A feminist political economy of cultural work: Unpacking the gender, labour, and precarity of South Korean television writers

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the working lives and labour activism of South Korean television writers, who are predominantly women, from a feminist political economy perspective. The dissertation provides a deepened and expanded understanding of cultural work, focusing on its content and gendered nature, as well as on the labour process and the precarity that workers experience in South Korean cultural industries. The key research questions guiding this study are: 1) Why are women the overwhelming majority of writers in the South Korean television industry? 2) What does the labour of Korean television writers entail, and what forms of precarity do writers face in their working lives? Finally, 3) how do some Korean television writers struggle collectively against the problematic aspects of their precarious working conditions? The primary research consists of in-depth interviews conducted with 91 research participants in South Korea from June 2018 to August 2019. In particular, the dissertation develops several conceptual tools for exploring cultural work in cultural industries, including the labour of cultural conception and communicative labour. It also unpacks the gendered and precarious nature of cultural work, and the concrete dimensions of the exploitation of a cultural workforce, including piecework, invisibility of workers, and a dependence on emotional labour. Through the lens of the intersection between capitalism and patriarchy, this dissertation shows how separation, discrimination, and hierarchy impact the exploitation of labour and production processes. Moreover, it suggests that working creatively, autonomously, and equitably should be recognized as a basic labour right. Finally, the dissertation develops the concept of feminization as a valuable tool for understanding labour and precarity in contemporary capitalism by examining a unique example of the feminization of the writing workforce in the Korean television industry.

Keywords: Cultural work; Precarity; Television writers; Feminist political economy; Feminization; Labour activism; South Korean television industry

Dedication

To those who find themselves in precarious states and feel isolated, and to the people who take care of them.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Acronyms

BSU	Broadcasting Staff Union
BWU	Broadcasting Writers Union
CJD	Culture/Journalism/Documentary
EBS	Korea Educational Broadcasting System
ENT	Entertainment
HSU	Hope Solidarity Union
JTBC	Joongang Tongyang Broadcasting Company
KBS	Korean Broadcasting System
KCC	Korea Communications Commission
KTRWA	Korea Television and Radio Writers Association
KWTU	Korean Women's Trade Union
MBC	Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation
MOEL	Ministry of Employment and Labour
MSIT	Ministry of Science and ICT
NBWCs	Non-fiction Broadcasting Writers Councils
NUMW	National Union of Media Workers
PD	Producer-Director
SBS	Seoul Broadcasting System

Chapter 1.

Introduction: Cultural work, gender, and precarity

1.1. Statement of the problem

My dissertation explores cultural work in the South Korean television industry in contemporary capitalism from a feminist political economy perspective. It focuses on the intersection of gender, labour and precarity in the cultural industries, and considers the manifestations of workers' collective organization and struggles.[1] To explore these issues, my doctoral research investigates writers' experience of, and labour within, the television industry in South Korea.[2]

Writers' work in the Korean television industry refers to a specific kind of *cultural work* in *cultural industries.* In this dissertation, I define cultural work as the work of making cultural products. Cultural work contributes to the production of meanings through "symbols for primarily expressive, aesthetic or informational purposes" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008, p. 103). At the same time, cultural work in industrial form is the labour involved in producing commodities with economic value within capitalism (Miège, 1979, 1989). The television industry is considered to be a key part of the cultural industries (Miège, 1979, 1989), which, in the analysis of Adorno and Horkheimer (1944), refers to the economic sector and the organizations within it that commodify culture and

[1] In this dissertation, when I refer to gender or gendered, 'gender' refers to "the social processes through which cultural meanings become associated with sexual difference" (Vosko & Zukewich, 2005, p. 389). Gender is a social construction as opposed to sex, which is based on biological difference. Initially, I tried to use only the terms 'women' and 'men' that indicate gender as opposed to female and male that indicate sex. Nevertheless, because of English language conventions and for the purpose of readability, this dissertation sometimes uses the terms 'female' and 'male' (e.g., male-dominated). In addition, I acknowledge that there are a range of genders, such as transgender, and feminist scholars have engaged in moving beyond and challenging the binary set model of women and men. I am aware that this dissertation does not reflect a range of genders, which should be addressed in a nuanced way in a future study.

[2] In my dissertation, instead of using the term 'screenwriter' or 'scriptwriters,' which is the most comparable job title in North America, I use the term 'writer.' My choice is based on the fact that writers' tasks in the South Korean television industry include not only writing scripts—the principal work of North American screen writers, but also casting, coordination, and various other tasks depending on the television genre.

produce cultural commodities in an industrial and collective form (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002).

Another key concept for this dissertation is precarity. Brophy and de Peuter (2007) define precarity as "the financial and existential insecurity arising from the flexibilization of labour" under post-Fordism[3] (p. 180). In this dissertation, I explore precarity somewhat more broadly as *the financial and existential insecurity* relevant to labour issues beyond the flexibilization of labour, a precarity which takes different forms depending on the economic and social context and the features of a given labour market (S. Lee et al., 2017, pp. 22–23). I agree that the flexibilization of labour has impacted the experiences of (women) labourers in a different way compared to Fordism.[4] However, the flexibilization of labour is only one of the factors that make people precarious even under post-Fordism. As Schaap et al. (2022) highlight, "Importantly, precarity is distributed unequally, with people of colour, women, low-status workers and many in the global south experiencing its most devastating effects. At the same time, however, some of its aspects penetrate all social strata" (p. 143). In this dissertation, I focus on the way that precarity is unequally distributed to women (Bohrer, 2019; Federici, 2012; Werner et al., 2017), which cannot be explained solely by the economic aspect, the flexibilization of labour. Several features of precarity under post-Fordism have been shown to be historically central in women's work (Federici, 2012; Haraway, 1988; McRobbie, 2011). Rather, by focusing on (gendered) cultural workers in a specific way, this dissertation

[3] Fordism refers to the phase of capitalism which became dominant in the post-World War II period, starting in the late 1910s. It involves standardized, mass production and consumption, economies of scale, large companies' bureaucratized production, as well as the states' intervention and closed economy. Labour relations in Fordism are described as relatively secure and stable employment, with organized labour based on national unions (Bonanno, 2012; D. Harvey, 1990; Jessop, 1994). In contrast, post-Fordism refers to the phase of capitalism that has appeared since the late 1960s in the Global North and has been guided by the neoliberal ideology and practices. It involves social, economic, and cultural transformations such as the liberalization of markets (free-market), and the reduction of states' interventions and deregulatory policies. In particular, a post-Fordist production mode is characterized as the flexibilization of production and the decentralization of production, while the labour relations are described as temporary, unstable, and insecure. Labour tends to be non-unionized and, therefore, the power of unions tends to be diminished. In particular, flexible accumulation means that large companies outsource production, and engage mainly in financial operation, and distribution (Bonanno, 2012; D. Harvey, 1990; Jessop, 1994).

[4] Brophy and de Peuter (2007) explain that the notion of precarity is useful as a "conceptual tool, the practical purpose of which is to aid in naming, understanding, and ultimately transforming the conditions of labour under post-Fordism" (p. 180).

questions what forms and content precarity takes and how it interacts with gender in cultural work.

Labour issues were famously referred to at the beginning of the 2000s as a ‘blind spot’ in communication and media studies (Mosco & McKercher, 2008, p. vii). However, since the early 2000s, critical scholars have paid closer attention to labour in the media and communication industries (M. Banks, 2007; de Peuter, 2014a; de Peuter et al., 2015; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Ross, 2008, 2009). These scholars have pointed out that working conditions have fallen short of claims made in celebratory discourses around “creative labour” (Florida, 2012; Howkins, 2001; Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999), highlighting unpaid and underpaid work, diminished social benefits, overwork, and insecure employment.

This dissertation aims to expand these critical scholars’ discussions on labour issues in cultural industries in two ways. First, it investigates labour issues in cultural industries beyond “the forms of the administration of labour,” that is, labour conditions such as low pay and insecure employment (Morini, 2007, p. 42). Specifically, this research examines *the content* of labour by exploring what cultural workers do in making cultural products and how they do this, as well as how the labour process of cultural workers is distinctive. This approach is significant because if cultural workers experience features in their work distinctive from those who make other than cultural products, these distinctive features are likely to be closely connected to the different types of precarity that workers face.

Second, this research examines the gendered nature of cultural work by highlighting gender as one of the crucial social identities of cultural workers. Since not only occupational identities (a labourer who makes cultural products) but also other social identities (gender, race, etc.) define the experiences, labour and struggles of cultural workers, I investigate the intersection of gender and labour issues in cultural industries in this research (Crenshaw, 1991). For example, in the United Kingdom and the United States, men dominate in film and television screenwriters’ jobs (Conor, 2014). In Hollywood specifically, film and television writers have been male-dominated since the late 1930s (Bielby, 2009). It is plausible to assume that women writers in Hollywood certainly have different labour experiences and face different forms and/or degrees of precarity in comparison to men performing the same work. Labour issues, as feminist

political economists have demonstrated, cannot be detached from gender issues (Federici, 2012). Also, the experiences of cultural workers (like those of labourers in other industries) are defined in the nature of their relationships with other workers, including relations of separation, cooperation, and hierarchy.

To achieve these two goals, my dissertation explores the gendered and precarious nature of cultural work in the specific case of writers in the Korean television industry. Korean television writers' work is significant in broader discussions of the gendered nature of work because television writing is considered in the context of the South Korean industry to be women's work (H. M. Kim, 2005; Y. Kim, 2007). To quantify this claim in a preliminary way, it is sufficient to point out that almost nine out of ten of the more experienced writers in this industry are women (KTRWA, 2019). Moreover, the social perception of television writers within the industry is strongly gendered. Two additional important points are that most Korean television writers are freelancers, which legally refers to self-employed workers in South Korea, working under conditions of structurally-normalized precarity (Y. Kim, 2007). Some writers have responded to this situation collectively, however, attempting to struggle against their precarious working conditions through organizations that have included the Broadcasting Writers Union [*Pangsong Chakka Yunion* in Korean], a labour union for television writers established in 2017. The key questions guiding this study are: 1) Why are writers in the Korean television industry predominantly women? 2) What does the labour of Korean television writers consist of, and what forms of precarity do writers face in their working lives? Finally, 3) How do some Korean television writers, as cultural workers, negotiate or struggle against the problematic aspects of their precarious working conditions collectively? These questions will be detailed in Section 1.4.

In the following sections, I first introduce the research perspective adopted in this dissertation. Secondly, I present more details regarding the general characteristics and the gendered features of writers in the South Korean television industry. Next, I provide the research questions and explain the methodology. Finally, I anticipate the structure of this dissertation.

1.2. Perspective of my research

In this dissertation's exploration of the content of cultural work and the gendered and precarious nature of its labour, I investigate the work of Korean television writers from a feminist political economy of communication approach**.** Feminist political economy is "an approach that understands social difference – including, but not limited to, gender – to be integral to the functioning of political-economic systems and knowledge production processes" (Werner et al., 2017, p. 2).[5] In relation to political economy, Micky Lee (2011) clarifies that a feminist political economy of communication necessarily entails a fundamental recognition of the gendered nature of the political economy approach itself:

> The 'feminist' in feminist political economy of communication is not only to include the excluded and to add alternative voices, but also to re-read the political economy of communication—as both a theory and a method—as gendered. The history and the development of political economy are gendered, and the terms that it critiques (such as capital and global economy) are gendered as well. Therefore political economy should be feminist by nature. (M. Lee, 2011, p. 85)

More specifically, feminist political economy in this dissertation is based on three theoretical and practical trajectories: 1) a feminist standpoint perspective, 2) an intersectional analysis, and 3) a socialist feminist viewpoint (M. Lee, 2011; Riordan, 2002; Werner et al., 2017).[6] These three approaches are based on feminist notions of ontology, or "theories of being and reality", epistemology, or "theories of how knowledge is produced", and politics, or "relations and practices of power" (McCann & Kim, 2013, p. 1).

Feminist epistemology has challenged what is acknowledged as knowledge as well as its objectivity, legitimacy and rationality, by asking who produces such knowledge, and how the knowledge is situated in politics (N.-Y. Lee, 2017; McCann &

[5] Although I develop my discussion focusing on gender in association with the topic of this dissertation, feminist political economy pertains to all groups that are politically, economically, socially, and culturally marginalized due to not only gender but also race, sexuality, ethnicity, class, religion, age, etc. (Bohrer, 2019; Federici, 2004, 2012; Riordan, 2002; Werner et al., 2017).

[6] Generally, socialist feminism is often used interchangeably with Marxist Feminism in many feminist writings (Bohrer, 2019) and "the distinction between Marxist feminism and socialist feminism is not always clear" (Weeks, 2011, p. 236). In this dissertation, I use the term 'socialist feminism' for convenience because my references directly quote this term (e.g., Gordon, 2013; Holmstrom, 2003; Riordan, 2002; Weeks, 2007).

Kim, 2013). As part of feminist epistemology, a standpoint perspective seeks to explore the experiences of marginalized people from their perspectives (Harding, 1991, 2004; Hartsock, 1983; Hesse-Biber et al., 2003; D. E. Smith, 1990). Flowing from this is an effort to approach the work of women workers from their standpoint *as a group* and not simply include women's experiences in their research (Brooks, 2007; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 2004). Harding (1991) highlights that experiences are formed and created within the social relationship, while a standpoint is achieved through struggles and practice, and feminist research is intimately connected to feminist politics. In this regard, a feminist political economy seeks to restructure existing knowledge systems that are hierarchically produced and distributed by/for privileged groups, and challenge the power relationships of society (M. Lee, 2011).

The term intersectionality was first developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in the field of legal studies. The perspective was initially developed in feminist scholarship as a way to consider the experience of black women (A. Harvey, 2020; Sin, 2000). Black feminist scholars emphasize how references to women's experiences are discussed through the perspective of the lived realities of a specific group. Women are, however, not a unified group with similar identities and struggles (A. Harvey, 2020; hooks, 1981; Sin, 2000). Broadly, the concept of intersectionality indicates that different kinds of oppression, can co-exist and overlap, including class, race, gender, ability, sexuality, and others. Thus, these forms of oppression and exploitation cannot be separated into distinct categories on a single axis (Bohrer, 2019; Crenshaw, 1991; Reed & Garrido, 2021). "Intersectionality is a term that brings together a variety of positions on the relationships between modes of oppression and identity in the contemporary world" (Bohrer, 2019, p. 81). Crenshaw (1998) described the concept of intersectionality by illustrating a well-known example:

> Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars travelling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. ... To bring this back to a non-metaphorical level, I am suggesting that Black women can experience discrimination in ways that are both similar to and different from those experienced by white women and Black men. Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to white women's experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with Black men. Yet often they experience double-

> discrimination—the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex. And sometimes, they experience discrimination as Black women—not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women. (pp. 321- 322)

Indeed, Crenshaw (1998) highlights that we must not view different forms of oppression as separate and mutually exclusive. The concept of intersectionality therefore suggests that we need to consider and identify "the layered complexities of multiple forms of subjugation" rather than measure "several forms of subject positions" that are additive to forms of oppression that marginalized groups and individuals experience (A. Harvey, 2020, p. 20). In other words, various manifestations of discrimination operate dialectically and often create a distinctive form of oppression and injustice (Bohrer, 2019; Collins, 2000; A. Harvey, 2020).

Intersectional approaches aim to unveil not simply "the existence of the categories, but rather the particular values attached to them and the way those values foster and create social hierarchies" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1267). Intersectional approaches suggest that it is necessary to reveal how distinctive forms of oppressive systems are formed, their modes of operation, and how they marginalize particular groups with specific identities (Crenshaw, 2013). For example, while some labour concerns for workers in a given setting might be addressed, the specific problems women workers face may not. When we subsume the precarity women workers face into a generalized bracket of labour issues, the distinctive forms of precarity that women workers experience becomes marginalized and made invisible (J. Park, 2018a, p. 167).

As Crenshaw (2013) states, the concept of intersectionality enables us to reveal distinctive axes of oppression that the existing knowledge system and activism do not present, and to make visible a marginalized or excluded group and their unique precarity. Therefore, intersectional approaches are closely relevant to a standpoint epistemology and certain aspects of feminist politics in that they challenge the existing knowledge system and even mainstream activism (J. Park, 2018a). Feminist standpoint theory and intersectionality lay the epistemological foundation for the methodology adopted in this dissertation and for my approach to Korean television writers as those who experience the gendered, precarious, and/or cultural labour and to the existing knowledge and history surrounding these writers.

A feminist political economy approach is also based on the socialist feminist approach. In fact, Riordan (2002) argues that “most feminists explicitly working in the area of political economy have been socialist feminists. Working from within these paradigms, feminists reject the liberal claim that human nature is defined by rationality” (p. 7). Generally, Marxists stress the idea of humans as labourers within capitalism, and the identity of humans being defined by their labour and class relations. In labouring to make a living through the wage, humans are exploited within capitalism (Tong 1997, p. 39 cited in Riordan, 2002, p. 7). Socialist feminists criticized and revised male-centric Marxist analyses of capitalist labour (Federici, 2012; Weeks, 2011), arguing that the classic Marxist concepts of labour and class are gendered—in other words, while appearing as gender-neutral categories they actually exclude women and their work from consideration (Acker 1999 cited in Riordan, 2002, p. 7).

Socialist feminists have therefore explored “the relationship between gendered relations and capitalist logics” from a feminist viewpoint and from the perspective of women’s embodied experiences (Weeks, 2011, p. 118). Beechey (1979) has argued that:

> Marxist feminists have attempted to analyze not simply ‘patriarchy’ but the relationship between patriarchy and the capitalist mode of production. This is because they do not believe that the subordination of women can be absolutely separated from the other forms of exploitation and oppression which exist in capitalist societies, for example class exploitation and racism. (p. 67)

The concept of patriarchy has multiple implications, which are defined differently within feminist approaches (Beechey, 1979). “At the most general level patriarchy has been used to refer to male domination and to the power relationships by which men dominate women” (Beechey, 1979, p. 66). Socialist feminists have argued that patriarchy is interconnected with capitalism, which means that the oppression women experience should be understood in the intersection of gender and class (Bohrer, 2019; Federici, 2004; Gordon, 2013; Weedon, 1997).

The important point in this socialist feminist idea is that the intersection between gender (patriarchy) and class (capitalism) as social conditions does not mean the reduction of gender issues to an economic problem. As Holmstrom (2003) has said:

> … all socialist feminists see class as central to women's lives, yet at the same time none would reduce sex or race oppression to economic exploitation. And all of us see these aspects of our lives as inseparably and systematically related; in other words, class is always gendered and raced. (p. 2)

In the same manner, we cannot say that gender is more important than labour in women's work because complicated oppressions cannot be ranked (Bohrer, 2019; Crenshaw, 1991; Reed & Garrido, 2021). Therefore, many scholars have suggested that socialist feminism is inherently connected to, and should be based on, both standpoint epistemology (Weeks, 2007) and intersectionality (Bohrer, 2019; Federici, 2004; Gordon, 2013).

The socialist-feminist tradition of labour analysis that I refer to in this dissertation has developed significantly since the late 1960s. Some socialist feminists expanded the recognition of the place of capitalist production to the family and redefined domestic work in relation to capitalism, including caring work that was ignored or dismissed in Marxist analyses (Dalla Costa & James, 1975; Federici, 2012; Fortunati, 1995; Weeks, 2011).[7] Most of all, by showing that reproductive work such as caring for others is a form of labour, these scholars contributed to redefining and expanding the meaning of labour (Federici, 2012). They furthermore brought attention to how women have been regarded as having an inherent talent for domestic work, and how the naturalization of women's reproductive labour has been used to justify the unpaid domestic labour of women. In particular, Federici (2012) described that capitalism relies on the devaluation of social reproduction in the process of accumulation of value, especially unpaid domestic labour, which is essential for the reproduction of workers. Fortunati (1995) and other scholars have argued that if capitalists were to recognize the real value of reproduction, they would have to pay more wages for labour power. Instead, the capitalist mode of production is able to exploit more surplus value when the work of reproduction in the family is situated as non-productive, non-waged work (Fortunati, 1995, pp. 8–9). These feminists also argued that while capitalism' invisible exploitation of women within capitalism is correlated to the subordination of women to men, it should not be reduced to just the oppression of women by men (Dalla Costa & James, 1975, p. 27). These

[7] From the late 1960s to 1970s, these socialist feminists engaged in the International Wages for Housework Campaign, a feminist political organization developed to resist the gendered capitalist labour system (Weeks, 2011). The Campaign was feminist activism to define unpaid domestic labour in social and political terms (Federici, 2012).

scholars highlighted that we should connect the exploitation of women to the exploitation of the working class by capital.

The socialist feminist literature has produced a perspective that has vital implications for analysis of the ways in which gender and other forms of difference are created and used within capitalism (Dalla Costa & James, 1975; Weeks, 2011). More broadly, this perspective has indicated that capitalism has been "above all an accumulation of differences, inequalities, hierarchies, divisions, which have alienated workers from each other and even from themselves" (Federici, 2004, p. 115). Therefore, we need to begin with understanding the differences, divisions, and hierarchies between workers, and furthermore between people in society based on not only gender, but also class, race, age, etc. in discussing labour exploitation, and justice (Federici, 2004). In this regard, Bohrer (2019) has argued that capitalism "produces and reproduces inequalities at every turn, not only in the economic realm, but in the political, social, academic, intimate, educational, and imaginative dimensions of contemporary life" and it "cannot operate outside of the complicated dynamics of race, gender, sexuality, and nationality" (p. 15).

In the relationship between a feminist political economy and socialist feminism, Riordan (2002) has argued that "Whereas socialist feminism looks primarily to macroeconomic organizations structuring women's lives, a feminist political economy also looks to the meso- and microlevels of capitalism as they shape women's day-to-day interactions" (p. 8). In particular, a feminist political economy "foregrounds how capitalism is reproduced through logics and practices that create and marshal difference into its categories of value," and more specifically it aims to explore "how this general process works itself out in particular places, and the racialized and gendered forms of force and hegemony that this process entails" (Werner et al., 2017, p. 2).

More specifically, how does a feminist political economy approach explore labour, specifically in the cultural industries? In other words, what do we examine in exploring a specific labour from a feminist political economy approach? I found that my research benefits from some of the key challenges and debates on labour that feminist, queer, anti-racist, and anti-colonial Marxists have suggested (Bohrer, 2019, p. 126): "Who labours and how is labour organized under capitalism?"; "Is all labour waged under capitalism?"; "Where does labour happen?"; "What besides labour is necessary to

maintain capitalism?" and "How is exploitation related to other forms of violence under capitalism?" (Bohrer, 2019, p. 127). These questions propose that we need to start with questioning the concept of labour by re-reading and re-defining the content of labour, the valuation and pay system of labour, and their relations with other oppressive systems, such as gender and race. Ultimately, I examine the content and the gendered nature of cultural labour in a specific setting in the work of Korean television writers from a feminist political economy perspective.

1.3. Who are Korean television writers?

In South Korea, the term "broadcasting writers" (*pangsong chakka* in Korean) refers to all writers in the broadcasting industry, which comprises television, radio and translation. In this dissertation, I use the term "television writers" to distinguish television writers from radio writers and translation writers, but I will occasionally refer to them simply as "writers" for the sake of convenience and to limit repetitiveness.[8] In the Korean television industry there are three categories of television writers, roughly divided by genre: drama writers (*tŭrama chakka* in Korean), entertainment writers (*yenŭng chakka*), and culture/journalism/documentary (CJD) writers (*kusŏngdak'yu chakka*) (M. R. Kim & Ko, 2004; Y. Kim, 2007). This categorization is defined as such by the industry, and this dissertation follows the definitions used in the industry itself.[9] The distinctive features of each group of writers are discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 respectively.

The three categories of television writers stem from four broad television program genres in the Korean television industry: drama, entertainment, culture/journalism/documentary programs and news reports. Korean broadcasters classify television programs into these four program genres to observe the broadcasting regulations, such as the *Broadcasting Act*, on the content of the major terrestrial broadcasters and the broad categories of television show genres (D. K. Lee et al., 2018). Each group of writers engages in its own area of expertise. For example, drama writers

[8] Radio writers (*radio chakka* in Korean) participate in making radio shows, and translation writers (*pŏnyŏng chakka* in Korean) translate the radio and television programs from foreign languages to Korean (Y. Kim, 2007). While these groups of writers are also women-predominant, this dissertation focuses on television writers.

[9] The Korea Television and Radio Writers Association also divides writers according to the programs on which they work.

produce drama programs, which encompass narrative fiction genres. One example is *Descendants of The Sun Kingdom* (Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), 2016), a love story between a surgeon and a special forces officer. This group of writers contrasts with entertainment writers, who make entertainment shows in a variety of sub-genres, such as comedy, variety, talk, and reality shows. A popular example of a Korean entertainment show is *The King of Mask Singer* (Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), 2015−), which is the original inspiration behind The *Masked Singer*, a now-international music show franchise. Finally, culture/journalism/documentary (CJD) writers produce non-fiction programming. In particular, most CJD writers work to produce CJD programs. The term CJD programs refers to non-fiction programming, such as documentaries, and investigative journalism programs. In recent years some CJD writers have started to work in the news reports production sector. In terms of the characteristics of the shows, several news reports and CJD programs overlap but they are separately categorized according to the *Broadcasting Act* as mentioned above (See details in Section 1.6 as well). Importantly, the two genres of programs are produced by a different group of workers. News reports are normally produced by a specific group of workers, news reporters who write the news in an independent department called the 'newsroom.'[10]

These groupings of television writers give us a sense of how writers work on most television shows in the country and how the responsibilities of writers are expanding into news shows in the Korean television industry. The following sections turn to how Korean writers are gendered, how they have worked as freelancers, and how they are unrecognized to the point that they can be considered hidden. Nevertheless, writers have employed individual and collective means to make themselves visible and change their working conditions.

Writers as women freelancers

Regardless of the genres they work in, Korean television writers share some common features, in that most writers are women who work as freelancers. There are no comprehensive statistics available for the total number of writers who work in the industry or for the gender breakdown of this workforce (Broadcasting Writers Union &

[10] Even though Korean writers work with news reporters, these TV writers do not function as 'news writers' do in other countries such as the United States.

National Union of Media Workers, 2016), which is a striking example of the invisibility of writers in the broadcasting industry as discussed in the next section.

An alternative method for those seeking to understand the general trends among this group of writers is to look at statistics on more experienced writers who are members of the Korea Television and Radio Writers Association (KTRWA, *Han'guk pangsong chakka hyŏphoe* in Korean). The KTRWA is a professional association that was established in 1962. This professional association grants membership to broadcasting writers who meet the minimum requirements, which for television writers in force since 2009 are the following: drama writers have to write scripts for more than two television movies (*Tanmakkŭk*) or for more than one series or serial, entertainment writers have to work for more than five years, and CJD writers have to work for more than four years, including one year as a main writer who works on and writes scripts for an entire program. The statistics on writers with a membership in the KTRWA are limited in two ways. First, they missed the far more precarious workforce, such as the less experienced writers that have yet to qualify, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 7. Second, because KTRWA membership is a life membership, the statistics on the KTRWA members include retirees. Nevertheless, for more experienced writers, KTRWA statistics may roughly represent general trends.

Table 1.1, and Figures 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 are based on the statistics from the KTRWA on January 11, 2019.[11] Table 1.1 shows the highly gendered breakdown of the television writing workforce, with women senior writers outnumbering men senior writers 2553 to 257, meaning that almost nine out of ten senior writers are women. This broad pattern is repeated across all television genres.

Table 1.1 The total number of television writers with KTRWA membership according to genre at the end of 2018

Genre	Men	Women	Total	Percentage of Women Writers
Drama	148	500	648	77.16%
Entertainment	76	727	803	90.54%

[11] I specifically asked if the KTRWA had statistics related to the total number of writers during my research. The KTRWA offered these statistics on writers with membership for this dissertation and explained that they were unable to even estimate the total number of writers in the industry inclusive of those without membership in the KTRWA.

Culture/journalism/documentary	33	1326	1359	97.57%
Total number	257	2553	2810	90.09%

Source: Korea TV and Radio Writers Association (statistics from January 11, 2019)

Figure 1.1 shows that starting in the 1990s, women television writers began to steadily outnumber men in the Korean broadcasting industry. The gap between the number of women and men writers has since widened every year, a trend clearly demonstrated in Figures 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 for television writers divided according to Korean television genres.[12]

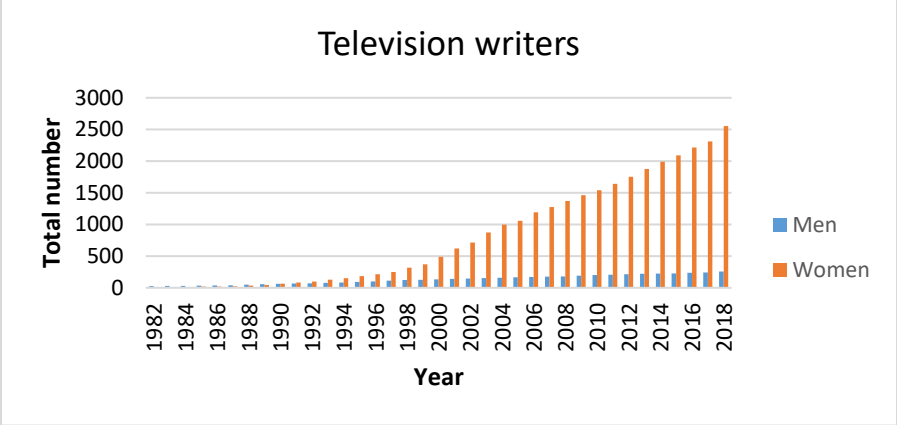

Figure 1.1 Total numbers of television writers with KTRWA membership
Source: Korea TV and Radio Writers Association (statistics from January 11, 2019)

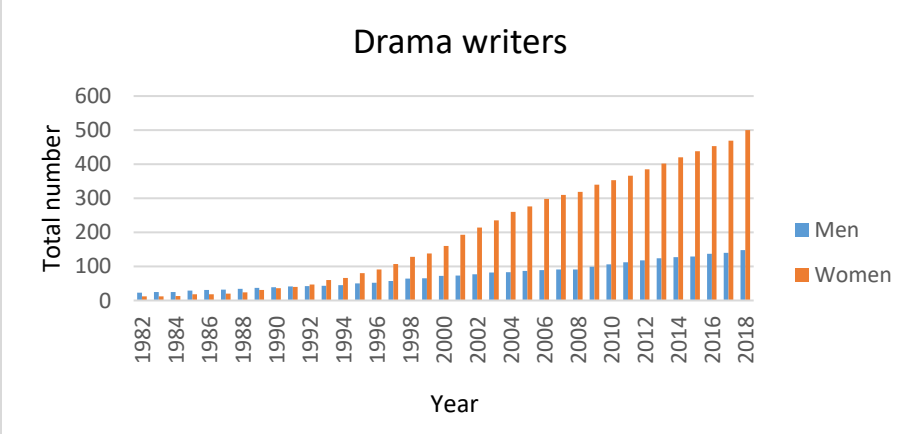

Figure 1.2 Total numbers of drama writers with KTRWA membership
Source: Korea TV and Radio Writers Association (statistics from January 11, 2019)

[12] Not only are most TV writers women, but also my interviews indicate that the majority of current applicants are as well, a factor which appears likely to consolidate the trend toward feminization.

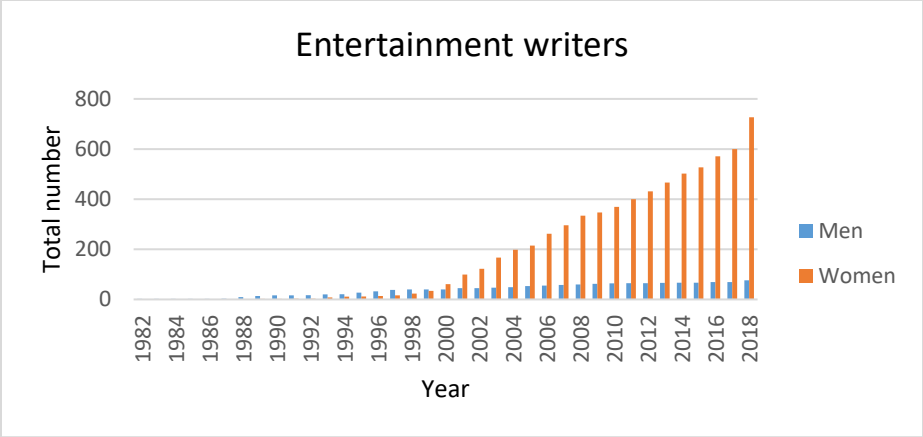

Figure 1.3 Total numbers of entertainment writers with KTRWA membership
Source: Korea TV and Radio Writers Association (statistics from January 11, 2019)

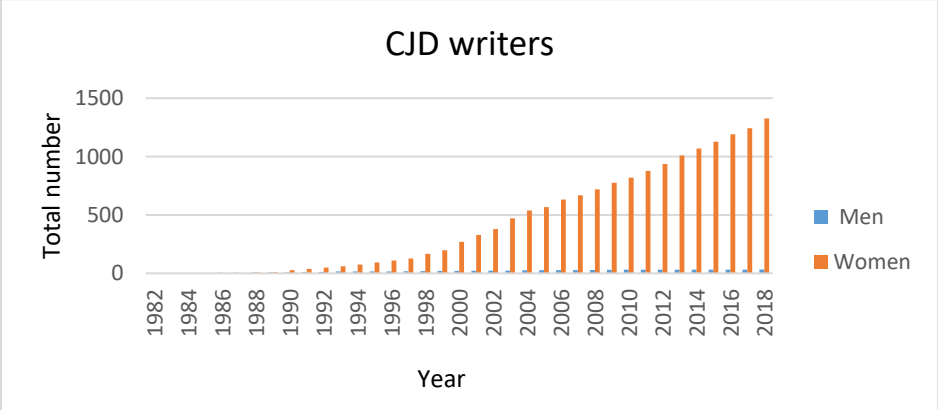

Figure 1.4 Total numbers of CJD writers with KTRWA membership
Source: Korea TV and Radio Writers Association (statistics from January 11, 2019)

In terms of employment status and copyright, this Korean writing workforce faces very similar conditions across the different genres worked on: most writers work as freelancers (self-employed workers) and more experienced writers receive royalties based on a collective agreement between broadcasters and the KTRWA (S.-J. Yu, 2006), which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7. A majority of writers tend to suffer from job insecurity, heavy workloads, excessive overtime and diminished social benefits (H.-J. Choi & Lee, 2011). In terms of long working hours, a survey of six hundred broadcasting writers in 2016 showed that writers worked for 2,805 hours per year (an average of 53.8 hours per week). Moreover, writers are usually not given regular vacation and weekends off (Broadcasting Writer Union & National Union of Media Workers, 2016), and therefore work much more than the average annual number of hours per-capita among the South Korean working population as of 2016 [2,069 hours].

