circle*

The most commonly recurring collaborative circle consists of the director, director of photography (DP), script supervisor (also known as "continuity"), and the first assistant director (often with the second assistant director as an auxiliary member). While each position involves different responsibilities, chores often overlap. These workers also pull in others, such as actors and costumers, as needed. For example, while in the process of shooting a restaurant scene, the script supervisor begins talking with the director about continuity—specifically, when people (actors) are sitting down and when they are getting up.

*We are shooting in a restaurant today; mahogany wood trims the plum-colored booths, the low light and fancy place settings on the smooth maroon tablecloths creates a fine dining ambience. There is plenty of room for crew and extras in the main dining room, with chairs provided. (The craft services table is outside, though.) I sit in a booth with my back against the wall to observe the shooting. Several conversations among*



*characters sitting around tables, coming and going, must be shot. This means many different angles on each scene; each character's perspective must be covered.*

*The script supervisor Kim is discussing continuity with director Dave. She keeps track of when actors are sitting down and when they are getting up. She wants Dave to decide which lines should be the actor's cues to move. DP Fred is listening, since these directions directly affect him. Dave says he wants the lead actress to walk in a different way when they shoot the reverse angle. "I'm all set for that," Don interjects. He tells first AC Brian what they're shooting next, so Brian can relay it to camera operator Aaron. "That's great, just no sound this time?"*

*There is no dialogue when the actress moves, and restaurant sounds will be added later, so no audio will be necessary for the next shot. DP Fred asks someone to take a coat out of the shot—now that the camera angle is reversed, several people must move as well. Director Dave and DP Fred confer with first AD Trevor as to the next angle. Trevor is keeping track of how many angles have been shot so far, so he knows what's next. Director Dave asks script supervisor Kim how he should shoot the next angle, and she gives him her advice (although I cannot make out all of what she is saying from where I am). Kim then consults camera operator Aaron regarding whether or not they've shot more or less than they need.*

*Next Kim finds Denise from wardrobe. We've shot three days in this location, and all action is to have taken place on the same day in the story. Kim wants to make sure the wardrobe matches, so Denise looks up her Polaroid still shots from the previous day. The lead actress needs a hat—is she wearing it? She is. Later, when I ask Kim about continuity, she acknowledges the help of others. "Well, we just rely on each other, and we never know—sometimes we make mistakes. For example, there's a rug*

*[she points to the red carpet on the sidewalk leading into the restaurant]. It was darker and wider but it was stolen. This one is different, but there's not much we can do, just hope the audience doesn't notice that the rug at the end of the show is different from the beginning." She hopes the elapsed time will make people less likely to notice.*

In the episode above, the first AC's utterance is an utterance of coordination rather than collaboration (a common occurrence, of course), but the interactions among the director Dave, DP Don, script supervisor Pam, and first AD Trevor in this instance, are typical of the creative collaboration that occurs on a regular basis among the workers in this circle. The gaffer, who is the head electrician, is a common addition to this group. Sometimes the key grip is there as well. Eventually, Denise from wardrobe is pulled into the circle.

The DP and the director work together closely, and often consult each other. All of the regular members of this collaborative circle sit near each other, in front of video monitors, and confer with one another regularly all day.

Still shooting in the restaurant, director Dave oversees a camera rehearsal. "Is that okay with you?" he asks the DP.

"Look at this," DP Fred says, pointing out a shadow. "I see what you mean," says the director, then the first AD is pulled into the conversation before a decision is made on what to do. Electricians fix the problem, and shooting finally commences a few minutes later. The problem, while never fully explained, has been shared and solved.

It is common, acceptable, even expected for other crew members to make bids for, or be pulled into the key collaborative circle (director, DP, script supervisor, sometimes gaffer). On another episode, the script supervisor discusses a shot with the

camera operator in an effort to determine if he had shot more or less than was needed. And on that same episode, another person—the acting coach for a guest star mentioned in Chapter 4—becomes an almost constant member of that key collaborative group. She confers with the star before and after almost every take, and at times the director speaks to the coach instead of to the actor/singer.

Although the key collaborative circle is comprised of people in positions of higher levels of on-set hierarchy, their authority can be eclipsed by the arrival of writers and producers who visit the set periodically—not daily, but at least once or twice per episode.

One of the greatest frustrations noted by script supervisor Kim is the role and influence of the producers—they are often invisible collaborators, telephoning directors from off-set. On other days they arrive in person to take over directing duties for a time. They typically enter the process in the middle of the shoot, and often take control from the director. They do not concern themselves with every last detail, they reserve the right to have input at any point in the process, and they exercise it periodically.

*For this scene, an urban-style bridge has been built inside a warehouse owned by the production company, where today's shoot takes place. Actual yellow cabs have been driven into the warehouse to drive over the bridge. The director works with the script supervisor and actors to establish why one of the cabs on the bridge stops when it does, and if it makes sense to do it that way. Suddenly, executive producer/head writer Nancy appears. She is dressed fairly casually, in slacks and a knit shirt. "Her saying 'Look!' should stop the car," Nancy interjects. It appears that the producer is directing. A few minutes later director Dave confers with Nancy on how to fade out of the scene.*

This is another story of collaboration, concluded by another instance of management entering and dominating a collaborative circle. Slowly fading out is not a great compromise, and the director would like to be rehired in the future, so he cooperates. Nancy leaves the set satisfied.

Audio technician Trent discussed this situation later. "On this set people work together pretty well," he tells me. "What I find frustrating is when things are going well, like on this show, and then producers or somebody has to come in and spoil it, tinker with it, change it. You think 'It was going well, why did you mess with it?'"

Despite their frustrations with upper management, sometimes key on-set collaborators will call a writer or producer into their collaborative circle because they want their advice. For such collaborations to go smoothly, all members of the circle must favor such an initiative. If management is called without everyone's consent, conflict can occur.

*It is the middle of the afternoon now, just after lunch, and script supervisor Pam is upset. She is worried that the script for this episode is too long, and if so, producers will blame her for not noticing. (Never mind that the producers had supervised its drafting throughout the process.) Pam tells director Dave about her concern. Next thing she knows, producer Vince is calling the set, "hopping mad" as one crew member put it. Dave talks to him and tries to calm him down. Pam is irritated. "I didn't know you were going to call Vince!" She seems embarrassed.*

*Director Dave tried to go to bat for Pam, but it created quite the row. Within an hour a 30-ish man in jeans and a plaid shirt, script in hand, comes on set. This writer enters the key collaborative circle by engaging Dave concerning the script. "The script isn't too long," writer Ed tells Dave. "At one and one-half minutes per page, I get*

*exactly 52 minutes." You just can't assume so many minutes per page," Dave protests. "Every page is different." "On average, on average," Ed protests. Dave won't give in easily; it seems as if Ed is trying to sell him something and he's not buying. Dave is concerned because the script indicates a need for stock footage near the end, and doesn't seem to allow for the time it will take to include such footage in the final edit. "But look here, if we count these pages and multiply, it's the right length, even with the stock footage!"*

*Dave calls Vince again, still concerned. The shoot goes on. In the end, the script is not changed. When I view this episode, the season finale, on television two weeks later, the story is intact, as shot. The stock footage segment at the end works, although it may be shorter than the writers originally intended. In the end, if the script had been too long, though, the writers, not Pam, would have been to blame.*

#### *Intradepartmental Communication and Collaboration*

Some collaborative circles are intradepartmental. These circles usually maintain and reinforce a typical hierarchical structure (with orders conveyed by department heads through two-way radio headsets) there is careful communication and coordination of effort as workers collaborate to solve problems and/or achieve various outcomes.

*The dolly grip Steve has finished laying track for the dolly shot—he uses little wooden boxes to balance the pieces of dolly track. The blocks have holes through which he attaches the track. Ready now, he listens intently as DP Fred talks the shot through with the camera operator and the first AC, telling exactly what he wants for this shot. They're ready to try it now. Steve gingerly moves the dolly on the temporary track, with the camera and operator perched on top. It works. The camera is ready to go.*

The example above details an ordinary communicative interaction within a department. No particular problem is posed, but there is conversational space for a small group of three (DP, first AC, and dolly grip) to discuss, question, or collaborate on the shot if need be.

An episode involving a circus provided a ripe opportunity for intradepartmental collaboration. This particular instance, which I did not observe because it involved pre-rigging of lights the day before the set moved to that location, is recounted by gaffer Dave.

*Matt, my best boy, does all the pre-rigging while I'm on set. He's up at the fairgrounds, and they ended up building a grid for lights. It was kinda complicated. I said "Matt, do you want me to come up there?" He said no. I offered again later, he said no. Finally, the third time, he said "Yes." The top of the tent, it seems, was not high enough.*

*They had to put in cross-beams to hang the lights [inside the tent]. But then, the trapeze artists couldn't do their thing. So we tried different things. Finally, we cut the tent in several places so that lights hung down from the ceiling through the holes. "The decision concerning how to handle the problem was not made over the phone; ultimately, it was the gaffer and best boy, working together, who solved the problem.*

In another instance of intradepartmental collaboration, producer Vince joins the collaborative circle within the camera department. (His participation might make this exchange *interdepartmental*, were it not for the fact that this particular producer, Vince, is the postproduction producer who oversees special effects. His work directly affects the picture—he is, in this role, an extension of the camera department.)

*The camera is placed up high to shoot down into a "Hall of Mirrors" set, and DP Don climbs the ladder to collaborate with director Dave, camera operator Aaron and Steve, the dolly grip, who is assisting with the shot (without the dolly). The DP is asking what the director wants, and the producer is dictating what he wants to the director. He will be shooting inserts later that evening, and is working with the director on how the actors are shot in order for the scene to come together properly in postproduction editing.*

*"Put a second mirror behind John [the actor]," the producer tells him, "That way we'll get a two-fer out of it." Next, the postproduction producer Vince discusses his plans to keep most of the crew late to shoot additional shots after the union folks (director, ADs, and principal actors) go home. ("I'm a genius," he states proudly, and then adds with some bravado, "I'm gonna be hated," anticipating crew reaction to the plan.)*

Producer Vince may not realize that some of the crew already feel that way.

When Vince enters the collaborative circle, he makes no bid—he just enters. The others acquiesce to his presence, since he is not only a postproduction and special effects person—he is also management. They grant him his power, as such is required of them to remain employed. Once in the circle, he does collaborate, yet the others allow him to dominate. The director will stand up to him, though. "He works all the time, he has no life," one worker comments when the subject of Vince comes up. "Even when we're on hiatus, he's in the office working every day!" Others laugh and make their own comments, but I notice that the director is silent. He never utters a negative word about him directly; he must work with Vince when supervising the editing of this episode. It is clear, though, that this director has lost some respect for this crew's

management. Later, he tells me, "My union [the Director's Guild of America] requires that I have three days in postproduction editing to make my cut, without the producer. On this show, I sometimes have one day, and that's *with* the producer."

### *Interdepartmental Collaboration*

At some point in the episode above, the collaboration moves from an intradepartmental collaborative circle (DP, camera operator, and dolly grip) to the interdepartmental circle that is often operative in final decision-making (usually some combination of the director, DP, first AD, and script supervisor.) This group is expanded by the incorporation of another player—the producer pulls in the scriptwriter next, to talk with the director about how to shoot the scene. In the end, the director and first AD join the producer and DP in the discussion of how the scene should be shot. (The script supervisor drops out of the discussions at this point, since continuity problems for this sequence can be corrected in postproduction, when the special effects will be done.) Eventually, the producer tells the director how to direct an actor to walk out of the frame in order for his special effects to work. The director listens and does not protest or add comments, although it appears that he has some freedom to do so.

Another interdepartmental collaborative group involves the gaffer, who supervises the use of electric lighting on the set.

*"I collaborate with the DP all the time, and the director and the key grip," Don explains, identifying another recurring interdepartmental creative collaborative circle. (The key grip, Dan, supervises all flags, screens, scrims, etc., also non-electrical gear affecting lighting filter or direct natural or electric light.) He also emphasizes diplomacy. "Getting along and working things out is as important as whether or not you*



*can do your job." He consults with the DP (his direct supervisor) as well as his department. He also works interdepartmentally with the key grip, who is at the same level of the hierarchy as he. "I'll coordinate with Dan regarding whether or not the lights should be flagged, for example. I have to do it without stepping on toes. Sometimes I wanna say 'Dan, get that flag off my light!' But instead I'll say 'Dan, we've got less light here' and he'll change it."*

Don indicated that his best boy (his top assistant) is less diplomatic. "He's the best, but sometimes the personality conflicts—well, he's at the center of them. I just want to say 'Matt, it's just episodic television, go pick up your kids from school or something.'"

As a supervisor, the gaffer employs techniques not unlike those of a resourceful parent when diffusing tensions among his electricians. "Sometimes there are personality conflicts. If I see there's gonna be a problem I'll tell one of the crew, 'Hey can you come over and watch this shot for me while I go out?' I'll send them out for the day on a rigging with the best boy to separate that person from the others and diffuse the situation."

Most workers seem to know when it is appropriate to make a bid to enter the key collaborative circle, or even to interact with management (in this case writers and producers). In another example of interdepartmental collaboration, the wardrobe department head comes around to talk with the writer about the "reunion scene" and what a particular actor should wear.