This latter figure placed South Korea second among the OECD countries with the highest average number of annual work hours, where the average in 2016 was 1,692 hours worked per year (OECD, 2017).

Moreover, with the exception of drama writers, most CJD and entertainment writers work without documented contracts (Broadcasting Writer Union & National Union of Media Workers, 2016). In particular, many CJD and entertainment writers are “hired temporarily” for the duration of a television program and often work full-time during that period. However, legally they retain the status of self-employed workers rather than employees.

At present, while writers are not unique in facing precarious working conditions, the form of precarity that television writers experience differs from that experienced by other professionals, such as producer-directors (PDs), a historically male-dominated position (C. Kim, 2014; H. M. Kim, 2005). A “PD” is a term utilized in the South Korean context which refers to those professionals who play the dual role of producer who performs various responsibilities, such as casting and coordination, and director who leads shooting and editing in the television industry. Writers usually work with PDs in the production of television programs. The employment arrangements of PDs are not uniform, divided as they are into both full-time permanent workers and workers in non-standard employment relations, usually short-term contract workers or freelancers. Yet in contrast to the diversity in the employment conditions of PDs, it is not an exaggeration to say that most Korean television writers are contingent or casual workers with a degree of precariousness which is structurally normalized (Kim, Y, 2007). In short, Korean television writers are generally forced to work as freelancers, whether they want it or not.

In the mid-2000s, the gendered nature of writers’ work in the Korean television industry began to draw attention from feminist scholars such as Hyun Mee Kim (2005) and Young Kim (2007). Hyun Mee Kim (2005) argues that the exploitation of highly educated women in writing positions is an indication of a new form of gendered labour management in the South Korean television industry. Also, Young Kim (2007) points out that Korean broadcasters do not guarantee the minimum labour rights of CJD writers. She further states that CJD writers’ struggles should be considered in tandem with women’s struggles.

Regarding the increasing number of women writers in the 1990s, Hunsun Kim and Dongsuk Park (1999) explain that general social and economic changes in South Korea contributed to women's entry into Korean writing positions. They point out that in the 1980s, the growth of the economy resulted in openings for more women workers. In the 1990s, several rounds of legislation were introduced to improve women's social and economic status, with bills taking aim at curbing gender discrimination and promoting gender equality in employment (H. Kim & Park, 1999). However, this explanation is limited because it does not explain why, while women increasingly came to dominate writing positions, men still monopolized the better-remunerated and more secure positions, such as PDs and news reporters in the Korean television industry in the 1990s.

Writers as unrecorded workers

Despite (and because of) this relatively limited attention to the relationship between gender and cultural production in the Korean television industry, this dissertation argues that the gendered structure of Korean television writers' labour has thus far mostly been hidden from scholarly, media, and even political attention, a fact which is indicative of the degree of marginalization and inequity writers have faced. It is, in fact, highly ironic that writers have been marginalized in the *written* histories—including scholarly articles and governmental documents—of those who work in the Korean television industry. This hiddenness plays out in many ways. It can be uncovered by taking note of the lack or shortage of relevant data regarding writers, an absence which arguably serves to perpetuate the unequal and gendered structure of labour (Conor et al., 2015, p. 6). As mentioned above, there are no exact statistics that are even kept on Korean television writers including the overall number of writers or their working pay rates. As such the statistics largely overlook these writers, including in governmental reports such as the *Annual Survey of the Korean Broadcasting Industry,* published by the South Korean central administrative agencies, Korea's Ministry of Science and ICT (MSIT) and the Korea communications commission (2020). Specifically, the *2020's Annual Survey of the Korean Broadcasting Industry* categorizes production staff in Korean terrestrial broadcasters into news reporters, PDs, announcers/presenters, technical staff (camera operators, light technicians, etc.) and

"others." This report defines *the others* as "writers," "voice actors" and "workers who support program productions generally" (MSIT & KCC, 2020, p. 61).[13]

Despite the fact that the above-mentioned work of Hyun Mee Kim (2005) and Young Kim (2007) has problematized gendered labour issues among television writers in South Korean academia, the discussion of the gender and labour problems of television writers continues to be insufficient.[14] This insufficiency is directly linked to the lack of discussion of gender and labour issues more generally within the South Korean television industry. Even in the few studies of gender and labour issues produced by South Korean academia, television writers have been marginalized. For example, in the early 2000s, several Korean studies pointed out the existence of a glass wall and glass ceiling for women in key creative worker positions such as PDs and news reporters (Sohn & Kim, 2004; S. Lee, 2004; S. Youn & Lee, 2003). In these studies, the discussion of gender inequality in cultural work (Sohn & Kim, 2004; S. Lee, 2004; S. Youn & Lee, 2003) excludes television writers, though one study did do its best to justify the exclusion of writers' work from their research by pointing to the lack of statistics on writers (S. Youn & Lee, 2003). Aside from this research, more broadly, several studies note that salaried, women news reporters are disadvantaged due to the masculinized production culture in their workplace on top of their parenting responsibilities (J. Hong, 2016; Hur, 2006). Overall, the fact that women announcers experience employment insecurity and sexism in the Korean broadcasting industry has been documented (T.-H. Kim & Na, 2012). However, a review of the academic literature published after the early-2010s was unable to find studies of gender inequity in labour among the production staff that make television shows in Korean broadcasting companies.

Although labour issues in the broadcasting industry have drawn increasing attention from academia in South Korea since the late 2000s (Seo, 2012), most studies focus on the historically male-dominated job category of PDs, and either dismiss writers

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[13] Another example is The *Annual Korean Broadcasting Industry White Paper*. This report presents "statistics" for writers since 2013 but in actuality provides figures on only the number of writers working for independent production companies (KOCCA, 2021). This report identifies 2,033 writers working in the independent production sector in 2019 but does not offer detailed information on them.

[14] Hyun-Ju Choi and Gang-Heong Lee's (2011) research broadly examines writers' labour by conducting online surveys of around 500 writers and shows that most writers worked as freelancers. This research, however, does not link writers' labour to gender issues.

or mention them only briefly (e.g., B.-S. Kim & Kim, 2011; D. Kim, 2010; Y. H. Kim, 2008; C. K. Lee & Song, 2010; C.-K. Lee & Song, 2014). As a result, in the theorization of precarity and flexibilization, Korean academia often defines the starting point of these phenomena as occurring in the late 1990s, the time when PDs began to experience non-standard employment. In doing so, scholarship to date has overlooked the fact that television writers have experienced precariousness as freelancers since the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., B.-S. Kim & Kim, 2011). This finding is a major contribution made by this research, and the skewed treatment of precarization will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3.

As noted previously, the invisibility of the labour issues that writers have faced in academic research appears to be directly related to the gendered nature of writers' work. In fact, "It is history writing that has consigned women to the sidelines, not historical events themselves" as Michele Hilmes (1997) points out (p. 132). Korean media scholars, Bohyeong Kim and Misook Baek (2009) argue that in the history of the Korean broadcasting industry, the roles of men workers have been mythicized in the establishment of the modern broadcasting system, while those of women workers have been missing from the discourse on the contribution made by workers to the industry. They conclude that, as a result, women workers have generally been excluded from the official history of the Korean television industry.

The degree of invisibility faced by writers within the television industry varies by genre. Several Korean studies have examined writers focusing on professional identities, authorship, and autonomy without paying attention to labour and gender politics. However, most of the Korean studies have mainly examined the labour of drama writers (e.g., M. Kim & Hong, 2016; M. Kim & Lee, 2013; M.-S. Kim & Hong, 2017; Na, 2011; J. S. Park et al., 2015). The studies of other genre writers are notably insufficient, with just a few on CJD writers (e.g., Shin, Jung-Ah & Han, Hee Jeong, 2015; Youk & Youn, 2013), and no studies on entertainment writers. Generally, the academic interest in drama writers can perhaps be linked to the fact that the job of these writers has been unrealistically glamourized by the media (Y. Kim, 2007). This phenomenon has occurred as a result of the increasing popularity of Korean dramas in South Korea, as well as in

other Asian countries such as Japan and China (Y. Kim, 2007).[15] In addition, drama writers are historically more visible than writers working in other genres because they are better known to the general public and scholars (e.g., Jeong, 1998; M. Kim & Hong, 2016; M. Kim & Lee, 2013; M.-S. Kim & Hong, 2017; Na, 2011).

Despite this marginalization or exclusion, Korean television writers have insightfully recorded and voiced their roles and work in their writing, which should be considered a kind of struggle along an individual dimension. Korean graduate students' theses have discussed the roles and labour of writers, in particular in the CJD production sector (e.g., M. H. Choi, 2017; Ha, 2007; Y. Hong, 2011; J. H. Kim, 2003; C. Lee, 2004; E. H. Lee, 1997; Lim, 2004; M. J. Park, 2017). The research in these theses is often inspired from the authors' experiences as television writers. The writers' practices as graduate students show that women writers have unpacked and expressed their labouring experiences during their time in academia. In particular, these topics include the change in writers' roles in the transformation of the Korean television industry (Y. Hong, 2011) and the emergence of a managerial role in writing positions (J. K. Lee, 2001). Also, they explore the tasks and roles of writers in specific genre programs, such as investigative journalist programs (Ryu, 2009), and television documentaries (M. H. Choi, 2017). Several theses delve into writers' labour rights and employment relations with broadcasters (Ha, 2007; J. H. Kim, 2003; H. H. Lim, 2004; M. J. Park, 2017). In addition, the collective actions of writers have impacted academic research on writers' work and gender inequity because such research (often) starts with a description of several forms of collective action taken by writers in the 2000s (e.g., H.-J. Choi & Lee, 2011; H. M. Kim, 2005; Y. Kim, 2007; Youk & Youn, 2013). In recent years, the establishment of the Broadcasting Writers Union in 2017 has again motivated scholars to engage in research on the labour of writers (H. Jang & Noh, 2019; Noh, 2019).

Writers in struggle

We should keep in mind that not only does work impact workers, workers transform the workplace as well (Dyer-Witheford, 1999). This dissertation also explores

[15] Regarding gender issues, studies including Hunsun Kim and Dongsuk Park's study (1999) have focused on how the gender of drama writers impacts the content of Korean television dramas (Jeong, 1998; H. Kim & Park, 1999; M.-S. Na, 2011).

how Korean television writers sought to form collective organizations of different kinds for the purpose of improving their working conditions.

Founded by writers in 1962, the KTRWA has been a key organization for broadcasting writers. The KTRWA is a professional association based on membership as mentioned earlier in this chapter. The total number of its members in January of 2019 was 3509 (KTRWA, 2019). At least until the 1990s, the KTRWA organized collective actions such as strikes. In the mid and late 1990s, the organization also successfully achieved collective agreements with major broadcasting companies (KTRWA, 2000). Based on the collective agreements, it has negotiated with the major broadcasting companies to increase writing fees and royalties for the shows for which writers produce scripts. It is notable that the KTRWA's collective agreements ensure television writers maintain copyrights and receive royalties as mentioned above (S.-J. Yu, 2006), while other professionals such as freelance PDs in the television industry and writers in the film industry do not receive them (S.-B. Lee, 2015).

In recent years, one of the main roles of the KTRWA has been to assist experienced writers in receiving royalties easily. The organization also provides advocacy, workshops, and benefits such as an annual full medical examination, and it operates a writing training centre for aspiring writers. In terms of memberships, the KTRWA includes members of all genres of television writers (as well as radio writers) in the broadcasting industry. However, since the KTRWA as a professional association advocates writers' rights based on professional identities and grants memberships to only the more experienced writers who meet a high threshold of work experience, it does not support less experienced writers.

Notably, the KTRWA has established and revised the basic writing fee standards through negotiations with major terrestrial broadcasters such as KBS, MBC, SBS and EBS at least since the 1990s (KTRWA, 2000). As reported by numerous interviewees for this dissertation however, at present the basic writing fee standards are too low and do not secure reasonable pay for writers. No research has been conducted on the KTRWA's collective actions to increase pay and enhance other precarious working conditions, and future research should consider the question of why the KTRWA is not as effective as it was in the 1990s. These issues will be explored in Chapter 7.

In the early 2000s, some broadcasting writers of a regional broadcaster, the Masan Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (Masan MBC) established a trade union as a branch of the Korean Women's Trade Union (*Chŏnguk yessing nodong chohap*) (H. H. Lim, 2004). However, their employer, Masan MBC, refused to engage in collective bargaining. The writers went so far as to file a lawsuit against Masan MBC in order to compel the employer to engage in collective bargaining, but they failed. This was because the courts did not recognize them as employees with legal labour rights such as collective bargaining rights with the broadcasting company (their employer) (Y. Kim, 2007). More specifically, these rights were not recognized because television writers were regarded as "freelancers," not as employees of broadcasters (Broadcasting Writers Union & National Union of Media Workers, 2016, p. 1; Y. Kim, 2007, p. 178). As a result of this failure, writers still do not have a trade union with meaningful legal rights that represents them, and the Writers' Union of Masan MBC was disbanded. Today most television writers in South Korea are freelancers without actual legal labour rights, a situation that constitutes a major obstacle to freelance workers' struggles.

Nevertheless, writers have established collective communities, although this action has been limited to CJD writers. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, CJD writers of the major Korean terrestrial broadcasters (KBS, MBC, SBS, and EBS) organized four Non-fiction Broadcasting Writers Councils (NBWCs) (*Kusŏngjakka hyŏbŭihoe*), which became sub-organizations under the KTWRA: each NBWC consists of writers of a major Korean terrestrial broadcaster (S. Jung, 2016; T. Song, 2000). These councils have engaged in forms of collective action, such as presenting press releases on important issues. For example, in 2012 the MBC fired all writers on *PD Note,* an investigative journalism program. These councils presented petitions with the signatures of 992 non-fiction writers to convince MBC to reverse the dismissal (M. H. Choi, 2017), but this action was not successful. An important point to note here is that there is little information on what roles these organizations fill and how they operate in the existing Korean academic research or media coverage. This dissertation has cast light on their activities through interviews (See Chapter 7).

In the late 2010s, the public awareness of problematic labour conditions in the Korean broadcasting industry grew as a result of incidents such as injuries on the job and even a worker's suicide. In October 2016, an assistant PD, Han Bit Lee for the CJ E&M entertainment company, died by suicide and left a suicide note in which he

described dire working conditions in the drama production sector (M. Yoon, 2017). Not too long thereafter, in the late 2010s trade unions for television writers began to appear. On November 11, 2017, the Broadcasting Writers Union [*Pangsong Chakka Yunion*] was established as a branch of the National Union of Media Workers [*Chŏn'gug ŏllon nodong johap*]. Additionally, some writers joined the Broadcasting Staff Union [*Pangsong Sŭt'aep'ŭ Nojo*] established on July 4, 2018, for a variety of workers in non-standard employment in the television industry. The Broadcasting Staff Union is a branch of the Hope Solidarity Union [*Hŭimang Yŏndae Nojo*], which aims to build solidarity between full-time permanent workers and workers in non-standard employment.

As shown above, despite the fact that Korean writers have engaged in collective action and in forming organizations in the television industry, a review of the literature suggests academia has not studied these writers' activities in sufficient detail. The aforementioned organizations will be examined more closely in Chapter 7 of this dissertation, which is based on extensive interviews with key members of each organization. What is clear at this point, however, is evidence that writers in the Korean television industry have struggled through several forms of collective organization, including the formation and activities of a trade union, but that accounts of the official history of labour resistance in South Korea have tended to overlook these struggles against precarious working conditions.

1.4. Research questions

My dissertation addresses this absence by exploring the work, lives and struggles of writers in the South Korean television industry, focusing on writers' experiences and the gendered nature of their labour. In particular, I delve into the following three questions.

First, I explore why women are the overwhelming majority of writers in the television industry. I expect to provide a picture of the manner in which—and reasons why—writers' work has become predominantly performed by women in the cultural, economic and social context of South Korea since the 1990s.

Second, I examine writers' work and the valorization of cultural production within the South Korean television industry. Here I try to answer the following questions: how

do writers engage in cultural production? What roles do writers take in making television shows? What forms of cooperation, division, and hierarchy characterize television writers' labour and cultural production? To what degree do writers have autonomy and creativity? What forms of precarity do writers face in their working lives?

Third, I document how some Korean writers have struggled against the precarious working conditions they face through the development of and participation in forms of *collective* organization. Here I ask questions such as: what kinds of modes of resistance and collective organization have Korean writers enacted? What are the main issues that their organizations address? What difficulties do writers in collective organization face in their collective activism? What distinctive features do the organizations present in terms of women's struggles or cultural producers' struggles? Fractures among, and cooperation between, television writers and between writers and other workers, such as producer-directors (PDs), are also examined.

Given that the majority of broadcasting companies and independent production companies are located in the Seoul metropolitan area, this research focuses on writers in the Seoul metropolitan area, South Korea. Specifically, this study focuses on writers' experiences in making programs that are aired on the major terrestrial broadcasters such as the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), the Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), and the Korea Educational Broadcasting System (EBS). MBC, SBS, and KBS have national networks and have been dominant in the Korean television market (C. K. Lee, 2009, p. 278).[16]

1.5. Research method

I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 91 research participants in South Korea from June 2018 to August 2019. The first research group, the worker group, includes professionals such as television writers (70) and television producer-directors (PDs) (11) who are key coworkers of writers in the Korean television industry. The second group, the collective organization group (23), includes organizers, activists, and directors for collective associations, such as unions. It comprises non-writers (6),

[16] Technically, KBS, and MBC have headquarters in Seoul; in 2020, KBS has 20 local broadcasting stations and MBC has 19 local broadcasting stations. This dissertation focuses on workers for the headquarters of KBS and MBC that are situated in Seoul metropolitan area, South Korea.

former writers (3), and writers (14) who are also members of the first research group. Finally, I interviewed two researchers who have studied labour in the industry. This study's ethics application received approval from Simon Fraser University's Research Ethics Board in May 2018.

I inductively drew on the interviews to explore my research questions, focusing on the experiences of the workers while keeping the broader political economy of South Korea and its television industry in view. The use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews allowed me to explore what writers experience as women and/or labourers in their working lives from their standpoints, based on the feminist epistemology discussed above (Harding, 2004). Based on the experiences of those who were marginalized and unprivileged due to gender, class, race, etc. this approach seeks to restructure the existing knowledge system that is hierarchically produced and distributed by/for privileged groups (Harding, 1991; Hesse-Biber et al., 2003). In-depth interviewing is an ideal way to approach those who have been omitted from official histories; to understand social contexts from different viewpoints other than dominant ones, and as such it provides a foundational method for this research project (Gluck & Patai, 1991; T.-H. Kim & Na, 2012; Steiner, 1998).

I should note that when I conducted the interviews in 2018 and 2019, several important developments occurred in South Korea with respect to labour issues. In early 2018, the Moon Jae-in administration (2017–2022) established several important labour policies which impacted the broadcasting industry. A key action was the revision of the *Labour Standards Act* which led to reduced working hours. As a result, companies with more than 300 workers are prohibited from making their employees work longer than 52 hours a week. Because longer working hours had been prevalent in the television industry as in other sectors in the country, this policy led to a significant debate among workers. However, since television writers are mostly self-employed as freelancers, this policy does not apply to them. Concurrently, labour organizations such as the non-profit organization *Chikchang Kapchil 119* (in English, "Urgent rescue of workers in unfair working conditions 119") ignited broader discussions on working conditions in Korean society. Its broadcasting branch, *Pangsonggye Kapchil 119* (in English, "Urgent rescue of workers in unfair working conditions in the broadcasting industry 119"), helped workers gather and discuss their labour problems and propose solutions. One result of this activity was the creation of the Broadcasting Staff Union in June 2018.

In the specific case of the writing workforce SBS, a major broadcaster, fired four out of seven CJD writers from a news report program based on an unfair contract that allowed the broadcaster to fire writers unilaterally in March of 2018 (J. Park, 2018b). This event sparked discussions over the course of 2018 on the verbal contracts, the unfair written contracts and in many cases the complete lack of contracts for writers, and their labour conditions. As a result of the new public policies on labour and ongoing discussions about working conditions in the broadcasting industry, the working conditions in 2018 and 2019 when I conducted interviews of assistant writers were somewhat improved, with pay increases and reduced working hours. In the Korean television industry, assistant writers in all genres refer to entry-level writers who frequently engage in other varieties of work such as research and coordination, but they do not write scripts, even though they are spoken of, categorized, and employed as 'writers.' My interviews suggest that this improvement occurred because while the major broadcasters argued (and continue to do so today) that writers are not employees but freelancers, they tend to concede to some degree that assistant writers who are not 'writers' who literally write scripts should be temporary employees and be protected as employees under the *Labour Standards Act* (See Chapter 7). Finally, alongside implementation of the government's labour policy and the debate on writers' working conditions initiated by the writers individually and collectively, the major broadcasters began introducing contracts for CJD and entertainment writers working without one in 2018 and 2019.

I conducted the interviews with all research participants through face-to-face communication. Based on the interviewee's consent, I recorded all the interviews. Face-to-face communication was necessary for this research because semi-structured interviews require active participation by interviewees and rapport building between the researcher and research participants. Furthermore, face-to-face communication allows researchers to communicate with research participants not only through verbal explanations, but also through other communication methods such as facial expressions or by drawing pictures. The length of most of the interviews ranged from two to four hours. I tried to conduct a one-time interview because interviewees' working hours are generally long and their working schedules are irregular, making it difficult for them to participate in several research interviews. As a result, with the exception of five interviewees, I interviewed most research participants once. I conducted the interviews

and transcribed the voice recordings myself in Korean and translated direct quotations cited in this dissertation into English. In order to highlight the diversity and dynamics among writers, I analyzed, interpreted and described workers' experiences inductively (Wolcott, 1994), while recognizing that not all individuals' memories and representation are facts, and should be interpreted (Geertz, 1973).

Interview group 1– Workers in the Korean television industry

In total, 70 television writers participated in my research project: 18 drama writers, 19 entertainment writers, and 33 CJD writers as shown in Table 1.2 below. Originally, my plan was to interview approximately 20 writers involved in the South Korean television industry, regardless of the television genres in which they were employed. After discovering significant differences between drama, entertainment, and CJD writers, I decided to change this initial plan and to interview around 20 writers from each sub-group in order to have a better and more in-depth understanding of the specificities of their work.

Table 1.2 Interview group 1: Television writers and PDs by gender

Sector	Television Writers			Television PDs		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Drama	16	2	18	1	1	2
Entertainment	16	3	19	3	2	5
CJD	27	6	33	2	2	4
total	59	11	70[17]	6	5	11[18]

The composition of each genre of interviewees is roughly similar to the overall composition of the television writing workforce. As shown in Table1.1, CJD writers make up a high proportion of the total writers in the television industry. In addition, CJD writers' working conditions and the qualitative features of their work are determined by several standards, such as writers' seniority, and where they work (between broadcasters, and between a broadcaster and an independent company). During initial interviews, it was challenging to get a handle on why the writers described their experiences differently. To

[17] 14 writers belong to the collective organizations' interview group.

[18] One PD is also part of the collective organizations' interview group.

further identify and understand these patterns and differences, I interviewed more writers of the CJD genre than writers of the drama and entertainment genres.

I consciously recruited writers with diverse backgrounds in terms of gender and seniority and sought to find the commonalities and differences between them. The interviewees ranged from entry-level writers to those with around 30 years of experience. I also recruited 12 CJD writers who have engaged in collective organizations. These writers are included in Table 1.3. *Former or current organizers, activists, or directors of collective organizations*. Two entertainment writers also belong to a collective organization group.

Prior to each interview, I prepared key and sample questions based on preliminary research. Interview questions included those related to interview participants' life histories, such as how they entered into the television industry, what motivated them to develop their careers, and how they imagined their work and lives in 10 years. I explored writers' working lives, which are constructed not only by doing paid labour at a job, but also by performing unpaid labour, and by moving between workplaces (McRobbie, 2016; Weeks, 2011). While conducting interviews, I expanded and revised questions based on the findings of the interviews. This was necessary because I found that the writers' specific roles and tasks were very broad and diverse.

Generally, the key question motivating this dissertation changed from *what writers do* to *how they do* it, and there was a shift in the analytical focus from individuals to the broader workforce, from the production process of television programs to the transition process between workplaces (the production processes), and from tasks (what) to logics (how).

While they do not technically qualify as writers, I also interviewed 11 producer-directors (PDs), for several reasons. First, in describing their working experiences, some writers (in particular, CJD writers) made frequent reference to the experience of PDs. In terms of drama and entertainment writers, although they did not directly compare their work with that of PDs, their working experiences were constructed in association with and out of their relationship with their PD coworkers. Interviews with PDs had the additional benefit of showing how writers' colleagues perceived writers and their labour, and how PDs specifically, as another type of key worker, understood the production

process of making programs in the television industry. Moreover, since in-house PDs often played a managerial role in hiring writers, they could explain the writer hiring process in the major broadcasters. All PDs have worked for more than 5 years, and I interviewed two PDs with more than 20 years of experience. One PD was a member of a collective organization. Because this group was not a large sector of my primary research participants, I did not interview a representative sample of PDs as seen among the writer interviewees. However, the interviews that were conducted added significant depth to my understanding of the labour conditions and experiences of writers.

When I started recruiting workers, I had difficulties with identifying and accessing the first research participants, which, in fact, is a general barrier for researchers who study production sectors in cultural industries (K. Lee, 2010; Ortner, 2009). Additionally, I had to find three different access points for contacting potential research participants according to the genre for both writers and PDs. The first research participants were contacted through friends and acquaintances who work (or whose acquaintances work) in the Korean broadcasting industry. Without the personal networks that linked me to these first research participants, it would have been much more difficult to find writers to interview. After interviewing the first research participants, I was able to identify additional prospective participants through a standard snowballing technique. Some of my interviewees voluntarily introduced their colleagues because they agreed with my research goals and understood that as an individual working outside the television industry, I would have some difficulty in contacting writers. In the final period of fieldwork, I targeted my recruitment to those who had specific experiences based on the profiles of people I had already interviewed, which required more time. For example, I had to interview new drama writers but found that when drama writers are working on an ongoing drama project team, they did not have time to do anything beyond their work. As a result, I had to wait for almost 6 months to conduct interviews with several writers.

Interview group 2 – People from organizations and researchers

My interviewees included 23 (current or former) activists, organizers, or directors for worker associations such as the Korea Television and Radio Writers Association, the Non-fiction Broadcasting Writers Councils, the Broadcasting Writers Union, and the Daegu MBC Writers Union as shown in Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3 Interview group 2: Former or current organizers, activists or directors of collective organizations

Organizations		Writers[19]	Former writers[20]	Non-writers
Korea Television and Radio Writers Association		3		1
Non-fiction Broadcasting Writers Councils	1990s[21]	1	2	
	2010s	6		
(Now-defunct) Writers' Union of Masan MBC (early 2000s' writers' union)			1[22]	
Broadcasting Writers Union		3		
Daegu MBC Writers Union (a branch of Broadcasting Writers Union)		1		
National Union of Media Workers				2
Broadcasting Staff Union				1
People's Coalition for Media Reform				1
Korean Independent Producers & Directors' Association				1
Total		14 (12 CJD writers & 2 entertainment writers)	3	6 (Including one PD[23])

These interviewees from worker organizations include 14 current television writers. At the time of the interview, some writers in this category were former directors, and the other writers were currently working as directors. In addition, I was fortunate to interview three of the organizers who established the Non-fiction Broadcasting Writers Councils in the late 1990s. I also interviewed one of the organizers who established the now-defunct Writers' Union of Masan MBC and participated in the aforementioned lawsuit for making broadcasters engage in collective bargaining in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The other interviewees falling in this category were two organizers from the National Union of Media Workers, one organizer from the Broadcasting Staff Union, one activist of the People's Coalition for Media Reform [*Ŏllon' gaehyŏk shimin yŏndae* in Korean] and one independent PD from the Korean Independent Producers & Directors' Association. Lastly, to supplement my information on labour and activism in the South Korean broadcasting industry, I interviewed two Korean scholars who studied these

[19] These interviewees are also included in the number of writer interviewees.

[20] These interviewees worked as writers when they engaged in collective organizations. However, at the time of the interview, they were in different careers.

[21] These writers were the initial organizers of this organization in the 1990s.

[22] This person was an organizer with this organization in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

[23] This PD is also included in the number of PD interviewees.

topics in South Korea. I identified and recruited several non-television industry workers including key organizers/activists and researchers at public events in which I participated, which are listed in Table 1.4 below. Also, I identified some prospective research participants through the websites of organizations that contained the information on those who engage in the organizations. I used a snowballing technique here as well.

Other methods

Additionally, for this research, I attended six public events related to the topic of this dissertation, as shown in Table 1.4 below. I also collected archival and documentary data relating to work in South Korean cultural industries, including reports from the government, state regulations, and relevant academic research. This documentary research is necessary for contextualizing the writers' work and struggles. For example, television writers' collective organizing should be situated in the history of labour organization and trade unionism in the television and film industries.

Table 1.4 The list of public events

Date	Event
May 31, 2018	Opening ceremony of Seoul Media Workers Shelter, Seoul, South Korea
June 20, 2018	The presentation of the study on women's labour in the South Korean publishing industry, Seoul, South Korea
July 4, 2018	Inaugural meeting of the Broadcasting Staff Union, a branch of the Hope Solidarity Labour Union Seoul, South Korea
August 30, 2018	Monthly seminar, "How have the lives of labourers been changing in the Korean broadcasting industry" by the Hanbit Centre for Labour Rights in Media Work, and the Korean Association for Communication and Information Studies, Seoul, South Korea
October 25, 2018	Forum on changes and problems in Korean drama production sites, two years after the death of PD Lee Han-bit, Seoul, South Korea
November 08, 2018	Declaration ceremony for independent creators' human rights in the Korean broadcasting production, Seoul, South Korea

Reflection, and citations of research participants

Before starting the interviews, I was conscious of my status as a middle-class woman as it relates to the critique of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). During the interviews, I felt that I was able to build a strong rapport with most writers because they knew that to a certain extent, my identity born of my gender and class as a woman

graduate student is similar to that of many interviewees. In South Korea, it is widely acknowledged that graduate students majoring in social science are often recognized as precarious individuals who struggle to make a living or get a job after graduation. This awareness was present in some interviews, as some participants expressed their concern about my future job prospects. I believe that had I been a man or a full-time employee (such as a professor) in academia, it might have been more difficult to build such a rapport with them.

In addition to this status within South Korea that my research participants recognized, I was aware that outside of South Korea I had a status of an Asian, woman, migrant, student/worker with multiple layers of marginalization which had been developed from accumulated experiences in Canada. For example, in one class during my graduate studies at SFU, I was the only Asian woman student, while the instructor and the other students were Caucasian. In addition, I was conscious of my status as a low-waged, foreign, temporary campus worker. These subjectivities might have transformed my existing habitus that had been formed in South Korea. It was plausible that although most research interviewees did not recognize my status outside of South Korea, my subjectivities and habitus might have impacted my interview process and relationship with research participants beyond my own and their consciousness.

In reality, and deliberately, my research participants often were at the upper level of knowledge hierarchy during the interviews. As I was not familiar with my research field and previous research did not offer sufficient knowledge, I learned about the work of writers and the production process of programs in the Korean television industry from the interviewees. Moreover, during the interview process, I endeavoured to focus on what each research participant described beyond the existing knowledge and the descriptions of the other participants. Specifically, I applied a qualitative methodology technique called bracketing. Bracketing refers to setting aside theories, perceptions and experiences in order to “to mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor of the project” (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 81).

While interviewing the writers, I noticed that they generally explained their experiences quickly and clearly. I would say that communication with writers proceeded smoothly because of their professional affinity for dealing with words, either in writing or

speaking. In addition, I would consider myself an experienced qualitative researcher in that I conducted several interdisciplinary empirical studies during my master's and bachelor's programs. In the interview process, I tried to observe relevant rules. First, I did not transcribe the interviews synchronously. Instead, I tried to note down only minimum keywords to facilitate the fluidity of the discussions. I also memorized the interview questions to avoid looking at my interview guide during the interviews. Instead, I focused on listening to them and reacting to their verbal and non-verbal communication. Simultaneously, I organized the order of questions and thought of follow-up prompts based on the themes and topics that the participants described. I did this to ensure that the interviews were based on the natural progression of the interviewees' stories. With this form of interview design, I endeavoured to develop the interviews into conversations rather than question-and-answer sessions. Even when it seemed that the research participants discussed topics I did not expect and the dialogues were irrelevant to my research, I rarely interrupted the conversation. I only checked my interview guide at the end to confirm that all questions were answered.

This interview process was deliberately designed for several reasons. First, it was my strategy to build rapport and develop interactive communication during the interviews by preventing any avoidable interruptions and distractions. In addition, as I was aware that researchers should not exploit research participants and their experiences, I aimed to facilitate the interviews as a reciprocal experience between the research participants and myself. When the participants wanted to talk about something, although they did not seem to be relevant to my research, I was ready to share my time with them as they were doing for my dissertation. I surmised that providing a space for them to give public utterances to what they wanted to share with me would be beneficial to the interviewees, although I could not include all of the utterances in my dissertation. Lastly, I expected that my interview processes would benefit from the advantages of semi-structured interviews. I observed that what seemed to be irrelevant information to my research during the interviews contributed to the key findings after transcribing and analyzing them. In most cases, the interviewees' discussions were very relevant as they recognized my research topics.

A major concern about this research process was that the amount of time that research participants could share with me was limited, and I had to complete my interview within the available time frame. My observation was that the interviewees were

mindful of the time constraints. For example, when they had a shorter amount of time, they tried to answer my prepared questions as quickly as possible. In most cases, they responded to all key questions. I found that although the interviewees were busy due to heavy workloads and irregular schedules and had an insufficient amount of 'free' time, they were willing to share their time according to their schedules and availability. This finding leads me to believe that researchers are possibly the ones who, for various reasons, have not invested their time into studying these forms of production and labour.

The interview process for this research required a considerable amount of time, mental, physical and emotional work. For example, on the days when I scheduled interviews, I was not able to engage in other work. When I interviewed two people in one day, I had to rest until the day after. Additionally, due to the interviewees' irregular schedules, I was ready to interview them at any time when they were available. Thus, when one respondent asked to have an interview after 9 PM, I was willing to set the interview at night. Indeed, during the field research for my dissertation, although I focused on the interviews, I also attended various workshops, seminars, and public forums relevant to gender and labour issues in the Korean cultural industries to develop my understanding of the space beyond academic research and interviews. I, however, have not included these as data collection sites in this dissertation.

I have to highlight that the most significant difficulty I faced while working on my dissertation was the scope of the research rather than the interview process. Transcribing and analyzing the interviews required a substantial amount of time and energy, as the number of interviewees was 91. I decided to widen the breadth of the research because I, as a social science researcher, appreciated that my research would contribute to social change in a positive way and to making the labour and activism of Korean television writers visible. However, I acknowledge that when I realized the differences that exist between writers of different genres, I should have narrowed down the scope by selecting one or two research questions or focusing on a specific genre of writers, rather than expanding it by increasing the number of interviewees.

In the following chapters, I refer to most of the interviewees using pseudonyms. Real names are used for those who chose to have their names identified in my research findings. With 91 interviewees, it is difficult to give an individualized pseudonym such as a nickname. Also, since the interviewees are divided into several sub-groups, readers

need to know key information to understand the sub-categories to which individual interviewees belong. Therefore, I use abstractive forms of pseudonyms constituting the "genre, type of occupation, and number," such as "Drama Writer 1" and "CJD PD 1" to refer to individual workers.[24] Most of the non-cultural workers in the collective organizations wanted their actual names included in my research result. However, they requested anonymity for some of their opinions and explanations. Therefore, in accordance with those requests I cite some parts of their interviews as "anonymous person in collective organizations." I do not reveal the titles of specific television programs when I quote passages of workers' interviews or explain individual workers' careers because specific program titles would make such workers more readily identifiable. Television titles are indicated only when I describe television shows and writers' work generally.

1.6. Gendered workers and chapter overview

The focus of this dissertation is the work of television writers who are predominantly women, not just the work of women writers. This distinction is important for the following reasons. Through my interviews, I found more commonalities than differences between writers who are women and those who are men. For example, writers of both genders receive their pay in the same way and conduct the same tasks. In other words, writers who are men tend to experience the precarious nature of writers' work in the same way as women writers. Several scholars point out that when a form of work is gendered, not only women but also men tend to conduct gendered work in similar working conditions (M. J. Banks, 2009; Mayer, 2013; Vosko, 2000). This trend is found among Korean television writers, and while to some degree the experiences of writers who are men are different from those of women in the profession, this dissertation focuses on the commonalities. Therefore, when I refer to gendered (or feminized) work, it is inclusive of the work of all writers, both women and men. When I need to distinguish women writers and men writers, I refer to each group specifically.

[24] Several workers changed the genres that they mainly worked to produce. In this case, this dissertation categorizes them according to the genre they were producing when I conducted the interview. For example, "ENT Writer 1/CJD" had worked as a CJD writer in the CJD production sector but changed her working genre from CJD to entertainment programs.

The similarities and differences between writer groups

As discussed above, this dissertation divides writers primarily according to how the Korean television industry classifies them in the three main genres in which they work. No matter the genre, all writers play a critical role in the conceptualization and planning of cultural products, and thus in the production of value and surplus value. However, in most of the interviews carried out for this dissertation, writers tended to describe different working experiences with respect to what they do, how they work, and how they identify themselves according to the genre in which they work. In terms of tasks, drama writers mainly engage in developing stories and writing scripts, which is similar to the role of screenwriters in the United States and the United Kingdom. Entertainment and CJD writers, in contrast, participate in a variety of forms of work beyond simply writing scripts—including research, coordination, casting, editing, etc.—throughout the entire production process of a show, from conception to execution. In particular, if we focus on the roles and tasks of entertainment writers, it can be seen that their work broadly comprises a number of activities beyond writing scripts, including key roles in coordination and casting. *Some of the duties* that entertainment writers perform are, therefore, often actually closer to what in the United States or the United Kingdom would be referred to as the duties of "producers" (e.g., Grindstaff, 2002; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008). However, the roles of entertainment writers are not exactly the same as the producers because entertainment writers produce several forms of scripts literally as writers. More importantly, the work of entertainment writers in the Korean television industry is transformable and expandable, which is distinctive (See Chapter 5). In terms of CJD writers, I strove to search for a comparable position in North America and Europe, but this search proved unsuccessful (See details in Chapter 6). One of the reasons is that, historically, there have been fewer production studies than consumption studies owing to theoretical and experimental difficulties (K. Lee, 2010; Mayer et al., 2009; Murdock, 2003). Rather than to try to look for a similar position or to find how similar programs are made in other countries, it is more valuable to investigate the unique features of this CJD writer group in the Korean television industry. This is because this dissertation does not aim to compare the Korean case with other cases and more importantly, a finding of insufficient research highlights the need for research on production and labour in cultural industries to be explored further in more diverse contexts.

Some may ask whether the title “writer” is even an appropriate moniker for these workers at all, in particular for entertainment and CJD writers, given the range of other activities they engage in beyond writing. However, there is considerable value in exploring why and how these workers have been defined as writers, how this is connected to the fact that writing work has become women-dominated, and what writers actually do in the television industry. Furthermore, regardless of the genres they work in, Korean television writers share some common and obvious features. Most writers are freelancers, as has been highlighted above. Moreover, although writers conduct other tasks beyond writing, their main role in the television industry has been defined and popularly understood as writing scripts.

Korean television writers and the distinctive features of the work of each group have been shaped by the major terrestrial broadcasters and the political and economic dynamics affecting the television industry, a process which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. In the Seoul metropolitan area of South Korea, the major terrestrial broadcasters are the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), and the Korea Educational Broadcasting System (EBS). KBS, MBC and EBS are public service broadcasters, and SBS is a commercial broadcaster. The revenues of not only SBS but also KBS and MBC depend on advertising, though KBS and EBS are also partially funded by public subsidies. Regardless of the form of funding, all major terrestrial broadcasting companies are subject to the regulation of the South Korean government (C. K. Lee, 2009). According to the *Enforcement Decree of the Broadcasting Act,* the major Korean terrestrial broadcasters are expected to produce programs that place a priority on public interests rather than private interests: they are supposed to provide diverse programs that have different goals, according to content quota requirements (D. K. Lee et al., 2018, pp. 19–21). For example, in addition to entertaining audiences, major terrestrial broadcasters have to produce and distribute both instructional and educational programs that have more of a public service ethos (H.-Y. Jang & Joe, 2011, p. 262). The latter category includes “news reports” and CJD programs, and the former entertainment and drama programs. Based on content quota requirements and distinctive features of the program categories, the major Korean terrestrial broadcasters organize their production units into different departments, and each has distinctive production processes and practices (Won, 2007, p. 16). Generally, the major broadcasters operate five broad

production departments: “news reports,” “culture” (culture/journalism/ documentary), “entertainment,” “drama,” and “sports” (D. K. Lee et al., 2018, p. 21). Sports programs do not have writing positions and, though some news reports have started to hire CJD writers in recent years, CJD writers work mainly in the CJD production sector.

For several decades, Korean broadcasters have managed their internal production departments, where drama, entertainment, and CJD production settings have each formed distinctive production logics, production processes, and labour management strategies (Y.-M. Baek & Youn, 2005). These distinctive characteristics of production sectors and writers’ work include a diversity of arrangements as far as the number of writers per program, relationships with coworkers, and the working cycle, as seen in Table 1.5 below. Specifically, writers in each setting have experienced a distinctive form of work, labour process and precarity, which this dissertation explores in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Table 1.5 Brief characteristics of production sector and writers

	Drama	**Entertainment**	**CJD**
Cultural product (programs)	Fiction	Non-fiction +fiction	Non- fiction
	Drama (fiction narrative shows)	Comedies, music shows, reality-variety shows, etc.	Documentaries, investigative journalism programs, etc.
	Descendants of The Sun (KBS, 2016)	The King of Mask Singer (MBC, 2015−present)	PD Note (MBC, 1990−present) & Unanswered Questions (SBS, 1992−present)
General programming characteristics	One-time programming	Continuous programming depends on the market value. (Getting shorter due to intense competition)	Continuous programming
	Generally, 16 or 20 episodes aired for 8 to 10 weeks	Generally aired weekly	Generally aired weekly
Production size/cost	Large/expensive	Medium/medium	Small/cheap
A basic production unit in which writers participate	Individual work. Basically, a single writer develops a whole program & writing scripts (with 1 or 2 assistant writers)	Cooperative labour in a writing team (generally around 4-10 writers)	A writer works with a PD (generally around 2 people)

	Less interaction with other staff including PDs.	Clear distinction between writers and PDs	Less distinction between a PD and a writer.
The origin of occupation and the current features	Script writers	The combination of the roles of producers and writers	A new form of writers
		The rearrangement of two occupations (writers and PDs) in the 1990s	Their work became divided from PDs in the 1980s and 1990s
		The same forms of writers since the 2000s	The unclear division between the duties of writers and PDs even in recent years

Note: This table is based on the analysis of interviews for this dissertation.

Not surprisingly, writers in my interviews recognized that they have different working identities and experiences of work depending on the program genre. For example, many entertainment and CJD writers felt that they should be considered separate from drama writers as their work is different from writing scripts for fiction programs. CJD programs aim to play a role in producing information, criticizing social, political, and economic issues or revealing the truth, whereas entertainment shows strive to entertain audiences. Each group of writers thus defines their work from different viewpoints and experiences. In the CJD production sector, when individuals start to write scripts, they are recognized as writers, graduating from the category of assistant writers. In contrast, in the entertainment sector, writing scripts is less valued, and individual writers with three or four years of experience are recognized as writers because entertainment writers work on a team.

Therefore, it is necessary to recognize the Korean television industry as actually being comprised of several sub-industries based on genre, each with their own distinctive production logics, which in turn impact writers' labour (Miège, 1989). In addition, although specific features of one television genre can also apply to some aspects of another television genre to some degree, the production process of a specific television genre and the labour process of that genre's writers are based on the genre's peculiar political economy (Miège, 1989).

In other words, looking at how writers work in different genres enables one to see various features of cultural work in cultural industries. On the other hand, the different genres present common features, such as the predominance of women freelance writers

and contributing to developing new shows. Therefore, each genre's writing workforce takes on distinctive forms of labour, which contributes to the specificity of cultural work in the Korean television industry more broadly. I expect that these aspects can be tools to analyze cultural work, precarity, and gendered features in another context.

Synopsis of chapters

In Chapter 2, I introduce research surrounding key concepts for my dissertation, including cultural industries, cultural work and creative labour, and gender inequity in cultural work. In this chapter I first define writers' work in the television industry as a form of cultural work. I then discuss the difference between cultural industries and creative industries focusing on the implications of their theories, policies, and discourses. I then examine how scholars from liberal and critical perspectives have interpreted 'creative workers' in association with the worker model in contemporary capitalism. Next, I examine the studies on gender inequity in cultural industries and introduce the concept of the feminization of labour. The feminization of labour refers to the quantitative increase of women in the labour force and qualitative changes into the forms of labour that are socially and historically prevalent in the work women perform.

Chapter 3 examines the intersection between women's overrepresentation and precarization in the writing workforce in the Korean television industry, focusing on the general management of their labour, including conditions regarding to employment status, pay, recruitment, and training. In this chapter, I mainly discuss the common features in the labour conditions of writers across genres. First, I introduce the backdrop to this study, introducing a broader political economy focused on the phenomena of increasing competition, neoliberal regulation, and a transition from Fordism to post-Fordism in the Korean television industry. I show that the discussion on the precarization of labour in the Korean television industry is centred on the labour conditions of a specific workforce, such as PDs, who are predominantly men. Second, I reveal that the television industry had already hired and managed freelance writers in the 1980s and that it expanded and transformed its hiring processes for writing positions so as to create a gendered, precarious workforce of freelance writers by the end of the 20th century. Lastly, I describe the working conditions in the first two decades of the 21st century. Here, I show how the exploitative system for writers has worsened, focusing on

underpaid labour, job insecurity, informal employment and recruitment, flexible working times and places, and excessive competition.

Chapter 4 explores writers' labour and precarity in the Korean drama production sector, focusing on what I refer to as their *labour of cultural conception*. I define the labour of cultural conception as the labour of imagining, conceiving, and developing ideas and fabricating them through language in the production process of cultural and symbolic products. A sole drama writer works to plan a new television drama project and write scripts for all of the episodes. First, I contend that the drama industry structurally accumulates value from writers' unpaid labour of cultural conception in planning a television drama show by offloading its risk to writers. I describe how broadcasters pay writers according to the piecework pay system that compensates writers according to the written scripts they have completed, and as a result writers frequently go unpaid for the creation of new drama projects. Next, I show how writers experience distinctive forms of precarity while writing scripts because they have to carry out their labour of cultural conception within increasingly shorter time frames. Finally, I relate the way by which writers define their identities as conceivers of drama shows and feel a sense of responsibility to their audiences, their colleagues, and the successes of their shows.

Chapter 5 investigates entertainment writers' labour and precarity, focusing on their communicative and emotional labour. I describe communicative labour as the labour of facilitating or fostering cooperation between workers through communication. Emotional labour, on the other hand, refers to "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labour is sold for a wage and therefore has *exchange value*" as created by Hochschild (2003) (p. 7; emphasis in original). I distinguish between the labour of communication (which is necessary for making programs) and emotional labour (which is caused by hierarchical cooperation in performing communicative labour). Entertainment writers work in a writing team with approximately 10 other writers. Writers work across diverse types of programs that require a range of tasks while performing communicative and emotional labour. I argue that communicative labour is often undervalued and underpaid although it is essential to developing the creative aspects of making programs. I, furthermore, demonstrate that cooperation and communication are based on hierarchical relationships between writers and cast members, between writers, and between writers and other workers. Due to these hierarchical relationships, writers perform emotional labour.

Chapter 6 examines CJD writers' experiences of labour and precarity, focusing on the concept of invisibility and invisible workers. I describe how Korean broadcasting companies created a dual workforce of invisible writers who are mostly women and visible in-house PDs who are mostly men. I demonstrate that the broadcasters differentiate between these two forms of workforces through various mechanisms, such as employment forms and recruitment processes. Next, I show how writers' employment, working conditions, and autonomy have been determined by their hierarchical relationship with in-house PDs. After that, I point out how, as writers have recognized their precariousness as a form of discrimination against their labour and their exclusion through their work experiences, they have developed marginalized subjectivities. The exploitation of this writing workforce takes two forms: the devaluation of their labour (decreasing the labour costs for producing programs) and putting to work their marginalized subjectivities in the production process in order to enhance the quality of the programs. I argue that, despite playing key roles in the making of these programs and leading the program production processes, fundamentally, writers have not been legitimated as independent professionals, as employees of major broadcasters, or as labourers with labour rights.

Chapter 7 documents how some Korean writers have struggled against the precarious working conditions they face through the development of, and their participation in, several different forms of five organizations: the Korea Television and Radio Writers Association (KTRWA), the now-defunct Writers' Union, the four Non-fiction Broadcasting Writers Councils (NBWCs), the Broadcasting Writers Union (BWU), and the Broadcasting Staff Union (BSU). These organizations have ranged from a professional association to informal grassroots communities to a women-only trade union to two unions of media workers in non-standard employment. I show that after their organizations were formed, writers faced distinctive difficulties including, primarily, the struggle for the very right to bargain collectively. I argue that the activism of these Korean writers reflects the intersection of different identities, ranging from women to freelancers to cultural workers, and that the activism also promotes the idea that working creatively, autonomously, and equitably should be recognized as a basic labour right.

Chapter 8, the conclusion of this dissertation, first summarizes the previous chapters and broadly shows the gendered features of writers' work and precarity in the Korean television industry. Next, it discusses if/how the results are linked to the notions

of the feminization of labour. I explore if/how the aspects of each group of writers' labour can be understood as a manifestation of the broader feminization of cultural labour in the television industry. Finally, I explore how we can understand the participation or exploitation of women in association with the complexity of cultural production and labour in cultural industries.

Chapter 2.

The cultural industries, cultural work, and gender: An overview

This dissertation examines the work of Korean television writers in the cultural industries, focusing on the content of cultural work, and the gendered and precarious nature of this labour. As a result, this dissertation explores the intersection of gender, labour and cultural production in the cultural industries more broadly, as impacted by contemporary capitalism and its post-Fordist incarnation.

In this chapter, I lay the foundation for the research that follows by discussing the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of concepts like the cultural industries, cultural work (or creative labour, which tends to be used as its synonym but also has different connotations), and gender politics in cultural work. I first discuss the differences between the cultural and creative industries approaches, focusing on the implications of their related theories, policies, and discourses, and specifying why I define the television industry as one of the cultural industries. Next, I review how several scholars have understood working conditions and workers in the cultural or creative industries. Finally, I discuss scholars' perspectives and analyses regarding gender inequities in cultural work, including the exclusion of women from job markets and from the more privileged and well-remunerated forms of work. Furthermore, I examine the concept of the feminization of labour and describe how this concept is useful to explore the gendered nature of the television writers. By describing the research and debates characterizing these concepts, I clarify why a feminist political economy approach makes a unique contribution to discussions on the content of cultural labour, the gendered nature of cultural work, and the manifestations of precarity among—in particular, the work of writers in the Korean television industry.

2.1. Cultural industries as a place of cultural production

In this dissertation I use the term *cultural work* to refer to the work of making cultural products as described in Chapter 1. To communication scholars, a distinctive trait of cultural work is that it contributes to the production of *meanings* through "symbols

for primarily expressive, aesthetic or informational purposes" in industrial form (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008, p. 103). At the same time, cultural work is marked by the labour involved in producing *commodities* with economic value within a capitalist structure (Garnham, 1990; Miège, 1979, 1989). *The cultural industries* refers to "those industries in our society which employ the characteristic modes of production and organization of industrial corporations to produce and to disseminate symbols in the form of cultural goods and services--usually as commodities" (Garnham, 1987, p. 55). Traditional mass media industries, such as print publishing, music, broadcasting and newspapers, are the more classic examples of cultural industries. Cultural industries involve mass media-enabled forms of cultural production, reproduction, and circulation (Hesmondhalgh, 2008; Miège, 1989, 2019). The term cultural industries not only denotes "a sector of production," but also signifies "an approach to cultural production" that highlights the "contradiction and complexity" between culture and economy in industry, as Hesmondhalgh (2008) suggests (pp. 553–554).

Since the late 1990s, the term 'cultural industries' has often been replaced by the term 'creative industries' in the discourse of cultural policies in several countries. During the course of this transition scholars have explored the differences between the two approaches (Garnham, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2008; L. Kong, 2014; Miège, 2019; Oakley & O'Connor, 2015; O'Connor, 2011; Pratt, 2012), pointing to the fact that they are rooted in very different theoretical traditions and policy contexts (Hesmondhalgh, 2008). This section begins with an introduction to discussions of the cultural industries by political economists of communication. Next, I discuss how the cultural and creative industries concepts differ from each other. Lastly, I argue for a return to the cultural industries approach in our analysis of cultural work.

Cultural industries approach

Adorno and Horkheimer famously coined the term "culture industry" to criticize the commodification of culture under capitalism in *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* (1944). The authors considered culture to be "the expression of the deepest shared values of a social group" (Garnham, 2005, p. 17), and to hold "emancipatory possibilities" and "human capacities for experience and critical thought" (Gunster, 2004, p. 24). Writing toward the end of World War II, Adorno and Horkheimer argued that in an era of mass media the forms of cultural products had become

standardized as a result of rationalization, rendering cultural products homogeneous as mass commodities. Specifically, they described the standardization by claiming that culture was “infecting everything with sameness” and “each branch of culture is unanimous within itself and all are unanimous together” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 94). They argued that in its commodity-form, culture lacked depth, complexity and critical power (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). In this situation “the consumer becomes the ideology of the amusement industry, whose institutions he or she cannot escape” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 128). For Adorno and Horkheimer, the culture industry “represented the final reduction of the realm of culture to the logic of monopoly capitalism, resulting in the extension of the control of the worker to the sphere of everyday life” (O’Connor, 2011, p. 27). Furthermore, Adorno and Horkheimer argued that in the capitalist production process of large companies, artists became waged labourers who experienced alienation (Garnham, 2005, p. 17).

A well-known critique of Adorno and Horkheimer by Bernard Miège (1989) argued that their approach was reductive in that it lumped a diverse set of industries into a single unified model of cultural production. Miège suggested the use of the plural form, ‘cultural industries,’ in order to reflect the distinct media logics inherent in the ways in which cultural commodities are produced, distributed, and consumed. Miège (1989) also importantly critiqued that Adorno and Horkheimer paid insufficient attention to the fact that “this industrialization of art [or culture] should be analyzed as a process of capital valorization adapting to new fields with specific conditions” (p. 11). He also pointed out that Adorno and Horkheimer tended to overlook the fact that the production process of cultural commodities should be discussed with consideration given to the distinctive features of cultural commodities that require human creativity and continuous conception processes in contrast to other manufacturing products. In the wake of the significant economic growth of the cultural industries in the 1980s, Miège (1989) stressed the need to investigate cultural industries as organizations involved in the valorization of culture. In addition, Ryan (1992) specifically analyzed the labour process of cultural workers in privately-owned corporations and argued that culture (art) has inherently conflictual relations with commerce, demonstrating that there are tensions between culture and commerce within the cultural industries.

Indeed, cultural policy (or arts and media policy) and state intervention should begin by defining “what is meant by art or culture?” (Garnham, 2001, p. 445). In the

wake of Adorno and Horkheimer's critique, for those in cultural policy and academic spheres in Europe, cultural industries (in particular, mass media industries like radio, television and film) tended to be regarded as a crudely commercial cultural sector (O'Connor, 2011). Until the late 1970s, public cultural policies and public subsidies of European states tended to focus on the support for '*the arts*' and artists rather than popular or ordinary culture in cultural industries (Garnham, 1987, 2005). This policy was grounded on the presumption that the value of the arts is inherent and universal to all people beyond their class, gender, and race, and that it stems from 'the creative artists who have genuine talent and aspiration' (Garnham, 1987). As the arts were understood to be fundamentally in conflict with commerce, one goal of cultural policies was to protect the arts from commerce (Garnham, 1987). Moreover, this public policy approach tended to assume that popular or ordinary culture and commercial culture were "low" culture in contrast to the arts as high culture (O'Connor, 2011).

In the 1970s, in several countries in Europe, public cultural policies began to approach cultural industries "as a more positive policy concern" (O'Connor, 2011, p. 27). Social, economic, and academic changes surrounding the cultural industries fostered the change in public cultural policies (Garnham, 2005, Hesmondhalgh, 2008; O'Connor, 2011). Specifically, in academia, viewpoints toward commercial culture in mass media industries became more positive (O'Connor, 2011). For example, several scholars, including Becker (1982), Bourdieu (1984) and Williams (1981), raised questions about the legitimacy of the arts, and about what was seen to be the classist criteria distinguishing the arts from popular culture. While the specific theoretical trajectories of these scholars were different, they rejected the idea that the arts have inherent and universal value, and that artists are somehow transcendent individuals. These scholars described how the arts and artists are socially and historically constructed within the social, cultural, and economic contexts where they live (O'Connor, 2011).[25] In addition, scholars argued that as the consumption of mass media products drastically increased,

[25] Specifically, Bourdieu (1984) raised the question of what defines the legitimacy of high art, popular culture, and the autonomy of the cultural production field. In the United Kingdom, Williams (1981) showed that the organizations and institutions of cultural production were socially constructed by showing how they changed historically. In the United States, Becker (1982) suggested that cultural products, including works of high art, are the outcome of the direct and indirect collaboration of many people, not just individual artists, and that current stereotypes of artists were socially and historically formed in European societies during the Renaissance.

cultural policies were required to engage with the cultural industries to which most people were increasingly drawn to satisfy their cultural needs (Garnham, 1987; Hesmondhalgh, 2008). In the late 1970s, and the early 1980s, as the consumption for mass media products increased, the market size of cultural industries was enlarged significantly, and their potential for making a profit became evident in North America and Europe (Hesmondhalgh, 2008; O'Connor, 2011).

Cultural industries policy was based on the idea that there was an interactive, and even contradictory, relationship between culture and economy in the cultural industries (O'Connor, 2011). Therefore, such a policy aimed to secure cultural values within the cultural industries by offsetting problems that are caused by commercialization (Garnham, 2001). Specifically, this policy tried to regulate "concentration, monopoly, cross-ownership, vertical integration, ever-increasing levels of capitalization and so on" in Europe (O'Connor, 2011, p. 28). Scholars have since pointed out how the 1980s and 1990s saw cultural legitimacy shift from the arts to ordinary, commercial culture (Hesmondhalgh, 2008; Oakley & O'Connor, 2015). These shifts can be broadly linked to the emergence of creative industries discourse in neoliberalism, which became dominant in the last couple of decades (Hesmondhalgh, 2008; Oakley & O'Connor, 2015).

Creative industries approach

The contemporary term 'creative industries' (versus 'cultural industries') "was initially introduced in Australia by Paul Keating's government in the early 1990s" (Ross, 2009, p. 19). In particular, the term creative industries has been dominant in public policy discourse in Europe since 1998 when the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) introduced the idea in the United Kingdom (H.-K. Lee, 2017; Oakley & O'Connor, 2015; Ross, 2009). The creative industries include "those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" according to the oft-cited British government definition (H.-K. Lee, 2017, p. 1080).

Since its introduction in the late 1990s, the concept of a creative industries policy has been adopted in Australia, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Sweden, and the United States, although the moniker for these policies may differ (e.g., 'cultural and creative industries,' 'content industries,' etc.) and there are local variants in their implementation (Cunningham, 2009; L. Kong, 2014; H.-K. Lee, 2016, 2017; Oakley

& O'Connor, 2015; Ross, 2009; Volkerling, 2001). The creative industries in many countries often have been promoted as a key broad national economic driver in a global economy (M. Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009; Garnham, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2008; H.-K. Lee, 2017; Ross, 2009). Creative industries policy tends to be associated with related policies, such as in the area of urban development (e.g., the 'creative city' policy) in many cities worldwide (Florida, 2012; C. Kim, 2017; Peck, 2005; Scott, 2007), and this policy orientation has also had implications for employment and/or labour policies (M. Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009; McRobbie, 2016; Ross, 2009).

Despite the extensive popularity of the term creative industries, its definition and scope are unclear, and the practical use of the term tends to vary according to nation and region (L. Kong, 2014). The set of industries specifically categorized as creative industries is very broad, ranging from "advertising, design, architecture, film, television, music, fashion, electronic publishing, software, online-gaming, arts and crafts, to the entertainment and leisure business" (L. Kong, 2014, p. 602). In practice, the term is used to refer to those industries that produce information, knowledge, and other immaterial commodities, and thus generate intellectual property, such as copyrights and patents (Garnham, 2005; Howkins, 2001; H.-K. Lee, 2017; Ross, 2009).

Creative industries policy is closely connected to human capital theory and several theories regarding new economies—the knowledge economy, the information society, post-industrial society, and post-Fordism (Garnham, 2005; H.-K. Lee, 2016, 2017; Ross, 2009). While these theories, such as Daniel Bell's post-industrialism (Bell 1973), have different foundations, they commonly emphasize that human capital that generate ideas, information, and knowledge has increased in importance in a new stage of capitalist economics, rather than physical capital (e.g., raw materials, machines) and physical labour (Garnham, 2005). These theories argue that we have entered a new stage of economic development that will result in positive economic and social transformation (Garnham, 2005).

While creative industries discourse is relevant to these theories, including those proposing the knowledge economy as an analytic category, it is distinctive in that the definition of "creative industries" is so broad that it can encompass various areas, such as fashion, fine arts, and software, in addition to cultural products. In theory the umbrella term creative industries has the capacity to encompass all industries, because "simply

put, creativity is a value that is essentially attached to all production and economic activity" (Miège, 2019, p. 78). In addition, in creative industries discourse we find the assumption that the value of products comes from the creativity of individuals. This assumption enables an extension of its boundaries to include intellectual property, including copyrights, which constitute a "defence of the interest of 'creators' with all the moral prestige associated with the 'creative artist'" (Garnham 2005, p. 26). Creative industries theory stresses the importance of people's creativity and belittles infrastructure and state's support (Peck, 2005). Indeed, the creative industries policy suggests that we are faced with a new mode of economic development.

Optimistic policy consultants such as Richard Florida (2012) and John Howkins (2001) have asserted that the creative economy is a new kind of economy, and that these industries will be dominant in the 21st century. Florida (2012) has argued that human creativity has become a primary factor for development in our economy and society. This optimism shows clearly in his discussion of 'creative city' policy (essentially another version of creative industries policy), which suggests that human creativity is the key driver of developing cities, that creative people have the power to regenerate urban areas, and the development of creative industries produces more jobs (Ross, 2009). This school of thought was adopted by policymakers at municipal and national levels in over 80 cities within 35 nation-states, such as Canada, China, France, Japan, India, South Korea, and the United States by 2009 (See details in Evans, 2009, p. 1033).

The neoliberal character of creative industries and creative city policies is evident because it relies on private development rather than on public funding (Peck, 2005). Policymakers who have advocated for creative industries have tended to assume that they contribute to increasing and maintaining employment, but the actual impact of creative industries policy on these factors is questionable (Ross, 2008). Significantly, in recent years, Florida (2017, 2020) has recanted his optimism and admitted that creative economy cities are also deeply unequal cities. He has suggested that he was "overly optimistic to believe that cities and the creative class could, by themselves, bring forth a better and more inclusive kind of urbanism" (Florida, 2020, p. 176).

While creative industries policy has mostly taken the place of cultural industries policy, it lacks the same kind of focus on cultural production which is historically associated with the latter, such as enhancing the quality of culture or ensuring wider

access for audiences (Garnham, 2005). In creative industries policy, the evaluation of creativity depends on the economic value that creativity procures in the market. In other words, as Kong (2014) has argued, “culture and the arts are valued only because they are seen as drivers of economic growth” (p. 598). Put differently, in the creative industries approach there is no inherent “hierarchy or distinction between high art, and popular art or culture” because economic value defines the value of cultural products (Garnham, 2001, p. 450). Creative industries policy usually pays less attention to the cultural value of cultural commodities (e.g., encouraging social reform, and developing critical viewpoints) and cultural equity (e.g., meeting the cultural needs of people) (M. Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009). Thus, as Hesmondalgh has argued (2008), “the term ‘creative industries’ represents a refusal of the forms of critical analysis associated with the cultural industries approach” (p. 552).

Going back to cultural industries

In this dissertation I argue that critical studies of media industries like the television industry require a return to the cultural industries approach. The umbrella term “creative industries” is inadequate to the analysis of cultural production and the labour processes required therein because it refers to an excessively broad range of industries involving diverse and heterogeneous productive activities (Miège, 2019). The forms of cultural production and the labour processes associated with cultural industries have distinguishable features in contrast to the industries (e.g., performing and visual arts, fashion and architecture industries) that are categorized as creative industries but not typically associated with cultural industries (Miège, 2019). As Miège (2019) has argued, non-industrial forms of cultural production such as performing and visual arts are less likely to involve qualities which are prevalent in the production process in the cultural industries, such as division of labour and reproduction/distribution through technology. In addition, fashion and architecture industries, for example, are usually combined with manufacturing industries that include the production of materials, such as clothes, or buildings. The production processes and logics in several creative industries such as performing and visual arts, fashion and architecture industries are different from those in cultural industries such as those that have formed around mass media (See Miège, 2019). Thus, to research the work of writers in the Korean television industry, greater focus is required to understand the specificities involved, making it necessary to narrow the analysis of cultural industries.

More importantly, utilizing the cultural industries approach enables critical, political, and social interventions in, and public policies towards, areas of industrial cultural production (Hesmondhalgh, 2008; Oakley & O'Connor, 2015). This approach fully acknowledges the "social, symbolic, and imaginary dimension that is at the foundation of the cultural industries" (Miège, 2019, p. 78). Further, the cultural industries approach enables us to raise "questions unavailable within the creative industries imaginary: 'how is cultural production structured in contemporary society; how does this affect the kind of culture we get; and why does this matter?'" (Oakley & O'Connor, 2015, p. 10). By defining the television industry as one of the cultural industries, we can better understand that industry as a place of production of cultural commodities where culture and commerce co-exist in a contested form, so that we may more fruitfully interrogate and criticize the commercialization of culture.

2.2. Cultural work (creative labour), and the model worker

While creative industries policies and discourse have become dominant since the late 1990s, studies on labour associated with both cultural industries and creative industries have increased. In North America and Europe (e.g., Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2016; Smith & McKinlay, 2009b) as well as South Korea (e.g., C. Kim, 2014), many of these studies have analyzed this form of labour under the umbrella term "creative labour." Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) define creative labour as "those jobs, centred on the activity of symbol-making, which are to be found in large numbers in the cultural industries" (p. 9). In many cases however, scholars tend to employ the terms "creative workers" and "creative labour" loosely, without defining them when referring to workers or labour (relevant to creativity) in the creative industries. In some cases, the terms creative labour and cultural work are used interchangeably. In this section, since most scholars use the term creative labour to refer to the labour in creative industries (rather than cultural industries), I use the terms 'creative labour' and 'creative industries' loosely in reviewing the scholarly literature. Only when specific authors indicate their preference for cultural work and cultural industries do I use the terms when engaging with their discussions.

Several scholars have argued that there are similar conditions across different forms of creative labour while each form of creative labour has their own distinctive features. Research has underscored that employment in creative industries is often

organized as freelance work, through self-employment and on temporary contracts. Creative labour tends to be flexible and project-based (Conor, 2010; Gill & Pratt, 2008; McRobbie, 2016). Compensation for creative labour often includes not only wages, but also occasionally takes the form of intellectual property rights (Florida, 2012; Garnham, 2005; McRobbie, 2016; Ross, 2008, 2009). Scholars have suggested that creative labour tends to provide workers relative autonomy and gratification in comparison to the more regimented working routines in manufacturing industries (e.g., Banks & Hesmondalgh, 2009; Kim; 2014; McRobbie 2016; Ross, 2008, 2009). Lastly, researchers have argued that there are fewer unions for creative workers compared to those for traditional industrial workers, such as full-time workers in the manufacturing industry (Cohen, 2016; de Peuter, 2014b; McRobbie, 2016; Ross, 2008, 2009).