*"What do you think she should wear for the reunion scene?" wardrobe specialist Fran asks. "If it doesn't look right, the executive producer will go crazy," I hear someone else say. It is obvious that they think the wardrobe for this scene should look*

*particularly nice. Finally, postproduction producer Jim enters into the discussion. The actor needs to wear a certain color, or the special effects won't work, he explains. (So much for artistic considerations.)*

Because the producer often enters into what some may consider the purview of others, his participation frustrates some. The script supervisor, for one, resents the control the producers have over the director, even when they are not on set. "It's like the invisible man is there pulling strings," the script supervisor tells me while making a marionette motion. Still, the majority of creative collaboration on the set takes place without the producers.

Although it is the main collaborative circle that makes final decisions concerning when shooting should begin and when enough takes and angles have been filmed, other lower-level film crew workers do contribute on an ongoing basis. When this happens, the entire crew (except support personnel) form a larger collaborative circle in which many opinions may be voiced at a particular time. Although lower-level crew members are nonunion, paid less, and have less power in decision making than those in the key collaborative circle, there is a general sense of respect on this crew as evidenced by the way key collaborative figures respond to unsolicited advice from lower-level production workers such as grips and electricians.

First AD Trevor, a member of that main group, tells me, "The thing I love about filmmaking [is that] it's a total collaboration art. Every department is crucial, everyone's opinion matters. Electric and grips always make suggestions, and if it will help, we'll do it. On some crews, the director doesn't want to listen. It's not like that."

*It's getting late, and director Lenny is frustrated. "Cut! Let's do it again." He wonders aloud what is going wrong with the scene. I hear one worker, an electrician,*

*mutter. "I think he missed his mark." The director hears, but does not acknowledge the input. "Go to your mark," he tells the actor. While the input was not acknowledged directly, the contributing worker knew his input had been heard, and that it had made a difference. Over the course of the day, solving such problems quickly can mean the difference between a 12- and 14-hour day, which everyone on set can appreciate.*

### *On-Set Collaboration Above-the-Line*

The collaboration I have discussed thus far has involved production workers (mostly "below-the-line") collaborating as they work to fulfill the artistic and technical expectations of the producers as laid out in the producer-approved (and often producer-authored) script.

Sometimes, though, other above-the-line workers, most notably actors, will make a bid to join the collaborative circle comprised of the director, producer, and writers about specific lines that might be changed. While the actors most popular with the public may have more influence (one was credited with influencing management to implement shorter days—generally limited to 16 hours) despite their celebrity, they do not necessarily get their way with the writers. Sometimes the writers or producers are contacted by phone if an actor feels strongly about changing an important line, or has a question about a scene.

*This week's episode focuses on a main character who happens to exhibit characteristics of dwarfism. Lynnette, one of the regular leads, already requested a line change earlier today, and it was approved. Now, she protests a line that she believes is demeaning to little people (it includes a pun about being "short-sighted"). Lynnette stops, and requests that the line be changed. Director Lenny asks her to read the line*

*again, as written. She balks. Standing firm, she asks that the director get permission for the line to be changed, and Lenny obliges, in at least a cursory way, by getting the writer (rather than the producer) on the phone. The writer won't budge. The line stays. Lynnette cringes after every subsequent take, but she complies.*

In another instance, detailed in Chapter 4, the producer reversed a line change as a less experienced guest star complains that the change is confusing for her (notably, after multiple unsuccessful takes). At that everyone seems to want to do everything possible to make the novice actress, a former talk-show host, more comfortable.

It is common for directors to request script changes, and pull the writers and producers in for a discussion of a particular line or scene. One of the more popular directors tells me that he has requested such changes that very morning in a meeting with the producers. He said the change helped the story make more sense. "It didn't totally fix it, but it helped." He added, "We changed the script all around."

*It is mid-afternoon on the first day shooting a new episode, and I hear the writers and director debating the merits of the screenplay for this episode wherein the lead guest star's child has been kidnapped, but the script has him in dialogue with other characters before beginning to look for the child. The director argues, "I'd want to find my kid and worry about other matters later!" He and the writer go back and forth, but the issue is not resolved. The next morning, the director speaks with producer Nancy about it. The sequence of events in this episode is finally altered—the director wins out, even over producer Donna, who still likes to stop by the set long enough to make suggestions*

*Sensemaking, Power, and Collaboration  
in Creative Work Circles*

It is important to note that although workers on this set genuinely collaborate, they do so within a particular system of power relations. These relations are not entirely unique to this set—they undoubtedly draw from cultural and political aspects of U.S. culture—yet some of the expressions of such relations on this set may well be.

On the set, the creative process is characterized and constituted by conversation—coordination and collaboration make the process work. Participating in this process requires certain understandings on the part of the production crew members. Some may come with previous experience on other sets, specific knowledge about this organizational environment and how to successfully operate within it comes through social interactions with others here. Since roughly half the crew is "hanging out" half of the time, there are plenty of opportunities for such organizationally constitutive talk. Such talk can help newcomers learn more about the exercise of power which is inherent in collaborative activities that include workers from different levels of the hierarchy.

Who may speak when, and to whom? Sometimes, the answer depends on the person one is addressing, rather than the position that person holds. For example, I was advised to "stay back" when Lenny was directing and did not have the opportunity to interview him as I did the other directors. New crew members not similarly advised or wise about that director's attitude might suffer for lack of such knowledge.

For crew members who lack the appropriate sensemaking skills, or who do not participate in the talk that constitutes the organizational community (see Hawes, 1977), there are consequences. For example, sometimes bids for entry into creative collaborative circles are not accepted. Knowing when one's bid will likely be accepted,

and when it is likely to be rejected, depends on the situation and the people involved; it is a sensemaking skill keener in some workers than others.

*It's late, but there's still a long way to go before we wrap for the day. The entire crew is weary of director Lenny's shouting. "Quiet! Everyone be quiet!" "He needs to show the crew some respect," stand-in Stella tells me. The director calls for a particular shot, but audio technician Eric is concerned about the implications of that particular decision for audio. He asks about it, but Lenny sees it as questioning his judgment. "Watch, and act accordingly," he replies sharply. Eric grunts, and his body stiffens; he is irritated. Lenny's remark says that Eric shouldn't even be speaking, let alone questioning the director's judgment. Shooting continues; the director's approach does not change.*

Savvy crew members know when it is not appropriate to enter another collaborative circle for some reason, and make no bid for entry. Often they will mutter comments instead, as if to say, "Here's my opinion, take it or leave it," as noted in Chapter Four when Eric pointed out quietly that the director had been over-rehearsing a neophyte actor.

Knowing when to make a bid for entry, and when not to, is complicated in episodic television by the fact that different directors shoot different episodes. Some are hired for multiple episodes each season, but none on this show are hired for even half the season. Thus, some of the rules of engagement change from episode to episode, as the director is "at the helm" when the producers aren't around. Knowing how to collaborate (or how not to) with each particular director is a skill that well-informed, politically astute crew members have developed.

*Collaboration and Worker Gratification on a  
Scientifically Managed Set*

Although I observed and documented various frustrations among crew members on set, the general atmosphere I observed was positive. Kind words outnumbered angry ones by a considerable margin, and many of the crew members seemed to be genuine friends. Some of the workers had spent six full 10-month shooting seasons together—almost six years of intermittent conversations, meals shared, problems solved, creative collaboration exercised.

If the reality of the organization is socially constructed through the action of communication (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Giddens, 1986; Hawes, 1998; Taylor, 1999) then the crew conversations between takes are almost as important to the life of the organization as the work itself. The character of the organization is its talk—the arguments, creative moments, the collaborative efforts, the orders, the complaints, and the mutterings. Despite consistent, legitimate complaints about management, this crew still worked, and worked well. The theme of this crew as family was prominent in crew member talk while "hanging out" and it is not difficult to see why. This crew eats together, works together, plays together (crossword puzzles, word jumble, football after lunch if there's time, hockey on the weekends). As one electrician put it, "This crew is like a family. I feel taken care of working here. If it gets too cold, wardrobe gets me a coat. If I'm hungry, I get fed. It's actually easier to work here, in some ways, than it is to be at home." Stand-in Stella echoed this sentiment. "We're just like a family—we fight, we make up."

It is generally accepted that scientifically-managed workers are too disconnected from the overall creative process to feel a part of it, let alone be gratified by it. But far

from being disengaged during shooting, workers constantly monitor the action for opportunities to contribute. They may chat in camp chairs around the periphery of the set, but as makeup artist Chad once noted, each of them is ready to spring into action when needed. After a task is completed or disaster averted, workers return to their perches on chairs, in lofts, or leaning against walls, physically, but not mentally, disengaged from the work at hand.

The continuous engagement of crew members working on the picture is another way the scientific management approach to production is altered in the film production setting. Although crew people must perform a specific, specialized task at the moment they are needed, they are also part of the whole process, observing, commenting, contributing beyond the lines of their ostensible responsibilities. Thus the worker remains connected to the overall creative process in a way that contributes to an overall sense of satisfaction with the work process, despite long hours and merely decent pay; it may also help individual crew members feel more fully invested in each finished episode.

Creative collaborative circles on the set work to undermine the traditional hierarchy, even though power is unevenly distributed. Although those with greater authority have increased opportunities to contribute, anyone can make a difference, and this is evident in the action I observed, as well as the talk I heard. I noticed props assistant Brian constantly bidding to enter the key collaborative circle, and his bids were sometimes granted, sometimes not. He would sit at the feet of "old Hollywood" Lenny, soaking up his stories from the set of *Cleopatra* so many years ago, maybe hoping to contribute to the shooting of the next scene. Perhaps the process of making sense of, and working within, creative collaborative circles (and their rules of membership and



engagement) works to bridge the traditional gap between scientifically-managed workers and the overall creative process on this set.

Most of the workers I met on the set expressed a love for their work and for the collaborative process. Grip Jesse talked about the satisfaction he gets working with the electricians to "get a pretty picture." He also cites the spontaneity of collaboration as a significant gratification. "It's different every day. New places, new people, new situations. Of course, the lighting is mostly the same—key light, back light, fill light—but we have to do different manipulations to get it to work, like on this house."

First AD Trevor claimed that his job is organizational—not creative, but communicative. But as Weick (1989, 1998) notes, organizing achieved through communication is inherently creative. Creativity does come into play when juggling the many requirements for shooting, as does analytical thinking, and Trevor seems to enjoy this. On set, the first ADs must be thinking at least three shots ahead of the director. Trevor is gratified that the general public—a national audience—will see his work. But the most gratifying part of the production process for him is the serendipitous; he loves the improvisational aspects collaborating on work in this organization.

"The main reason I love this so much is that a lot [of the work] is accidental and spontaneous. Film is totally a collaborative art," he continued, "unless you're drawing single-cell animation all by yourself or something. You can come in with [a plan]; the director may change everything. When I see something spontaneous happen, I get excited.

"What I like best when I'm on the set—there's a rush you can get when all the elements are working. [When] we're under the gun and then it works, there's a feeling, there's a rush, it's like drugs. All these elements come into place. The whole ends up

being greater than the parts, more than any individual could have done alone. It's a lot to know that people out there are going to be entertained by it."

### *Summary*

On this crew, collaboration occurs through overlapping *collaborative circles* comprised of workers in both supervisory and lower-level roles. All are free to negotiate a temporary position in the key collaborative circle if their bid indicates that their input will further the goals of the organization (whether pragmatic, creative, or professional). Although some directors allow more general crew input than others, all three different directors I observed used some crew input. Even the grumpiest director, who was disliked intensely and could quickly squelch a bid for entry into the key collaborative circle, listened when a lower-level worker made a helpful contribution, although the director did not acknowledge the input directly.

An important aspect of collaboration on the set is making sense of when a bid to join a collaborative circle is appropriate; it requires making sense of power relations on the set as well. When a bid is accepted, a worker is empowered to contribute directly to the quality of the filmed episode itself. This empowerment may also contribute to workers' job satisfaction, despite the consistently long hours the crew worked. The idea of such empowerment and gratification among lower-level production workers is somewhat at odds with the traditional view of scientifically managed enterprises as attempts to standardize, mechanize, and keep creative decision making in the hands of management. This study has shown there is flexible specialization in film production. Such flexibility, I maintain, allows for creative collaboration among crew members that keeps lower-level workers from acting as mere cogs in a giant machine. As they move

in and out of collaborative circles, they exercise creativity while at the same time they fulfill their own specialized duties as part of the production team.

## CHAPTER 6

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

*In a truly creative collaboration, work is pleasure.* (Bennis & Biederman, 1998, p. 8)

This study demonstrates a clear difference between the organizational structure and the practical performance of a film production crew. The film production crew I observed was structured in a highly delineated hierarchical manner enforced by work rules, unions, and the tradition of scientific management. This structure, however, was regularly undermined by the demands of tasks at hand that made operating in a true top-down fashion impossible. Because of the complexity of the film production process, no single person has the capacity to do the job alone. So despite our vision of the producer or director as auteur, the reality is that there are necessarily many decisions at lower levels that affect the final product, in ways not predictable from the ostensible structure. Lower-level film production workers do not merely actuate the decisions of others, but rather collaborate creatively on an everyday basis. The consequences of their local decisions and the solutions they enact are what make the finished product possible.