In this section, I first introduce the celebratory approach to creative labour that sees creative workers as an idealized new class, the creative class (Florida, 2002; Howkins, 2001). Then I look at critiques of this discourse, which illustrate problems in its concept of creativity and model of the worker. Next, I examine alternative, critical approaches to creative labour. Scholars from a post-Foucauldian (governmentality) approach argue that cultural or creative workers internalize neoliberal governmentality and engage in self-exploitation (McRobbie, 2002; 2016). In contrast, scholars from a Marxist viewpoint focus on insecure and contingent employment forms, such as freelancing and temporary employment. Some autonomist Marxists see creative workers as workers with new possibilities to struggle against their precarious conditions in contemporary economies (e.g., Cohen, 2016; de Peuter, 2014b, 2014b), following Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004, 2009) and Lazzarato (1996).

Creative class

In developing the creative class theory, Florida (2012) has stressed the value of human talent and creativity in the creative economy as described in the above section. He has argued that creative labour is a process of obtaining pleasure, self-fulfillment, and personal growth. He has claimed that this labour allows workers to obtain a high financial reward and an improved social reputation according to their individual talents and abilities, beyond factors such as their socio and political backgrounds, gender, and socio-economic class. According to Florida, creative workers are free agents that “utilize their intellectual and artistic talents and exert enhanced control over the labour process”

(M. Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009, p. 417). Regarding the creative class, Florida (2012) suggests:

> I define the core of the Creative Class to include people in science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music, and entertainment whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology, and new creative content. Around this core, the Creative Class also includes a broader group of *creative professionals* in business and finance, law, health care, and related fields. These people engage in complex problem solving that involves a great deal of independent judgment and requires high levels of education or human capital. In addition, all members of the Creative Class—whether they are artists or engineers, musicians or computer scientists, writers or entrepreneurs—share a common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference, and merit. (pp. 8-9, emphasis in original)

This definition of the creative class has been characterized as too ambiguous and broad, making it hard to recognize to whom Florida is actually referring when speaking of the creative class (Scott 2007). Florida's creative class theory suggests that creative workers are free agents (Ross, 2009). Specifically, creative labour in these treatments is presented rather simplistically as idealized, non-alienating work, without the demands and harsh obligations that are actually associated with making a living (Ross, 2009). In Florida's theory, therefore, unions and government programs seem to be unnecessary if they are addressed at all. Although Florida argues that creative labour gives equal opportunities to people beyond their gender, race and class, critics say that in fact his creative labour concept pertains to only the more privileged categories of people he sees as the creative class, and not to people who do not belong to the creative class and do not have the creativity that he refers to (Peck, 2005; Scott, 2007). Florida's creative class theory attempts to cover this ground by suggesting that inequity between classes is addressed in the way highly ranked creative people feel a moral obligation to help unprivileged people (Peck 2005). Regarding this argument, Peck (2005) counters that Florida's view amounts to merely a "plea for grassroots agency with a communitarian conscience amongst a privileged class of creatives" (p. 760), a call that history suggests would remain largely unanswered. In fact, Florida (2017, 2020) has also acknowledged the limits of his argument as previously described (See Section 2.1).

Creative artist trope

While culture and the arts have been relatively devalued in creative industries discourse and policies, ironically, several critical scholars have found that the ideal

worker at the heart of creative labour discourse bears many of the characteristics of the longstanding romantic stereotype of the artist, a figure which I will refer to *as the creative artist trope* (Garnham, 2005; McRobbie, 2016; Pang, 2009; Ross, 2008, 2009). McRobbie (2016) has argued that the figure of the artist has been centre-staged as the model worker in the creative economy because "artists are typically self-employed" and "there is still, even nowadays, a romantic ethos that surrounds their working lives" (p. 70). The artist has historically been highly regarded as embodying "a kind of free spirit, an unbridled freedom of movement," and therefore willing to take risks in the process of developing ideas (McRobbie, 2016, p. 76). In this regard, the creative artist trope signifies the "current modes of biopolitical power, as the site for implementing job creation and, more significantly, labour reform" and the creative labour discourses turn "culture into an instrument of both competition and labour discipline" (McRobbie, 2016, p. 38). Thus, the image of the artist has been transformed from the impoverished, unconventional human resource to the busy multi-tasker with the capacity for creating wealth, not only individually but also for the broader economy. Importantly, Ross (2008) highlights the idealized and romanticised nature of this image, arguing that the creative artist trope plays a role in justifying the exploitation of labour. Under the artist trope, creative workers are supposed to endure personal sacrifice as the natural and necessary process of producing creativity. Workers are regarded as artists who engage in their work voluntarily despite the often long working hours and poor wages it entails.

In creative labour discourse involving the creative artist trope, creativity is regarded as an inherent talent or capacity that is embodied to greater or lesser degrees in individual workers (M. Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009; H.-K. Lee, 2017; McRobbie, 2016). At the same time, creativity is often regarded as a kind of capital that should be put into the production process as the core source in generating economic value (H.-K. Lee, 2017). As a result, creativity has the connotation of being exclusive in that creative workers are often regarded as the "genius-artist" possessing reified creativity (Pang, 2009). In this process, the outcomes of creative labour are often regarded as being produced by the creativity of workers, where creativity takes the place of the labour of workers and cooperative (and collective) production. As the value of creative products derives from individual creativity, this trope is founded on a winner-take-all market system marked by the privatization of culture and knowledge (Ross, 2008).

Not surprisingly, critical scholars argue that it is necessary to dismantle creative labour discourse. For McRobbie and Ross, what is needed is to develop "a counter to the highly individualistic notions of inspiration, genius, talent and competition" (McRobbie, 2016, p. 156) and instead embrace the idea that "all creative work is the result of shared knowledge and labor" (Ross, 2008, p. 39).

Critical viewpoints on creative labour

In contrast to creative labour discourse, since the early 2000s critical scholars have reported cases of degraded working conditions in the cultural and creative industries, describing unpaid and underpaid work (including unpaid internships), job insecurity, long working hours, fewer social benefits, and the expansion of precarity in workers' lives (M. Banks, 2007; M. Banks et al., 2013; Blair et al., 2001; Cohen, 2012; de Peuter, 2014b; de Peuter et al., 2015; Dwyer, 2019; Gill & Pratt, 2008; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Lorey, 2009; McRobbie, 2002a, 2016; Mosco & McKercher, 2008; Ross, 2009; Whitson et al., 2021). Their distinctive viewpoints on labour, autonomy, and unionization are described below.

Scholars drawing on Foucauldian concepts have focused on why some workers enter into and continue participating in the creative labour market voluntarily at the cost of job insecurity, long working hours, low pay, and/or less social benefit (Lorey, 2009; McRobbie, 2002a, 2002b, 2016; Ursell, 2000). Based on the concept of "governmentality" which refers to the "techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour" (Foucault, 1999, p. 42), they suggest that a "mode of neoliberal governmentality" forms the subjectivities of creative workers (McRobbie, 2016, p. 14). In terms of governmentality, Foucault (1999) describes:

> Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word, is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by oneself. (p. 162)

Importantly, governmentality means the creation of subjects "who are willing to play their allotted roles" (Sum & Jessop, 2013, p. 112, cited in Mulcahy, 2017, p. 229). In terms of neoliberal governmentality, McRobbie (2016) described the ethos of creative workers under neoliberalism as requiring a "risk-taking personality," entrepreneurship, passion, self-regulation, self-exploitation, and self-blaming. These scholars argue that, beyond

pay, creative workers tend to be motivated by the expectation of self-actualization, self-fulfillment, public esteem, and pleasure through their labour (which are difficult to achieve in reality). From this post-Foucauldian approach, even creative workers' desire for autonomy and freedom is structured in harmony with neoliberal political and economic structures. Specifically, Lorey (2009) argues that creative workers seem to choose precarization in a process of "self-precarization," but there is no free choice under neoliberalism, and that this apparent "'self-chosen' precarization" is just a reflection of "structural precarization."

McRobbie (2016) also makes the case that, for creative workers, work is a process of self-actualization, and workers want to gain "happiness at work" through creative labour. She further argues that "the idea of happiness at work or 'pleasure in work'" reflects "the institutional terrain for new forms of post-welfare governmentality" (McRobbie, 2016, p. 36). Post-welfare governmentality encourages people to take responsibility for themselves only through their work, and not through the social security of the welfare system (McRobbie, 2016). It is also marked by individualization, where "people increasingly have to become their own micro-structures, they have to do the work of the structures by themselves, which in turn requires intensive practices of self-monitoring or 'reflexivity'" (McRobbie, 2016, p. 18).

In terms of unionizing, McRobbie (2016) argues that pleasure in work ideology acts against efforts to organize workers. Specifically, she claims that:

> The importance of finding enjoyment and reward in work itself is an important counter to the Marxist idea of 'alienation;' this new kind of workforce will have no reason to find common cause in the monotony or boredom of labour. Pleasure at work is thus an instrument to help ward off the dangers of worker dissatisfaction and thus 'combination.' By turning more people into small entrepreneurs, capitalism will be renewed and will be able to deflect all threats from socialist movements. (McRobbie, 2016, pp. 73–74)

In other words, McRobbie (2016) is pessimistic about the possibilities of unionizing in these sectors because the creative labour discourse plays such a significant role in diminishing the sense that trade unions and organized labour are necessary (p. 36). In this context, the precarization of creative workers is normalized (McRobbie, 2016).

Andrew Ross (2008) has been perhaps the most prominent voice in exploring the artist trope in creative labour discourse, and he notes that the embodied experiences of workers should be distinguished from the artist trope. Ross (2000) also cautions that creative workers might be easily exploited because these workers tend to be self-disciplined due to their work styles and ethos, which involves aesthetic perfectibility and selflessness. To Ross (2009), the reward system for creative workers is problematic because it tends to grant a majority of compensation to a few winners among individual workers (in particular, those who hold intellectual property rights directly), and as a result the remaining (majority) of the workers are underpaid or even unpaid. Creative workers' desires for autonomy, gratification and flexibility in their work are not present simply because workers internalize neoliberal ethos (Ross, 2009). Ross argues that workers have struggled for and achieved these features of creative work, and that they should be considered "as a basic human right, or entitlement, of the workforce" (Ross, 2008, p. 39). Ross (2008; 2009) further emphasizes that the precarious working conditions of cultural workers mainly stem from "non-standard employment," such as self-employment or internships rather than being reducible to inherent features of creative labour and the subjectivity of workers. He highlights that, although workers stood to achieve job security through the long-term, rigid, and perhaps tedious form of organizational employment that reigned during Fordism, this path should not be the only alternative for all workers (Ross, 2008, 2009).

As a matter of fact, in contrast to McRobbie's pessimistic perspective, many studies have reported cases of collective organizing and unionizing in recent decades. Whether workers gained protection only partly or substantially, creative workers—from 'art workers' in contemporary art to freelance journalists—have formed unions or other forms of collective organizations in Europe and North America (Bain & McLean, 2013; M. J. Banks, 2015; Bodnar, 2006; Caldwell, 2008; Cohen, 2016; Coles, 2016; de Peuter, 2014a; de Peuter et al., 2015; Kompatsiaris, 2015; Percival & Hesmondhalgh, 2014; Ross, 2000) and South Korea (e.g., C. Kim, 2019). In the United States, unions of artists have taken the form of various guilds, such as "the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), Directors Guild of America (DGA) and the Writers Guild of America (WGA)" (Conor, 2014, p. 28). For example, since the 1930s, the WGA has played a role in representing United States screenwriters and leading their collective actions, such as collective bargaining and

strikes (M. J. Banks, 2010, 2015). Korean television writers also have formed collective organizations in several forms, as discussed in Chapter 1 (Y. Kim, 2007; KTRWA, 2000).

Some autonomist Marxists, following Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004, 2009) and Lazzarato (1996), have understood creative labour as a form of immaterial labour in contemporary capitalism (e.g., Bain & McLean, 2013; Bodnar, 2006; de Peuter, 2011) in contrast to Ross (2008, 2009), who has highlighted the distinctive features of cultural work. These scholars argue that the precarious working conditions workers face result from post-Fordist transformations, such as the "de-standardization of employment, de-unionization of labour, dis-aggregation of production, de-industrialization of economies," and the flexibilization of labour (de Peuter, 2011, p. 421).

Autonomist scholars see "cultural workers as exemplifying the experiences of a new 'precariat'" (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 1). Coined by Standing (2011), the term 'precariat' combines 'precarious' and 'proletariat.' This concept has provided a theoretical resource to scholars exploring labour resistance and collective organizing in creative industries (e.g., Bain & McLean, 2013; Bodnar, 2006; de Peuter, 2011, 2014a, 2014b; Neilson & Coté, 2014). For example, de Peuter (2014b) has defined workers in "the arts, the media, and knowledge and cultural industries" who suffer from non-standard employment as a "creative precariat" (p. 266). This group represents not only precarious workers who experience exploitation, but also new political subjectivities who have a possibility for "new forms of political struggle and solidarity that reach beyond the traditional models of the political party or trade union" against post-Fordist exploitation (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 3). As de Peuter (2014b) notes, some workers, instead of managing privately, are responding collectively to their precarity through "nonstandard aggregations," including "atypical workers' associations, coworking spaces, and intern initiatives" in collective movements (pp. 269-270).

The identification of cultural workers as examples of a precariat has drawn debate particularly from several feminist scholars. Italian feminist scholar, Fantone (2007) has raised the critique that precariat politics are "based on a politically imaginary subject: the single, male, urban artist or creative worker" (p. 9). She argues that the concept of the precariat tends to focus on the flexibilization of labour under post-Fordism, which was "the moment when the western, male worker began feeling the negative effects of the new, post-industrial, flexible job market" (Fantone, 2007, p. 7).

Neilson and Rossiter (2008), themselves heavily influenced by autonomism, made this point as well. Fantone (2007) critiqued that precariat theory tends to disregard the fact that marginalized people, including women and immigrants, have experienced longstanding precariousness, explaining: “Simply put, precarity has been a permanent and traditional feature of life… for many generations of women” (p. 10). In a similar way, Vishmidt (2005) has argued that the idea of creative workers as exemplary precarious workers makes invisible different forms of precarities in other disposable work, such as housework, care work, and seasonal work. Feminist scholars such as Fantone (2007), Federici (2011) and McRobbie (2011) note that the concepts such as the immaterial labour and new political subjectivities (Hardt & Negri, 2000, 2004, 2009; Lazzarato, 1996) associated with the concept of creative precariat fundamentally focus on employment forms like contingent and temporary workers, and that they tend to overlook other social and cultural features of workers, such as gender, race, and occupational identities. As a result, workers with different backgrounds tend to be reduced to one unified form—workers in non-standard employment (Fantone, 2007; Federici, 2011; McRobbie, 2011). However, feminist scholars claim that “class was, from the start, a cultural as well as an economic category” and “the experience of being ‘a worker’” should be understood in association with social and cultural identities, such as gender, ethnicity and nationality, as McRobbie (2016) argues (pp. 94–95).

Focusing on working experiences

The above studies have provided insightful critiques highlighting the implications of creative labour discourse, the labour relations that creative labour discourse presents, and the collective organization that has arisen to confront them. However, many studies emphasize “creative work as individual enterprise,” focusing on workers who tend to work in more individualized forms, such as “the individual visual artist, dancer or independent film director” (Christopherson, 2008, p. 74). Through this narrow focus, they overlook “the industry context in which creative workers build their careers” (Christopherson, 2008, p. 74).

Moreover, these analyses of creative labour discourse also tend to discuss the workers and their labour broadly without a discussion of specific features. For example, while de Peuter (2014b) uses “the arts, the media, and cultural industries” and ‘creative industries’ interchangeably with the term cultural work, it is not clear what he considers

as ‘creative industries’ and cultural work, and how cultural industries are different from the arts and the media. De Peuter (2014b) focuses on the non-standard employment of workers in those industries without explanation of the specific features of the labour and workers of creative industries. Specifically, he does not clarify how the labour, and resistance of cultural workers in the arts, media, and cultural industries are different from those in other industries. Therefore, it is unclear why he defines the workers as a “creative precariat” and describes the features of ‘non-standard employment’ in discussing the workers’ labour and resistance. In addition, McRobbie (2016) focuses on the workers in fashion and fine arts in her discussion on creative labour while defining the fashion and fine arts sectors as ‘the new culture industries’ and tends to generalize specific features of these industries as simply ‘the labour’ of creative industries, which in fact includes the varied work of diverse distinctive industries. Going beyond the above research, we need to explore cultural labour within the process of cultural production, and make a connection to the political and economic context of particular industries (Christopherson, 2008). By situating cultural work in its industrial context and cooperative production process, we can also dismantle the creative artist trope within creative industries discourse.

When it comes to understanding the worker model, a larger amount of research that I examined above tends to focus on the administration of labour, such as employment types, pay level and working hours. In recent decades, scholars have paid attention to the content of labour, and the labour process in the production process in cultural industries (e.g., M. Banks, 2018; M. J. Banks, 2009; Grindstaff, 2002; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008; Hill, 2016; Mayer, 2011; Mayer et al., 2009). There is a paucity of this particular research(K. Lee, 2010; Mayer et al., 2009; Murdock, 2003) in contrast to the research on the administration of labour. Specifically, we need more research regarding what kind of labour is involved in producing cultural products, how cultural workers produce, and how their labour is exploited in specific workplaces, focusing on particular contexts, rather than what the worker model in general is (M. J. Banks, 2009; Mayer et al., 2009). Further, more research is needed which focuses on the division, difference, and distinctive features in and between different forms of cultural work. In particular, instead of focusing upon an assumed ethos and subjectivity, we need to consider real workers’ gender, race, and class, as clarified in the next section.

2.3. Gender and cultural work

As a communications scholar, I see the cultural industries as institutions producing and disseminating cultural products and, at the same time, promoting economic value in contemporary society. In this regard, cultural work is linked to the creation of meanings (symbols) and *engaging in cultural production*. So-called "more creative roles," such as writers, producers, and directors, are more likely to define, fix, or set the meaning of cultural products. With the development of media technology, cultural workers in mass media industries such as television dispose of notable symbolic power because they can quickly communicate with a great number of people (Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Mosco, 2009, 2010). For example, workers in Korean terrestrial broadcasters produce programs that are distributed through their national networks, reaching an audience of millions.

Since cultural work has distinctive features as cultural production, gender inequity in cultural work is complex. Specifically, gender inequity relevant to cultural work is not restricted to working conditions, such as unfair employment status, and the wage gap (in particular for so-called "more privileged" post-secondary women graduates). It is also linked to unequal opportunities of access to cultural production that reproduces social relations (M. Lee, 2011; Mosco, 2009; Riordan, 2002). In the television and film industries, "systemic gender inequality impacts who tells the stories on our screens; stories which influence how we see ourselves and the world around us" (Coles & Eikhof, 2021, p. 2041). "[Cultural workers including] screenwriters are directly involved in representational processes, in producing views on and of the world, images and narratives for others to consume" (Conor, 2014, p. 104). Therefore, for women, gender inequity in cultural labour is beyond unfair working conditions. It is also about the lack of empowerment of women, for *symbolic power,* and the lack of opportunities for producing cultural products from women's viewpoints and experiences (E. Hill, 2016; O'Brien, 2019). Furthermore, to feminist media scholars, the question of who produces cultural content is important because media is one of the critical places that (re) produce gender inequity (Jones & Pringle, 2015). For example, characters in television shows and films are gendered, which can reproduce gender stereotypes and social relations.[26]

[26] Certainly, as Liesbet van Zoonen (1994) has argued, women workers do not always produce cultural content that represents women in a positive way or that goes beyond gender stereotypes

Gender inequity in cultural work

Media scholars have reported that gender inequity in cultural work has often appeared in diverse forms, such as a gender pay gap, vertical and horizontal gendered occupational segregation, and career interruption in South Korean, North American and European cultural industries (M. Banks, 2018; M. Banks & Milestone, 2011; Bielby, 2009; Conor et al., 2015; Gill, 2002; E. Hill, 2016; H. M. Kim, 2005; Lafky, 1989; O'Brien, 2019; Sohn & Kim, 2004; Wreyford, 2015, 2018; S. Yoo, 2003; S. Youn & Lee, 2003).

Regarding occupational segregation, many studies reported the overrepresentation of men in more "creative" roles or privileged positions including writers, producers and directors in Europe and North America (Bielby, 2009; Coles & Eikhof, 2021; Conor, 2014; Conor et al., 2015; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015; O'Brien, 2019; Wreyford, 2015, 2018). Specifically, "a very small group of, mainly older, white men" are predominant in screenwriters' jobs for film and/or television in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States (Conor, 2014, p. 101). For example, since the late 1930s film and television writing positions have been male-dominated in the United States, and women screenwriters have faced limitations in obtaining high-level positions due to a glass ceiling in the television and film industry (Bielby, 2009). The same has been true for film writers in the United Kingdom (Wreyford, 2018). With regard to "work segregation by sex," Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2015) have demonstrated that women are overrepresented in "non-creative roles," such as marketing, public relations, and production co-ordination, while men are mainly present in "more prestigious creative roles," such as that of directors, and in technical jobs in the United Kingdom television, magazine journalism, and music industries.

Furthermore, many scholars have found that the organizational features of labour in the cultural industries are not only rooted in, but also serve to reproduce, gender

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and sexist portrayals. This is because the production of media content is not done solely according to individual preference. Cultural workers, including writers, directors, and producers, make cultural products within an organizational and industrial context (Lauzen et al., 2008) and within broader social relations (Mosco, 2010). It is true that the viewpoints of particular cultural workers on gender are not completely free from the social relations in their society where the workers are situated, and women workers' viewpoints sometimes reflect men's, as Laura Mulvey (1975) pointed out. Nevertheless, several scholars have shown the reciprocal relationships between the representations of women and men on screen, and workers behind the camera (writers or executive producers especially) to some degree in the United States' film and television industries, although these relationships are not directly a causal relationship (e.g., Glascock, 2001; Lauzen et al., 2008; Lauzen & Dozier, 1999).

inequity (e.g., M. J. Banks, 2009; M. Banks & Milestone, 2011; Bielby, 2009; Hill, 2016; H. M. Kim, 2005; Mayer, 2013). For example, gender stereotypes of women as being more communicative and altruistic play a critical role in putting women in gendered positions, especially jobs requiring negotiating, supporting, and caring roles in the cultural industries (Adkins, 1999; M. Banks & Milestone, 2011; Fröhlich, 2004; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015). Many scholars argue that such practices reproduce gender stereotypes inherent in reproductive labour, such as caring or and domestic work (e.g., Adkins, 1999; Fröhlich, 2004).

More directly, regarding the obligations attached to reproductive work, many scholars have explored how gender inequity is relevant to working conditions which are predominant in cultural work, such as longer working hours and irregular working schedules and work sites. They have found that these working conditions often tend to exclude women from the creative or cultural labour market, or from certain roles within that market because women socially and historically have often been pressured to take the greatest responsibility for parenting, caring, and nurturing (Adkins, 1999; Berridge, 2020; Gill, 2002; O'Brien, 2014, 2015; Wing-Fai et al., 2015; Wreyford, 2013). By the same token, for the few women who manage to succeed in entering into more creative jobs within the cultural industries, the demands of motherhood and the gendered responsibility for parenting often limit or prevent them from continuing or advancing their careers (e.g., O'Brien, 2014; Percival, 2020; Wreyford, 2013).

Additionally, several studies report cases where job conditions associated with freelancing arrangements, such as informal recruitment (personal contact and network-based connections) tend to disadvantage women regarding access to opportunities and progression in the cultural labour market in Europe and North America (Christopherson, 2008; Gill, 2002; Percival, 2020; Wing-Fai et al., 2015; Wreyford, 2015). It is true that formalized and transparent recruitment processes, such as open advertising for positions and the establishment of "gender and race-neutral criteria" do not always guarantee equal opportunities to women and people of colour (Acker, 2006, p. 45). However, as Acker (2006) suggests, "hiring through social networks is one of the ways in which gender and racial inequalities are maintained in organizations" (p. 45). Specifically, Wreyford (2015) found that decision makers who are usually "white, middle- to upper-class men" tend to rely on professional or personal reputations to decrease risk and uncertainty in hiring screenwriters, and due to homophily, informal recruitment

creates an “inequality of opportunity” for women screenwriters in the UK film industry. In short, the empirical evidence indicates that women are more likely to experience more frequent and\or more serious, precarious working conditions than men in cultural industries workplaces. Therefore, it should be noted that to women, labour politics are inherently about gender politics, and that they are gendered as well (M. Lee, 2011).

The above discussions focus on situations in which men are overwhelmingly represented in more “creative roles” or privileged positions within the cultural industries, providing a contrast to women’s overrepresentation in writing positions in the Korean television industry. Given the focus of this dissertation, it is necessary to explore whether or not these assessments are relevant to or offer some insights regarding the case of Korean television writers. The discussion of gender inequity is a critical component of my dissertation, but the case of Korean writers suggests I need to approach the gendered nature of cultural work from a different direction.

The feminization of labour

This dissertation goes beyond a focus on occupational segregation by gender or limits on the upward mobility of women workers. I aim to examine the gendered nature of labour in the work of writers, which is connected to changes in gender and labour politics in association with broader political-economic dynamics under post-Fordism in contemporary capitalism. Post-Fordism refers to a system of what David Harvey (1990) calls ‘flexible accumulation.’ As described in Chapter 1, this post-Fordist production mode involves the flexibilization of production, just-in-time production and market customization, based on niche markets and flexible specialization (D. Harvey, 1990; Jessop, 1994). The flexibilization of production leads to the casualization of labour. Specifically, as Murdock (2003) describes, the casualization of labour refers to “shifting workers from secure employment to freelance contracts and making more use of part-time and casualized labor” and in other words, “hiring people ‘just-intime’ to meet particular production needs and then returning them to the reserve army of cultural labor” (p. 22). Large companies outsource production, focusing on financial operation, and distribution. The labour relations are described as temporary, unstable, and insecure, and workers have been non-unionized (Bonanno, 2012; D. Harvey, 1990; Jessop, 1994). Furthermore, scholars have long identified the prominent role that information, culture, and communication play in this configuration. Forms of post-

Fordism might be different from place to place, but certainly, post-Fordism correlates with qualitative changes in economic, political, and cultural systems in contemporary capitalism (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; McRobbie, 2011; Weeks, 2011). In terms of labour politics, Weeks (2011) argues that under post-Fordism, "the difference between production and reproduction and between work and nonwork becomes increasingly obscure, as the same task could be either a waged or an unwaged activity" (p. 142).

In understanding the gender and labour under post-Fordism in contemporary capitalism, one of the key ideas driving my dissertation is the *feminization of labour*. The notion of the feminization of labour contributes to understanding how women are overrepresented in the cultural industries since it allows us to situate cultural workers against the broader dynamics of contemporary capitalism. Initially, the feminization of labour was introduced to refer to the broader trend of the increase in women's participation in the waged labour market across the world since the 1980s (Adkins, 2001; Richer, 2012). After the introduction of this term, as some scholars have observed, the feminization of labour is a "widely used but ambiguous notion" (Oksala, 2016, p. 281), and scholars have utilized feminization in various ways (Richer, 2012).

In this dissertation the feminization of labour refers not only to the quantitative increase of women in the paid labour market, but also to qualitative changes in the forms of labour (Haraway, 1991; Morini, 2007; Oksala, 2016; Vosko, 2005). The changes in the forms of labour refer to the way labour has come to possess characteristics that were historically and socially ascribed to the work performed by women (or other marginalized groups) (Haraway, 1991; Morini, 2007; Vosko, 2000, 2002, 2005). More specifically, Haraway (1991) asserts that:

> Work is being redefined as both literally female and feminized, whether performed by men or women. To be feminized means to be made extremely vulnerable; able to be disassembled, reassembled, exploited as a reserve labour force; seen less as workers than as servers; subjected to time arrangements on and off the paid job that make a mockery of a limited work day; leading an existence that always borders on being obscene, out of place, and reducible to sex. (p. 166)

In other words, the feminization of labour includes the implication that labour itself has become more precarious. More narrowly, Vosko (2005) uses a more specific term, "the feminization of employment norms," which refers to "a broad concept that entails the erosion of the standard employment relationship and the spread of forms of

employment exhibiting qualities of precarious employment associated with women" (p. 456). In this regard, to feminist political economists, "the concept of precarious work describes the feminization of labour markets" (Strauss & Meehan, 2015, p. 1). Additionally, Morini (2007) describes the feminization of labour as having characteristics such as "precariousness, mobility, fragmentary nature, low salaries [pay]" and low status (p. 42).

Furthermore, it should be noted that the feminization (or precarization) of labour is "neither gender- nor race-neutral" (Haraway, 1991, p. 166). Feminist scholars see the phenomenon not only in the expansion of precariousness that women have experienced, but also the continuously reinforced gender inequity in the labour market in that women are more likely to have more precarious jobs than men (Haraway, 1991; Vosko, 2000, 2002). For all of these reasons, McRobbie (2016) makes the rather sweeping declaration that "the gender of post-Fordism is female," arguing that we need to approach labour in contemporary capitalism through "new forms of feminism connected with the politics of precariousness" (p. 88). As this scholar stated, we still need "to foreground gender, or indeed to knit gender and ethnicity into prevailing concerns with class and class struggle" (McRobbie, 2011, p. 60).

More narrowly, focusing on the feminization of labour in the service industry such as customer service, hospitality and housekeeping, Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003) and Morini (2007) argue that the feminization of labour means a range of interconnected phenomena, such as the increased number of women in waged work, the commercialization of reproductive work that is prevalent in the service industry, and the global migration of women workers from the Global South to the Global North. Beyond this transformation of working conditions, Morini (2007) argue that in cognitive capitalism, economic relations tend "to prioritize extracting value from relational and emotional elements, which are more likely to be part of women" (p. 40). Morini (2007) asserts that in cognitive capitalism, the feminization of labour involves "the intensive exploitation of quality, abilities and individual skills (capacities for relationships, emotional aspects, linguistic aspects, propensity for care)" from workers, in particular women (p. 42). These characteristics are relevant to various aspects of reproductive labour. In fact, Morini (2007) argues that the feminization of labour in cognitive capitalism often involves the qualitative change in the contents of labour by including emotional and affective aspects beyond the change in administration processes. This idea is insightful,

but Morini (2007) develops this argument focusing on labour in the service industry. Therefore, such an argument cannot be applied directly to labour in other industries including the cultural industries. In fact, her assumption that the work that women perform is directly linked to reproductive work could reproduce gender stereotypes (Adkins, 2001).

In her investigation of the feminization of media work in the United States, Vicki Mayer suggests three criteria in defining “feminized work” (Mayer, 2013). First, Mayer explains that feminized work is associated with women’s domestic work, including care work such as mothering (Mayer, 2013, p. 51). Second, building on Hoschschild’s (2003) conceptualization of emotional labour, Mayer notes that feminized labour incudes affective aspects, such as caring and supporting others. Third, feminized work, including emotional labour, tends to be naturalized as having inherently “feminine” features, which are then devalued in contrast to other “non-feminized work” (Mayer, 2013, p. 52). Mayer (2013) highlights that feminized work is linked to material inequality because it is associated with unwaged forms of work, such as emotional labour, that historically are women’s work. In its exploration of how different kinds of feminized forms occur in the labour of Korean television writers, this dissertation does not exhaustively apply all of Mayer’s criteria in defining feminized work (although I do apply her criteria in the case of entertainment writers in Chapter 5). Nevertheless, Mayer’s argument that feminized work should be discussed in relation to non-feminized work is insightful and valuable to the project this dissertation pursues.

In contrast to the increase in women’s participation in the service industry, which emerged in recent years, the cultural industries are not new industries that have emerged in contemporary capitalism. The origins of the cultural industries date back to the early 1900s, and writing occupations for film and/or television shows arose with the emergence and development of mass media and cultural industries (Conor, 2014). The case of women’s overrepresentation in writing positions in the Korean television industry is distinctive from the feminization of labour in the service industry. On the other hand, since women have tended to be excluded from the more “creative” positions in these sectors in North America and Europe (Bielby, 2009; Conor, 2014; O’Brien, 2019) as discussed above, the case of Korean writers is unique.

Nevertheless, to some degree the Korean writers' case reflects changes in cultural labour markets that have appeared in other countries. Specifically, the incremental rise in women's participation has also been observed in the North American media industry. Women have comprised the majority of the graduates majoring in communications and journalism in North America since the 1990s (Fröhlich, 2004; McKercher, 2014; Shade & Jacobson, 2015). Women made up more than 70 percent of the graduates in programs related to communications in the United States in 2010 (McKercher, 2014). Women were overrepresented in freelance journalism, while men were overrepresented in media industries generally (McKercher, 2014). In addition, women were overrepresented in entry-level jobs in media and communication industries in North America, which presently tend to be low-paid or unpaid internships (Shade & Jacobson, 2015). Duffy and Schwartz (2018) also found an overrepresentation of young women in social media internships in North America. As Perlin (2011) has suggested, we need to question why unpaid and underpaid internships prevalent in communication industries in North America are gendered. Industries in which women predominantly major, including communications, tend to offer unpaid internships more frequently than male-predominant majors, such as engineering (Perlin, 2011). This trend of the feminization of cultural work in North American media industries should be further explored. More broadly, UNESCO (2017) has reported that women outnumber men in cultural sector labour markets in most countries, and the working conditions of women tend to be precarious in that they often work as self-employed or temporary workers and have more than one job.

A feminist political economy approach to cultural work

This dissertation argues that cultural work in cultural industries in contemporary capitalism should be studied with a feminist political economy approach as described in Chapter 1. A feminist political economy approach explores how workers experience and understand their work. Moreover, it examines what forms of labour have been put into the production process in the cultural industries, what labour have been undervalued and underpaid, and how labour is organized and managed, while exploring "the differences, inequalities, hierarchies, divisions, which have alienated workers from each other and even from themselves" (Federici, 2004, p. 115). A feminist political economy approach is essential for this dissertation in that it starts by exploring the identification of labour and evaluation systems in a specific workplace. This research necessarily

involves the processes of re-reading and re-defining the concept of labour, and the valuation and pay system of labour in connection with other oppressive systems, within which gender and race are active. By doing so, it unpacks the diverse kinds of precariousness that workers face.