This qualitative study of the everyday workings of a film production crew producing a prime-time dramatic television show was designed to accomplish three goals: to explore the historical roots of film production and management to explain why lower-level crew members have not typically been considered major contributors to the creative process of producing a film, while the contributions of producers, directors and

writers have been emphasized; to describe and document, in detail, a typical shooting day for a film crew producing film for episodic television; and to provide a description and analysis of film crew members' communicative and collaborative activities, as exercised within the hierarchical structure of a scientifically managed organization.

The study also works to show *how* crew members are able to collaborate creatively despite a hierarchical, scientifically managed crew structure and the presence on set of managing workers with greater authority in the organization (such as the director and director of photography). The hope is that this study will promote a deeper understanding of the collective human communicative and collaborative efforts necessary to create a film for television or theatrical release, and heighten awareness of the substantial and significant contributions that film production workers make on the set each day.

Thirteen research questions were considered at the outset of this study, which was designed to examine crew work during the shooting phase of the film production process.

Field work and the coding and analysis of its data did not provide information on three of the research questions: worker resistance in daily practice, worker response to the controlling aspects of formulaic television drama, and how workers view their own organizational practices and those of other workers. The 10 research questions addressed by the data involved issues related to how the film crew is structured, who does what, communication practices, collaboration, creativity, hierarchy, authority, control, the sense workers make of their own jobs, plus worker satisfaction. These were further framed by and interpreted in the context of literature relating to the history of film production, industrial management, and organizational communication in an effort

to construct a model of how creative collaboration works among crew members working on hierarchically structured film production crews.

Chapters 4 and 5 presented the results of the exploration of the study's research questions. This chapter, Chapter 6, reviews the significance of those findings to move toward a greater understanding of the collaborative and communicative processes at work on the film crew. It will also examine the implications of this study for contemporary film production management, as well as for educational institutions that teach television and film production as part of their curricula. Finally, I consider the limitations of this study, implications for future research, my subject position as a participant observer in the processes of data collection and analysis, and offer a summary of my conclusions.

*The Significance of Creative Collaboration  
Among Film Crew Members*

The idea that lower-level workers contribute little creatively under scientific management has been prevalent for years, despite anecdotal and journalistic evidence to the contrary.

Staiger (1995) offers a few quotations from interviews with film workers that indicate a high level of creative satisfaction in their jobs, yet, as she notes, few studies have made collaboration among film production workers their primary focus (only Saferstein, 1991, and this study). Scientific management had a great impact on the early film industry, and while I maintain that the influence of Taylorism may have worked to deemphasize creative contributions of lower-level workers, an emphasis on only above-the-line workers does a great disservice to the study of the film production process as well as to the workers themselves.

The presence of opportunities for, and instances of, creative collaboration among the film crew members I observed (even those at lower levels in the hierarchy) are significant, in part because they show that film production workers can actually have creative input through collaboration despite the hierarchical, scientifically managed structure of the crews, and in part because they demonstrate *how* such collaboration among workers in positions of varying authority and scope are possible under scientific management. Bids for entry into collaborative circles are spontaneous and improvised (Weick, 1989).

*The Character and Limits of Collaboration  
Among Film Crew Members*

Lest we conclude that all film crew members at all levels have equal opportunities to collaborate and make creative contributions, it is important to note that this is clearly not the case. The contemporary, scientifically managed production crew is most certainly not a horizontal organization—it is hierarchical in its distribution of the authority to speak and act. Yet the vertical levels of this scientifically managed organization are definitely permeable through both semi-permanent and ad hoc collaborative work groups. Collaboration through these groups was an expectation of the demands of the task at hand. No one called a group of lower-level workers together to say, "Let's collaborate on this." It was a fluid, improvised activity.

The key collaborative circle had a core membership of the director, director of photography (DP), script supervisor, and first assistant director (first AD). This workgroup was the only workgroup whose membership was fixed, although the makeup of several intradepartmental groups was fairly constant. The permanence of the core membership in this one group was reified daily through interaction, physical

propinquity (these four people were almost always together) and through the placement of four chairs, in front of video monitors, off to the side on set. No matter where shooting was taking place, those chairs and monitors were always set up promptly in anticipation of the arrival of the director, DP, script supervisor, and first assistant director although the first AD rarely sat.

Membership in this circle could be expanded instantly according to need. Those who wished to join the key circle at a given time, or any collaborative work group, for that matter, did so by making bids for entry that were readily accepted, rejected, withdrawn, or sometimes even ignored. There was no guarantee of acceptance, although the ability to predict it had much to do with political savvy (knowing who was authorized to accept the bid, and, of those, who was likely to do so) as well as timing.

Participants worked within the hierarchical structure, yet the collaborative work circles made it function more like an adhocracy—with collaboration taking place at various times, between various workers at various levels, to create approaches to work or solutions to problems. Yet it was not truly an adhocracy, since the hierarchical management structure remained in place, and those with more authority in that structure had the ability to validate or dismiss various collaborative contributions, or even attempts at collaboration. Still, the benefits of an "ad hoc" approach to collaborating were evident, and the practice was reinforced daily with the acceptance of bids for entry each day.

The improvisational style in which workers formed and reformed collaborative circles as the need arose is reminiscent of Weick's (1992, 1998) work that likens the sensemaking process in organizations to musicians engaged in improvisational jazz performances. While jazz performers might guess ahead of time where a particular



performance might take them, musically, they don't know for sure until the actual performance, given that they will be constantly responding to the split-second decisions other musicians are making during the performance. Similarly, film production crew members have good ideas about what a planned shooting day will be like, challenges related to the weather, creative disagreements, actors "in the moment" who may deviate from the script, and producers constantly rewriting it may require the formation of different collaborative circles (perhaps even some comprised of workers who have never worked together closely before).

There was a certain tension on the set between the boundaries that were set up by the hierarchical structure of the crew, and what was expected of them creatively. Those tensions were eased, perhaps even transcended, through the functions of creative collaborative circles, however. The crew I observed, although structured according to the tradition of scientific management, was expected to improvise, just as jazz musicians are. Creative collaborative circles were the means by which they worked to meet those expectations. Individuals, although expected to complete certain duties in certain ways, were consistently handling new situations, jumping in and out of collaborative circles as necessary, offering advice, observations, and even criticisms that could make the resulting program aesthetically better. (Such bids also maintain, challenge, or break down power relations on set; jazz musicians must negotiate power as well, as they play in ensembles that allow for individual solos at different times.)

These improvisational collaborative processes, which allow workers at various levels to contribute, can also work to strengthen the interpersonal cohesion of the organization. Whenever an electrician could pinpoint a problem with a scene, and mentioned it, each time grips and electricians worked together to produce what one

worker termed a "pretty picture," in every instance in which a wardrobe or makeup person or a production assistant helped out with continuity, the collaborative practices of this group were reinforced, and with them, I assert, workers' sense of belonging, of community, of the organization (or at least the crew) as a "family" were reinforced as well.

In *Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration*, Bennis and Biederman (1998) recognize the collective aspects of creativity—whether in art or in industry—and are among the few academics to address the collaborative aspects of filmmaking. They focus on seven consequential collaborative groups, including such groups such as the Manhattan Project, Lockheed's Skunkworks, Apple Computer, the 1992 Clinton Presidential campaign, and of special interest, Walt Disney Studios, to challenge the traditional American fascination with what they call "solitary genius"—of the individual personality changing the world with an invention, an innovation, or an artistic achievement. They write that since this attitude

[is] reflected in everything from the worship of film directors to our fascination with Bill Gates and other high-profile entrepreneurs, it is no surprise that we tend to underestimate how much creative work is accomplished by groups. . . . A classic example is Michelangelo's masterpiece on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. In our mind's eye, we see Michelangelo, looking remarkably like Charlton Heston, laboring alone on the scaffolding high above the chapel floor. In fact, thirteen people helped Michelangelo paint the work. Michelangelo was not only an artist, he was, as biographer William E. Wallace points out, the head of a good-sized entrepreneurial enterprise that collaboratively made art that bore his name (an opinion piece by Wallace in the *New York Times* was aptly headlined "Michelangelo, CEO"). (Bennis & Biederman, 1998, p. 5)

Reading this book after having observed a film crew for this study, there were obvious parallels between the characteristics of Disney Studios, Lockheed's Skunkworks, the group that developed the Apple Computer, and the film crew I observed. Those parallels are indicative of the success of this crew—I saw in it the

passion of crew members, their dedication to their work, and the quality of their creative, collaborative efforts described by Bennis and Biederman as characteristics of what they call a "Great Group."

While it might surprise some to see the intensity of collaboration at a motion picture studio compared to that of the groups that developed the B-2 *Stealth* aircraft or the atomic bomb, Bennis and Biederman pull it off by analyzing several of these groups and creating a list of "take home lessons" about collaboration—several of which they offer as common characteristics or perspectives that set "great groups apart." Excerpts from this list are reprinted in italics below, with my own annotations relating each particular characteristic to the film crew I studied:

*Every Great Group has a strong leader.* The crew I studied was led by a highly competent DP, who was well respected by the working crew. "Everything we do is for Fred," one lower-level worker told me. "We all work for him." The director, conversely, was a hired hand, with whom the crew might collaborate or merely tolerate.

*Great Groups are full of talented people who can work together.* Talent alone is not enough; many of those able to get along day after day, season after season, had been with the show since the beginning of the series several years before. They were also highly creative and skilled in their crafts.

*Great Groups think they are on a mission from God.* Several crew members indicated to me that because this television program was so different from ones that came before, and was so often credited by fans as enriching their lives, that they felt working on this crew was somehow "special"—certainly in comparison to other productions on which they'd worked—a horror movie, in the case of first AD Pam.

*Every Great Group is an island—but an island with a bridge to the mainland.*

The set was generally closed, crew members usually did not mix with the "real world" during the shooting day—even meals were taken on set, whether the shoot was in the warehouse next to the production office, or on location several miles away. Their "bridge" was contact by way of radio and cell phone with the production office, which was the crew's interface with the "real world" and handled pressures relating to determining when the network would want the finished program, for example.

*Great Groups see themselves as winning underdogs.* Because this program had originally debuted to dismal ratings, only to be brought back, revamped, the next season, the workers who had been there the longest remembered the audience's poor initial response to the show, and many still had that underdog mentality (even though the program was highly rated for several years, including the time I spent on the set).

*Great Groups always have an enemy.* Workers on prime-time television shows view other programs as the enemy, since the popularity of other shows threatens the ratings position of their show. There was regular talk each week when the audience ratings were released about which shows "we beat" and which were "beating us."

*People in Great Groups have blinders on.* Bennis and Biederman explain:

The project is all they [Great Group participants] see . . . you don't find people who are distracted by peripheral concerns . . . such . . . as professional advancement and the quality of their private lives. . . . Great Groups are full of indefatigable people who are struggling to turn a vision into a machine and whose lawns and goldfish have died of neglect. Such people don't stay up nights wondering if they are spending enough time with the children. . . . [They] fall in love with the project. They are so taken with the beauty and difficulty of the task that they don't want to talk about anything else, be anywhere else, do anything else. . . . But Great Groups often have a dark side. Members frequently make a Faustian bargain, trading the quiet pleasures of normal life for the thrill of discovery. Their families often pay the price. For some group members, the frenzied labor of the project is their drug of choice, a way to evade other responsibilities or to deaden loss or pain. (pp. 208-209)

The quote above is reminiscent of my very first day on set, when electrician Evan told me, "The crew is like a family. We have fun times, also fights, like any family. But the divorce rate [of film crew members] on the show is very high. People don't have a lot of time to spend with their [real] families." For wardrobe assistant Linda, hiatus (two months each year) was a good time to get things done that were difficult to do during the months the crew was shooting, such as going to the doctor and the dentist. Another worker, from props, told me that it's hard to have a life beyond the show, to have time to date, make new friends, and so forth, because of the long hours. Many of the workers' social needs were met on set, while "hanging out," since workers had almost no other time to socialize.

*Great Groups are optimistic, not realistic.* The crew I observed did not give up, no matter what daunting task the script specified. They worked hard to get the best shots they could in the time they had.

*The leaders of Great Groups give them what they need and free them from the rest.* Although workers readily collaborated with others and made suggestions as appropriate, the division of labor freed them to concentrate on their own area of work; although, the "creature comforts" offered, reminiscent of the Hollywood studio, kept workers from being hungry, thirsty, or cold at any given time. (They were even offered free massages from a traveling masseuse who appeared on set weekly.) Many physical needs were met as well. As previously mentioned, several film crew members referred to the feeling of community, or family, on the set, and there were references to "being taken care of," while at the same time, long work days and weeks had a negative impact on crew members' relationships with their immediate families at home, yet at the same time somehow "freed" from the current worries of the domestic realm. Most crew

members I spoke with were content, and some even in love, with their current jobs. (first AD Trevor expressed his love for his work in an interview with me recounted in Chapter 5.)

Bennis and Biederman (1998) write, "Great Groups become their own worlds. They also tend to be physically removed from the world around them. . . . As people so often do in isolated communities, participants in Great Groups create a culture of their own—with distinctive customs . . . jokes, even a private language" (p. 206). The crew I observed had a history of practical jokes and crew traditions (such as "dollar day") that worked to further a sense of community and belonging.

*Great Groups ship.* In television, broadcast deadlines must be met. Despite setbacks such as late scripts, meandering or temperamental co-stars, and union rules limiting the length of the actors' work days, this crew managed to get the work done—and to ship on time, even if it meant working late, after the actors and handful of union workers had gone home.

*Great work is its own reward.* Despite the long hours, most of the people on this crew loved their work; after my initial 2-day visit during the shooting of a season finale, the crew went on hiatus. When I returned to the set the next season, almost all (if not all) of the same crew people were back—even though I was told that many of them had traveled thousands of miles over hiatus to shoot a TV movie in which one of the series leads was starring—thus, much of the crew took virtually no vacation at all.

Unlike in feature film production situations, when a group might be called to work together for a short period of time, the crew I observed had worked together for years on the same dramatic television series. They had developed a rhythm for work and a collective history together, much as the collaborative groups studied by Bennis

and Biederman had. The first assistant camera operator commented, "This crew works [together] so well, everyone knows where everyone else is going. On movies of the week, by the time it works that well, the shoot is over."

Not every characteristic of Great Groups fits the film crew I observed, however. Most great groups are nonhierarchical, according to Bennis and Biederman, and their leaders have the authority to keep them from being micromanaged. Micromanagement by producers certainly decreased collaborative opportunities for lower-level workers, since they would not openly question the choices of the producers. The most collaborative moments came when hierarchical levels were permeated by workers on set, so the data suggest that a more ad hoc approach to problem solving in an organization may further creative collaboration. It also suggests that, on many levels, the conclusions of Bennis and Biederman, made following years of studying most of their "Great Groups" retrospectively through interviews and other historical research, do apply to certain film production crews.

#### *Implications for Scientific Management in Film Production*

Scientific management has become the subject of much derision and criticism over the past few decades. The idea that lower-level workers contribute little creatively under scientific management is very common, but as previously noted, this study denies that claim.

Staiger (1995) holds that flexible specialization is what separates the "scientific management" of film production studios from the same approach in any other industry—workers *are* flexible in their work, as it is completed in conjunction with the creative work of others. And Jewell (1995) writes that

the time has come to dispense with the assembly-line analogy for studio production. Although the moguls no doubt wished their operations could be as efficient and predictable as those of a Ford plant, their product mitigated against standardization. Most pictures presented special problems which could not have been solved by inflexible, factory-inspired methods. (p. 47)

Jewell (1995) quotes Rosten's (1941) comments on production at the height of the

Hollywood studio era:

Movie making is not a systematized process in which ordered routine can prevail, or in which costs can be absolute and controlled. Too many things can and do go awry, every day, every hour, during the manufacture of a movie. Movies are made by ideas and egos, not from blueprints and not with machines. Every story offers fresh and exasperating problems; every actor, director, writer carries within him curious preferences and needs; and the omnipresent hand of a mutable public throws sudden switches in the traffic of ideas through which the making of movies flows. The movie business moves with relentless speed, change is of the essence, and Hollywood must respond to change with short-spanned flexibility. (Rosten quoted by Jewell, 1995, p. 47)

"Unfortunately," Jewell (1995) concludes, "most scholars have preferred the depersonalized studio characterizations . . . to the somewhat nebulous, but more accurate, depiction of Rosten" (p. 47).

The production of film for television today is patterned after the Hollywood studio system of the 1940s, with the producer at the helm, but the necessity of creative collaborative work among the crew remains as well. Yet the separation of planning and execution that Braverman (1974) writes of as the hallmark of scientific management still occurs as well, but in upper management; producers propose projects, executives approve the financing, then preproduction planning begins and may continue for months or even years. Lower-level workers are not involved in such planning, of course. Recently, however, as it has become customary for news of films in preparation to be posted on the Internet, legions of enthusiastic film fans have begun making suggestions to the producers. The current production of the theatrical motion picture entitled *Snakes*



*on a Plane* is a good example of this. Once word was spread through the Internet that a campy thriller involving airline passengers trapped in the air with snakes was to be produced, excited would-be fans began posting reactions to the idea of the movie, comments on the title—even suggestions as to what they would like to see happen in the film. Director David Ellis says the production has benefited from "the ability to listen to the audience before we finished, so we could totally deliver exactly what they dream of seeing. . . . You have to be smart enough to collaborate with everybody when you're making a movie, so why not work with the people you're making the movie for?" (Tyrangiel, 2006, p. 1).

Unlike assembly line workers, most film production workers (with the exception of the director, DP, first AD, and script supervisor) do not work constantly during the work day. Rather, most complete their work in one particular phase of the production process, then wait for their turn to come again. So, workers "hang out" and often observe, as I did while on set. They can observe the entire shooting process. This gives them time to ponder the process if they choose. More importantly, they can learn from watching, and offer greater expertise in the future, as did the electrician who pointed out that an actor "missed his mark."

### *The Future of Scientific Management in Film*

Will the U.S. film industry ever move away from its roots in the theatrical division of labor and Taylor's scientific management? There has been a decrease in the division of labor in television over the past several years, but only in the genre of reality television, which is often produced by video production companies not steeped in the 90-year traditions of narrative film production management. Skeletal crews are often

used to shoot interviews with reality program participants; grips and electricians may be used to assist but are not always necessary given the low-light requirements of digital video cameras. Writing positions have been reduced as video editors construct storylines in postproduction editing, prompting the Writers Guild of America (2005) to campaign for their inclusion in that union. Some networks, such as E! Entertainment Television, have coined a new term for such editors—"preditor"—a combination of producer and editor.

There is no financial incentive for unionized film production workers in television or film to do away with the division of labor, since workers on most productions are protected by unions which define their job descriptions and clearly delineate duties in an effort to prevent worker exploitation. Robert Rodriguez (feature film director of *El Mariachi*, *Spy Kids*, and *Sin City*) is one contemporary filmmaker who eschews tradition and often performs the work of several film crew members himself. (Positions Rodriguez has held on various films he has directed—often three or four positions on the same production—have included editor, producer, writer, composer, cinematographer (DP), sound, visual effects, actor, production designer, special effects, and production manager. Rodriguez quit the Director's Guild of American (DGA) in 2005 over his desire to co-direct *Sin City* with the author of the graphic novel on which it is based. (DGA rules forbid co-directing.)

Although Rodriguez has performed multiple job functions successfully in several of his films, few filmmakers have the talent (or at least the desire) to perform several creative and technical roles on a film at once. An end to the division of labor and scientific management in the U.S. film industry in the near future does not seem likely (although new technologies, such as digital video, may alter their expression).

The industry certainly can benefit, however, from a better understanding of how the existence and fluidity of collaborative work circles can facilitate creative collaboration among film crew workers regardless of the size of the crew, or members' respective levels in the hierarchy.

### *Implications for Educators*

As an instructor for college-level television production classes, I have been amazed at the difficulties college students often have working in groups on production assignments. One of the complaints I have heard more often involves whether or not production assignments are simulating "real-world" experiences. Several students have told me over the years that working together in groups is not realistic, since students are "all on the same level," professionals are organized hierarchically, and "are just taking orders" (Gould, 1998, p. 1). This study clearly contradicts that claim. Although some workers have more authority than others, creative collaboration occurs among workers at all levels.

Also, students need to realize that when they take on various roles for projects, those roles carry with them particular levels of authority on the project—for instance, if there is a conflict in the middle of a television production, what the producer says, goes. Yet the director and others on the crew are free to negotiate, discuss, attempt to convince—just as director Dave did on the set I observed when arguing over script length, or whether to shoot a scene a certain way. Sometimes Dave won out, sometimes he didn't. Students need to learn that such battles are not only part of student life, but professional life as well.

This study provides an opportunity for students as well as faculty members to gain insights into how film production crew members collaborate. If professors can construct assignments that allow students the opportunity to have collaborative experiences similar to those described in this study, students may find the work frustrating, but their instructors can assure them that they are learning more about the actual creative, collaborative process of producing for television.

### *Suggestions for Future Research*

This study, as conducted, allowed me to explore the work routines and creative collaborative practices of a film production crew shooting a prime-time television series in the U.S. This crew was typical of a nonunion crew shooting film outside of Hollywood around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This project has demonstrated that contrary to popular belief, and the implications and tradition of scientific management, film production crew members on this set engaged regularly in a form of creative collaboration through participation in smaller working groups I call alternately "creative collaborative circles" or "collaborative work groups." I was able to observe activities on set daily, but was not part of preproduction planning (including the production meetings for each episode) or the postproduction process. Future field work could include access to the entire process from scripting all the way through shooting and editing to allow the researcher(s) the opportunity to explore further the collaborative process in dramatic television, from the story idea and script writing all the way through shooting and editing.

Future research may also include conducting fieldwork on the sets of other dramatic television programs to compare 1) how the work routine might differ from that

which I observed; and 2) how collaboration and the fluidity of collaborative work groups might be affected on crews that are fully unionized (would they have the same freedom to make bids to join certain collaborative circles?).

Research could also be conducted on other film-for-television sets, most notably movies of the week (MOWs). Routines on these sets may also differ due to unionization, but the most notable difference I anticipate would be the transitory nature of the crew composition—crew members would come together to work on the movie for six weeks or so, then move on to other jobs. How are opportunities for collaboration, especially among lower-level workers, affected by the very temporary character of the organization? Would collaborative work circles exist beyond the essential key collaborative group? Would others be allowed to make bids to join that group temporarily? Does unfamiliarity breed contempt, or result in less open, but perhaps more polite relationships? Or are crew members more likely to fight because they know they won't have to work together for very long, anyway? Or perhaps they would get along more easily for that same reason.

Reality television, shot on video, is an area ripe for research at this point. A study of crew practices and collaboration on a reality program such as *Survivor* would open up the study of crew collaboration to video crews, and would present an opportunity to explain the evolution of the video crew and its structure since the invention of videotape in 1955.

Studying situation comedies (sitcoms) would present different challenges, yet still hold great potential for learning more about collaboration in the production process. The production routine for sitcoms is very different from that described in this study, even if they are shot on film, but especially if they are shot on videotape. Comedy on

tape is shot with four cameras simultaneously; many filmed programs work on a single-camera basis similar to the ways crews work on dramatic film programs, except that most sitcoms don't go on location much. Sitcoms shoots are generally in a studio most of that time, so they lack that carnival-style transient character of dramatic film crews that shoot on location regularly.

Additional studies could also interview participants regarding the existence (or nonexistence) of creative collaborative circles on their crews. (I could not do so for this study, since the existence of collaborative circles beyond the key work group was not clear to me until after I transcribed, coded, analyzed, and studied the data I had collected.) Also, I did not have access to the crew after shooting, so I was not able to conduct post-fieldwork interviews.

A study of collaboration among crew members working on a feature film (another one-time affair) could offer insight into the differences between the directing role in television and that of feature films. Since some crews (the one with which director Steven Spielberg works, for example) tend to stay together, and others are working together for the first time on a feature film project, observing crews in both situations would offer additional insight into the creative, collaborative process.

Finally, does quality crew collaboration result in greater commercial success? DeFillippi and Arthur (1998) assert that although a certain amount of experience working together in the past will aid the work process of film production, too much experience together can be as much of a hindrance as not enough. It is important to note here, however, that a smoothly shot, collaborative effort in filmmaking is possible even with a subpar script or amateurish acting, thus opening up the possibility that a model

collaborative effort among crew members might still result in a product not popular with audiences and thus not commercially successful.

### *Limitations of This Study*

Grounded theory offers many advantages and much in the way of flexibility; it allows researchers to develop theory based upon data, as opposed to testing a theory deductively that may or may not be relevant to the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As I coded and analyzed data, I looked for recurring themes and categories in my effort to generate theory about collaboration on the film crew I observed.

What this study cannot do is generalize—that is, make assertions that all film crews are like the one I studied. As a hermeneutic empiricist, generalization is not my goal. Rather, the goal is to provide insight into the relevant aspect of human communicative and collaborative processes through the theorization that results from my participant observation. Study results do not necessarily apply to other film crews, they can be compared with studies of other crews to promote a deeper understanding of the potential interactions that the conditions involved in shooting film for episodic, dramatic television make possible.

A felt limitation of this study was my lack of access to all six years of shared history which many of the crew members experienced together. I observed production of several episodes, but I did not have 6 years of access, nor even a full year. The producers were very nervous about my being on set, first as an outsider, then later as a pregnant woman. Producers and crew were also nervous about spies for tabloid newspapers lying their ways onto the set to get a kernel of truth to exaggerate into a

front page story. It is my understanding that typical visitors spend no more than a day on set, so the access I was granted was fairly remarkable. I was probably two-thirds of the way through my observations before I felt that at least half of the crew members were comfortable with my presence. Those crew members were the most accepting and cooperative—granting interviews, explaining procedures, and being genuinely helpful when they weren't working. Others never seemed comfortable with me—key grip Dan said he would allow me to interview him (on my last day!) but his talk consisted almost entirely of the story of a crew member who once spoke to a visiting high school student, who quoted that person in his school newspaper when he got home. The producers somehow saw the story, in which the crew member was critical of the producers and their habit of submitting scripts late, and demoted that crew member. That's the only story Dan would tell. Everything else I knew about him I found out from other people.

There were other serious limitations related to the being on set. First, network policy prohibits photographs and tape recordings on the set—mostly for security and privacy reasons, I understand. As a former journalist accustomed to using a small audio recorder, I was thrust back to my days as a "cub" reporter struggling to jot down everything crew members said to me as they said it.