This chapter has shown why I explore Korean television writers in cultural industries through a perspective of feminist political economy of communication. With the very specific case of Korean writers, we can investigate insights regarding the content of cultural labour, the exploitation of that labour, and distinctive forms of precarity in the cultural industries. In the next chapter, I begin by describing how women have constituted the majority of writers in the Korean television industry.

Chapter 3.

Why women writers? Because the work is precarious: The making of a feminized, precarious cultural workforce

3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the intersection of the overrepresentation of women and the expansion of labour precarity in the writing workforce in the television industry in South Korea (hereafter Korea). It focuses on the general administration of writers' labour, including employment status, job security, pay, and recruitment among writers across all genres of television production. I examine how women have become the overwhelming majority of writers by connecting the gendering process of the writing workforce to another shift—the precarization of labour that took place in the Korean television industry beginning in the late 1980s. In making this connection, this chapter explores the intersection of gender and labour issues in the Korean television industry.

This chapter's point of departure is based on one of the most common answers I received to the question of why interviewees felt that writers in the Korean television industry are predominantly women: because a writer's work is precarious.[27] While this reasoning surfaced for writers across genres, seniority levels, and gender categories, one so-called "top writer" made this connection especially clear: "Writers are always freelancers, which is critical. Here, there are no employment contracts or job security. Women are usually placed in jobs with less security and stability in Korean society. Therefore, most writers are women" (CJD Writer 29, personal communication, July 30, 2019). This particular writer, a woman, explained that writers' work has been gendered due to "the precarity of writers' jobs," highlighting "freelancing," not "the inherent

[27] Korean writers used the term *puranjŏn* in Korean, which can be translated as 'insecure,' 'unstable,' or 'precarious' in English, to describe their working conditions. In this dissertation, *puranjŏn* is translated as 'precarity' reflecting how the writers described specific features of their work during the interviews.

characteristics of television writers' work" (CJD Writer 29, personal communication, July 30, 2019).[28]

What does it mean when writers describe their work as *precarious*? Through my interviews with writers, I found that many of them feel their labour is precarious as a result of a range of conditions, including their employment status as freelancers, job insecurity, informality in recruitment and employment, barriers to upward mobility, and (for less experienced writers especially) low pay and status. As detailed in Chapter 2, these factors have often been identified not only in studies on the feminization of labour (McKercher, 2014; Morini, 2007) more generally, but also in studies on the precarious working conditions of (mainly freelance) workers in cultural or creative industries (Baumann, 2002; Cohen, 2012; de Peuter, 2014b; Gill, 2002; Gill & Pratt, 2008; McRobbie, 2002a, 2016; Ross, 2008, 2009; Ursell, 2000).

Labour in cultural or creative industries, as Susan Christopherson (2009) has argued, should not be considered *sui generis*, and, instead, should be put in "the context of the economic institutions that construct incentives in market economics" (p. 73). The precarious working conditions and employment status in broadcasting industries are directly relevant to industrial transformation, including the flexibilization of production in many countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States (Christopherson, 1996, 2008; D. Lee, 2018b; McGuigan, 2010; Ursell, 1998). In the Korean television industry, women writers began to outnumber men in 1990 and became overwhelmingly predominant over the following decade, as shown in Figure 1.1 (See Chapter 1). In the 1990s, the Korean broadcasting industry, which includes the Korean television industry,[29] began to face a range of transformations, such as the liberalization of media

[28] Why do writers think that the majority of writers are now women because writers' work is precarious? When the writers interviewed for this project pointed to precarity as a reason for the gendering of writers' work, many tended to say that they had no idea why or how women have become the majority of writers, but they knew why men cannot work as writers.

[29] While this dissertation focuses on television writers, and the production process of television shows in Korea, this chapter includes discussions on the political-economic transformation of the Korean 'broadcasting' industry, to which the Korean 'television' industry belongs. This inclusion helps explain important transformations within the Korean television industry that have been impacted by regulatory and economic changes surrounding the broadcasting industry more broadly rather than surrounding the television industry more specifically. Nevertheless, this chapter also uses the terms television writers and the Korean television industry because the Korean broadcasting industry also includes the radio industry. 'Radio' writers work as an independent group, which this dissertation does not focus on (See Section 1.3 in Chapter 1).

markets, increased competition among broadcasters, and flexibilization of production (Y. H. Kim, 2008; C. K. Lee & Song, 2010), which will be discussed in detail in the following section.

These general transformations in the 1990s, however, only offer a limited explanation for why women became so significantly overrepresented among writers. Technically, the increasing number of women in writing positions began to increase before the 1990s. In the 1980s, in reference to the total number of writers across genres, the number of women writers began to increase remarkably in contrast to men in the Korean television industry. As a result, in the CJD production sector women began to outnumber men in 1988, a milestone repeated among drama writers in 1992 and entertainment writers in 2000. Another important point is that general industrial transformations do not explain why women were predominant in the writing positions in the 1990s, while several comparable positions, such as producer-directors (PDs) and journalists, who often cooperate with writers in the production of television shows, were predominantly men. Men comprised almost 80% to 90% of the salaried PDs and journalists in major terrestrial broadcasters during the 1990s and early 2000s (S. Lee, 2004; S. Youn & Lee, 2003).[30]

As a result, the exploration of the relationship between the overrepresentation of women and the precarization of writers' work in the Korean television industry needs to answer two questions. How were writers' labour conditions different from those of other positions, such as PDs, in the 1990s? How was the work of writers transformed at this time? Secondly, how did precarity, which is characterized by job insecurity, informality in recruitment, barriers to upward mobility, and low pay and status, become the dominant mode through which writers' labour is shaped and experienced?

Through my research, I found that the Korean television industry began to introduce women workers into the writing workforce who had already worked as freelancers in the early 1980s, and it reorganized the workers who wrote scripts for fiction shows into the current forms of the three television writing genre groups during the 1980s and 1990s: drama, entertainment, and CJD writers. These writer groups' duties were also reorganized. In fact, the introduction of the writer position in non-fiction

[30] In 2003, the percentage of women PDs in KBS, MBC, and SBS was estimated to be just under 12% (journalists represented 9.15%) (S. Lee, 2004, p. 128).

meant an influx of women workers in precarious positions into the industry when most comparable workers were predominantly men who were permanent full-time employees. Crucially, and as we will explore more in detail further along in this dissertation, the job description for writers expanded from simply writing scripts for fiction shows to a range of tasks beyond writing, including researching, casting, editing, and coordinating for non-fiction shows. During this period, the expansion of the writers' working responsibilities coincided with the introduction and expansion of precarious, gendered workers (women) to all programs in the Korean television industry. My research further reveals that after the late 1990s when the precarization of labour in the industry was expanded into previously secure occupations such as PDs, writers who were already freelancers experienced the current forms of precarity through diverse mechanisms, such as an increasing informality in recruitment and employment, expansion of apprenticeship, and intensive competition.[31]

To explain these findings, in the following sections, first, I briefly explain the transformation of the Korean television industry (and more broadly the Korean broadcasting industry), since the late 1980s. Second, I show how with the reorganization of writers in the last two decades of the 20th century most television shows produced by terrestrial broadcasters, such as KBS and MBC, hired workforces of freelancers who were predominantly women. Next, I discuss how the neoliberal labour regulations accelerated the casualization of labour that occurred in the Korean broadcasting industry after the Asian financial crisis in 1997. This financial crisis is also known as the Asian Debt Crisis (J. Song, 2011). The particular crisis that occurred in South Korea as part of the Asian financial crisis is often called the IMF Crisis by Koreans (B. Kim, 2022) and the Korean financial crisis by other scholars (e.g., Shim, 2002). After that, I show how writers' precarity worsened in the first two decades of the 21st century. I conclude this chapter by pointing out that the women workers' participation has been expanded into another job position since the job security has increased in that position.

The history offered in this chapter mainly relies on my analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with writers across three genres for this dissertation. Regarding the

[31] The timelines, such as the 1990s and mid-2000s, are suggested to show general trends that are linked to the transformation of the Korean television industry, rather than a precise and strict chronology. It is difficult to precisely clarify the order and period because concrete changes occurred gradually and overlapped.

writers' experiences in the 1980s and 1990s, I mainly draw on 17 interviews with three writers who have worked as fiction or non-fiction writers since the 1980s, two drama writers, three entertainment writers, and nine CJD writers who started their careers in the 1990s. For writers' working history in general in the Korean television industry in the 2000s and 2010s, I am able to draw on analysis of a broader range of the interviews I conducted. I also rely on a literature focused around the political-economic transformation of the Korean television industry. Additionally, I draw on graduate students' theses that have investigated writers' work (predominantly CJD writers), as well as other scholarly research on non-standard labour in the Korean television industry.

3.2. The political-economic transformation of the Korean broadcasting industry

This section provides a description of the political and economic context that shaped the precarization of cultural work among Korean television writers. In particular, it pays special attention to how the Korean broadcasting industry has been transformed since the late 1980s. I show how a range of political and economic processes and regulatory shifts—including the commercialization of cultural products, the liberalization of media markets, increased competition, and the flexibilization of production—became dominant in the Korean broadcasting industry under a more markedly neoliberal approach to regulating the industry. This section shows how this industrial transformation was driven by Korean state policies and global discourses about the knowledge-based economy (S.-H. Kwon & Kim, 2014; Shim, 2002) and creative economy (H.-K. Lee, 2016) which I surveyed in the last chapter.

From 1962 to 1988, authoritarian military governments in Korea deployed economic policies that focused on economic development through 'export-oriented industrialization' (Koo, 2001; S.-H. Kwon & Kim, 2014). The industries promoted by these military governments were labour-intensive manufacturing industries ranging from light manufacturing to chemical production (S.-H. Kwon & Kim, 2014). Military governments tended to see and use cultural production as an ideological instrument to justify their authoritarian regimes, and controlled the mass media through censorship and limitations on the freedom of the press (Ryoo & Jin, 2020; Shim, 2002). In particular, the Chun Doo-Whan administration (1980–1988) restructured the Korean broadcasting

industry by merging 29 broadcasters, including commercial broadcasters, into two major public broadcasters (KBS and MBC) in 1980. This action was part of the "compulsory reform of the media" (*Eoron-tongpaehap*), a state media policy aimed at controlling the freedom of the press (Shim, 2008, p. 23). As a result, by the 1980s a duopoly of the two major terrestrial broadcasters dominated the industry. The major terrestrial broadcasters had a vertically-integrated production/distribution system that encompassed planning, production, programming, and distribution (D. Kim, 2010; J. W. Kim, 2008; C. K. Lee & Song, 2010). This policy framework speaks to how before the late 1980s the government did not approach cultural products such as television and radio programs, films, and newspapers, as commodities relevant to export-oriented economic development (H.-K. Lee, 2016; Ryoo & Jin, 2020; Shim, 2002). Between the 1960s and the 1980s, a Korean military regime controlled the country's cultural products, including television programs to advocate state political and economic objectives, such as the promotion of nationalism and economic development through hard work and personal sacrifice, and repressed other cultural products that did not support the military regime (S.-H. Kwon & Kim, 2014, p. 425).

In 1987, the Korean national democratization movement (*minjuhwa undong*) led to the restoration of electoral democracy. In the following decades, the country experienced a drastic transformation due to the combination of political democratization and economic neoliberalization (H.-K. Lee, 2016, p. 442). A number of neoliberal policies, including the deregulation of the financial market and the "internationalization of the Korean economy" was established by the first civilian government, the Kim Young-Sam administration (1993–1998) (H.-K. Lee, 2016, p. 443).[32] Notably, this government was also motivated by the global policy and academic concepts such as that of the "knowledge-based economy" and "information society" (S.-H. Kwon & Kim, 2014; H.-K. Lee, 2016). These discourses commonly defined the industries producing intangible products such as knowledge and information as the key drivers of economic development, and stressed a vision of knowledge workers as 'human capital,' the flexibilization of production, and the small-scale production of diverse products (H.-K. Lee, 2016, p. 440). As part of this vision, the government promoted, regulated, and

[32] At that time, the government promoted the campaign for globalization. This campaign was also one of the government's reactions to pressures to opening Korea's markets to the world from the United States and other leading economies (Jin, 2011; Ryoo, 2008).

subsidized cultural sectors as new national strategic industries, focusing on the potential commercial value of cultural products, like television programs, films, and music in the global media market (Jin, 2011; S.-H. Kwon & Kim, 2014; Shim, 2002). In addition, cases of successful Korean cultural products, often referred to as forming 'The Korean Wave' or *Hallyu*, encouraged the government to approach cultural products as new exportable commodities during the 2000s (H.-K. Lee, 2016, p. 445). The Korean Wave refers to "the rapid growth of Korea's cultural industries and their exports of cultural products in Asia mainly since 1997" (Jin & Yoon, 2017, p. 2243). In particular, television dramas were considered to be an emerging marketable commodity capable of supporting the export-oriented economy because Korean television dramas gained popularity in several East Asian countries, such as Japan and China in the late 1990s (Jin, 2016; M. H. Lee & Lee, 2005).[33]

In line with the state's promotion of cultural industries, since the 1990s most Korean universities and colleges have established undergraduate majors related to communication and journalism (C. Kim, 2014, p. 566). In particular, the creative writing major (*Munye ch'angjak*) has become increasingly popular. To illustrate, colleges and universities that offer this program grew from two institutions in the mid-1980s to around 40 in the late 1990s (Park, 2000). 35 colleges and universities offered a creative writing major in 2019, according to the Korean Educational Statistic Service (KESS, 2020).[34]

In the late 1980s, the vertically-integrated production and distribution systems with the national networks became a subject for debate (S.-H. Kwon & Kim, 2014; Shim, 2002). Critical voices argued that the oligopoly did not present enough variety of perspectives from Korean society, and did not satisfy the cultural needs of the public (Shim, 2002, 2008; S.-M. Youn & Jang, 2002). Using this criticism as leverage, the government restructured its broadcasting industry in order to raise the degree of

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[33] In 1997, the Korean drama series *What Is Love?* (*sarangi mwŏgillae*, MBC 1991-1992) was exported to China and became known as one of the first television shows in the Korean wave (Jin & Yoon, 2017). Originally, this drama series was aired in 1991 and 1992 in the Korean domestic market, and the average audience rating was 59.6%, which continues to hold first ranking in Korea today. Another drama that gained popularity in Asia is *Stars in My Heart* (*pyŏrŭn nae kasŭme,* 1997), which is a love story. Thanks to this drama, the actor, Ahn Jae-wook, who was cast as a supporting role originally shot to stardom in Asia.

[34] I counted the number of the institutions offering programs that have "creative writing" in their program titles from the list of institutions and majors provided by the Korean educational statistic service (KESS, 2020).

competition in the broadcasting market and promote the commercialization of programs in two ways. First, in order to weaken the dominance of the two terrestrial broadcasters the government increased the number of broadcasting companies by making more licenses available (I.-H. Kang, 2003; Shim, 2008). The government policy was supported by the *Broadcasting Law* enacted in 1990 and the *Cable Television Act* of 1991. As a result, a commercial terrestrial broadcaster, SBS, was launched in 1991 and 30 cable television channels, such as Yonhap Television News (YTN) and Mnet (with the introduction of a cable television system), began operating in 1995 (Korea Press Foundation, 1997).[35] In the 1990s regional broadcasting stations, such as the Kwangju Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), Taegu Broadcasting Corporation (TBC), Taejon Broadcasting Corporation (TJB), and Pusan Broadcasting (PSB) began to air shows (I.-H. Kang, 2003). In the beginning, SBS was a regional broadcaster that covered the Seoul metropolitan area. Subsequently, it functioned as a network for KBS and MBC by providing their shows to other new regional television stations, such as PSB and TJB (Shim, 2008). As a result, the introduction of SBS led to a new form of oligopoly by the three major broadcasters with networks (i.e., KBS, MBC, SBS) and increased commercialization (D. Kim, 2010, p. 164).

Second, to dismantle the vertically-integrated production system of the major terrestrial broadcasters, in 1991 the Korean government implemented the “compulsory outsourcing policy for programs” (henceforth “outsourcing policy”), which forced the broadcasters to air at least a designated percentage of programs made by independent television production companies (Shim, 2008). This policy aimed to diversify the production of television programs by promoting production by independent companies and thereby spurring the development of the independent production sector (J. Kim, 2003). In 1991, this outsourcing policy was implemented in accordance with the *Enforcement Decree of the Broadcasting Act* (D. Kim, 2010). In 2000, the Korean government legislated the *Broadcasting Act Article 72*, known as the *Programming of Broadcast Content Genuinely Produced by External Producers* (J. Kim, 2001). The designated percentage of programs produced by independent television production companies increased gradually from 3% in 1991 to 40% in 2003 (J. Kim, 2003). In the 2000s and 2010s, it remained between 20% and 40% (Y. S. Lee & Kim, 2017). As a

[35] In 2019, the overall number of cable television channels in South Korea was more than 100 (KOCCA, 2021).

result of this policy, the total number of independent television production companies (hereafter independent companies) increased significantly. Thus, while it stood at only eight in the late 1980s (Jin, 2007, p. 239), after this policy was passed the total number of independent production companies increased to 108 in 1998, 851 in 2007 and 1502 in 2015 (C. Joo et al., 2017, p. 292).

As the percentage of programs produced by independent production companies has increased, the vertically-integrated production system of the broadcasters has been seemingly dismantled, and the dominance of terrestrial broadcasters such as KBS, MBC, and SBS, has decreased in the production market (C. K. Lee & Song, 2010). However, the terrestrial broadcasters still retain a powerful position in the market as they make the key decisions around conceiving and planning television programs. Independent production companies are more likely to play the role of subcontractors of the broadcasters rather than producing their own content independently (H. Y. Jang, 2017; Moon, 2011). In reality, the broadcasters tend to take advantage of independent production companies by outsourcing their production to them in order to decrease their production costs (Jin, 2007), which is a common feature of the outsourcing process under post-Fordism. In the CJD sector, independent production companies in particular are small and subordinate to the broadcasters, and the working conditions of workers in such companies tend to be insecure and unstable (C. K. Lee & Song, 2010).

The aforementioned Korean media policies aimed to promote competition in the broadcasting industry in order to diversify the range of sources of information and voices featured on television, an effort which was expected to encourage political and cultural democratization (Shim, 2008, p. 23). At the same time, these policies were driven by an economic rationale which is that competition would enhance the quality of television shows, which would then contribute to their growth and the likelihood of being exported (J.-W. Kwon, 2007). These two approaches were based on different motivations, but were identically grounded in the neoliberal assumption that a competitive market would naturally generate a diversity in programming (S.-M. Youn & Jang, 2002). They, in reality, also placed program production into a free market competitive system (J. W. Kim,

2008).[36] Moreover, the major terrestrial broadcasters (i.e., KBS, MBC, SBS) still hold a large amount of market power (C. K. Lee, 2009).

In 2011, four major Korean newspaper companies established the four new nationwide private generalist cable television networks: the Joongang Tongyang Broadcasting Company (JTBC), TV Chosun, Channel A, and the Maeil Broadcasting Network (MBN). Before the introduction of these networks, the government again assumed incorrectly that competition would reduce the power of the major terrestrial broadcasters and encourage diversity and quality (G.-M. Park & Woo, 2015, p. 132). With the launch of these new networks, competition and marketization increased again (H. Choi, 2012).

Some Korean scholars have argued that the flexibilization of production in the Korean broadcasting sector began to occur in the 1990s as a result of the regulatory and sectoral transformations described above (e.g., D. Kim, 2010; C.-K. Lee, 2009). Nevertheless, many Korean scholars have pointed to the late 1990s after the Asian financial crisis as the period when the flexibilization of labour began in earnest and workers started to become precarious in the industry (e.g., B.-S. Kim & Kim, 2011; D. Kim, 2010; Y. H. Kim, 2008; C. K. Lee & Song, 2010; C.-K. Lee & Song, 2014). The reason why they stressed the late 1990s as the starting point of the precarization of labour is mainly because, as discussed above, these studies have tended to focus on PDs, most of whom are full-time, permanent employees across the Korean broadcasting industry including the broadcasters and the independent production companies and predominantly men in the last decade of the 20th century (C. K. Lee & Song, 2010). For example, while Lee (2009) studied precarious workers, including CJD writers, he stated only that “the flexibilization of the workforce in the Korean broadcasting industry began in the 1990s, and it was accelerated by the Asian financial crisis in 1997” without paying much attention to the writing workforce (p. 281). As discussed in Chapter 1, this skewed treatment of precarization is a result of overlooking the labour of television writers who worked as freelancers in the 1980s and 1990s. The next section shows how the

[36] Specifically, as SBS accelerated the intense competition for viewer ratings, the number of entertainment-oriented programs increased, but diversity in the programs decreased (Y. H. Kim, 2008, p. 120). In addition, the outsourcing policy decreased the diversity of content even though the number of entirely independent production companies and the ratio of programs produced by them have increased (J. Kim, 2001; J. W. Kim, 2008; S. Park & Yang, 2006).

casualization of labour in the Korean television industry became prevalent through the gendering and expansion of the writing workforce over the 1980s and 1990s.

3.3. Feminized freelancers in the making (1980s-1990s)

In this section, I zero in on the process through which the number of writers and the proportion of women writers dramatically increased in the 1980s and 1990s. I then demonstrate that this growth in the writing workforce, and this overrepresentation of women should be understood above all as the result of the introduction of precarious (freelancer) positions in the Korean television industry. As discussed in Chapter 1, writers have their own distinctive working experiences regarding what they do and how they work based on the genre of television they work to produce. For example, while drama writers mainly write scripts, entertainment and CJD writers conduct a variety of forms of work (e.g., research, coordination, casting, editing) in addition to writing scripts. In this section, I explore how these additional responsibilities were added on top of the work of writers at the same time as the overrepresentation of women and precarization of labour occurred in the industry. First, I show how in the 1980s the television industry expanded its workforce of writers by bringing script writers into the production of non-fiction programs, such as journalism shows and documentaries. I then describe how writers were reorganized into three different groups during the 1990s. Finally, I discuss how the industry turned its attention to the formation of a workforce of writers in precarious employment that would suit its needs through informal recruitment and private job training centres.

1980s: The creation of non-fiction writers

Until the late 1980s, men were overrepresented in all genres among more experienced writers with the Korea Television and Radio Writers Association (KTRWA) memberships (See Table 3.1 below). However, Table 3.1 shows that during the 1980s there was a definitive increase in the number of women entering into the Korean television industry as writers. In addition, since (as described in Chapter 1) the KTRWA memberships are provided only to writers who meet the minimum experience requirements, it is plausible that the real number of women was even higher before 1990, when women outnumbered men among experienced writers.

Table 3.1 The total number of television writers with KTRWA membership by genre from 1982 to 2001

Year	Drama			Entertainment			CJD			Total		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
1982	12	23	35	0	2	2	0	2	2	12	27	39
1983	12	25	37	0	2	2	0	2	2	12	29	41
1984	13	25	38	0	2	2	0	2	2	13	29	42
1985	18	29	47	0	2	2	1	4	5	19	35	54
1986	18	31	49	0	2	2	2	5	7	20	38	58
1987	20	32	52	0	3	3	3	6	9	23	41	64
1988	24	34	58	1	9	10	**9**	**8**	**17**	34	51	85
1989	31	37	68	2	14	16	11	8	19	44	59	103
1990	36	39	75	2	16	18	27	9	36	**65**	**64**	**129**
1991	40	41	81	3	16	19	39	10	49	82	67	149
1992	**47**	**42**	**89**	3	17	20	49	12	61	99	71	170
1993	60	43	103	8	20	28	60	16	76	128	79	207
1994	66	45	111	11	21	32	75	16	91	152	82	234
1995	80	50	130	12	27	39	93	17	110	185	94	279
1996	91	52	143	14	32	46	109	17	126	214	101	315
1997	107	57	164	16	38	54	128	18	146	251	113	364
1998	128	64	192	23	40	63	167	19	186	318	123	441
1999	138	65	203	34	40	74	198	20	218	370	125	495
2000	160	72	232	**61**	**40**	**101**	270	21	291	491	133	624
2001	193	73	266	99	45	144	329	22	351	621	140	761

Source: Korea Television and Radio Writers Association (statistics from January 11, 2019)
Note: The years when women writers outnumbered men, and their numbers of writers are highlighted. The Korea Television and Radio Writers Association (KTRWA) presented annual statistics on the number of writers with membership since 1982. They have sporadic statistics regarding writers before 1982.

As illustrated in Table 3.1, before the 1990s, the total number of writers in the CJD and entertainment sectors was very low. In the early 1980s only fiction genres, such as comedy shows (which are categorized as entertainment shows in the Korean television industry), and dramas had dedicated writing positions on production teams. In the non-fiction sectors, most programs were not scripted, and, if some programs needed writing, such as narrations, PDs wrote them. In these genres the people employed in writer positions mainly engaged in writing scripts (E. H. Lee, 1997). In the non-fiction genres it was generally the PDs who conducted a range of different tasks in addition to writing, including directing, casting, and researching (CJD PD 1, personal communication, November 1, 2018), and most PDs were full-time, permanent employees of the broadcasters recruited through formal recruitment processes from the late 1960s (S. Kim, 2007). This process remained the same until the last decade of the 20th century (B. S. Kim & Kim, 2011, p. 29).

Korean state policy increased the required minimum ratio of CJD programs in the overall programming at major terrestrial broadcasters such as MBC and KBS from 20% to 30% in 1973, and then to 40% in 1981. Korean authoritarian military governments established this policy based on the reasoning that CJD programs are educational and informative, supporting public interests, as opposed to entertainment shows which were seen as crude and decadent (M. Baek, 2012; H.-J. Cho, 2003).

With the increased airtime devoted to CJD programs there was a corresponding need for a larger workforce to address the new production requirements (Won, 2007, p. 15). In the 1980s, the major broadcasters created non-fiction writing positions which were also responsible for scriptwriting and/or researching duties in order to decrease the workload of permanent, full-time PDs. Crucially, writers were hired for these positions instead of PDs (Y. Hong, 2011, p. 43; E. H. Lee, 1997).[37] Notably, in the 1970s and 1980s most writers received designated writing and script-researching fees on a per minute basis rather than wages, which indicates that they worked as freelancers, not employees (KTRWA, 2000).[38] Therefore, I argue that the emergence of positions for non-fiction writers, who were generally hired as freelancers, was a critical moment in the introduction and expansion of a contingent workforce in non-fiction production sectors, and broadcasters hired women for those precarious positions.

According to one interviewee the growing number of non-fiction writers in the 1980s mainly engaged in writing scripts, and often worked for several different programs at the same time (O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018). These writers worked on both entertainment and CJD programs, and no clear distinction was made between writers according to the genre they helped produce. Interviewees who worked on non-fiction productions in the 1980s told me that they felt that their pay was relatively high and did not feel like they were being treated unfairly as is common in the experience of writers currently (C. Joo, personal communication, September 14, 2018; O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018).

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[37] Ok-young Kim, a senior writer who started her career in 1982, recounted that PDs devised plots and edited videos while she wrote narrations based on the edited video clips. She said that, in the 1980s, she engaged in more diverse tasks because she wanted to get more deeply involved in the production process, not because PDs forced her to do so (O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018).

[38] I was not able to find precise record of the payment forms for writers before the 1980s.

While major broadcasting companies occasionally offered formal competitive recruitment pushes for fiction writers,[39] most started their careers through informal networking paths, such as personal recommendations. PDs played a significant role in hiring writers, predominantly based on their demonstrated writing skills (C. Joo, personal communication, September 14, 2018). Writers learned how to write scripts for television shows while working on production teams. Three writers who started their careers in the 1980s began as *writers* and, at that time, no positions existed similar to today's assistant writer positions (which became prevalent as an occupational rank in the mid-1990s) (Drama Writer 17, personal communication, August 17, 2019; C. Joo, personal communication, September 14, 2018; O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018). Instead, researchers were working on the programs, but they were independent professionals, rather than assistant or aspiring writers acquiring experience in order to become writers.

1990s: Making a feminized workforce

When women began to outnumber men in writing positions in the 1990s, the total number of writers overall drastically increased—a whole 382% (from 39 to 149) between 1982 and 1991 and 425% (from 179 to 761) between 1992 and 2001 (See Table 3.1). As new broadcasting companies, such as SBS in 1991, and 30 cable television channels in 1995, launched (See Section 3.2), the total number of programs produced in the Korean television industry increased as did the need for writers in the industry (M. H. Choi, 2017). The more significant factor according to my interviews for this dissertation, however, was likely the increased number of writers per program as a result of the expanded duties of writers. Specifically, whereas drama writers continued to mainly write scripts for fiction shows just as they had in the 1980s, the duties of other writers gradually expanded to include other forms of work beyond writing, including selecting topics, coordinating, casting, and editing (Y. Hong, 2011). The number of writers per program in the entertainment and CJD sectors also gradually increased according to my interviews. A key indicator of this shift is the fact that, in the 1980s, entertainment programs had only one writer each, whereas by the mid 2000s some entertainment shows hired up to 10 writers per show. In recent years, most entertainment programs have had a writing team that compromises four to 14 writers per show (ENT Writer 16,

[39] Since the 1970s, broadcasting companies irregularly engaged in formal recruitment for traditional types of writers who mainly wrote fiction, such as dramas or comedy shows (Y. Hong, 2011, p. 51).

personal communication, October 18, 2018). My interviews also suggest that, as the overall number of duties associated with writer positions expanded, most non-fiction writers no longer worked by moving between entertainment and CJD positions like they did in the 1980s. Therefore, I see the 1990s as the period when entertainment and CJD writers began to become clearly divided.[40]

My interviews indicate that the expanded scope of CJD and entertainment writers' work during the 1990s was originally attributed to the reallocation of duties assigned to in-house, permanently employed PDs originally. For example, one interviewee explained: "writers in one entertainment program began to take on various tasks, such as casting, which PDs had been previously responsible for" (ENT Writer 14, personal communication, October 1, 2018). Based on my interviews, I argue that in-house PDs played a critical role in redefining the duties of writers because the former had the right to hire and manage writers in the production process of shows. One writer's experience confirms this: "entertainment writers who could bring out good ideas were preferable in the past. However, nowadays, PDs want writers who can work with them throughout the entire production process" (ENT Writer 16, personal communication, October 18, 2018). A similar process occurred in the production of CJD programming (Y. Hong, 2011).[41]

An important question related to this process is why upper management in the television industry expanded the roles and work of writers and not those of other workers such as PDs. One of the plausible reasons for this expansion is the different employment status between writers and the others as mentioned above. In the 1990s,

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[40] Entertainment and CDJ shows each have their distinctive production process. For example, in entertainment programs, writers in one program work on a team while collaborating with each other, and the writer's work has become clearly divided from the PD's work. In contrast, a CJD writer usually collaborates with a CJD PD per individual unit of programming.

[41] This expansion of writers' responsibilities is still occurring in entertainment programs. One writer interviewee explained:

> In my broadcasting company, a shortage of professionals, such as assistant directors and PDs, has occurred. As a result, writers have worked as substitutes in order to make up for that kind of work. Now, I feel that the company automatically assumes that I can do it. (ENT Writer 7, personal communication, September 4, 2018)

This writer had to undertake more work without an increase in pay. She worked for a terrestrial broadcaster, where the number of directing/producing workforce members with standard employment decreased because the workforce moved to new companies, such as JTBC. In fact, as this writer's case shows, it is not easy for writers to refuse expanded duties or an increased workload because they are in precarious employment.

particularly before the Asian financial crisis in 1997, PDs were generally men on standard employment contracts with both the broadcasters and independent production companies (C. K. Lee & Song, 2010), while all writers worked as freelancers. Although the boundaries of non-fiction writers went beyond writing scripts and researching, broadcasters paid writers a 'writing fee' and/or a 'researching fee,' not a wage. They generally calculated the payment for writers' labour as part of the production costs, not labour costs (I.-H. Kang, 2004, pp. 26–27), a situation that continues to the present day.

In this way, the expansion of writers' working responsibilities in non-fiction programming meant that broadcasters hired writers who were predominantly women through non-standard employment instead of PDs who were predominantly men workers in standard employment. In other words, I argue that by expanding the writing workforce, who were working as freelancers, broadcasters both casualized their growing workforce and decreased production costs. In an interview, one entertainment writer who experienced the transition said that, in the 1990s, "instead of PDs with standard employment, the broadcasters started hiring more and more writers" (ENT Writer 16, personal communication, October 18, 2018). Similarly, when I asked why broadcasters did not hire CJD writers as permanent, full-time workers in recent years, one CJD PD with more than 20 years of experience told me: "If they wanted to hire more workers in standard employment, they would hire more PDs, not writers. These days, broadcasters try to decrease the number of PDs in standard employment" (CJD PD 1, personal communication, November 1, 2018).

The formation of the writing workforce and discriminatory opportunities

Interviews conducted for this dissertation underscore how major terrestrial broadcasting companies such as KBS, MBC, and SBS partially utilized formal competitive recruitment processes to recruit some of entry-level, CJD and entertainment writers in the 1990s. The recruitment processes involved screening CVs, written exams, and interviews. In the 1990s, the main recruitment method for writers was still informal, personal recommendations that PDs used through their social network (E. H. Lee, 1997, p. 17). Although the formal recruitment processes were not a major method to recruit, it is plausible that, because this formal recruitment process was public, it played a role in legitimizing writers in the CJD and entertainment sectors as new professionals. Writers who passed through the formal competitive recruitment processes were called

‘*kongch’ae chakka’* (in English, “writers recruited formally by a broadcaster”) (H. Jang & Noh, 2019, p. 266).

Even if these rounds of hiring were more formal, the broadcasters did not grant standard employment to *kongch’ae chakka,* however, hiring them as freelancers as they did with other writers. This practice was discriminatory because, at that time, broadcasters utilized this formal recruitment process for entry-level, permanent, full-time workers. For instance, PDs and journalists who were recruited through this process were hired into standard employment contracts. Not surprisingly, several interviewees who started their careers as *kongch’ae chakka* expressed their bitterness at their employment status. For example, one interviewee said that “I felt that it was unfair that my broadcasting company recruited using almost the same recruitment process as PDs and put me in unfair working conditions” (Drama Writer 13/CJD, personal communication, November 22, 2018).