Workers were very busy on the set, so it was sometimes difficult to find them available to talk. The ones who were most available were the lower-level workers, although I was able to convince one of the first ADs, two script supervisors, and a director to consent to be formally interviewed. The other directors, the DP and one first AD were too busy to sit down with me one-on-one, although most were amenable to answering questions between takes, if they weren't busy planning for the next shot.



*Reflections of a Participant Observer*

As a participant observer, I was at first unsure how to present myself to the crew. Once I gained access to the set, I had anticipated that the greatest challenge (beyond making sense of what was going on) would be getting to know the crew well enough that they would be comfortable talking with me and answering my questions.

When I first arrived on set, the many crew members were very suspicious of me, and one of them even "grilled" me about my intentions. Was I a writer? A journalist? A former journalist? For whom? The tabloids, perhaps? A student? Where? Which university? Which department?

Later, of course, I learned that others had been punished in the past for speaking to a visitor who turned out to be a student journalist, so the reticence of some to speak to me at first without knowing who I was made sense. Fortunately, I soon made several friends among the crew.

What I did not anticipate, however, was the publicity department's anticipation of my interests. For instance, before I began my observations, the publicity director, Donna, was trying to decide when I should begin. She thought she had a date, then she stopped. The lead actors would not be there then. "You don't want to go then!" she chirped, "You'll want to see them." (She was used to bringing VIPs onto the set to meet the actors.) Since I was planning to observe the entire crew, whether or not the "stars" would be there on my first day mattered little. I tried to explain politely that I could still start that day, but I could tell that Donna *expected* me to be in awe of the actors, so I tried to act as if I would be glad to see them when the time came. I could tell she was puzzled by my relative lack of interest in the series leads.

Donna tried to prepare me to meet the "stars," and of course I was nervous—not because I was a huge fan, but rather, because I wanted them to like me. So I tried to follow her advice. "Emily, now, with Emily, don't even *try* to shake her hand. She won't do it. She hugs. She *only* hugs people." I was advised that another one of the stars was nervous with new people, since she is very popular and stopped for autographs almost everywhere she went. Both women had full-time bodyguards. "Oh, well, I'm not interested in the stars," I thought to myself. "They won't have to worry about my bothering them." I was interested in studying and interviewing the crew members about whose jobs most people know very little.

Well, the first day I had the chance to meet Emily, the one who hugs. "This is Kara," the second AD began, "Visiting to learn more about what we do." Remembering Donna's advice, I told Emily I admired her work, but I kept my hand at my side so as not to offend her. But Emily looked offended. "I've been wondering when you were going to introduce yourself," she said gruffly. She wished me well with my work but did not smile.

Later, when I noticed extras meeting Emily later in the day, I realized that Donna had spoiled Emily's schtick. It was only after the extras *offered* to shake her hand that she would decline—then offer her outstretched arms. "Great," I thought. "She hates me now." I was worried, not that she wouldn't speak to me, but that she might not support the idea of my being on set. If she did not, it is likely that I would have to find another study.

My meeting with Zoe, the other lead, was more pleasant, although it was very low-key, as anticipated. She kept asking me, quietly, throughout the day if I were feeling bored yet.

The dynamic changed a bit between the crew and me when I returned a few months later following my initial two-day visit to the set. The publicity office had sent a memo about me (which they said they would give me a copy of, but never did), which reportedly explained that I was a graduate student working on a project in which I was studying how film crews work. This helped, since people were generally less nervous around me after this, but they were also less inquisitive, since they knew why I was there. Some were more willing to talk, while some cared much less about my presence once they knew what I was doing.

The biggest change was with the actors—I realize now that two of them wanted very much to be interviewed after they learned the purpose of my visit. One of them, very approachably, told me if I needed anything, to just say so. The other, Emily, was re-introduced to me. Fortunately, she had forgotten me, so I had the opportunity to offer my hand, which was met by her outstretched arms instead. After a few days, I noticed Emily talking loudly in my presence to a visiting writer about the importance of communication to her career. She also told a little of her life's story to the man. In retrospect, I realize that she wanted to be interviewed for my project, or at least approached for an interview. Worried that she would say no, I reasoned that the crew members were my focus anyway. Now, I realize that working on set with the crew daily, Emily could have had much insight to share. This lesson, well-learned, will follow me to my next project, when I will value the input of actors as well as crew, and not be afraid to ask for an interview from anyone.

### *Summary and Conclusions*

This study stands as evidence that *some* film crew workers at various levels of the hierarchy collaborate through fluid, creative collaborative circles, and provides insight into how workers *can* contribute creatively, despite a scientifically managed, hierarchical organizational structure with a strict division of labor. Although producers and directors for television and film have been constant subjects of study, the work of lower-level film crew workers shooting film for television and/or features has been sorely neglected. In this study, I observed film crew routines and interactions on set to gather data to learn more about how film production crews work, with a particular focus on the creative, collaborative practices within the group's organizational communicative processes.

Film scholar Janet Staiger (1995) asserts that lower-level film crew workers, in addition to writers, directors, and producers, have input into daily production processes, despite a hierarchical structure derived from scientific management that results in a "top-down" organization—in theory, anyway. This study confirms that assertion. Staiger also writes that "In the Hollywood mode of production, workers interrelate in a routine process with many conversations among the various segments of the sequence" (1995, p. 3). Yet, as she notes, *how* workers interrelate is rarely addressed. This study attempts to begin to fill that void as well.

Findings of this study indicate that through work groups known as *creative collaborative circles*, film production workers *do* collaborate: intradepartmentally, interdepartmentally, and with others both above and below themselves in the organizational hierarchy. Some collaborative circles are semi-permanent, others are fluid; still others are comprised of a combination of fixed and fluid memberships.

This study does acknowledge that the subjectivities of different worker position are endowed with differing levels of authority. Such authority is a factor when someone is considering making a bid for entry into a collaborative group, but it does not necessarily preclude a lower-level worker from making such a bid.

Film crew workers begin each day preparing for their specific duties, but the specialization of tasks become "flexible" as the day goes on. If a scene doesn't work because an actor missed his mark, on this set the electrician may mention it to the director, and everyone finishes sooner. The various contributions of film crew workers to the collective effort over the course of the day builds crew rapport with one another, and helps the shoot be completed on time, within budget, and with a certain level of quality. In short, the contributions of lower-level film crew members count. They have consequences. Perhaps in the future the long-standing fixation on the auteur in television (Mark Burnett, Aaron Spelling, Norman Lear) and feature films (Quentin Tarantino, Steven Spielberg, John Ford) will give way to an approach in both scholarly and popular publications that give proper attention as well as credit to the lower-level film crew members who collaborate daily to eventually realize the culmination of the artistic contribution of scores of individuals in the airing of the program or the release of the film. In the meantime, studies such as this one can serve to remind us of the potential impacts and benefits of human creative collaboration, and challenge future researchers to examine the complex creative interactional processes necessary to bring a film or television episode to fruition. Perhaps then we as a society will start to see film production workers as largely responsible for much of the entertainment we enjoy. Not that it matters to them. The joy of the work itself may be enough. Bennis and Biederman (1998) write:

In spite of front-page stories in the *Wall Street Journal* on the surge in feature animation, most of the people who make animated features still work at Disney and still do it anonymously. *The Lion King* was one of the most successful movies of all time. Can you name its directors? Do you know who animated *Pocahontas*? Why do greatly talented people choose to remain part of a group that expects heroic achievement on their part, then work hard at keeping their names out of the paper? Not for the money, surely, even with bonuses and the promise of profit participation. People work at Disney animation because they feel that they are part of something truly important, something insanely great. They work at Disney because, like the people who invented the personal computer and the people who got President Bill Clinton elected, they are on a mission from God. Hollister asked one of Disney's men in 1940 why he worked for the studio. "The thing here," the animator stammered, "is like that—you know, you can't help feeling that you're going to grab that . . . Holy Grail." (pp. 61-62)

APPENDIX A

ACCESS DOCUMENTS

Below is an edited copy of the letter I wrote to one of the producers asking for continued access to the set, along with the vita I included.

Mr. XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXXXX Film Productions  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXX, XX XXXXX

Dear Mr. XXXXXXXX:

Thank you for allowing me to visit the set of XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX for the past week and a half for my PhD field research. I enjoyed meeting you very much, and appreciate your allowing me to observe. I spoke with XXXX this afternoon, and she mentioned you had asked if I had everything I needed. I'm so grateful for your hospitality so far that I hate to ask for anything else, but I'm afraid I must.

I understand issues regarding my personal safety on set led you to request that I end my observations yesterday. I appreciate your concern for me personally, and I understand the general liability problems a non-employed visitor to the set presents.

But ending my observations now places me in a very difficult situation since I'm not quite halfway through the time frame my graduate committee requires for these observations. I'm hoping your safety concerns might be satisfied so I might be able to continue my observations long enough to finish.

If allowed to return, I would be willing to sign a "Hold Harmless" agreement to protect XXXX Films and XXX [the network] from any liability regarding my possible injury on the set. My insurance agent tells me I can also purchase a policy that would provide coverage for me while on your set. I would be willing to do that as well.

I have worked in video production in the past, and taught production for a combined seven years at North Central College (Naperville, IL) and the University of Utah. I am familiar with the hazards of lights, sets, etc., and am comfortable with the daily risks associated with being on the set. I am in excellent health with no complications related to my pregnancy. My personal obstetrician knows about my project and has given me the green light to go ahead.

I have spent six years studying for a PhD in Communication, and the past 10 months preparing for this research project with your set in mind. If I can't return to your set, starting over on a new project would require a new project proposal, committee approval, etc., and set me back at least one full year.

Thank you for reading this letter, and for your past kindnesses. I appreciate your reconsidering, and look forward to hearing what you decide. I would also be happy to answer any questions you might have about my project. I may be reached at (801) 363-8232 or (801) 718-7957.

Thanks again.

Sincerely,

Kara J. Gould  
University of Utah



## HOLD HARMLESS AGREEMENT

Below is an edited version of the hold harmless agreement I wrote and signed. I modeled it after several examples I found through my research, then I cleared the wording with my brother who is an attorney. I also included a statement regarding insurance which is included here as well.

By my signature below, I hereby agree to hold harmless XXXXXXXXXXXXX Film Productions and their successors and assigns from any claim, action, liability, loss, damage, or suit arising from the following: bodily injury I might incur while observing on the set of XXXXX XXXXX XXXXXX.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name Kara J. Gould

Address 642 Columbus St.

City/State/Zip SLC, UT 84103

Below is a vita similar to the one that I forwarded with the above letter.

## VITA

Kara Jolliff Gould  
642 Columbus Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84103

### EDUCATION

University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT  
Doctoral Candidate, Department of Communication  
Admitted to Candidacy, June 1998

Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL  
Bachelor of Arts, Communication, May 1988  
Master of Arts, Communication, December 1988

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Fellow, Department of Communication, University of Utah, 1994-1996.  
(Various duties described under "Fellowships.")

Assistant Professor of Communication, North Central College, Naperville, IL, 1989-1994. Taught 6-7 courses each year, served as academic advisor to undergraduate students and as faculty advisor to NCC's student video organization. Actively participated in departmental curricular revision; developed four new courses which became regular departmental offerings.

Part-time Instructor, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, IL, 1988.

### COURSES TAUGHT

Mass Media and Society  
Mass Media Law  
Media Criticism  
Television Production  
Introduction to Visual Media  
Television Performance  
Introduction to Radio and Television  
Broadcast Copywriting  
Broadcast News  
Introduction to Journalism  
Writing for the Mass Media

## FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS AND HONORS

Recipient, Teaching Fellowships, Department of Communication, University of Utah. Various fellowship positions in the Department of Communication have supported doctoral work at the University of Utah. Positions have included:

Editorial Associate, *Communication Theory*. Position responsibilities involve working with editor James A. Anderson on this journal of the International Communication Association for a three-year term. Work includes copy editing for grammar, clarity, typographical errors, and APA style; corresponding with authors, reviewers, and Oxford Press; and administering the manuscript review process. 1996-present.

Jay W. and Sharlene D. Glasmann Teaching Fellow for the 1995-96 academic year. Endowed fellowship involved teaching Radio/TV Announcing, plus serving as advisor and Assistant General Manager for KUTE-AM 1620, University of Utah student radio. 1995-1996.

Teaching Fellow, Department of Communication. Taught four course sections over the 1994-95 school year, plus the 1995 and 1996 summer sessions. Courses taught included Introduction to Visual Media, Writing for the Mass Media, and Mass Media Law. 1994-1996.

Selected participant, 1998 Doctoral Honors Seminar at Northwestern University, sponsored by the National Communication Association. Was one of 12 students selected to participate in the media studies division of the seminar program. Summer 1998.

Kappa Tau Alpha, National Honor Society in Journalism and Mass Communication. Inducted May 1995.

Selected participant, Academy of Television Arts & Sciences 1993 Faculty Seminar. Was among 18 faculty members selected to participate in a four-day seminar focusing on television program development and the structure of the U.S. television industry. November 1993.

Selected Delegate, Midwest Faculty Seminar's Institute on Visualization and Its Perception, University of Chicago. Was one of 40 educators from across the Midwest selected to explore a cross-disciplinary approach to the concept of visualization and how it is perceived at this two-day workshop. October 1991.

Selected Participant, Northwestern University's Annenberg Washington Program Summer Faculty Workshop. Was one of 26 educators and professional selected to participate in a two-week intensive workshop focusing on telecommunications law and policy. June 1991.

Recipient, 1990 NCC Faculty Development Grant. \$1200 award supported participation in the Sony Video Workshop on instructional video in Savannah, GA. Summer 1990.

Recipient, Leadership, Ethics and Values Grant. Grant from North Central's Leadership, Ethics and Values program supported participation in the First Annual Communication Ethics Conference at Gull Lake, Michigan. May 1990.

Winner, North Central's Clarence F. Dissinger Award for Development of Teaching. First-year teaching award supported participation in the Speech Communication Association's Essential Communication Curriculum Conference at Hope College in Holland, MI. May 1990.

#### SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Author, review essay examining Asamen & Berry (Eds.) *Research Paradigms, Television and Social Behavior*. To be published in *The Southern Communication Journal*, 1999.

Author, *Content regulation in student productions: Some legal and philosophical considerations*, a paper presented at the 1998 meeting of the Broadcast Education Association in Las Vegas, NV. April 1998.

Author, review of Zettl's *VideoLab 2.0*, an instructional CD-ROM. *Feedback*, February 1998.

Author, *Communitas online: The electronic practice of major league baseball fandom during the 1994-95 players' strike*, a paper presented at the 1997 meeting of the National Communication Association in Chicago, IL. November 1997.

Author, *Libel online: Issues of credibility, negligence and malice in computer-mediated messages*, a paper presented at the 1997 conference of the International Communication Association in Montreal, Canada. May 1997.

Author, book review of John Fiske's *Media matters: Everyday culture and political change* published in the Summer 1995 edition of the *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*.

Respondent for "Freedom of Speech and the Marketplace of Ideas," a panel presented at the annual convention of the Speech Communication Association. November 1994.

Author, *Issue-oriented production assignments and student attitudinal changes*, a paper presented at the 1994 convention of the Broadcast Education Association, Las Vegas, NV. March 1994. (A revised version of this paper was published in *Essays on Integrating Liberal and Professional Studies*, a collection of articles edited by M. Van Hecke and published with support from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., 1994.)

Author, *Beverly Hills 90210: A Cultural Studies Approach*, paper presented at the 1993 meeting of the Broadcast Education Association. April 1993.

Panelist, "Student-Operated Media: Part of the Curriculum or Stuck in the Sandbox?" at the Broadcast Education Association Annual Convention, April 1993.

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/GUEST SPEAKING

Speaker/contributor, 1994 Center for Teaching and Learning Teaching Assistant Training Seminar, University of Utah, September 1994.

Participant, Essential Communication Curriculum Conference at Hope College in Holland, MI. Studies focused on media criticism and research methods. Summer 1993.

Panelist, "Politics, Rhetoric and the Media," a panel sponsored by the North Central College Leadership, Ethics and Values program. November 1992.

Guest speaker, Naperville Kiwanis. Addressed the membership concerning Presidential candidates' use of the media during the 1992 campaign. November 1992.

Participant, "Documentation for Film & Video Grants," and "Self-Distribution: Getting Your Work Out There," workshops sponsored by the Center for New Television in Chicago. July 1992.

Participant, "Integrating Liberal and Professional Studies," a six-day workshop held at NCC and sponsored by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. June and July 1992.

Short Course Participant, Speech Communication Association Annual Convention, Atlanta, GA. Completed short course on teaching communication technology; attended seminar on media criticism and various pedagogical approaches for teaching it effectively. November 1991.

#### PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AT NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE

Steering Committee Member, Communication Technology Task Force. Worked with other faculty and staff members to supervise the development of a comprehensive plan for the development of telecommunications technology on the NCC campus. Issues included instructional multi-media for all classrooms, the establishment of the infrastructure necessary for linking all classrooms in a campus-wide video distribution system, and the ultimate organization of an instructional media center on campus. 1993-1994.

Elected faculty representative, Welfare and Benefits Committee. Served on committee of faculty, staff, and administrators involved in the selection of a new health insurance policy for North Central College employees and the articulation of policy on a variety of personnel issues. 1993-1994.

Faculty Advisor, Cardinal Video Productions. Initiated the formation of a new student organization and co-curricular activity in the fall of 1991 to offer students experience and instruction in video production in addition to departmental curricular offerings. The organization is patterned after the video production company model, and serves to document campus activities on video for the college archives, and continues to produce creative and innovative programming for NCTV, Naperville Community Television. 1991-1994.

Member, External Affairs Task Force. Served on task force comprised of faculty, staff, and administrators designed to identify and develop connections between the college and the local "corporate corridor." 1992-1994.

Member, Wingspread Committee. Served on faculty committee designated to select outstanding North Central College students for the national Wingspread Program. 1992-1994.

As College Cable Coordinator, supervised the development, production, and scheduling of college programming on NCTV, local cable channel 17. Productions included the series *North Central Now*, plus *North Central Spotlight*, which featured presentations of campus events as well as creative projects produced by television production students. 1989-1994.

Secured Corporate Donations of video equipment from local companies. Negotiated donation of video editing system, plus a video switcher, lighting kit, wireless intercom system, and edit bay furniture for use in media production classes. 1991-1993.

Researched, marketed, and sold film equipment donated to the college; used funds to purchase equipment for classroom use. Effectively marketed film equipment donated by Leo Burnett Inc. Proceeds from equipment sales provided portable video production equipment for use in media production classes. 1991-1992.

Visiting Lecturers/Cultural Affairs Committee. Worked to coordinate Cardinal Video coverage of convocations, visiting lecturers, panels, workshops, etc. Served on two subcommittees in 1991 and 1992.

A&L "Continental Caf," Committee Member. Served on faculty committee to plan and present the Arts and Letters division's annual reception for students, faculty, and staff. Fall 1991.

At-large member, faculty search committee. Served on faculty search committee for a faculty position in biochemistry. Winter-Spring 1991.

Secretary, Academic Affairs Committee. 1989-1990.

## MEDIA EXPERIENCE

Editorial Associate, *Communication Theory*, a journal of the International Communication Association. (See previous description.) 1996-1999.

Assistant General Manager, KUTE 1620 AM, University of Utah (see previous description under Glasmann Teaching Fellow). 1995-1996.

Freelance scriptwriter/producer. Wrote and/or produced for corporate, promotional, educational, and training videos for Chicago-area organizations. 1989-1994. Work included:

Director and Editor, *Not All White* and *Barely Heard*, two video documentaries exploring issues of student diversity on the North Central College campus. Produced in conjunction with the Lilly Endowment, Inc. and North Central College for presentation at the college's faculty development conference. December 1991.

Video archivist, North Central College. Shot various campus events for local cablecasting and college archives in addition to other duties as a faculty member and college cable coordinator at the college. 1989-1991.

Producer, Co-editor, *North Central College: Reflections of . . .*, a video retrospective on North Central College history from the 1860s to the 1990s. Spring 1994.

Producer, *Class of 1988*, a video produced for Wheaton College in honor of its 1988 five-year reunion. October 1993.

Writer/producer, *Forward by Faith*, a promotional video produced for a Chicago-area church fundraising campaign. November 1993.

Writer/reporter, *The Daily Journal* newspaper, Wheaton, IL. 1988-1989.

Radio newswriter, WMAQ-AM 670, Chicago, IL. Summer 1988.

Graduate Internship, WMAQ-TV, News Assignment Desk, NBC-owned & operated broadcast outlet, Chicago, IL. Summer 1988.

Community Producer, Centel Cable Television, Wheaton, IL. Wrote and produced several programs for local cablecasting, including *The Folk Next Door*. 1987-1988.

Internship, News Department, KTHV Channel 11, CBS affiliate in Little Rock, AR. Summer 1987.

Disc jockey, announcer, and newscaster, WETN FM 88, Wheaton, IL. 1985-1988.

**PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND OFFICES HELD****Broadcast Education Association**

Newsletter Editor, Production, Aesthetics & Criticism Division, 1996-1998.

Newsletter Editor, Student Media Advisors Division, 1992-94.

**International Communication Association****National Communication Association**

Publications Committee Co-chair, Mass Communication Division. 1994-1996.



## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

While some questions varied depending on the position of the crew member I was interviewing, the following basic questions were common to most of the interviews, and often served as departure points for extended conversations. Since many interviews were squeezed in between takes, I made an effort to keep the questions simple. In some cases, only a few of the questions below were posed before the person being interview was called away to her or his duties. Some returned to finish the interview; others never did.

1. Tell me about your job. What tasks are most central to your job?
2. With whom do you work the most?
3. What are some different ways you communicate with others on the crew?
4. How important is communication to your job?
5. What aspects of your work involve collaboration? Can you give me some examples?
6. What do you like best about your job?
7. What is the worst part of your job?
8. How well, on the whole, do you feel this group works together?
9. What is the most fun aspect of working here?
10. What is the least fun aspect of working here?

## APPENDIX C

### LIST OF CODES

In my research I used WinMax99 qualitative analysis software to code, analyze, and organize my data. The coding categories I used are listed below (as in all other documents, names have been changed or omitted to preserve confidentiality under the guidelines and requirements of the Institutional Review Board). Category names are followed by the software's calculation of the number of lines of text coded under that category. Coding was applied in such a way that the same line could be coded under several different categories.

CODES	FREQUENCIES	LINES
Access	64	1,892
Collaboration examples	100	704
Comments on set atmosphere	47	268
Complaints about actors	12	99
Complaints about management	48	418
Complaints about other crew	22	130
Creativity	1	11
Crew general characteristics, financial situations	11	60
Crew traditions	22	98
Division of labor	4	155
Education-related comments	1	10
Executive vice president conversation	1	24
Flirting/gender/sexual issues	8	95
Gaffer Don	20	264
General observations/environs	214	1,715
Hanging out/small talk	136	958
Inquiries about my project	38	340
Interruptions	2	26
Interview with Michael	1	7
Interview with director Alan	5	49
Interview with director Dave	7	114

## APPENDIX C (continued)

CODES	FREQUENCIES	LINES
Interview with electrician Ed	7	64
Interview with grip Jesse	2	84
Interview with Jon	4	77
Interview with Kim (script supervisor)	5	66
Interview with Pam (script supervisor)	1	17
Interview with Trevor	1	123
Job descriptions/departments	102	579
Jokes	22	118
Long days, toughness of job	55	346
Lynnette	7	92
Lynnette's security	1	12
Meeting people/individual descriptions	166	1,042
Observations about management	19	165
On working together	42	361
Power	11	89
Power subjectivity, power relations	59	689
Pregnancy	21	97
Preproduction	3	63
Procedure/rules of operation	149	1,135
Reference to notebook sketches	6	23
Resistance	46	474
Script/story details	57	304
Secretiveness	5	43
Security man: Dennis	1	23
Self-reflection/notes to self	207	1,989
Self-reflection/notes to self, my industry connections	6	44
Show history	4	30
Sound: Todd	8	32
Stand-in Rebecca	7	55
Stand-in Stella	2	55
Technical/equipment details	39	205
Telephone numbers/contact information	15	61
Terminology	49	642
Variety	15	112
Totals	1,908	16,748

## APPENDIX D

### FIELD NOTE EXCERPTS

#### *My First Visit to the Set*

As I approach the building just south of downtown, I see many trailers and trucks turning in, so I know I'm at the right place. My contact told me they'd be returning from a shoot at the community college about 11:30 a.m. She wanted me to wait until now to come so she could introduce me to people, and either go with me to the set or send someone to go with me.

I arrive at 11:35, and tell the guard why I'm there. "You can pull in right here," he tells me, pointing to a visitor's spot adjacent to his booth. "You're not going to be here long, are you?" "Well, actually, she said several hours," I reply tentatively. "Do you have anything heavy to carry in?" he asks, thoughtfully. "No," I reply. "Then would you mind parking across the street?" he asks thoughtfully. "Not at all," I reply, and pull out to go to the lot adjacent to a retail store. As I pull through the parking lot at the store to get to the adjacent lot, I spy one of the program's stars, walking with another woman exiting the store with large shopping bags. So, I know I'm at the right place. I am excited.

The building is two-story, with garage-type building in the parking lot that is used as a dining hall. There's also a building where props are stored. The lot is filled with multiple trailers: wardrobe, grip truck, props truck, lighting truck, star trailers, etc. The guard asks another guard to take me inside to the proper office. "Do you know where the office is?" he asks. "I've never been there before, so you can take me anywhere and I'd believe that was her office," I joked. "Oh, no," he laughs, as if to say he would never do something like that.

He takes me into the two-story building. The ground level offices are very open and airy, not cubicles and few walls dividing workers. We go out a door, up some stairs, then through another door to the producers' offices. (Security seems fairly tight.) The first office we pass on the second floor has framed snapshots on the walls—pictures of people. He deposits me in the producers' office, where the receptionist greets me. She is a 20-something woman with longish brown hair. I've spoken with her on the telephone before. (She gives me a smiling look that says, "So this is the Kara who's been calling.") While waiting, one of the star's assistants introduces herself. I stand to shake hands with

her and realize that in my shoes I'm at least eight inches taller, and I feel awkward and embarrassed. "I'm here to learn more about production," I tell her.

While I wait, a woman comes in requesting autographed photos.