In the 1990s, some broadcasters began to tap into an emergent writing workforce through their own job training centres. The major broadcasting companies established private job training centres called *pangsong ak’ademi* (in English, “broadcasting academies”), such as the MBC Academy, established in 1991. The *pangsong ak’ademi* have offered training programs for aspiring writers in all genres, but do not provide official degrees or relevant credits, while charging expensive tuition fees. For example, in recent years, one writer paid approximately three to four million won ($3,000 to $4,000 CAD) for the registration and tuition fees for one academy, which was a similar amount to her university tuition (ENT Writer 18, personal communication, October 29, 2018). The titles of these programs include ‘class for non-fiction writers’ and ‘class for drama writers.’ Most trainees have been post-secondary school students or graduates. Generally, the training periods are between three and six months, and assistant writers must work for several months to offset their education fees. In recent years, the *pangsong ak’ademi* have recruited trainees using CVs and/or interviews, although most interviewees did not think that admission into these training centres was difficult. At these job training centres, trainees for CJD and entertainment writer positions learned how to choose topics for episodes, research data, and write scripts. The *pangsong ak’ademi* also provided programs for aspiring drama writers. The Korea Television and Radio Writers Association (KTRWA) established its own training institution called the KTRWA Academy (KTRWA *kyoyugwŏn*) in 1988, which is a more popular choice for

aspiring drama writers than the *pangsong ak'ademi*. The training fees from this institution have been much cheaper than the *pangsong ak'ademi* and scholarships are also granted to trainees in the most upper-level course. These educational institutions have contributed to promotion of television writing positions to the public and potential workers. Indeed, several interviewees who started their career in the 1990s told me that they first learnt that CJD and entertainment programs had writing positions, and even that the occupation of non-fiction writers existed at all, through the advertisements of *pangsong ak'ademi*. It takes assistant writers several months to make enough money to make back the funds they paid in tuition fees. These writers are arguably exploited twice over—having been overcharged for job training in *pangsong ak'ademi* and then underpaid for a precarious job.

3.4. Structural reforms and the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis

After the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, the precarization of labour that writers experienced was expanded into other occupations in the Korean broadcasting industry due to changes in labour policies in Korean society. Broadly, the neoliberal reforms started in the late 1980s in Korea as described in Section 3.2. As labour scholar Hagen Koo (2007a) explains, although, since the early 1990s, the Korean government and companies tried "to reduce labour costs and increase flexibility in labour utilization," the Asian financial crisis accelerated "the neoliberal restructuring or the flexibilization of the labor market" (p. 5) in part due to pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). For example, the Korean government implemented neoliberal structural reforms that included the liberalization of the financial market, deregulation of corporate governance, privatization of the public sector, and flexibilization of the labour market (B. Kim, 2017; K.-Y. Shin, 2011). Most significantly, the Korean government reformed its labour policies as a requirement for a bailout from the IMF in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis. One of the critical changes to labour policies in the country occurred in February 1998, when labour laws were amended to allow layoffs and temporary agency employment (*p'agyŏn kŭllo*)[42] (D. Kim, 2010, p. 4). The reformed labour policy immediately led to "mass layoffs, including involuntary early retirement and a drastic

[42] Temporary agency workers are temporary workers who are hired by temporary help agencies and dispatched to firms (Fu, 2016, p. 1).

increase in casual or contingent workers, such as part-time workers, dispatched workers [temporary agency workers], and contract workers" in the late 1990s (K.-Y. Shin, 2011, p. 17). As a result, the neoliberal labour policy led to a general casualization of labour and an increase in job insecurity in the Korean labour market (B. Kim, 2017).

In addition, in 2007, the Korean government began enforcing the *non-standard worker protection laws* (*pijŏnggyujik pohobŏp*),[43] which made employment more insecure (J. Lee, 2017). Originally, these laws were aimed at resolving the pay gap between workers with standard and non-standard employment as well as decreasing job insecurity. They limited the employment period for contingent/temporary agent workers to two years and forced companies to employ temporary workers who had worked for more than two years as permanent workers. However, the laws allowed companies to legally employ workers on a short-term basis, which aggravated the job insecurity of workers in non-standard employment (D. Kim, 2010). As a result, these laws accelerated the increase in freelancers in the Korean broadcasting industry as companies increasingly avoided establishing employment relationships with workers (D. Kim, 2010).

After the Asian financial crisis, major broadcasters restructured their labour forces and employment relationships pointing to a decrease in advertising income as the reason such changes were necessary (B. S. Kim & Kim, 2011). The restructuring tended to mean that broadcasters increased the proportion of workers with non-standard employment in order to decrease their overall labour costs (S. Youn & Lee, 2003, p. 178). Thanks to union protection, permanent, full-time workers at MBC and KBS, such as PDs and journalists, were able to avoid being laid off.[44] Instead, broadcasters implemented voluntary retirement/resignation for permanent, full-time workers, offering financial compensation (Y. H. Kim, 2008, p. 209). In contrast to this treatment of permanent employees, broadcasters laid off temporary workers who were not represented by unions, including art designers, drivers, security guards, and cleaning staff (D. Kim, 2010, p. 234). Broadcasters also began to hire the majority of new workers

[43] In South Korea, the *non-standard worker protection laws* refer to three Acts: the *Act on the Protection, etc. of Fixed-term and Part-time employees*; the *Act on the Protection, etc. of Temporary Agency Workers*; and the *Labour Relations Commission Act.*

[44] Unions for permanent, full-time workers were established at MBC in 1987 and KBS in 1988. PDs and journalists at MBC and KBS each established their professional associations first and led the unionization of permanent, full-time workers (D. Kim, 2010, p. 146). In contrast, permanent, full-time workers at SBS did not establish a union by the end of the 1990s (D. Kim, 2010, p. 232).

on non-standard employment contracts (C. K. Lee, 2009), which only accelerated the casualization of labour. One study has shown how the proportion of non-standard employees in the broadcasting industry rose to more than 40% (e.g., 47.4% in 2002, 41.7% in 2007) since the Asian financial crisis (D. Kim, 2010, p. 4).[45] After the *non-standard worker protection laws* were implemented in 2007, broadcasters forced contract workers who had received wages and social benefits previously to work as freelancers (D. Kim, 2010, p. 250). Today, in the production teams for terrestrial broadcasters, except for one or two main directors (PDs) and some technical positions, such as sound, light, filming, and editing staff, most workers, including writers, have non-standard employment (B. S. Kim & Kim, 2011).

3.5. Feminized, precarious workers in the making (2000-present)

The broadcasters reduced writers' pay in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis (KTRWA, 2000), but, before long, due to an increase in the hiring of workers on non-standard employment contracts, companies began to hire people for a growing number of writing positions and raised pay levels for writers to pre-crisis levels (J.-S. Kim, personal communication, October 4, 2018). As writers were already freelancers, their employment status did not change during this decade. However, beginning in the late 1990s, the division of labour, the rise of extended apprenticeships, and intense competition for higher positions and jobs (for more experienced writers especially), further accelerated the precarity of writers—all of which are discussed in the following section. Next, I show how writers who were divided into several sub-groups along lines of seniority and hierarchy experienced different types of working conditions in the first two decades of the 21st century—less experienced writers struggled from less autonomy, lower pay, and a diminishing status attached to the work, while more experienced writers were more likely to receive higher pay and greater recognition, but also suffered from growing job insecurity.

[45] It is unclear if this statistic includes writers. As writers did not labour under contract with broadcasters, they were often omitted from government statistics, as mentioned in Chapter 1.

From informal members to real freelancers

As the dismantling of the vertically integrated broadcasting system and the flexibilization of its production accelerated at the end of the 1990s, broadcasters increasingly outsourced the production of programs to independent production companies. Before this industrial restructuring most writers worked for a specific broadcaster and, to some degree, considered themselves to be a part of the companies for which they worked. An interview with one drama writer shed light on this situation:

> [Freelance] writers, actors, and narrators were kind of members of the broadcasting companies. The broadcasters raised these workers. When making television dramas, the broadcasters were concerned about who needed jobs among the actors and drama writers in the 1990s. Nowadays, everyone is a real freelancer. If someone does well, then they can survive. If not, then they lose their job and disappear from this industry. I feel that the Korean television industry has become a real industry. (C. Joo, personal communication, September 14, 2018)

As another writer recalled, in decades past "most workers at a broadcaster worked with comradeship" (Drama Writer 2, personal communication, September 15, 2018). Writers moved from program to program within one company and "writers knew each other and knew who the new writers were in a production team" (CJD Writer 17, personal communication, September 8, 2018).

In contrast, in recent years, most writers move back and forth between gigs at broadcasters and independent production companies. Regarding how this flexibilization has impacted the status of writers at broadcasters, one CJD writer I interviewed suggested that "in the late 1990s, the broadcasters understood that writers needed experience and waited for young writers to mature, but nowadays, broadcasters do not support the growth of writers" (CJD Writer 29, personal communication, July 30, 2019).

Several major broadcasters and independent companies have continued to hold formal open calls for drama scripts. However, the actual function of the open calls has changed. Before the turn of the 21st century, broadcasters were more likely to find promising entry-level writers through these open calls, and after winning a position through them entry-level writers were able to work on different program formats while developing their skills. However, since the early 2000s, most broadcasters have decreased the production of drama shows such as television movies (*Tanmakkŭk*) that are only one episode long because these formats are not seen as marketable, meaning

there were fewer opportunities for entry-level drama writers who used to write scripts for this format (M. Kim & Hong, 2016, p. 48). Broadcasters now mainly produce Korean mini-series (16 or 20 episodes in length) or longer series, which are viewed as the most marketable formats (Chung, 2009). More and more broadcasters and independent production companies hold open calls for Korean mini-series that used to be written by more experienced writers. As a result, aspiring drama writers have to spend more years developing their writing skills to prepare themselves for writing mini-series for the open calls, while working as assistant writers (See Chapter 4 for details).

In terms of the CJD and entertainment production sectors, most broadcasters ceased their formal competitive recruitment processes for entry-level writers in the mid-2000s. The fact that major broadcasters had been hiring CJD and entertainment writers through formal competitive recruitment processes in the 1990s played a role in forming CJD and entertainment writing positions as new jobs offered by major broadcasters as mentioned above. In contrast, in recent years, broadcasters do not seem to have a need for the formal competitive recruitment processes for CJD and entertainment writers. Thanks to job training centres such as the *pangsong ak'ademi* and post-secondary programs, the pool of writers available for hire by companies has been greatly expanded. Specifically, I found that a large portion of the writers I interviewed who started their careers in the 2010s graduated from post-secondary schools and majored in 'creative writing', communications, or literature. Regarding this pool of aspiring writers, a drama writer whose career began in the mid-1990s stated that "although the number of television shows increased, there are more aspiring writers who have graduated with relevant majors such as creative writing. The actual opportunities available to find work as a writer seem to have decreased" (Drama Writer 10, personal communication, October 26, 2018).

Division of labour and apprenticeship

With the creation in the mid- to late-1990s of assistant writer as a new job category, Korean television writers were henceforth divided into main writers who wrote scripts and assistant writers who supported the program production. Prior to that time, writers often started their writing careers without working for a period as assistant writers (CJD Writer 2, personal communication, June 22, 2018). In contrast, more recently most entry-level writers start their careers as assistant writers in order to get a foot in the door

for the television writing labour market.[46] Assistant writers conduct research and interviews with cast members and informants to gather information necessary for the production of television programming. In addition, assistant writers often perform menial tasks, such as photocopying, taking meeting minutes, buying coffee, and ordering food for delivery. In fact, interviews conducted for this dissertation highlighted how assistant writers' work tends to be dictated by the individual needs of the PDs or main writers for whom they work. It is not easy for assistant writers to refuse underpaid labour, overtime work, and/or overwork. To this end, the assistant role has made writers' work even more precarious and vulnerable: entry-level writers now have to work with low pay at the lowest status in order to obtain a writing position. The apprenticeship period has also become a longer one over time. For example, one CJD writer I interviewed recalled being an assistant writer for close to one year in the late 1990s (CJD Writer 22, personal communication, September 28, 2018). In contrast, in recent years aspiring writers are generally required to work as assistant writers for approximately two years in the CJD sector and four years in the entertainment sector. This stage, the lowest rung on the writer career ladder, has no fixed time in the drama sector, according to the interviews for this dissertation. For example, one writer worked as an assistant writer only for one month before she became a main writer (Drama Writer 15, personal communication, July 9, 2019). However, even if a person works as an assistant writer for 10 years, the opportunity to work as a main writer is not guaranteed (Drama Writer 1, personal communication, September 6, 2018).

In terms of standards for hiring new assistant writers, the industry seems to have low requirements. "Everybody can begin to work as an assistant writer because there are no requirements or barriers, and this has both positive and negative points" (CJD Writer 16, personal communication, September 5, 2018). As already mentioned, most assistant writers are post-secondary school graduates, but many interviewees suggested that it is easy to find work as an assistant writer regardless of training. As a permanently employed PD on a standard contract suggested, "it does not make sense that employers give low pay to assistant writers who have satisfied specific industry requirements. Without an entry barrier, writers start as freelancers. When they prove

[46] For example, a CJD writer recounted that she had to start her career as an assistant writer in the mid-1990s through formal competitive recruitment processes. However, just a few years prior senior writers at her company had not had to begin their writing careers as assistant writers (S. Jung, personal communication, November 12, 2018).

their abilities, they can survive as freelancers" (ENT PD 1, personal communication, October 2, 2018). No job criteria, however, does not mean that assistant writers are not qualified. Rather, the lack of clarity shows how the industry justifies the exploitation of their underpaid and undervalued labour and how they approach entry-level writers. This industry takes no responsibility for training, nor does it even offer minimal benefits or job security to writers, at least initially.

Over the 2000s and 2010s, the writing workforce became further segmented into main, sub-, and assistant writers. In the 1990s, a sub-writer (*sŏbŭ chakka*) referred to someone who was a level below, but in training to be, a main writer. However, since the early 2000s, this group has been redefined to have distinctive features from main writers. Main writers chiefly engage in planning a show or writing scripts and often play the role of the head writer of a writing team by recruiting and supervising sub-, and assistant writers. While the specific nature of sub-writers' work varies according to genre, this group of writers tends to conduct tasks that are more repetitive, less valued, or less autonomous and receive less pay in comparison to main writers. In the CJD sector, after first working for several years as assistant writers, new sub-writers start out making shorter and simpler programs and get to access work on longer and more complex programs as they build up their experience. When they get opportunities to take responsibility for one-hour programs, they are recognized as main writers, who can negotiate their job pay with their employers individually and do more creative work. In the entertainment sector writers work on a team, and as they gain more experience, are assigned more complex and highly skilled work. In the drama sector, although they are not called sub-writers, a new writer group with similar responsibilities has been created.[47] The division of labour among emergent hierarchical categories of workers is therefore clearly and closely related to the flexibilization of labour in the broadcasting industry. By hiring assistant writers and creating the new category of sub-writers, the Korean television industry has cultivated a broader stratum of writers to serve its needs while remunerating them poorly or not at all. Furthermore, it has created new rungs in the career advancement ladder.

[47] The division of writers manifests in diverse ways according to genre. For example, several ranks of writers with varying levels of seniority work cooperatively as one writing team in the entertainment sector. In contrast, sub-writers often work in short or less valued programs in the CJD sector.

In the CJD and entertainment sectors generally most of the interviewees who started their careers right before the late-1990s became main writers in the early 2000s, after working for four or five years. In contrast, many interviewees who entered the profession in the mid-2000s experienced significant difficulty in securing an opportunity to work as main writers even though they had sometimes accumulated over 10 years of experience. The obvious takeaway from this situation is that the possibility for career progression up through the ranks has become much more limited, and progression lengthier. Most writing positions in the television industry are currently at the assistant and sub-writer level. In other words, the labour force composition has increasingly taken the form of a pyramid structure with a large proportion of positions being low status and low paying.

Competition and job insecurity

Most of the interviewees explained that they received their pay after the deduction of a 3.3% tax that is applied to self-employed workers, and that they did not receive benefits such as health and unemployment insurance. Although their responsibilities have been transformed, broadcasters still classify most writers' pay as "writing and/or researching fees" as they did 40 years ago. More experienced writers receive residuals and royalties. The broadcasters set production costs for shows and pay writers writing and/or researching fees according to shows that are aired. In other words, if particular shows do not air for one month, due, for example, to being pre-empted by major sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup or the Olympics, most writers do not receive pay. With the exception of drama writers, most CJD and entertainment writers worked without formal contracts at least until the late 2010s when I interviewed them. Generally, writers start working without clearly defined working periods. Moreover, no television writer—regardless of status—enjoys labour protections because Korea's labour laws do not apply to freelancers. For example, several writers I interviewed told me of cases in which a company failed to pay them at all, but they were unable to receive any help from the Ministry of Employment and Labour because they were not considered company employees.

The pay system for main writers is thought of as a meritocratic system. This situation manifests in various ways. At the end of the 1990s, due to the competition between independent production companies, the companies scouted renowned drama

writers with higher pay, which increased writing fees for experienced writers. For these companies, it was critical to work with competent writers because the companies pitched new drama series that writers developed for broadcasters and, when the broadcasters decided to produce the series, the companies gained outsourcing contracts from the broadcasters (See details in Chapter 4). Currently, the pay for drama writers varies according to the writers' reputation and seniority (M. Kim & Lee, 2013). In the entertainment and CJD sectors, some of the 'top' main writers work for several programs at the same time, which enables them to earn higher incomes. Due to the possibility of earning higher incomes, some writers have been satisfied working as freelancers. More recently, however, main writers have experienced increasing difficulty in finding jobs as the overall number of writers in this category increased during the 2000s and 2010s. Many main writers in my interviews expressed a familiar ambivalence about the benefits of freelancing for writers' work. For example, one writer acknowledged that "the employment of writers is insecure," but also pointed to the fact that "if entertainment writers get high reputations, then they can earn more than in any other job" (ENT Writer 6, personal communication, August 30, 2018). Many of the main writers hesitated to disclose their pay levels at all. For example, one interviewee said:

> I am wondering how much other writers receive. The pay seems to be a secret. When I make a contract, I am also confused about how much I should suggest and if my pay is appropriate in comparison to other writers. I also do not open up about how much I receive, even to very close colleagues. This is because I feel that a writer's value is measured in terms of pay and that my level of pay reflects the evaluation of my ability. (Drama Writer 15, personal communication, July 9, 2019)

As shown in this interview excerpt, main writers' labour and their identities have become more individualized and atomized in the labour market.

Most of the main writers I interviewed recognized that they are real freelancers who show their abilities and receive pay according to their reputations in the labour market. In contrast, assistant and sub-writers have different perspectives on their employment forms. This is because they usually receive equal pay according to their seniority and working patterns, which are similar to the full-time workers who are directly employed by a company. Therefore, some writers I interviewed told me that in terms of working patterns, such as working hours and workplaces and the features of tasks, assistant and sub-writers are similar to employees who have legal employment

relationships with companies, but companies force assistant and sub-writers to work as freelancers in order to avoid their legal responsibilities. In fact, the majority of CJD and entertainment writers go to broadcasters or production companies, and work more than 40 hours a week just as full-time permanent employees do.

A majority of assistant and sub-writers work like full-time employees for a television program, but receive writing and researching fees like main writers. However, the pay standards for assistant and sub-writers are different from those of main writers. By the late 2010s assistant writers I interviewed were starting their career with a monthly pay of approximately $800 to $1,200 CAD (800,000–1200,000 won) regardless of the genre they worked in. In 2018 and 2019, assistant writers' pay significantly increased to $1,500 to $1,800 CAD a month (1500,000–1800,000 won), a change driven, as mentioned in Chapter 1, by the overall increase in the national minimum wage and the growing recognition of labour conditions of assistant writers as a social problem. In the CJD and entertainment sectors, all sub-writers who began their careers in the same year received a similar level of pay across broadcasters and independent production companies. Pay is awarded on a seniority-based system according to how many years a writer has worked: with every additional year, weekly pay increases by $100 CAD (100,000 won) per week.[48] While pay is usually calculated per hour or per month in other industries, in the CJD and entertainment sectors, sub-writers are paid per week that the show is aired. This system is relevant in explaining the crucially important fact that writers do not get paid for the periods in which their programs do not air. For drama sub-writers, there are no clear rules around remuneration. Income levels for assistant and sub-writers during the 2010s were, according to interviewees, similar to the levels of the early 2000s (ENT Writer 10, personal communication, September 11, 2018). Considering that the consumer price index increased 44.4% between 1997 and 2018, this similarity means that in reality the actual pay levels of these writers decreased in real terms.

It will not come as a surprise at this point that another significant problem for writers is job insecurity. For example, one writer with 10 years' experience expressed

[48] For example, if a writer has been working for five years, they receive approximately $500 CAD (500,000 won) per week.

satisfaction with her pay and working conditions, but was concerned about job insecurity, explaining that:

> These days, my most significant concern is job security. On the top of the pyramid structure, there is only one head writer. When a writer finally establishes a career, there are fewer jobs available. PDs prefer not to hire many senior writers for a program because they have to offer higher pay to writers with more seniority (ENT Writer 9, personal communication, September 10, 2018).

As this interview indicates, in the pyramid-like structure of the writing profession, if writers do not advance in their position, they have to work for less pay, and it is more difficult to get a job. In other words, sub-writers face structural uncertainty around the possibility of continuing their careers. In addition, as mentioned above, the main writer group also suffers from a shortage of overall availability of jobs, which worsens insecurity faced by senior sub-writers in the CJD and entertainment sectors.

In the drama sector, entry-level writers do not need to work for a specified period before getting opportunities to work as main writers. However, opportunities to write scripts as main writers occur only when new drama projects that both assistant and main writers have developed are selected by broadcasters. Such conditions mean that it is very difficult for drama writers to succeed in becoming main writers and continue their careers, as they are at the mercy of what could be described as a sort of lottery system where very few shows go on to become successful.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the varied intersection between gender and precarization in writers' labour in the Korean television industry. In the 1990s, the industry faced several drastic transformations, including the regulatory liberalization of the media system, the flexibilization of production, and the commercialization of television shows. These transformations have led to the profound precarization of work and life for the writers upon whose cultural labour the sector depends.

In this period, Korean television writers were reorganized by their industry into new groups in precarious employment status, while other comparable groups such as PDs retained their relatively secure employment. Specifically, in the 1980s and 1990s, the CJD writing professionals group was created, and the entertainment writing

professionals group undertook diverse duties, such as coordinating casting and conducting editing that workers in standard employment had previously carried out. In the CJD and entertainment sectors, the overrepresentation of women in writing positions should, therefore, be understood as a result of the creation of new occupations that involved a workforce of freelancers who took duties that were previously done by a male-dominated, permanent full-time workforce. The feminization of writers' work is consistent with the gendering of work in the industry more broadly beyond the gendering of writing to some degree. The reorganization of Korean television writers' work in the last decade of the 20th century clearly demonstrates the gendered nature of work in contemporary capitalism (See Chapter 2).

In the late 1990s, the precarization of labour began to be prevalent in other positions in the television industry in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis and deepened neoliberal labour policies. Although by this period, writers were working as freelancers, diverse mechanisms, such as the informality in recruitment and employment, division of labour, extended apprenticeships, and intensive competition worsened labour problems, such as job insecurity, limited upward mobility, and underpaid labour. In other words, the labour of feminized writers who were already working as freelancers in the industry had become more precarious. As writers are freelancers, the broadcasters can hire, dismiss, and pay them without much concern for labour laws or unions.

The Korean writers' case gives a very specific example of how labour and gender issues are entangled in cultural work under post-Fordism. While conducting field research, I found that the feminization of cultural work has occurred in another profession in the Korean television industry. Several writers and PDs pointed out that the number of women PDs has increased since the late 2000s when freelancing started to become prevalent. In terms of assistant and junior PDs, women have begun to outnumber men. The interviewees thought this predominance of women was also related to the precarization of PDs' work. One writer was aware of the trend as her interview showed:

> These days, in terms of junior and assistant directors, women PDs outnumber men. I had a chance to talk about the situation with one senior PD. The PD said, 'the Korean television industry has been declining, and so the proportion of women workers in one profession is increasing.' I

> asked him why he thought the Korean television industry was in decline, as I thought the Korean television industry was growing, and the demand for writers and PDs was increasing. The PD said, 'When one industry doesn't provide jobs with decent working conditions and, as a result of the poor working conditions, competent people do not want to go into the industry, the industry is considered declining.' I could not understand why he argued that since competent people do not want this job, the number of women workers in the Korean television industry is increasing. However, now, I often think to myself that the work in the Korean television industry is getting more precarious and men don't want this work. So, women are substituting for men. I ask myself if this is our reality (CJD Writer 15, personal communication, August 29, 2018).

The above quote is from an interview with a woman writer who has worked as a writer since the mid-2000s. This trend implies that the feminization/precarization has expanded into another area.

In the chapters that follow, this dissertation delves into the labour of each writer group (i.e., drama, entertainment, CJD writers) to explore what writers do, how they do it, and how their labour is situated in the Korean television industry.

Chapter 4.

The labour of cultural conception, uncertainty, and responsibility in the work of Korean drama writers

4.1. Introduction

While known as “K-dramas” or “Korean dramas” outside of the country (e.g., Singh, 2020), “dramas” inside Korea refer broadly to various fictional narrative television shows. Drama writers in the Korean television industry can be compared to screenwriters in the United States television industry in that both write scripts for fiction shows. However, the labour processes of these two groups differ.

In the United States, television writers work within a team that consists of two groups: series creators, who have developed the show, and staff writers, who mainly write scripts for specific episodes. People on one team typically write scripts on a rotating basis or cooperatively (M. J. Banks, 2015; Caldwell et al., 2012; Davies, 2007).[49] The series creators supervise the work of other writers and sometimes rewrite scripts (Caldwell et al., 2012; Davies, 2007). Notably, staff writers often imitate the writing styles of the series creators, who have the highest degree of autonomy in their work. As Banks (2015) describes it, the staff writers “make their way in the industry by emulating the voice of a series creator” (p. 6).

By contrast, Korean dramas rarely have more than a single writer (J. S. Park et al., 2015; K. Yu & Jeong, 2019). Typically, a single person develops a drama and writes the scripts for all episodes. In other words, in Korea most television writers do the work of both the series creator and script writer in the US. In acknowledgement of the high level of creative autonomy and contribution of writers, dramas are often referred to as “writers’ art” (J. Lee & Park, 2008; Y. S. Lee & Kim, 2017; Roh, 2015). In fact, drama writing is one of the most coveted jobs in the Korean television industry. Some of my interviewees quit their prior full-time jobs, such as engineering and trading business, abandoning high salaries and benefit packages in order to pursue a career as full-fledged drama writers. While doing part-time jobs in other industries or working as

[49] The series creators often work as producer-writers (also known as showrunners), who engage in producers’ duties, such as casting and selling their products (M. J. Banks, 2015).

assistant writers in the drama production sector in the television industry, these writers had developed their own shows in the hopes of launching them.[50]

Despite the strong pull exerted by this form of work, the interviews for this research suggest that the working life of a drama writer is far from ideal. For example, as one writer described it:

> For writers, the most difficult part of the job is to conceive something new (*ch'angjak ŭi kot'ong*). Nothing can compensate for our suffering in writing scripts. One writer might write a page of a script easily. However, another writer might need to spend 100 times that time, suffering to conceive ideas. It is impossible to quantify the difficulty. Regardless of genre, all creators might face a similar difficulty. Could we call this difficulty a form of labour injustice [a labour problem] that a particular group of workers face in an industrial system? (Drama Writer 13/CJD, personal communication, November 22, 2018)

Many interviewees echoed this account of the struggle to produce. One suggested that "the most difficult part is the suffering generated by the writing process itself" (Drama Writer 10, personal communication, October 26, 2018). Another related that "writing scripts is very lonely, very anxiety-inducing, and very uncertain. Writers might understand what I mean" (Drama Writer 6, personal communication, October 4, 2018). I found that several writers identified the challenge writers face as an inherent feature of 'creative activity' (*ch'angjak hwaltong*), rather than stemming from factors like labour justice and the exploitation of labour. In this dissertation, I argue that the difficulty of conceiving new ideas for dramas is indeed a result of how the Korean television industry organizes, manages, and controls the labour of drama writers.

This chapter explores drama writers' labour and precarity in the Korean television industry, in particular focusing on the notion of the *labour of cultural conception.* The labour of cultural conception refers to the labour of imagining, conceiving, and developing ideas, and then expressing them through language in the production process of cultural and symbolic products.[51] I coined and developed this concept based on my in-

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[50] In the interviews I conducted for this dissertation with entertainment and culture/journalism/documentary (CJD) writers, several of them with more than 10 years of experience told me that they were preparing to become drama writers. Although they had to start as assistant writers in the drama production sector, they wanted to work as drama writers. These cases show that drama writing is considered a desirable job although it is extremely precarious in terms of financial and existential security as Chapter 4 shows.

[51] I acknowledge that the term 'conception' in 'the labour of cultural conception' is influenced by the term "conception" in Braverman's (1975) idea of the distinction between conception and execution in the labour process in advanced capitalism. However, cultural conception is different from Braverman's idea of 'conception.' Braverman (1975) explained that "conception must still precede

depth interviews with 18 drama writers and two producer-directors (PDs). The labour of cultural conception is a useful concept to identify one of the significant aspects of cultural work in cultural industries like the television industry.

My research shows that writers suffer from distinctive forms of precarity in performing the labour of cultural conception in the Korean television industry. The labour process of Korean drama writers usually consists of two stages. While writers perform the labour of cultural conception in both stages, the specific features of their labour process, including precarity faced, differ between the two stages. In the first stage the writer develops a new drama in order to pitch it. I found that this labour for developing shows often results in a great deal of unpaid labour because writers receive their pay per episode and only for completed episode scripts, rather than on a salaried basis. This pay method is based on a piecework system, which pays workers “a set fee per item produced” (McKercher, 2014, p. 220).

The second stage of the labour process involves writing scripts for episodes after a show has been picked up for production. In the Korean television industry, writers must continuously generate scripts even while shows are being shot and aired. In writing scripts, writers suffer from the pressures, anxiety, and stress associated with the requirement to generate ideas and writing scripts according to shooting and editing cycles and rhythms. In addition, I found that, based on professional identities as workers engaged in the labour of cultural conception, drama writers feel a particular sense of responsibility to their audiences and colleagues to make quality and successful shows. This responsibility strongly motivates writers to work more, even without extra pay, and contributes to a situation in which the conception process is often a painful and stressful one.

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and govern execution, but the idea as conceived by one may be executed by another” (p. 35). He also outlined how conception and execution “may be broken in the individual and reasserted in the group, the workshop, the community, the society as a whole” (Braverman, 1975, p. 35). Braverman argued that the broadening division of labour in the workplace meant capital actively seeks to separate conception and execution, with a few privileged people (normally, managers) allotted the task of conceiving ideas, and most workers tasked with executing them by engaging in repetitive and specialized labour in manufacturing a product. Braverman saw this process happening in non-manufacturing industries, including knowledge-producing industries. Here, I do not assume that the division between conception and execution, along with the deskilling of labour, that Braverman (1975) pointed to appears in the labour process of Korean drama writers. Rather, I use the term conception to highlight one of the distinctive features of the labour of writers.

In the following sections, I describe the concept of cultural labour while linking this concept to scholarly discussions around the distinctive features of cultural commodities (e.g., television shows, films), the production process, and the pay system in the cultural industries. I then explain how intense commercialization has shaped the Korean television industry, and how writers have taken responsibility for developing shows. Next, I describe how writers developing shows participate in unpaid labour in the industry due to the piecework pay system. Finally, I examine how writers create scripts for episodes and how they face distinctive precarity as conceivers of dramas.

I found through my interviews that it was not easy to generalize the working lives of drama writers given that their labour process and working conditions vary according to factors such as seniority, reputation, contract status, as well as their relationships with broadcasters, independent production companies, and colleagues in other positions, including PDs and assistant writers. Due to this diversity, several writers told me that they themselves did not know and therefore could not describe how other writers work. However, while the specifics may vary from one writer to the next, for the most part almost all writers face a range of common issues associated with the labour of cultural conception, and the pay system. The description I will provide of how drama writers typically work on average will help in analyzing the important issue of the precarity of their work.

4.2. Cultural commodities and the labour of cultural conception

In this dissertation, cultural work refers to the work of making cultural commodities (e.g., television shows, films). As described in Chapter 1, cultural industries are sectors composed of organizations that commodify culture and produce cultural products in an industrial and collective form to produce surplus value, in other words, to make a profit (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). When a particular cultural product in the cultural industries is produced to make surplus value through cultural labour, we can designate the cultural product as a commodity and its production as part of “the capitalist production process” (Miège, 1989, p. 40). In this section, I introduce academic discussions about distinctive features of cultural industries, cultural commodities, and

cultural workers, and I explain how the existing analyses can be expanded and elaborated by using the concept of the labour of cultural conception.[52]

The notion of *creativity* has been used to indicate a distinctive, core characteristic of cultural work in many studies (Conor, 2014; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2016). Several scholars of the political economy of communications have described how human creativity has been seen as a key feature in increasing the value of cultural products (e.g., Miège, 1989; Schiller, 1989; Smith & McKinlay, 2009b). These scholars have argued that, since creativity is difficult to control, companies have tried to make adjustments. For example, Schiller (1989) explained that large companies tend to allow "small-scale and relatively independent activity" to exist in cultural industries because the bureaucratized system at large companies is likely to oppress "human creativity" (p. 442).

As described in Chapter 2, in recent decades, many studies have arisen on cultural work in cultural industries in which the umbrella term "creative labour" is used, and they often reference popular and celebratory terms and discourses, like the "creative economy," "knowledge economy," and "information society" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; C. Kim, 2014; McRobbie, 2016; C. Smith & McKinlay, 2009b). Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) define creative labour as "those jobs, centred on the activity of symbol-making, which are to be found in large numbers in the cultural industries" (p. 9).

Yet many studies do not specify what the term "creative labour" actually seeks to describe, and in particular, what is meant by "creative" in the term "creative labour." In fact, since usage of the term creative labour is so broad and abstract, it raises several significant questions, including: "what is creativity?," and "does [the term] necessarily create a corresponding 'uncreative' category, and how on earth are such designations philosophically or practically made?" (Conor, 2014, p. 5). Moreover, several critical scholars have argued that, in creative discourse, the usage of "creativity" has been expanded to include multiple meanings, such as information, knowledge, and innovation (e.g., Garnham, 2005; H.-K. Lee, 2017; Ross, 2009). H.-K. Lee (2017) notes that

[52] When scholars discuss cultural or creative workers, they tend to refer to above-the-line workers who mainly engage in conception (M. J. Banks, 2009; E. Hill, 2016). This group of workers is often referred to as "artistic professionals" (Miège, 1989), "artists" (Ryan, 1992), or "creatives" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015, p. 29).

creativity is often used to connote a type of “(pseudo) capital” that is put into the production process “within a for-profit economic system” (p. 1079) (See details in Chapter 2).

As Pang (2009) explains, “the creative economy continues to rely on the Romanticist notion of the genius-artist to reify creativity” (p. 58). In fact, creativity in creative labour discourse connotes “a special attribute, something unusual and rare” that emanates from inherent aspirations and talents that only a few geniuses can have (McGuigan, 2010, p. 323). “The view of creative inspiration inherited from romanticism holds that the artist creates out of inner necessity” (Caves, 2000, p. 4). Based as it is on the idea that some people have ‘creativity’ as an inherent personal capacity, this romanticist understanding of the concept is elitist. In this discourse, cultural products are regarded as the capital that exists in such genius artists, rather than the outcome workers produce. When creative labour discourse stresses ‘creativity’ in the production process, the use of the ‘creative’ label tends to erase or obscure the physical and mental effort, along with the labouring time that cultural workers put into the production process (Jones & Pringle, 2015; McRobbie, 2016).

As noted above, to specify and analyze this aspect of cultural work often referred to as creativity or creative labour, I develop the notion of the labour of cultural conception. In particular, I highlight that the labour of cultural conception consists of active processes of doing—imagining, conceiving, and developing. Although workers engender specific outcomes (i.e., ideas), we should consider that they perform the labour of cultural conception in an effort to achieve these outcomes. In fact, a writer might fail to produce ideas, which does not change the fact that the writer conducted the labour of cultural conception. To clarify, I do not consider the labour of cultural conception as one which only occurs in the conception stage. Rather, workers in the entire production process also partake in the labour of cultural conception. However, workers certainly participate more intensely in the labour of cultural conception during the conception stage. My research suggests that this form of labour is a significant aspect of cultural work across cultural industries, including the television industry, and underlies a specific form of precarity experienced by Korean drama writers, as described in the following sections.

The idea of the labour of cultural conception is connected with the distinctive features of cultural commodities and cultural industrial management of the production process. From a Marxist perspective, what labourers sell is their capacity to perform work (labour power) for a certain duration of time, but the effort that labourers actually put into work is indeterminate (Braverman, 1975; Marx, 1990). To increase the input of labour power in the mass production of commodities, the labour process is systematically controlled by management and enforced through varying kinds of supervision and formalization in sets of production procedures, a situation which causes labourers to lose their autonomy (Braverman, 1975; C. Smith & McKinlay, 2009a). Such labour processes also alienate the skills and knowledge of workers (Braverman, 1975; Ryan, 1992).

The specificities of organizing production and the labour process vary depending on the industry and the social, economic and/or cultural context (Braverman, 1975; Caves, 2000; Christopherson, 2008). The distinctive features of cultural commodities lead to unique production processes (Garnham, 1990; Miège, 1989; Mosco, 2014; Ryan, 1992). Here I point out three characteristics that are directly relevant to the labour of cultural conception that I will discuss later in this section.

First, in contrast to other mass production commodities, cultural commodities uniquely contain or generate inherently uncertain and unstable value (Caves, 2000; Garnham, 1987; Miège, 1989).[53] Although it is generally difficult to estimate the exact demand for commodities, and thus difficult to predict how many commodities will be sold, the demand for cultural commodities is marked by heightened uncertainty, since it is particularly difficult to estimate what value audiences obtain from a given cultural commodity (Caves, 2000; Garnham, 1987; Miège, 1989; C. Smith & McKinlay, 2009a). As Caves (2000) describes, “nobody knows” how audiences experience cultural products (p. 3). Indeed, the uncertain and unstable value of cultural commodities in cultural industries make them highly risky in terms of making profits (De Vany, 2003; C. Smith & McKinlay, 2009a). Consequently, companies in the film industry try to decrease this uncertainty by using strategies like the “blockbuster strategy” that involves investing

[53] Since this discussion on cultural value is complex and needs an intensive exploration, I focus on only the exchange value of the labour of cultural conception in the cultural industries in this dissertation.

in a big budget, casting stars, and releasing films widely in order to obtain high profits (De Vany, 2003, p. 123). Nevertheless, uncertainty still remains (De Vany, 2003).

Second, cultural industries have to continually produce new forms of cultural commodities (Caves, 2000; Garnham, 1987; Miège, 1989; C. Smith & McKinlay, 2009a). Miège (1989) explains that:

> In the cultural industries there is a permanent crisis in 'creativity' and producers [companies] must constantly be on the lookout for new '*forms'* or new talent; production must be constantly renewed, and occasionally long periods may elapse before a solution is found. (p. 44)

For example, film companies have to produce new films, and broadcasting companies also keep developing new series and new episodes. Specifically, all episodes are new forms of cultural commodities in cultural industries to a greater or lesser degree while automobile manufacturers produce the same form of automobiles for a certain period.

Third, cultural commodities take new and varied forms, which require distinctive production processes. For instance, each film is produced through a specific process (C. Smith & McKinlay, 2009b, p. 33) in that a new film needs a particular story, its particular cast members, and distinctive shooting settings. Therefore, in such production contexts, it is difficult to develop strictly standardized labour processes, with Garnham (1990) arguing that "the cultural commodity resists that homogenization process which is one of the material results of the abstract equivalence of exchange to which the commodity form aspires" (p. 160).

I argue that *the labour of cultural conception* has distinctive features in terms of uncertainty in association with the specific characteristics of cultural commodities and production, as discussed above. First, the labour of cultural conception is uncertain in that cultural industries cannot measure the value of the form of labour that cultural workers generate through the conception process because the value of a cultural commodity is highly uncertain (Caves, 2000). Moreover, the labour of cultural conception required in a particular cultural industry is considerably uncertain and onerous because the cultural industries have to develop new forms of cultural commodities according to uncertain marketability and, moreover, requires the continual development of new forms of cultural commodities. For instance, television industries tend to develop new series according to audience ratings. Even when a particular series gains popularity, new

episodes for the series have to be developed continuously. Therefore, television industries have to pay a considerable amount of cost for the labour of ongoing cultural conception. Lastly, the labour of cultural conception has uncertainty in that cultural industries cannot strictly control the degree to which cultural workers put their labour of cultural conception into the labour process. These industries have difficulty estimating how many hours are necessary for the conception stages. For example, for music industries, it is extremely difficult to estimate how many hours a musician puts into composing music.

As cultural industries consistently have devised new forms of products, they have developed distinctive labour management styles for those individuals who perform the labour of cultural conception. To resolve this issue, cultural industries tended to give their workers relative autonomy rather than to try to control them (Garnham, 1990; Miège, 1989; Ryan, 1992). This form of labour management serves as one of the ways to increase the value of cultural commodities and the productivity of cultural workers. The tactic seems to arise from necessity given that employers have found it difficult to control the labour of cultural workers, who typically seek to hold on to autonomy and independence in their work, and refuse to be supervised and controlled by manager intervention in the conception process (Garnham, 1990; Miège, 1989; Ryan, 1992). For example, Ryan (1992) analyzed the labour process of cultural workers in privately-owned corporations and found that managers minimally supervise cultural workers ("artists" in his expression), only intervening in their labour process through "discussion, negotiation, and compromise" (p. 111).

On the other hand, scholars have found that, while difficult to control the labour of cultural conception directly, it is also seemingly easy to exploit this work in the cultural industries. This may have to do in part with, as Miège (1989) observed, the way cultural industries tend to provide different forms of remuneration beyond (or instead of) wages, including royalties and residuals, to those workers, like writers or composers, who mainly engage in the conception stage of the production process. The distinct management and payment of the labour of cultural conception is reflected in the North American film and television industries in the way workers are broadly divided into "above-the-line" and "below-the-line" workers (M. J. Banks, 2009; E. Hill, 2016; Mayer, 2011). The former are usually professionals, including writers and directors, whose pay is negotiable and sometimes includes residuals or copyrights. In contrast, below-the-line workers are craft

and technical workers, such as editors, camera operators, and costume designers, who tend to be paid more conventionally and be unionized. In addition, Miège (1989) has argued that cultural industries have decreased their costs for conception by taking advantage of the unpaid or underpaid labour of cultural conception. He has claimed that large pools of workers tend to accept unpaid or underpaid labour in the conception phase of cultural production. For example, young, aspiring workers often develop their own projects and give them to a company at a low price, while earning a small amount of paid work from the company.

The work of Korean drama writers takes the form of piecework. Marx (1990) argued that "the wider scope that piece-wages give to individuality tends to develop both that individuality, and with it the workers' sense of liberty, independence, and self-control, and also the competition of workers with each other" (p. 697). Drawing on Marx's notion of 'piece-wages,' McKercher (2014) argues that piecework allows workers to decide when and how long they work, which "gives the worker a sense of autonomy and a degree of control over the labour process" (p. 220). However, she adds that piecework also fosters competition between workers, which tends to lower the average pay for everyone except for a lucky few (McKercher, 2014, p. 227). On the surface, piecework seems to allow workers a certain amount of independence in their working schedules, yet people have to work according to the dictates that the capitalist's schedule demands (Caffentzis, 2013; Cohen, 2016; Marx, 1990). Related to this issue of piecework, Caffentzis (2013) argues, "Consequently, the capitalists save superintendence costs via the action at a distance that the piecework wage system provides ... a bitter autonomy indeed" (p. 115).

Drama writers' labour is one part of the overall staffing and production needed to create television shows. The effort involves several other types of professionals, including directors and actors, and includes the tasks of filming, editing, and distributing (Conor, 2014). Scripts created by writers are not the final products but can be seen as blueprints for the production of television shows and films. In other words, writing does not produce the commodity, but contributes to its conception and planning. By comparison, freelance journalists produce and sell their completed products themselves. While writers develop new dramas and write scripts, writers cannot decide if the dramas and scripts are going to form part of a commodity that is considered complete. Therefore, the labour time for a piece can be extended. A piecework pay system can

thus result in what is arguably a fairly extreme form of unpaid labour, which is found in Korean drama writers' labour.

In the following sections, I will focus on the labour of cultural conception in the work of writers and describe the piecework pay system for their labour. I will show that writers participate in unpaid labour in response to industrial risks in the television industry that are shifted to them. In addition, I will discuss how writers experience distinct precarity and have a distinctive professional identity in association with their labour of cultural conception.

4.3. The intensive commercialization of Korean dramas

As described in Chapter 3, since the 1990s the Korean broadcasting industry has faced the liberalization of media markets, flexibilization of production, and increased competition. The Korean drama production sector in particular has become intensively commercialized in the last couple of decades. To highlight the impact of commercialization on this sector and on the labour of writers, I will begin this section with a brief summary of several features of the sector as they existed in the 1990s.

Before the late 1990s, major terrestrial broadcasters, such as KBS, MBC, and SBS, produced the majority of the country's dramas and circulated them mainly through their domestic networks (M. H. Lee & Lee, 2005). The formats of these shows varied from television movies (*Tanmakkŭk*), to serials and series that aired weekly for several years (Chung, 2009). Broadcasters recruited new writers through open calls for scripts for television movies. New script writers were also recruited by in-house PDs (producer-directors) through personal recommendations. Entry-level writers often developed their careers at one broadcaster and enhanced their writing skills while writing scripts for several drama formats. Writers usually worked without assistant writers (C. Joo, personal communication, September 14, 2018). One individual I interviewed claimed that she had started her career at a particular broadcaster by writing scripts for television movies. In the early stages of her career, she joined a production team that produced a series—a collection of short stories that had the same characters and settings, but a discrete story for each episode—that allowed her to write one episode for the weekly series every couple of weeks. As each episode had a different story, each writer wrote

their scripts individually, without working as a team for any specific episode (Drama Writer 17, personal communication, August 17, 2019).[54]

In-house PDs have been central to the in-house production systems for dramas. In the 1990s, broadcasters assigned in-house PDs to develop and produce new dramas, granting them the rights to select writers and actors. In instances where in-house PDs suggested specific writers, the PDs often worked with the writers closely to develop new dramas together, and the new dramas were easily launched in a fairly straightforward manner, without the need for pitching the show (Drama Writer 2, personal communication, September 15, 2018).

In the late 1990s, the commercialization of the production of Korean dramas accelerated due to two reasons. First, the risk of experiencing a financial loss in the production of dramas began to increase due to changes in the advertisement market. By the last decade of the 20th century, regardless of the audience ratings, the majority of the advertising slots sold were for dramas (Y. Lee et al., 2021). However, the Asian financial crisis (1997-1998) caused Korean broadcasters to lose a large portion of their advertising market. One interviewee recounted that, around this time, broadcasters began to explicitly pursue financial profits through dramas because dramas tended to achieve higher audience ratings than other genres and, therefore, were the most appealing to advertisers. As such, writers were increasingly pressured to generate scripts that would obtain high audience ratings (C. Joo, personal communication, September 14, 2018). Second, Korean dramas began to emerge as global cultural products that were marketable beyond the domestic media market as part of the so-called *Korean Wave*. In particular, the success of Korean dramas in East Asian countries like Japan and China (e.g., *Winter Sonata* in 2002, *Dae Jang Geum* in 2003) showed the potential for Korean dramas as global commodities (Y. S. Lee & Kim, 2017; Jin, 2016). This success has only grown in the years since, and in 2019 the drama genre accounted for 90.4% of the total exports of Korean broadcasting programs by genre ($273,272,000 out of $302,285,000 CAD) (KOCCA, 2021).

During the 2010s, competition in the Korean drama market increased as domestic cable channels (e.g., JTBC, tvN) became major suppliers of dramas in addition

[54] This format has disappeared in recent years.

to terrestrial broadcasters. In the late 2010s, global media platforms (e.g., YouTube) and Over The Top (OTP) media services (e.g., Netflix) increased this competition (M. Lee, 2019). In addition, the industrial metrics of success for television shows began to change from ratings of general audiences to specifically 'online television audience ratings,' which measure the popularity among young people between the ages of 20 and 49 years who form the key target consumers of the Korean advertising industry (J. Lee, 2018d). This change meant that, even though a drama might receive high ratings overall, if it did not appeal directly to this particular demographic, then it would not be considered successful (Drama Writer 2, personal communication, September 15, 2018).

On the whole, as Korean dramas became an increasingly marketable commodity abroad and competition among companies increased domestically, commercial logics have become a far more dominant factor in the production of dramas over the last two decades. Two writers discussed the intensification of these commercial logics:

> With the Korean Wave, the drama production sector became very commercialized. Dramas started to be recognized as commodities, beyond entertainment content for audiences. ... In the 2000s, drama production became a business in which people can hit the jackpot. The business is not interested in how dramas impact audiences. In this business, we have to make good dramas. (Drama Writer 5, personal communication, August 17, 2019)

> At least in the 2000s, to some degree, dramas were regarded as works of art (*chakp'um*). … 10 years after the 2000s, there are more dramas that follow popular trends. There are too many media platforms and too many dramas. Now, most dramas are regarded as commodities*, just consumable goods (sobijae)*. (Drama writer, personal communication, November 2, 2018a, emphasis added)

Several writers also stated that the cultural contribution made by dramas that provide entertaining or meaningful content to audiences has been less valued than in the past. Some of them highlighted that writers should be concerned with how dramas as cultural products would impact audiences. As the above interviewee mentioned "in this business, we [writers] have to make good dramas."

As Korean broadcasters produce dramas by mainly focusing on their commercial value, Korean dramas feature an inherent uncertainty in consumption and marketability (Caves, 2000; Miège, 1989). If broadcasters choose drama shows based on cultural values, then the uncertainty will be decreased to some degree. It is true that the criteria

for the evaluation of cultural values can vary according to the particular society and therefore, there is still the uncertainty to measure the value of drama shows. For example, even if a society determines that diversity in content is one criterion for evaluating cultural value, the meaning of diversity can vary according to the particular society (Belfiore, 2020). However, the difference between cultural and economic values is that people in a society can set the criteria by which to evaluate cultural values through social discussions (Garnham, 2001). By doing so, the society or broadcasters evaluate the cultural value of cultural products based on clear, societally-approved standards.

The comments below from some of the interviewees show that writers were aware that there is significant uncertainty about how the dramas would be received by the audience:

> Everyone said that drama X could not succeed. The drama was refused by several broadcasters for several years. After I made several successful dramas, I was able to launch the original drama. Everyone said that the drama was wonderful. It is ironic. (Drama Writer 12, personal communication, November 2, 2018)

As a result, during the 2000s and 2010s the overall diversity in the formats of dramas decreased. While most broadcasters have decreased or ceased the production of television movies due to their lower profitability (Chung, 2009), two formats in particular, the “Korean mini-series” (*mini shirijŭ*) and open-ended serials became dominant (J. S. Park et al., 2015, p. 16). The Korean mini-series is a localized fiction format, a format that has between 16 to 24 episodes of 60 or 70 minutes each (e.g., KBS *Descendants of The Sun*). Open-ended serials are a format that has many episodes, sometimes as many as 100 episodes or more. The Korean mini-series airs twice per week, and open-ended serials air twice or five times per week. Both formats run for one season *only,* which means that there are no more episodes of that particular series after the series comes to an end. Furthermore, Korean broadcasters no longer produce drama series that air for several years. Today, the Korean mini-series is the most dominant and popular format among audiences and production companies (Y. Lee et al., 2021). Production companies prefer this format because the production and airing period of the Korean mini-series is relatively short, and therefore companies can select the drama they will produce while responding to market trends (Chung, 2009). The interviewees for this study suggested that, since the Korean mini-series and open-ended

serials have one ongoing storyline that connects across episodes, it is not possible, as it was with other formats, to simply get a different writer to write an episode.

Since the 2000s the dominant production system has changed from in-house production to an outsourcing model where broadcasters co-produce dramas with a sub-group of production companies (Y. S. Lee & Kim, 2017, p. 90). In practice there are a variety of complex contract relations between broadcasters and production companies, and it is not easy to distinguish between in-house and outsourcing production (H. Kwon, 2015; M. H. Lee, 2020; Y. S. Lee & Kim, 2017). Outsourcing production takes two broad forms in South Korea. In the first form, a production company makes all of the episodes for a drama and sells the broadcast rights to a television station. In this case, therefore, the broadcasters air the program, but do not participate in its production. The second form of outsourcing is closer to co-production. Broadcasters and independent production companies produce a drama together and share their costs and profits, while broadcasters distribute the shows. Most dramas are produced according to the latter arrangement in South Korea (Y. S. Lee & Kim, 2017, p. 90). When broadcasters select and schedule a show on their network, other production processes, including shooting, are initiated. Generally, a broadcaster offers a large portion of production costs, takes a majority of intellectual property rights, and shares profits with an independent production company (H. Kwon, 2015). By the late 2010s independent production companies were producing around 70% of the dramas for the country's major terrestrial broadcasters (e.g., KBS, MBC, SBS) (M. H. Lee, 2020). Due to this outsourcing arrangement, broadcasters no longer have exclusive contracts with writers (Y. S. Lee & Kim, 2017, p. 103). Instead, most drama writers have contracts with independent production companies.

4.4. Unpaid labour of cultural conception and piecework

While longer-running dramas were prevalent in the 1990s, shorter-running mini-series formats now predominate. This means broadcasters must develop new dramas more frequently, and they incur more costs for the conception of shows. My interviews suggest that frequent creation of new dramas increasingly has become the duty of writers since the early 2000s. In-house PDs, who had participated in conceptual work in the 1980s and 1990s, are less so engaged today, and instead mainly participate in selecting dramas for production (Drama PD 1, personal communication, October 5,

2018). When broadcasters dispatch in-house PDs to independent production companies, the PDs serve primarily in the shooting and editing of shows. The fact that writers work mainly in independent production companies and PDs in broadcasting companies adds to greater separation between conception and shooting and editing than had been the case in the past.

The work of the writer is solitary and demanding. Working alone when developing a new drama, the writer thinks of a topic, beginning with original shows or adapting a plot from other kinds of cultural products, such as a book. The writer designs the characters, plots a storyline, and writes a synopsis and a treatment.[55] The writer has to complete at least four episodes worth of scripts in order to pitch a show to broadcasters. If a writer is under contract with an independent production company, the writer must first take the show through an internal screening process at that company.

Regarding the almost constant work of developing a drama, one writer asserted: “even my family questions why I am always busy even when I do not write scripts for a particular drama. People cannot imagine to what degree the process of conceiving a drama involves trial and error” (Drama Writer 14, personal communication, November 22, 2018). Depending on the drama project, it could take several months or even years to develop a new show. Many writers I interviewed described how they had developed a drama show for two or three years (in one extreme case, for ten years), but failed to launch the show. If the drama show is deemed acceptable, the independent production company will pitch the show to broadcasters. If a broadcaster decides to produce a drama, then the writer completes the scripts for the rest of the episodes.

My research reveals that Korean broadcasters have created whole catalogues of new dramas out of the unpaid labour of writers. In this section, I present how and why both aspiring and experienced writers continually do unpaid labour to develop a drama. After that, I discuss how broadcasters offload the conception cost and risks to writers through a piecework pay system.

In recent decades, entry-level writers have found it increasingly difficult to establish careers. While broadcasters and independent companies hold open calls for drama scripts, most rarely produce drama formats that entry-level drama writers typically work on. Writers in the 1990s developed their skills by working on various drama

[55] A treatment in Korean industry means a specific collection of story outline of each episode for one show.

formats, but today entry-level writers must spend years developing their writing skills in preparation for writing mini-series. Several interviewees stated that, after winning open calls for television movies, they needed to work as assistant writers because there was no other way of learning the trade of how to create mini-series. Assistant writers make between $1,000 and $1,500 CAD a month (See details in Chapter 3), and only an experienced minority can earn around $2500 CAD a month (Drama Writer 15, personal communication, July 9, 2019).

Assistant writers are considered to be trainees in the industry: “Assistant writers are aspirants, those who are preparing to become writers. Before starting their careers, aspirants have the opportunity to experience what writers do in a workplace” (Drama Writer 6, personal communication, October 4, 2018). However, this experience comes at a distance. Contrary to what their job title would suggest, assistant writers generally do not take part in the writing process, but rather tend to support writers by performing non-writing work, including researching (finding data or interviewing people for information), providing ideas for writers, or coordinating between writers and production staff. Although one assistant writer I interviewed said that she had written parts of scripts (Drama Writer 9, personal communication, October 15, 2018), this was the exception among my interviewees. Thus, experience as an assistant writer does not directly contribute to one’s career development as a script writer for shows.

Assistant writers receive no writer credits. It is only when aspiring writers develop their own shows and write their own scripts that they are recognized and given credit as writers. An interviewee who recently worked as an assistant writer explained:

> It is clear that if I want to write scripts, I have to develop my shows. Therefore, if aspirants have worked as assistant writers, then they do not work as assistant writers again. They develop their own dramas or change their careers to make money more easily. (Drama Writer 16, personal communication, July 12, 2019)

Experienced writers who launch their shows with their own writer credits tend to make writing service contracts (*chipp’il kyeyak*) with independent production companies. Through this contract, these companies have the right to produce the dramas that the writers develop. Sometimes, the writing service contract specifies exactly what project writers will work on. However, more experienced writers usually make a contract that

includes how many episodes they must write without specifying a concrete show. Thus, with the writing service contracts, writers are paid based on a piecework pay system.

Beyond the direct contract relationship, the drama production sector organizes and manages a pool of new and less-experienced writers in various ways. At the company level, major broadcasters and independent production companies hold open calls for new original dramas.[56] In particular, more and more open calls are for Korean mini-series that have usually been written by more experienced writers. Companies review the shows that aspiring writers have produced without pay and choose to give a cash prize, internship opportunity, or a job to a few winners among those who submitted shows. PDs and/or managers in the industry meet writers through their personal networks. Many writers I interviewed were introduced to in-house PDs or managers early in their careers. They were asked to show drama projects they had organized or do speculative writing (Drama Writer 3, personal communication, September 21, 2018; Drama Writer 8, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Drama Writer 11, personal communication, November 2, 2018).[57]

According to what I have described as the piecework payment system for writers, writers receive a fee for the show when their shows are launched, an amount paid per episode multiplied by the specific number of episodes writers have produced (M. Kim & Hong, 2016). The interviewees reported receiving a wide range of writing fees, varying from $3,000 to $40,000 CAD per episode. The interviewee who received $40,000 CAD was a highly reputed writer who consistently wrote scripts for several popular dramas. In most cases, the writing service contract indicates the number of episodes and the writing fee per episode. Along with the writing service contract, companies often provide writers with a contract deposit, that is, part of the total writing fee paid in advance. My interviews

[56] When broadcasters make contracts directly with writers, they own the right to produce and distribute the contracted writers' shows. By doing so, the broadcasters can choose independent production companies to which the shows will be outsourced or produce dramas through their in-house production.

[57] In recent years, broadcasters and production companies have managed one more category of the writing workforce referred to as "project writers" (*kihoeng chakka*). Project writers review and revise other writers' drama projects. They also engage in adapting other cultural content, such as books and cartoons, and developing them for dramas. For these tasks, project writers receive a level of pay similar to what assistant writers receive. Although project writers significantly develop a project, there is no guarantee that they will work as writers for a show because they do not develop original show scripts (Drama Writer 3, personal communication, September 21, 2018; Drama Writer 7, personal communication, October 9, 2018).

suggest that most contracted writers usually receive a deposit worth about 30% of the total writing fee. For example, a writer explained that one of her contracts indicated that she would write 20 episodes within five years under the writing service contract, and the writing fee per episode would be $10,000 CAD. She received $60,000 as a deposit. If the contract period ends without the launch of a writer's drama, then the writer must return the deposit. One writer referred to the deposit as "a type of debt that writers should pay back by writing scripts" (Drama Writer 15, personal communication, July 9, 2019).

Production companies offer more reputed writers resources, such as an office or the support of one or more assistant writers to develop and write scripts. Less experienced contracted writers usually develop their shows without such support (Drama Writer 3, personal communication, September 21, 2018; Drama Writer 8, personal communication, October 11, 2018). Generally, such writers must wait until their shows have been picked up to air to receive such assistance (Drama Writer 8, personal communication, October 11, 2018). Therefore, a physical workplace for drama writers is not designated and varies depending on the contract with production companies. This is determined by the writers' seniority, reputation or preference. More experienced writers tend to work at an office that companies provide based on the contract between writers and companies. For example, some writers work at a separate office near their home, and other writers prefer to work at their homes. Less experienced writers find workplaces by themselves. For example, they work at their homes, cafés or libraries or rent an office by themselves.

The piecework pay system for drama writers is exploitative in several ways. There is no separate payment for the preliminary writing and thus the labour involved in devising a new drama. At best, some writers get paid in part for episode scripts they have written to pitch to broadcasters. More fundamentally, writers only get paid for work contributing to a show that ends up being aired, regardless of how many other shows or drafts they have developed in the process.

One writer describes how this works in practice: "Writers receive the same amount of money if it takes one year or 10 years to plan a drama and write scripts, and it doesn't matter how many times writers revise scripts" (Drama Writer 15, personal communication, July 9, 2019). Only a minority of writers who receive a very high level of

writing fees and succeed in launching their shows can offset their unpaid labour for developing shows by way of the pay given for writing scripts. Another writer interviewee worked to develop a drama for five years on a writing service contract with a production company, and she pitched several dramas to broadcasters. However, her dramas failed to be selected by them. In the end, she received only $10,000 for a five-year effort. This writer described:

> When I worked on my first drama, the companies told me that they could only give me the minimum payment because I had no shows where I wrote scripts and received writer credit. Although I worked as an assistant writer and I worked on contract and tried to develop a show for several years, my experience was not recognized as writer's experience in this industry. I am a new writer because I did not have any writer credit on any dramas. (Drama Writer 1, personal communication, September 6, 2018)

Theoretically, in this industry there are no fixed policies on writing fees, writing fees are negotiable, and pay depends on the commercial value of dramas. However, in practice new writers receive the industrial minimum writing fee, which is very low.[58] Since their writing fee is calculated based on how much they received in a previous project they developed, writers have to develop and successfully launch several dramas until they receive decent pay. Therefore, structurally, writers have to perform unpaid and underpaid labour early in their careers, although their early shows might have made a large profit. For example, one writer whose first drama show was quite successful in East Asian countries received low writing fees for her next drama show as well. (Drama Writer 5, personal communication, August 17, 2019)

Uncertainty of drama shows, and offloaded risks

While companies (broadcasters or independent production companies) may appear not to control the labour process of writers directly, they certainly do so indirectly. Granted, when they are not satisfied with the dramas that writers have developed, the companies do not directly force the writers to revise scripts. However, if the writers decide not to revise the scripts, the companies will not choose to launch them, and the writers will have to develop a whole new show that can meet the company's standards. As one writer with more than 10 years of experience said: "The company always asks me to choose if I will do it or not, and seemingly, I can choose everything. However, I

[58] The minimum fee is based on the KTRWA basic writing fee that has been used as the standard to calculate residuals and royalties for experienced writers in recent years.

can choose nothing practically" (Drama Writer 8, personal communication, October 11, 2018). When independent production companies pitch their dramas to broadcasters, which have their own criteria, many writers, except for so-called 'top writers,' are often asked to revise their scripts. While working with broadcasters, writers again face the same situation, in that broadcasters ask for revisions based on their own distinct criteria.

As I confirmed in interviews with in-house PDs who have participated in programming for dramas, broadcasters in recent years increasingly choose dramas based on their expected commercial value. For example, one PD stated that broadcasters tend to give priority to those writers who have a track record of writing dramas that are a hit with audiences (Drama PD 2, personal communication, November 7, 2018). Thus, Korean drama writers are situated not as workers but as sellers who have to sell their cultural products in the market. One PD's comment reflects this status:

> Devoting themselves to drama writing jobs seems similar to taking a gamble because drama writers' projects are always chosen by other people. ... In fact, all businesspeople experience such difficulties. When a product is sold and becomes generally known, we recognize the value of the product. (Drama PD 1, personal communication, October 5, 2018)

Korean broadcasters decrease the uncertainty of the market they face by choosing several shows according to market demands, without paying for development. In other words, in addition to the inherent uncertainty about audience response, writers face offloaded uncertainty and precarity due to the power held by broadcasters in the decision-making process to air a show. One writer's experience clearly illustrates this precarity:

> Broadcasters try to anticipate whether a drama will be successful and change their decisions easily. In fact, it is unpredictable whether audiences will like a drama. If it were predictable, all launched dramas would succeed. … Broadcasters very easily reverse their decisions on picking up a drama show. For example, one broadcaster cancelled my romance drama one month before the scheduled air date because the audience ratings for another romance drama airing on their channel were very low. ... I had already written scripts for several episodes, and the independent production company had spent a lot of money in preparation for shooting. Nevertheless, the broadcaster did not compensate us for anything. In this way, broadcasters do not take responsibility for anything. (Drama Writer 14, personal communication, November 22, 2018)

The above writer's experience may be extreme, but it clearly illustrates how broadcasters shift the conception costs associated with the initial airing of the show to the writers and the production companies due to the unpredictability in a given drama's marketability.

The cost, for a writer who may have prepared one or two years only to see the show cancelled, includes suffering from anxiety and financial insecurity. Most of the writers did not directly express their anxiety in their interviews with me. However, when several writers talked about their experiences as assistant writers, their concerns were expressed more directly. For example, one interviewee said:

> When I worked to assist a writer with planning a new drama, I ruined my health and got gastritis. It was so stressful to work on the development of a drama. That was such a weight on my mind. I often cried when I got off work. The most difficult part was that I worked hard for almost one year, but our writing team did not get any outcomes that we could show to others. When I suggested my ideas to the writers and failed to get approval, I felt my self-worth get lower. (Drama Writer 16, personal communication, July 12, 2019)

4.5. The subordinated labour of cultural conception

This section explores how writers perform the labour of cultural conception in writing and revising scripts after their shows are picked up. I present how writers' labour of cultural conception is subordinated to the production process of filming and editing where production staff, including PDs, are usually paid according to their labouring time. Specifically, cultural industries are less likely to directly control the labour of cultural conception as described in Section 4.2. but the Korean television industry controls the form of labour by forcing writers to produce scripts according to the production process of filming and editing that the industry is more likely to essentially control. I also show that, due to this subordination, writers suffer from extreme mental and physical labour that involves anxiety and stress.

Broadcasting companies generally finalize their show selections three to six months before their planned air dates (K. Yu, 2015, p. 111) and designate in-house PDs for each show. A writer works on writing scripts while the production staff shoots and edits the show—a process that continues even throughout the time that the show is being aired. This production process is often referred to as the "Korean live-shoot

system" (*saengbangsongshik*) of production (Y. Song, 2017). It is used in order to shorten the production period and lower overall production costs. Korean broadcasters allocate roughly $600,000 to $700,000 CAD per episode, meaning that the total cost of a 16-episode series tends to range between $10 million and $12 million CAD (Y. Kim, 2021). These production costs are almost one-tenth that of a comparable show in the United States (K. Yu, 2020, p. 59).[59] Granted, the market size of and production process in the Korean industry are significantly different from those in the American industry, hence the two industries are not directly comparable. Nevertheless, the lower production cost in Korea has been achieved through the exploitation of workers via underpaid labour and overtime/overwork (J. Lee, 2018c).

In the Korean live-shoot system of production, writers have to write scripts within a short time frame, which makes their work demanding and harsh. For example, most Korean mini-series have 16 to 24 episodes that are 60 to 70 minutes each and air twice per week. After broadcasters select their shows and schedule when to air them, most writers struggle to generate scripts at this rapid rate. For example, writers generally write at a pace of 12 to 20 episodes over the course of five to six months. Regarding this workload, one interviewee stated that “writers write scripts that are almost similar in amount to writing two books over several months” and that “it is not enjoyable to write scripts. This is real suffering” (Drama Writer 12, personal communication, November 2, 2018). Therefore, writers get tired physically and mentally while writing scripts for a show being aired. Another writer describes how she struggled:

> When I wrote scripts for drama show X, the show was produced through the live-shoot system. Although the shooting schedule was due to begin, we had not written all of the scripts. I had to squeeze something out of my head to offer for shooting locations. I just wrote scripts. I was not able to rest. When I got too tired to write, I fell asleep. As soon as I woke up, I wrote scripts again. As soon as I wrote scripts, the production team shot them and aired them. I struggled to write scripts in a timely manner. (Drama Writer 15, personal communication, July 9, 2019)

[59] Generally, the production of fictional narrative shows (i.e., Korean dramas) is labour intensive and requires a high level of financial investment in comparison to other shows (Christopherson, 2009). Due to the production costs, in the U.S. television industry a tendency exists toward decreasing the production of fiction shows (Christopherson, 2009).