I overhear a conversation about rhinoceros and elephant; could they be security code words for the stars, like the Secret Service uses for presidential security? I'm still waiting; it's been about 10 minutes now. Parking across the street made me six minutes late.

Angela discusses the "chunk" of time she'll have off after the company wraps this episode (almost two months, I understand). I notice a man with a headset reflected in the window. I wish I could go on set right now to watch the setup, but I must wait for my escort. They're shooting in this building for the rest of the day. This industrial building has very high ceilings (necessary for studio lighting). I overhear another person discussing a "lease agreement." There is a half-wall between me and the rest of the "producers' office" (that's how the receptionist answers the phone) but part of the wall between us and the stairwell is glass, so I can sometimes see people's reflections.

Finally, the publicist appears, after I've waited for about 20 minutes. "You must be Kara," she says. She works long hours, and seems tired. She looks older than she sounds on the telephone. In the past, she's had me call her near the end of the day, after 7 p.m. The first time she called to say I could come on set, it was 8:30 p.m. and she was calling from the office.

She brings me into her office, which is on the same floor with the executive producers. I thank her for the opportunity and she reminds me about what to say, that I'm observing the production process. She is very concerned that I don't say too much, and that makes me nervous. I don't want to mislead people about what I'm doing, but she seems to think that people will be self-conscious and unable to do their jobs if they know I'm studying them. This is no time to go into details relating to the philosophy of ethnographic methodology, so I tell her that I'll try to stay in the background.

The publicity director introduces me to Henry, a young man of about 24 years of age, very tall, with light brown hair. She tells me he proofs and distributes scripts, and helps her with other things as well. "He used to be an English teacher, so we like to have him look things over," she tells me. I also meet the assistant to the executive producer. He tells me the name of the first assistant director for this episode. A bell rings loudly, so people will know not to enter the set right then; they're filming.

Henry will give me a tour of the facility and introduce me to key people on the set. Then he'll make sure I get a chair and leave me for the day. His tour of the facility includes a tour of the building, offices, and parking lot.

The producers' offices are on the second floor; they are open, airy, with lots of windows and lots of space between desks. There's a room adjoining the executive producers' offices with a long table, many chairs, and a white board for writing up ideas (that must be the writers' room, I thought).

Production coordination inhabits the first floor. Much busier office, less space, people working busily. This is the head office that mass produces call sheets, sides (small pieces of paper stapled together that include the lines and stage directions for the scenes being shot that day) and scripts for the department heads. (Only department heads on the crew get full scripts. Others get "sides," copies of the script pages being shot on a particular day. The paper "sides" are printed on are small sheets, about a fourth of the size of an 8½ by 11-inch sheet.)

There are two location offices: each one has a first assistant director (first AD) assigned to it. Each location office works on a different episode: one odd-numbered, one even-numbered. Location scouts along with set designers, first ADs, the director, etc., go around scouting locations before each episode. Directors are hired on an episodic basis.

The casting office is on the first floor as well: they cast locals as extras and in small roles. Major roles usually come from LA. Some are local, though.

Henry takes me out to show me the prop warehouse. It is very large, with all sorts of signs, furniture, household items, etc. It looks like a cross between a theatrical scene shop and a huge garage sale or junk barn. Henry asks me if I know the difference between set dressing and props, and I actually know the answer! Props are items the actors actually touch. Everything else is set dressing.

Henry mentions that he got his job because someone he knew recommended him. Next season, he'll be a writers' assistant, he says. No word yet on who'll take his place next season, he tells someone who inquires.

He shows me the trailers in the parking lot by the building. Electrical truck, props, trailers for the stars, trailers for the guest stars and bit players, restrooms, etc. Most of the trailers are long and white, new-looking.

Finally, we walk back into the building and up the stairs, then into a hallway. We walk through a door, and we're on the production stage. The stars are sitting on a green platform, with green curtains behind them. Crew members are standing around and a large film camera is set up for the shot.

Henry explains the green screen concept, and I tell him I understand; we do blue screen in TV studio productions. After the scene is shot, the computer will replace all green in the scene with a background the user designates. (It's the same way the weather forecasters are superimposed over the maps on television news.)

The "stage" is actually a large room with a black floor, black ceiling, and black walls where the art department builds out rooms that are needed for sets. One room that is ready for shooting is a 1920s hotel room, and it is opulent, with floral wallpaper, heavy, rose-colored velvet draperies, and lovely period furniture.

It is at this point that Henry begins to introduce me to crew people. The first assistant director is a tall man who wears a cap and is very busy and businesslike. The director is very friendly. He asks me if I'm from Los Angeles. I say no, I live here, but came from Chicago. Later someone tells me that they sometime have visitors who are really "spies" from the show's television network, so he might have thought that was who I was at first. Some other crew members are friendly, but several obviously find me suspicious. It is understandable: gossipy tidbits from a top-10 show are worth money in the tabloids.

## APPENDIX E

### FILM CREW COMPOSITION

#### *Film Crew Composition: 1900-1920*

It is difficult to determine the precise makeup of the typical film crew in the early 1900s. It is clear that the composition of crews varied from company to company, and most early motion picture workers were not credited for their significant contributions to the developing medium of film. While some films utilized a handful of people and some many more, still others managed with only actors and a camera operator who also directed. Historian Edwin Palmer (1978) writes that when Francis Boggs of the Selig Company arrived in the Los Angeles area in 1908,

Mr. Boggs acted as director, scene painter, property man, photo-playwright and stage carpenter, as well as the less classified occupations. Mr. Parsons (Boggs' assistant) was primarily manager of finances, but also cameraman, bookkeeper, business manager, and wardrobe. (p. 191)

Many of the crew positions which Palmer mentions in the quote above were originally derived from the theatrical world. The custom of crediting certain workers for their contributions had been common in theatre since the 1800s—at least a few of the theatrical workers (particularly department heads), received playbill credit for their theatrical work. But filmmakers did not credit production workers in the early days; often not even department heads received onscreen credits for their work in the early days, largely due to the heavy influence of the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC).<sup>1</sup>

Thus, most U.S. films from the pre-1908 era list director and camera operator only (usually the same person), with the occasional identification of actors. Not much more is known about the specific makeup of early film crews (positions, duties, wages, etc.) beyond a few references to uncredited workers in trade publications and memoirs of

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<sup>1</sup>The MPPC was an organization organized by Thomas Edison and comprised of cooperating manufacturers who collected fees for the use of their patented motion picture equipment and mandated rules and regulations in U.S. film production ranging from standard motion picture length to who could receive onscreen credit for their work on a film.)



individual filmmakers, which are compiled by organizations such as the American Film Institute (AFI) and the Library of Congress.

The archival entry for *The Great Train Robbery* (Porter, 1903) offers an example of such sparse crediting. Below is the information available from the film archive at the U.S. Library of Congress (gleaned for film credits and background sources.)

*The Great Train Robbery*

Copyright: Thomas A. Edison; 1 Dec 1903; H38748.

Duration: 3:30 (part 1), 3:54 (part 2), and 4:18 (part 3) at 18 fps.

Director and camera: Edwin S. Porter.

Cast: George M. Anderson, Justus D. Barnes (head bandit), Walter Cameron (sheriff).

Filed in November 1903 at Edison's New York studio at Essex County Park in New Jersey, and along the Lackawanna Railroad. (American Memory Library of Congress.)

Undoubtedly more than four people worked on this production, and their numbers in technical positions surely constituted an additional divisions of labor, but identities of those who collaborated with Porter to create this groundbreaking film may never be known, however, because, in the spirit of Taylor's disdain for lower-level workers, most film crew members at that time were not credited. In addition to the many extras who appear in the film (along with a young girl in a minor role), a production of this caliber would have required additional technical workers.

Hundreds of workers helped bring D. W. Griffith's controversial *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) to the screen, according to Brown (1973), yet the following are the only credits we have, taken from the archives of the AFI:

*The Birth of a Nation*

Production Company: David W. Griffith Corp. Griffith Feature Films

Distribution Company: Epoch Producing Corp.

Released: 08 Feb 1915

Copyright Information: © Epoch Producing Corp. and Thomas Dixon; 08 Feb 1915; LP6677

Length: 12 reels

Physical properties: Black and white; silent

Production credits: Production D. W. Griffith. Production under the personal direction of D. W. Griffith; assistant director Thomas E. O'Brien; assistant director George Andre Geranger; story arrangement by D. W. Griffith; scenario Frank E. Woods; photography G. W. Bilzer; costumes Goldstein Co., Los Angeles; music accompaniment composer Joseph Carl Breil.

AFI states that modern sources provide additional information on crew members, as follows:

Chief assistant director George Siegmann; assistant directors Monte Blue, William Christy Cabanne, Elmer Clifton, Donald Crisp, Howard Gaye, Fred Hamer, Erich von Stroheim, Herbert Sutch, Tom Wilson, Baron von Winther; assistant camera Karl Brown; music D. W. Griffith and Joseph Carl Briel; film editors James and Rose Smith; master carpenter Frank "Huck" Wortman; special effects "Fireworks" Wilson; Cast, Violet Wilkey (Flora Cameron as a child); Elmo Lincoln ("White Arm Joe" and eight other roles), Alberta Lee (Mrs. Lincoln), William Freeman (sentry at hospital); Olga Grey (Laura Keene), Eugene Pallette (Union soldier), Mme. Sul-te-Wan, Erich von Stroheim, and Gibson Gowland.

*Crew Composition at the Height of the Studio System*

Film crediting further evolved during the 1920s and 1930s, and by the 1940s took a form similar to that to which we are accustomed today. While the credits for *Double Indemnity* do not name a gaffer, they do credit someone with electric duties, and include most of the standard film crew positions we know today, including first and second assistant directors. (The AFI uses a table format for detailing the crew list for this film.)

*Double Indemnity*

Production Company: Paramount Pictures, Inc.

Distribution Company: Paramount Pictures, Inc.

Director:	Billy Wilder	(Director)
	Jack Gage <del>OS†</del>	(Dialogue director)
	C. C. Coleman Jr.	(Assistant director)
	Bill Sheehan <del>OS†</del>	(Second assistant director)
Producer:	B. G. DeSylva <del>OS†</del>	(Executive producer)
	Joseph Sistrom <del>OS†</del>	(Producer)
Writer:	Billy Wilder	(Script)
	Raymond Chandler	(Script)
Photography:	John Seitz	(Director of photography)
	Otto Pierce <del>OS†</del>	(Second camera)
	Harlow Stengel <del>OS†</del>	(Second camera)
	Ed Henderson <del>OS†</del>	(Stills)
Art Direction:	Hans Dreier	(Art director)
	Hal Pereira	(Art director)
Film Editor:	Doane Harrison	(Edit supervisor)
	Lee Hall <del>OS†</del>	(Assistant cutter)
Set Decoration:	Bertram Granger	(Set decorator)
	Jack DeGolconda <del>OS†</del>	(Props)

	James Cottrell_ <del>OS†</del>	(Props)	
Costumes:	Edith Head	(Costumes)	
	Neva Boune	(Wardrobe)	
	Bill Rabb	(Wardrobe)	
Music:	Miklos Rozsa	(Music score)	
Sound:	Stanley Cooley	(Sound recorder)	
	Walter Oberst	(Sound recorder)	
	Loren Ryder <del>OS†</del>	(Sound recorder)	
	H. O. Kinsey <del>OS†</del>	(Recorder)	
Special Effects:	Farciot Edouart	(Process photography)	
Makeup:	Wally Westmore	(Makeup artist)	
	Bob Ewing <del>OS†</del>	(Makeup)	
	Hollis Barnes <del>OS†</del>	(Hair)	
Production Misc.:	Hugh Brown <del>OS†</del>	(Production manager)	
	Al Trosin <del>OS†</del>	(Assistant production manager)	
	John Woolfenden_ <del>OS†</del>	(Pubicity)	
	Harvey Clermont_ <del>OS†</del>	(Casting)	
	Nancy Lee <del>OS†</del>	(Screen clerk)	
	Paul Tranz_ <del>OS†</del>	(Stage engineer)	
	Walter McLeod <del>OS†</del>	(Grip)	
	Bill Pillar <del>OS†</del>	(Mike grip)	
	Chet Stafford <del>OS†</del>	(Electrical)	
	Jack Duffy <del>OS†</del>	(Cableman)	
	Stand-In:	Dorothy Staten <del>OS†</del>	(Stand-in for Barbara Stanwyck)
	Country:	United States	

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Music: Symphony in D minor by César Franck.

Composer: César\_Franck

Source Text: Based on the novel *Double Indemnity* by James M. Cain in his *Three of a Kind* (New York, 1943).

Authors: James\_M. Cain

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Copyright Claimant	Copyright Date	Copyright Number	Passed By NBR:
Paramount Pictures, Inc.	21/4/1944	LP12748	Yes

APPENDIX F

CALL SHEETS AND SIDES

*Call Sheets*

As previously noted, the call sheet is a "road map" for the day's work. In the top left-hand corner of the call sheet, key above-the-line personnel are listed: executive producers, producers, and the director for the episode, along with the address and phone number for the production office. (A photocopy of the first page of a call sheet is shown below followed by a copy of the back side of a call sheet.) It should be noted that a call sheet consists of a two-sided single page, and usually comes with a map if the crew is on location that day.

Executive Producer: [REDACTED]  
 Co-Executive Producer: [REDACTED]  
 Producers: [REDACTED]  
 Director: [REDACTED]  
 Production Office: [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED]  
 ( ) [REDACTED]  
 FAX ( ) [REDACTED]  
 2nd AD ( ) [REDACTED]

CALL SHEET  
 EP #624- [REDACTED]  
 CREW CALL @ 8:00AM  
 SHOOTING CALL @ 8:30AM

Order	SET DESCRIPTION	SCENE	CAST	O/N
✓	INT [REDACTED] TRAILER [REDACTED] has dinner w/ [REDACTED]	6	1,4,5	N1
✓	INT [REDACTED] TRAILER (DUSK) [REDACTED] updates w/ [REDACTED] for coming home scene	18	1,4,5	D3
✓	INT [REDACTED] TRAILER [REDACTED] talks to [REDACTED] about make-up & [REDACTED] mother	9	1,5	D2
	INT [REDACTED] TRAILER [REDACTED] [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]	27	1,5	D4
	INT CLASSROOM [REDACTED] POV of photos on desk	25 pt		D4

**THIS IS A CLOSED SET!!! NO VISITORS OF ANY KIND UNLESS APPROVED BY TP**

					TOTAL PAGES:	
NO.	ACTOR	CHARACTER	STATUS	MAKE UP	SET CALL	
1.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	W	8:45AM	8:30AM	
2.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	H			
3.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	H			
4.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	W	7:45AM	8:30AM	
5.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	W	7:30AM	8:30AM	
6.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	H			
9.	[REDACTED]	(K) [REDACTED]	H			

DATE: Monday, April 17, 2000			*07 #624 -							
P	1	LIPV/	O/C	E	1	GAFFER/	8:00AM	T	1	TRA
R	1	DIRECTOR/	8:00AM	L	1	BB ELEC/	8:00AM	R	1	CAP
O	1	1 AD/	8:00AM	E	1	ELEC/	8:00AM	A	1	OFF
D	1	2ND AD/	7:30AM	C	1	ELEC/	8:00AM	N	1	HOP
	1	2ND 2ND/	6:30AM	T	1	ELEC/	8:00AM	S	1	ELB
	1	KEY PA/	7:30AM	R	1	ELEC/	8:00AM	P	1	STA
	1	SET PA/	7:30AM	I				O	1	STA
	1	SET PA/	7:15AM	C				R	1	MAN
				S	1	MIXER/	8:00AM	T	1	CAP
	1	SCRIPT/	8:00AM	O	1	SDOM/	8:00AM	A	1	RUE
O	1	POC/	O/C	U	1	LTRITY/	8:00AM	T	1	PRO
F	1	APOC/	PER SW	N				I	1	PC
F	1	2ND APOC/	"	D				O	1	GRP
I	1	INS.COORD/	"	P	1	PROPMASTER/	O/C	N	1	VAN
C	1	TRAVEL COORD/	"	R	1	ASST PROPMASTER/	7:30AM		1	VAN
E	1	OFFICE PA/	"	O	1	SET ASST/	7:30AM		1	VAN
	1	PROD ACCT/	O/C	P	1	PROPS BUYER/	PER BW		1	VAN
				S					1	WAS
				M	1	DEPT HEAD/			1	PRO
C	1	DP/	8:00AM	U	1	KEY HAIR/				
A	1	OPERATOR/	8:00AM		1	HAIR-HE/				
M	1	1st AC/	8:00AM	H	1	HAIR-HE/				
E	1	2nd AC/	7:45AM	A	1	HAIR-HE/				
R	1	LOADER/	7:45AM	I	1	HAIR-HE/				
A				R						
				W	1	COST DSGR/	O/C	E	1	101
				A	1	ASST TO DSGR/	PER NC	Q	1	101
				R	1	COSTUMER/	PER NC	U		EXTI
				D	1	COSTUMER/	7:00AM	I	1	FUE
				R	1	COSTUMER/	7:00AM	P	5	STA
				O				M	1	STC
				B				E	7	STA
				E				N	5	MNE
G	1	KEY GRP/	8:00AM	S				T	1	HON
R	1	BB GRP/	8:00AM	F		EFX ASSTS.			1	MAX
I	1	DOLLY GRP/	8:00AM	X					1	WAS
P	1	GRP/	8:00AM						1	CAP
	1	GRP/	8:00AM	L	1	LOC SPA/	O/C		1	STC
	1	GRP/	8:00AM	O	1	LOC COORD/	PER MGR		1	STC
	1	ADDL/	8:00AM	C	1	LOC MGR/	"		1	CAT
	1	ADDL/	8:00AM	A	1	ASST LOC MGR/	"			
	1	ADDL/	8:00AM	T	1	SET LOC/	"			
				I	X	POLICE	PER MGR			
A	1	PROD DSGR/	O/C	O	X	FIREMEN	"		X	CAM
R	1	ART DIR/	O/C	N	X	PERMITS	"		62	RAD
T	1	SET DEC/	PER DM							
	1	LEAD/	"							
	1	BUYER/	"							
	1	ON SET/	7:30AM							

The top center portion of the page is reserved for the title of the program, film production company name, episode number and title, crew and shooting call times. (Note: episode numbers can be deceiving. In the case of this show, an episode number such as 424 would not indicate the 424<sup>th</sup> program episode shot; rather it indicates the 24<sup>th</sup> show of the fourth season (a season may include any number of episodes, but usually between 23 and 26 for a U.S. primetime drama.)

In the far upper right the weather forecast, sunrise and sunset times are listed along with the date, day number (listed as "day 2 of 7" if this is the second of seven shooting days, for example) and the location where the crew will be shooting.

The next section down includes a set description (interior or exterior, description of location), scene numbers, which cast members are needed (listed by their assigned numbers, or "x" for extras), whether the scene is supposed to take place in the day or in the evening, the number of script pages in each scene to be shot, and the actual location address and name if a place of business or well-known landmark.

A statement of the rules regarding visitors appears next: "THIS IS A CLOSED SET!!! NO VISITORS OF ANY KIND UNLESS APPROVED BY THE UPM [unit production manager]!" THANK YOU."

In the next section, near the vertical middle of the page, a list of each actor along with each actor's assigned number and character name appears. Makeup times and set calls for each are included here. Below this is information regarding stand-ins (more on those later) and extras: the sheet usually lists how many there are and their call times.

Next, near the bottom of the page, "advance notes" are given, although they are not usually listed as such. These notes include dates, scene descriptions, scene numbers and lengths (in pages), which actors will be needed (by number) and which locations will be used for the next day, and usually the day after as well. This gives the cast and crew ideas about what to expect for the following two days. Sometimes advance notes are changed (much as five-day weather forecast often are, before the fifth day originally forecast) and if so, a warning such as "\*\*\*Please be aware of new advance notes!!!" will appear before the first set and scene description. This tells the cast and crew of changes in plans since the last advance notes on the call sheet the day before.

The bottom left-hand corner of the page is customarily initialed by the unit production manager (UPM).

On the reverse side of the call sheet is a detailed crew list. The page is headed with the date, the name of the program, the episode number and title, and the crew call time. Next, each department is listed, with each crew position and the name (first initial and last name) of each crew member scheduled for the day. ("Day players" are not noted on this sheet, but appear on it when they have been called in for the day. They are paid a day rate but are sometimes quite regular; they receive no health benefits, however, since they are hired on a freelance, as-needed basis.)

Appearing in a "NOTES" section near the bottom of the page are production notes indicating things such as welfare crew (to look out for the welfare of child actors), props, animals, any special makeup, any unusual items needed from the art department for sets, and so forth.

The bottom of this page is initialed by the unit production manager as well. If a new location is planned for the next day, a map will often be stapled to the back of the call sheet to help crew members find the place. (Crew members drive their own cars to and from set generally.)

### *Sides*

Another document produced for set use daily is somewhat similar to the call sheet but includes more detail and serves a different function. These are small booklets, usually seven inches by five, known as "sides." They are compilations of script pages along with the call sheet for the day, with all pages reduced to pocket size for convenience. Cast and crew can follow along as scenes are filmed, verify lines, check details, and so forth.

The top page is a reduced-size copy of the call sheet for the day. It is the front page of the call sheet only—the reverse side with names of crew positions and crew members is not included.

The call sheet is copied in a way that allows for a two-inch wide white vertical column on the left-hand side of the page. In this space is written in black marker - Day 3 of 7 - Pink. (When scripts are revised, the pages that are changed are assigned a particular color. The first time a page is changed, it would be copied onto blue paper (or in the case of this show, be called the "blue" version.) The next time that page is changed, the revision would be on pink paper. The order of colors is white, blue, pink, yellow, green, goldenrod, buff, salmon, cherry, tan, gray, and ivory (Honthaner, 2001). When a crew member pulls sides out of her pocket, it would be difficult to tell whether her version is the most recent, if sides were not also coded by color. If the first AD says "We're on pink" and her copy is coded yellow, then she would know she had the wrong version. (In the old days, revised versions would be typed on different colors of paper. Since word processors are now used and photocopiers make assembling new sets of sides easy, the color system remains, but in word only.)

The only pages which are attached to the mini-sized call sheet are the script pages to be shot that day. Since most U.S. prime-time television dramas are shot out of sequence, the pages are attached in the order they are to be shot, not in the order they happen in the script.

For instance, on one day I observed, I received sides labeled "Day 7 of 8 - Pink." So this was the seventh day of an eight-day shooting schedule, and the color pink indicates that they are working from the 3<sup>rd</sup> version of the script. The call sheet is on top, the first script page is next, and the script notes it is scene 2, day one (that is, day

one in the story). So scenes for the first part of the program are being shot on the next-to-last shooting day. (This is common practice in motion picture production and can create unique challenges for actors, who must often resolve conflict within their characters before the scene involving the beginning of the conflict has been shot.)

Sometimes a script page will include sections of two different scenes. If a scene to be shot appears on a page along with a scene that is not, the one that will not be shot is crossed out with black marker, often in a figure X with lines added to the top and bottom of the X to form two triangles.

Often only portions of a scene will be shot on a particular day, especially if a scene includes both interior and exterior shots (a character conversing inside a house, then leaving through the front door, for example).

Sides serve many important purposes. Because a reduced copy of the front page of the call sheet is included, cast and crew may review what's going to be shot that day, how many script pages each scene is, when each actor is required to report to makeup and to the set, and what is planned for the following day. The script pages list all of the dialogue for the scenes to be shot, so actors can review lines without lugging around the entire script. Sides serve as both informative documents and as welcome diversions, since there are many times when crew members are sitting idle, waiting to work again. (Some do bring their own reading material, however, as well as their own folding camp or lawn chairs.) Also, even as an observing researcher, it felt good to hold an entire day's work (well, at least a summary of it) in my hand or fit it in my pocket.

By late in the day, sides are a coveted commodity. People tend to put them down and forget about them; others then pick them up. The day's sides are usually completely distributed after three or four hours of shooting; after that time they must be begged, borrowed, or stolen.

The call sheet and sides are the main documents distributed to the film crew each day. There are production memos circulated, but they are often between the production office and the director, director of photography, script supervisor, and so forth.

There are other documents that are part of the communication process, but they are not as widely circulated as the call sheet or sides. Some are related to meetings to be held, some regularly. For instance, department heads receive regular memos concerning the production meeting which occurs before shooting begins for each episode. A discussion of the production meeting necessitates an explanation of the preproduction process, so readers will have an idea about what planning and work has gone on before shooting begins.

A typical shooting day, to be as specific as possible, begins roughly 10-16 hours before it is to end. While many shooting days begin early (6 am for transportation, makeup, and some actors to prepare for an 8:30 set call), there is no set time for the start of each shooting day. Rather, the call times for shooting days vary depending on a



variety of variables. Is sunlight needed for exterior shots? How about shots of the outdoors at night? (It is possible to shoot outdoors during the day but have the film look as if it were night, but such "day for night shooting" is tedious and does not always look realistic.)

If night shooting is necessary, it is likely that the day will begin later. If certain locations are available only at certain times of day, then shooting times may be adjusted. Talent (the commonly-used term for actors) and union crew (director, UPM, ADs) must be paid overtime according to union rules, but non-union crew, extras, and stand-ins are not subject to union rules, so shots throughout the day are scheduled to maximize the use of the highly-paid stars of the show. On occasion a shooting day may start early and end late. Often the talent can be utilized early in the day, with the mostly non-union crew staying late to shoot special effects, background scenes that don't require talent, and so forth. The actors can be sent home earlier so as not to tax the production's budget. (While non-union crew is paid overtime beyond a certain number of hours per week, the pay scale is less than for union crew, and tremendously less than that of the actors who "star" in the show.)

Ultimately, the decision as to when the next shooting day begins will be the result of a collaboration between the production office (production coordinator, the "right hand" of the UPM, ADs, director, and often others as well) based on the best information they have the day before. That things can change at a moment's notice goes without saying, but prudent planning can result in more efficient shooting.

Few crew members are late for "crew call"; arriving early gives them time to eat, converse, and do what's necessary to set up before "set call" (usually 30 minutes later unless a lot of setup is necessary). Never in my observations was shooting delayed because of late crew members (but it was delayed several times due to late guest stars). Crew positions are in great demand and any member who is habitually late could be replaced quickly with an eager newcomer. Since there are many film productions shot in this area throughout the year, it is likely that such a newcomer would be experienced as well.

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