More than a few of the interviewees told me that writing scripts for a show which was concurrently being aired impacted their health negatively.[60] In addition to the heavy workload, many participants expressed difficulty in conceiving ideas within the short turnaround time. Specifically, one interviewee described her difficulty by employing strikingly emotional terms: “writing scripts is taxing. As writers we exhaust our bone and blood.” She also stated that “writers must complete scripts by a specific deadline” and “it is very difficult to creatively conceive new ideas in a given time. This is one of the most taxing forms of work” (Drama Writer 14, personal communication, November 22, 2018). Another writer shared her experience of writer’s block with me: “One day, I could not think up any ideas for a drama show that was being aired. Whatever happened, I had to send my scripts in a few days. Although I stayed up all night, my mind was blank” (Drama Writer 3, personal communication, September 21, 2018). At that time, she did not get any support from others, such as colleagues, regarding her writer’s block and was worried that the other production staff would need to stop working due to her incomplete script. She described her experience by saying: “I was so lonely. When this memory comes into my mind, I feel scared that this could happen again” (Drama Writer 3, personal communication, September 21, 2018).

In the Korean television industry, drama writing is not just providing completed products, but performing the labour of cultural conception continuously during production. In other words, in practice, writers’ duties include anything from revising to updating scripts that bear in mind audiences’ reception of the shows being aired. For example, one writer asserted that:

> When dramas are being aired, I try to see and reflect how audiences respond when I am writing and revising scripts. When audiences like dramas, the dramas are valuable. Dramas are not literary works. When I worked on drama show Y, if audiences liked a character, I tried to increase the scenes with the character. I tried to capture what audiences liked. (Drama Writer 15, personal communication, July 9, 2019)

[60] An interviewee said that when she began to write scripts for aired broadcasts, due to a heavy workload, she did not have time for her personal life. She told me that she decided to assign only two hours a week to going to church (Drama Writer 2, personal communication, September 15, 2018).

As pointed out by this writer, some of the interviewed writers aim to have their scripts updated in response to audience reactions. Several writers also indicated that they try to consider the actors' performance styles when writing their scripts.

Therefore, writers play a critical role in resolving a gap or break between conception (scripts) and execution (shows) by revising scripts (i.e., doing more labour) in the production process of dramas. Specifically, the interviewees told me that it is not unusual for the final filmed product to be quite different from what the writer had intended when they started writing the script. For example, it is possible that PDs may interpret the meaning of the scripts in their own way, or that writers might not properly express their intentions:

> PDs sometimes interpret my scripts differently from my intentions. If writers and PDs communicate sufficiently, we can decrease the frequency of miscommunication. Nevertheless, there is still a difference between my [writer's] intentions and PD's directing. In particular, it is important to me whether PDs shoot characters' feelings and their exchanges of emotion as illustrated in the scripts because the illustrations of what the characters do or feel make the natural connections between episodes. (Drama Writer 11, personal communication, November 2, 2018)

As this writer stated, because every episode impacts the flow and content of subsequent episodes, the writers must revise the scripts in order to make the flow of narratives logical and natural. As this writer was aware, adequate communication between writers and PDs decreases the gap between the writers' scripts and PDs' filming and editing. Yet, due to the busy schedules that both parties face, they typically are unable to communicate effectively. Thus, even when writers notice that particular filmed parts in an episode are different from their original intentions, they are not likely to ask the PDs to reshoot the scenes. Several writers told me that, generally, reshooting is not allowed due to the very limited production budgets mentioned above and tight airing schedules. In fact, most interviewees told me that they revise their scripts for shows that have not yet been filmed after viewing the already-aired episodes. This production process increases the amount of labour that writers have to put into their work. One drama writer communicated that she had completed all of the scripts for a show before filming began; however, as the show was filmed and aired concurrently, she had to constantly revise her scripts for almost five months (Drama Writer 15, personal communication, July 9, 2019).

4.6. Conceivers' responsibility and cooperation

This section aims to analyze the complex sense of responsibility that Korean drama writers exhibit, as well as how this sense of responsibility impacts their multifaceted identities as cultural workers.

> Drama writers are supposed to take significant responsibility for the outcome of the show. If a drama fails in a market, a writer is blamed for the failure. … Someone might say that if a drama succeeds, a writer will be in the spotlight. However, if it fails, a writer will take all the criticism. (Drama Writer 11, personal communication, November 2, 2018)

Several of the interviewees told me that, if a drama does not succeed, the writer in question is likely to have difficulty in continuing their writing career. Thus, the risk that a show might not be successful is shouldered by writers, which makes their work exceedingly precarious.

I also found that although they did not get extra pay for this work, the interviewees tended to be willing to revise their scripts if they thought that the revisions would increase the quality of the scripts. It is true that some writers work more because their careers depend on the success of their dramas or because professional perfectionism based on craftsmanship or artistic ethos motivates them. Beyond this motivation, some of the interviewees highlighted that, because scripts play a critical role in shaping the quality of the shows, it is unavoidable that writers take substantial responsibility for the success of their shows. For example, one writer told me:

> Individual writers' abilities play a critical role in defining the quality of dramas. I think that writers' roles are the most significant. Therefore, writers are overwhelmed by the stress. ... Other professionals, such as PDs and actors, are important in making a show; however, the writers lay the foundation for a drama. After the writers make an initial blueprint, the PDs and actors join in the program (Drama Writer 14, personal communication, November 22, 2018).

This writer told me that, although other workers such as PDs, are sometimes incompetent, dramas can be successful if their scripts are well-written. However, if the scripts are not well-written, then the dramas cannot be successful.

In addition, I found that most of the writers that I interviewed were concerned about the direct impact of their scripts on the audiences or the work of their colleagues, as shown in one writer's description:

> These days, the most difficult part of my work is that I have to be responsible for my writing. Before I wrote my first drama, I thought that it would go well if I wrote good scripts and that everything would depend on my effort. Now, I know that there are too many things I have to be concerned about and be in charge of. What I write has a significant impact on too many things. It impacts audiences, which is beyond just entertaining them. When I look at the online audience feedback,[61] I reflect on what I have done and what I will do as an author. Moreover, a lot of production staff labour is used to shoot the scenes I have written. If certain scenes are difficult to shoot, the director, actors, and crew have a hard time. These days, I am concerned that I have to take responsibility for what I'm doing. (Drama Writer 1, personal communication, September 6, 2018)

Another writer stated: "I am scared when I am conscious that my writing will decide how hundreds of production staff work" and "I am sometimes overwhelmed by the responsibility" (Drama Writer 6, personal communication, October 4, 2018). Due to this responsibility, the interviewees appeared to be more willing to revise their scripts to improve them. A writer with almost 30 years of experience added that she tries to write scripts that consider the production staff's workload and production costs. For example, she removed a scene that required shooting at an airport because it would require high rent fees and more work for the production staff (Drama Writer 2, personal communication, September 15, 2018).

Several writers told me that they do not write scripts for art's sake, and instead are compelled to focus on making it commercially viable:

> As a matter of fact, what television writers do is not to make a work of art. A famous writer said in a famous statement, "You should not try to make a work of art with other people's money." A huge amount of money, such as around 10 billion won [$10 million CAD], depends on scripts. What I write defines the destinies of many people as well as mine. If I write something wrong, not only I, but also those people face a difficult situation. (Drama Writer 15, personal communication, July 9, 2019)

[61] Writers get this audience feedback through various media, such as drama fan online-community bulletin boards, comments in online newspaper articles that discuss dramas, and users' discussions on social media, such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.

Just as this writer claimed, several writers specifically mentioned *$10 million* as the production budget for Korean mini-series when they talked about why they were concerned about the commercial successes of their shows. Many interviewees told me that the success or failure of the dramas impacts the future careers of PDs, actors, and other production staff, as well as the financial situation of the independent production companies involved.

When I asked how much autonomy writers have and to what degree they achieve personal expression and self-actualization in their work, the writers told me that one cannot conceive of personal expression and self-actualization through writers' individual work on television shows. Most of them described how the production process for dramas involves cooperation with many production staff and companies. However, in practice, only one writer would take responsibility for writing scripts, as discussed previously in this chapter. Many of the writers I interviewed highlighted the need for a cooperative or collective writing system. A senior writer, Chan-ok Joo, described:

> Some writers insist that a sole writer defines the content of television shows as an author. They argue that dramas should be shot and edited precisely as the scripts describe. I do not think so. I think that writing for dramas and films can be cooperative work. Moreover, collective production is needed now. Production costs have become larger and making a drama has become industrialized. A single writer can conceive only a finite number of ideas, which makes it difficult to fulfill the industrial needs of today's massive productions. ... Therefore, it is better to make a show with many ideas with more people. (C. Joo, personal communication, September 14, 2018)

Like this writer, several interviewees stated that if several writers worked together, they could put more ideas, more experiences, and higher skills into the writing process. Some of the writers were not sure if cooperative work would be possible because the characteristics of Korean television dramas and production processes (e.g., one ongoing storyline with connected episodes, the writing process involving continual revisions) make it difficult for writers to work together.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter has shown how drama writers participate in the labour of cultural conception in developing a drama show and writing scripts, and how a piecework pay system plays a significant role in making writers' labour precarious. Since the late 1990s,

drama production in the Korean television industry has been more commercialized. The commercialized drama production increasingly involves a considerable amount of labour of cultural conception to develop shows. Due to the piecework pay system in the industry, writers perform a large amount of unpaid labour.

In particular, I have shown that the industry structurally accumulates value from writers' unpaid labour of cultural conception in creating shows. I have also demonstrated that this industry exploits writers' continual labour in writing scripts, and their sense of responsibility as conceivers. As writers have been fully in charge of creating shows, writers have the opportunity or autonomy to develop their own shows, not just write scripts for shows that have been developed by others. However, autonomy is linked to writers' precarity because writers in the industry carry out the unpaid labour of cultural conception. Here, I posit that Korean drama writers' labour is precarious because the industry significantly offloads onto writers the inherent uncertainty and risks in the production processes and marketability of cultural commodities. As a result of this offloading, writers suffer from anxiety, pressures, and financial insecurity and instability.

After their shows have been selected for production by broadcasters, writers produce scripts according to the shooting cycles and rhythms in the production processes. The cycles and rhythms are organized so as to decrease production costs that are defined by the paid labour time of production staff. Further, even with the piecework pay system depriving them of appropriate additional pay, writers perform continual labour in revising their scripts by repeatedly having to consider how their audiences react to their shows and how other production staff (e.g., PDs) work.

Finally, writers are aware that their shows are cultural commodities that need commercial success, and that the success of their shows directly impacts the future of their colleagues and independent production companies. This awareness makes them more willing to work above and beyond to revise their scripts. On one hand, writers feel a sense of responsibility as conceivers toward their audiences, their colleagues, and the industry. In fact, they are required to manage not only their labour, but also that of other workers, along with capitalist concerns related to generating exchange value (i.e., profits). Writers acknowledge that this responsibility necessitates writing dramas in cooperation with other production staff. In this regard, the sense of responsibility that writers feel can be one of the motivations for building solidarity with other workers and

pursuing cultural values in their work. On the other hand, one of the critical aspects of their responsibility comes from the fact that writers have to make their shows successful to sustain their careers, and these successes and failures are directly relevant to their financial security. All of the responsibilities above create a situation where these writers become more willing to perform unpaid labour and, unfortunately, to suffer from resultant anxiety and stress.

Chapter 5. Exploited communication and precarious emotion in entertainment writers' work

5.1. Introduction[62]

This chapter investigates writers' labour and precarity in the Korean entertainment television industry, based on interviews with 19 entertainment writers and 5 producer-directors (PDs). An example of a Korean entertainment show is *The King of Mask Singer* (*Misŭt'ŏri ŭmaksyo pongmyŏn'gawang*; MBC, 2015–present). This reality singing competition television series is the original show behind The *Masked Singer*, a now-international music show franchise. In this series, celebrities conceal their identities with face masks and head-to-toe costumes. When the celebrities sing a song and give some clues, panelists guess the celebrities' identities. This series was created by one writer of the show, who has worked as an executive writer for several programs at the same time (S. Oh, 2021). In addition to this writer, at the moment 10 writers are working to produce *The King of Mask Singer* (MBC, 2022).

In another Korean reality comedy series, *Infinite Challenge* (*Muhandojŏn*; 2005-2018), an assistant writer showed up during taping and danced ridiculously in 2014. Since the show usually showed several men who were professional comedians playing games and completing missions, it was ironic that one writer showed up to perform her funny dance. A YouTube video with part of this episode obtained more than 20 million views over seven years. In 2021, during a television talk show the writer recalled (Y. Lee, 2021) that because the episode did not have enough funny scenes, the production team suddenly suggested including one comic story in which she would dance. The writer did not refuse the suggestion. In fact, she did not hesitate to dance, but she did express concern over whether her dance was funny enough to air, and whether she appeared tired in the show when it aired. This was due to the fact that she had gone without sleep for two days in order to assist with shooting.

[62] Due to the general lack of studies on Korean entertainment writers described in Chapter 1, most explanations related to entertainment writers' labour are based on the interviews conducted for this research project. This research has uncovered examples which are indeed expressions of broader trends.

In South Korea, entertainment shows refer to the shows that aim to provide entertainment to audiences and include a variety of sub-genres ranging from talk shows, to music shows, and reality shows. A genre refers to "media content that has similar characteristics such as the form, content, subject matter and so on" (Havens & Lotz, 2017, p. 252). Specifically, in this chapter, the form of a television show is referred to as a format. The form of television shows consists of a range of features, from program length and periodicity to the arrangements of cast members and information, which appear in every episode of a show repetitively. A format of television shows is a total collection of the features of the show. Entertainment writers usually work on a writing team. The basic duties of the team include developing new series, designing storylines for episodes, and providing ideas to make programs more entertaining. While entertainment writers are referred to as "writers" and receive their payment under the heading of "script fees," writing scripts (or designing shooting outlines) is only part of the work that a few writers on one writing team perform. Entertainment writers undertake multiple roles, from production to coordination, and conduct diverse duties depending on the requirements of the show.

Due to this diversity of tasks, the questions I asked during interviews shifted in several ways: 1) from a focus on what entertainment writers do to how they do it, and 2) from how individual writers perform such diverse roles in one program to how a group of writers conducts such diverse tasks that vary depending on sub-genres and their formats in the entertainment production sector. The nature of their work centers on two key processes: communication and cooperation, features which I argue most distinguish their work from that of writers from other genres. The following quote from one entertainment writer with approximately 10 years of experience shows the importance of communication in Korean entertainment writers' work:

> Entertainment writers' work is to *meet with people* (*saramŭl taruda*). We talk with people who are sometimes entertainers, ordinary people, or a PD [producer-director] of our production team. Through communication, we make decisions, which is the work of writers. As you know, it is hard work to deal with people. (ENT Writer 9, personal communication, September 10, 2018)

Focusing on cooperation, this chapter explores entertainment writers' labour and precariousness by using the concepts of communicative and emotional labour. Based on the analysis of entertainment writers' labour, I define "communicative labour" as the labour of facilitating or fostering cooperation between workers through communication.

For example, entertainment writers cooperate with cast members, their colleagues (writers and other production staff), and writers across different shows in the industry. Emotional labour refers to “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labour is sold for a wage and therefore has *exchange value*” as described by Arlie Hochschild (2003) (p. 7; emphasis in original). In particular, I discuss how entertainment writers perform communicative and emotional labour considering the over-representation of women in the entertainment writer profession, where according to the Korea Television and Radio Writers Association women constituted almost 90 percent of senior entertainment writers with memberships (727 out of 803) in 2019 (KTRWA, 2019) (See Chapter 1).

Through my research, I found that Korean entertainment writers are involved in various forms of cooperation and that the specific form of communicative labour writers undertake is essential for producing the creative aspects of new series, including developing a format, storylines, and episodes of entertainment shows; all of which must be made with a relatively short turnaround time. However, the communicative labour that Korean writers undertake is underpaid. Furthermore, because the cooperation processes are hierarchical and gendered, writers also undertake emotional labour. In this chapter, I argue that Korean entertainment writers undertake communicative labour (which is necessary for making programs) as a form of feminized work and emotional labour (which is caused by a hierarchical form of cooperation) as a form of gendered precariousness.

In the following sections, I review discussions based on the stereotypes of ideal workers in the current creative labour discourse, feminized work, and communicative and emotional labour. Next, I describe how the entertainment production sector has transformed since the late 1990s as the writing workforce has become increasingly gendered and has come to perform multiple roles. After that, I show how writers perform communicative labour and how that labour is undervalued and underpaid. Finally, I describe how writers undertake emotional labour due to hierarchical cooperation.

5.2. Gender inequity in cultural work and feminized work

Production in cultural industries takes an industrial form and involves the division of labour (Christopherson, 2008; Garnham, 1990; Miège, 1989). More specifically,

Becker (1982) argued that even less or non-industrial forms of cultural products, such as paintings and jazz performances, are eventually the result of cooperation involving “the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people” at diverse levels and stages (p. 2). He said that “the arts we know, like all human activities we know, involve the cooperation of others” (Becker, 1982, p. 7). Thus, the production processes in cultural industries involve more direct forms of cooperation between workers than do more individualized forms of cultural production, such as painting, while the degree of cooperation varies according to the characteristics of the cultural products. Since cooperation among humans requires complex and sophisticated forms of communication (McGuigan, 2010), cultural work, to a greater or lesser degree, also relies upon communication. Despite their importance, cooperation in cultural work and communication as a form of labour in cultural industries have been insufficiently explored. One of the reasons for this insufficient discussion is likely due to the last two decades’ dominance of creative industries discourse, where cultural workers are described as individualized artists rather than labourers involved in cooperative production processes (McRobbie, 2016; Ross, 2008, 2009).

As described in Chapter 2 scholars from liberal and critical perspectives have argued for or against the notion that cultural workers be seen as a kind of role model for workers in the so-called “creative economy” (Florida, 2012; Howkins, 2001; de Peuter, 2014; McRobbie, 2016). McRobbie (2016) and Ross (2008, 2009) described the romantic stereotype of the artist (hereafter referred to as the ‘artist trope’) and produced critiques of the manner in which it justified the precarious working conditions of cultural workers. Indeed “creativity and entrepreneurialism [were] very much linked to the artistic persona—the maverick, the rebel, the non-wearing of a suit” (Oakley & O’Connor, 2015, p. 4). Specifically, in this creative labour discourse the (creative) value of cultural products occurs as a result of individual talent and inspiration rather than of labour conducted cooperatively with other workers (McRobbie, 2016; Pang, 2009; Ross, 2008, 2009). The problem with the artist trope, scholars have observed, is that it assumes that workers voluntarily endure precarious working conditions, including unpaid and underpaid work and longer working hours as a result of their adoption of this persona (Garnham, 2005; McRobbie, 2016; Ross, 2009).

It is crucial to point out that this artist trope is also based on a romantic model of a *masculinized* artist, an observation made by several studies on gender inequity in

cultural work (Nixon, 2003; Nixon & Crewe, 2004; Parker & Pollock, 2013; Taylor, 2011). Feminist scholars Parker and Pollock (2013), for example, argue that in the conventional history of the fine arts, prior to the 18th century artists were referred to as "a kind of workman" and by the mid-19th century "the concept of the artist as a creative individual" was formed and had implications for "new social personae, the Bohemian and the pioneer" (p. 82). As a result, the authors suggest, "artists came to be thought of as strange, different, exotic, imaginative, eccentric, creative, unconventional, alone" (Parker & Pollock, 2013, p. 82). These scholars also found that exclusively male attributes were added to this artist trope, which was linked to a distinctive version of masculinity including male sexuality. Parker and Pollock (2013) claim that due to this masculinized trope of the artist, women's cultural production in the 19th century became "characterized as the antithesis of cultural creativity" (p. 8) and regarded "as biologically determined or as an extension of their domestic and refining role in society" (p. 9).

For their part Nixon (2003) and Taylor (2011) show that this masculinized artist trope is deeply significant for the exclusion of women from specific privileged positions in contemporary cultural or creative industries. Nixon (2003) studied why men were overrepresented in the 'creative jobs' such as art director and copywriter positions in the United Kingdom advertising industry. Confirming Parker and Pollock's (2013) discussion, Nixon found that the over-representation of men in the advertising industry was due largely to a stereotype of creative individuals that is based on "the link between creativity and masculinity" (Nixon, 2003, p. 97). Similarly, Taylor (2011) claims that the ideal creative workers were seen as men who are unboundedly immersed in their cultural work without concern for other people, and that this immersion is linked to creativity. She argues that the artist trope "conflicts with long-established gendered positionings of women as other-oriented," and that as a result women tend to be excluded from key forms of creative work (Taylor, 2011, p. 368).

More generally, many studies on gender inequity have implied that the masculinized artist trope has impacted the role that women perform in cultural and creative sectors (Adkins, 1999; M. Banks & Milestone, 2011; Fröhlich, 2004; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015; Mayer, 2013). They have found that women tend to take on specific gendered positions such as jobs requiring communication, negotiation, and support (e.g., public relations, coordination) and these positions are often considered 'non-creative,' marginalized, or undervalued in cultural or creative industries. In

particular, the gender stereotypes of women as being good communicators, other-directed, and altruistic appear positive, but actually have excluded women from more creative and privileged roles, such as producers, directors, or writers in the cultural industries (M. Banks & Milestone, 2011; Fröhlich, 2004; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015; Mayer, 2013). These gender stereotypes of women are not only "questionable" but also "dangerous" because they import "the 'mothering' role from [the] home into the workplace" (Fröhlich, 2004, p. 72).

These studies are important in that they suggest two interrelated implications. First, the masculinized artist trope has obscured the fact that communication and cooperation play a critical role in generating creative value in the cultural production process. Communication and cooperation have thereby been undervalued and marginalized in cultural or creative industries. Furthermore, they are sometimes regarded as opposite to creativity (Nixon, 2003; Parker & Pollock, 2013; Taylor, 2011). Second, communication and its relevant features in cultural industries have been connected to a so-called "femininity" that is socially and historically structured (Fröhlich, 2004; Mayer, 2013). Because communicative labour is regarded as one of the inherent features of women's work, the labour has been naturalized and devalued.[63]

Crucially, however, while the exclusion of women from some jobs and segregation by gender in cultural or creative industries are broadly relevant to my study,

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[63] Several scholars from an autonomist Marxist viewpoint have highlighted the value of communication, attention, and emotion as the products of immaterial labour in contemporary capitalism (Brophy, 2017; Hardt & Negri, 2000; D. W. Hill, 2015; Lazzarato, 1996). They have argued that with the dominance of the post-Fordist production system, communication has an important role in producing value (Brophy, 2017; D. W. Hill, 2015). Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004, 2009) argued that immaterial labour has the inherently high possibility of fostering cooperation and the building of a collective community among workers, which creates potential to struggle against capital. They claimed that the dominant organization of immaterial labour is a networked form through cooperation, instead of the clearly designated, linear organization of production under Fordism. In the case of industrial labour, cooperation should be built and managed from the outside, but in terms of immaterial labour, "cooperation is completely immanent to the laboring activity itself" (Hardt & Negri, 2000. p. 294). Although these scholars highlight communication and cooperation, they tend to naturalize the formation of cooperation (Federici, 2011, 2012) and to disregard that communicative labour has been gendered in recent decades, which is contrasted to other feminist scholars (Fröhlich, 2004; Mayer, 2013). However, Brophy (2017) describes that call center workers perform communicative labour while highlighting the feminized nature of call centre work. While Brophy (2017) highlights communication in service industries, the concept of communicative labour in this dissertation focuses on the labour which is involved in cooperation processes in cultural industries. The nuanced discussion regarding communicative labour should be addressed in future studies.

these processes cannot be mapped on to the Korean entertainment writers' case in a straightforward way because the above studies are based on cases of the *exclusion* of women from creative roles in cultural industries. In contrast, Korean entertainment writers certainly undertake the creative conception of shows, but they do it in a highly cooperative manner, engaging in communicative labour. However, as the literature cited above suggests, communication and cooperation have been undervalued, a fact that is directly related to the work of Korean entertainment writers.

To clarify the gendered aspect of the labour that Korean entertainment writers undertake, I use the concept of "feminized work" (Mayer, 2013). As described in Chapter 2, Mayer (2013) has suggested three criteria in defining feminized work. First, feminized work is associated with domestic work and often includes "organizational duties, interpersonal and time management skills, and the ability to do multiple tasks at once (multi-tasking)" (Mayer, 2013, p. 51). Second, feminized work involves affective aspects such as caring and supporting others, and often includes emotional labour. Third, feminized labour is characterized as having "feminine" features, and as a result tends to be undervalued and underpaid in contrast to non-feminized work (Mayer, 2013).

Emotional labour is commanded and managed in order to generate economic value as part of the labour processes that form the occupational requirements in a waged workplace (Hochschild, 2003). It is distinguished from "the synonymous terms emotion work or emotion management to refer to these same acts done in a private context where they have use value" as Hochschild stated (2013, p. 7; emphasis in original). Emotional labour is an intimately gendered form of labour in two ways (Federici, 2011; Mayer, 2011, 2013). First, women and men perform gendered forms of emotional labour as they have been trained in how to manage their emotions as part of their gendered roles at work and at home (Hochschild, 2003).[64] Second, although men sometimes undertake emotional labour in the workplace, women are more likely to

[64] Since workers are required to conduct emotional labour according to gender stereotypes, emotional labour tends to reproduce gender inequity (Wingfield, 2010). In this chapter, I focus on gendered forms of emotional labour. However, "emotional labor affects the various social classes differently" (Hochschild, 2003, p. 20). Kang (2003) demonstrated that emotional labour is not only gendered, but also formed by racial and class locations, through research on Korean immigrant women manicurists' labour in the United States. Wingfield (2010) also found that African American professionals in various occupations, ranging from engineers to lawyers, were forced to manage and express their feelings according to the stereotypes of gender, race, and class of a society. This scholar found that when these professionals failed to follow these stereotypes, they experienced punishment, such as being underpaid or fired.

undertake emotional labour in their workplaces while performing feminized work, such as caring or nurturing, as shown in innumerable studies on emotional labour in the service industries (Guy & Newman, 2004; Hochschild, 2003; M. Kang, 2003; Mayer, 2013).

Many studies on emotional labour focus on labour in the service industries, but case studies have shown that the concept of emotional labour also can be applied to media work (Grindstaff, 2002; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008).[65] Grindstaff's (2002) research is insightful and especially relevant for my study in that it connected television workers' emotional labour with the production process and characteristics of talk shows in the United States. In particular, Grindstaff shows that production staff perform emotional labour to motivate the guests to expose their feelings in dramatic, but nonetheless authentic ways (showing ordinariness), which usually appeal to audiences (Grindstaff, 2002, p. 19). Grindstaff (2002) found that the workers manipulated their emotions and felt alienation while performing emotional labour. In addition, in a study observing a talent show in the United Kingdom, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2008) describe how television staff members care for guests. These studies clearly demonstrate how the performance of emotional labour is integral to cultural industries,[66] but they do not pay a great deal of attention to the fact that emotional labour, in these cases, takes feminized forms. Mayer (2011) shows that casting directors for reality programming are predominantly women and perform a feminized form of emotional labour in recruiting and interviewing cast members.

My study suggests that the imposition of emotional labour on women workers should be understood as adding not just gendered labour, but gendered precarity to women, at least in this particular context in the cultural industries. As Guy and Newman (2004) argue, emotional labour performed by women is undervalued and unpaid

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[65] Several studies have explored emotional labour in cultural or creative industries, but this research tends to highlight that workers perform emotional labour to create good relationships with their managers (or sponsors) audiences to manage their funding, jobs, and/or reputations (e.g., Ashton, 2021; Butler & Stoyanova Russell, 2018; Soronen, 2018). In some studies, the description of emotional labour is closer to emotional management as defined by Hochschild (2003).

[66] Grindstaff (2002) studied talk shows, and Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2008) examined a talent show. These shows are categorized as entertainment shows in South Korea. Both studies showed that the production staff undertake emotional labour in interaction with cast members. In particular, the workers who mainly communicated with cast members were women in their 20s and 30s in Grindstaff's (2002) study. These factors indicate that the emotional labour in the above case studies appears in a similar context where Korean entertainment writers undertake communicative emotional labour in my case study.

because feminized forms of emotional labour, such as caring and supporting, are often regarded as inherent features of 'femininity' that women can do easily, not labour that requires skills and efforts.[67] As scholars have shown therefore, emotional labour in feminized work causes material inequity between workers who conduct feminized work and non-feminized work (Mayer, 2013). Moreover, as Hochschild (2013) has suggested, emotional labour is alienated labour because workers manipulate their emotions, separating and externalizing their feelings from themselves. Therefore, when it comes to emotional labour, I seek to go beyond material inequity and focus on women workers' gendered physical exhaustion, anxiety, and alienation. Most Korean entertainment writers I interviewed pointed to emotional labour as the most difficult part of their work, and that this labour had negatively impacted their personal lives, a process I describe later on in this chapter.

5.3. Korean entertainment television industry

As the industrial context of entertainment shows shapes the labour of writers, this section discusses the general features of the Korean entertainment television industry and the distinctive features of entertainment shows. Entertainment shows are regarded in the Korean television industry as a genre that can generate high profits with less investment and lower risk (Y. D. Kim & Jang, 2018). Competition for advertising has increased in the broadcasting market since the early 2010s when the four new nationwide, private, generalist cable television networks (i.e., Joongang Tongyang Broadcasting Company, TV Chosun, Channel A, Maeil Broadcasting Network) were launched, and cable television channels such as tvN began to find success in securing high audience ratings. In this situation of growing market competition, Korean broadcasters have increased their production of entertainment shows because entertainment shows were recognized as a genre that is more likely to achieve high audience ratings and to appeal to advertisers (Y. D. Kim & Jang, 2018).[68]

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[67] Guy and Newman (2004) found that the emotional labour that women undertake often "disappear most often from job descriptions, performance evaluations, and salary calculation" (p. 289).

[68] The number of Korean entertainment shows that aired per year on the eight major television channels increased from 79 in 2012 to 111 in 2016 (Y. D. Kim & Jang, 2018) The major channels include three terrestrial broadcasting companies (i.e., KBS, MBC, SBS); four nationwide, private, generalist cable TV networks (i.e., Joongang Tongyang Broadcasting Company, TV Chosun, Channel A, Maeil Broadcasting Network); and one cable TV channel (i.e., tvN) (Y. D. Kim & Jang,

As a result of this increasingly intense competition, over the last decade entertainment shows have frequently launched and often been cancelled just as quickly based on their audience ratings (Y. D. Kim & Jang, 2018). Broadcasting companies have also produced more pilots to gauge the potential of audience ratings (H. Cho, 2015) and have produced more series with a limited number of episodes rather than an open-ended number of episodes (S. Cho, 2015). In one interview conducted for this research project, one PD vividly described these features: “Now, the launch of a new program is instant and fast. The decision to cancel a program is also made very easily” (ENT PD 5, personal communication, November 16, 2018). My interviews suggest that the production process for shows can be described as rapid production with a short-term, tight production schedule and low budgets with, crucially, a very limited staff of workers. The production staff generally develop concrete and practical production plans and prepare for the launch of a show in a short time period, such as three months after the key features and hosts of shows are provisionally agreed upon (M. K. Choi et al., 2013). After launching the show, they usually produce and air one 60- or 70-minute episode every week (Roh, 2019).

Korean entertainment shows include a wide range of sub-genres, including comedy (a fiction show), talk, music, variety, quiz, game, talent, and reality shows (D. K. Lee et al., 2018). Originally, a few fiction shows, such as comedy, were dominant in the entertainment production sector. In the 2010s, Korean broadcasters such as KBS, MBC, and SBS significantly decreased the production of fiction shows and now only rarely produce them (C. Nam, 2020).[69] In contrast, reality shows have become dominant in the Korean television industry since the 2000s when they were imported from Europe and North America where they were first introduced. The forms of reality shows have been transformed into a variety of mixed forms in the Korean television industry (H.-S. Lee,

2018). The data count all entertainment shows that were regular or pilot shows, so it is unclear whether the number of aired shows per week increased. However, the data indicate that more shows were launched each year.

[69] My interviews suggest that fiction entertainment shows such as comedy that require concrete scripts are produced via an entirely different production process from most of the other shows. Given the decreased production of fiction entertainment shows in the 2010s, most of the writers that I interviewed had not garnered any experience in the format. Therefore, this chapter does not cover the production of fiction shows. I refer to the other entertainment shows as ‘entertainment shows’ to avoid complexity. When referred to in this dissertation, ‘fiction entertainment shows’ are specifically stated as such.

2011). The typical Korean domestic reality shows include 'real-variety shows'[70] (*Riŏl pŏrait'i*) and 'observation shows'[71] (*Kwanch'al yenŭng*). Real-variety shows are based on reality shows, but mixed with other sub-genres, such as game and quiz shows (Y. D. Kim & Jang, 2018). Observation shows deal with people's ordinary lives that occur mainly in limited locations, such as cast members' houses (Y. D. Kim & Jang, 2018). The proportion of television programs utilizing these two types of reality shows increased drastically from 29.11% (23 out of 79) in 2012 to 42.34% (47 out of 111) in 2016, and was 64.10% (75 out of 117) for the 10 months from January to October in 2017 in the Korean entertainment production sector (Y. D. Kim & Jang, 2018, p. 18).

Most Korean entertainment shows are comparable to unscripted (or non-scripted) entertainment shows, including reality shows in the United States television industry.[72] Most empirical academic studies on writers in North American and European industries tend to focus on writers for scripted shows (e.g., Conor, 2014; Wreyford, 2018). Thus, it is not easy to compare notes on how writers work in unscripted shows in those contexts. While they limit their focus to reality shows in the United States, several studies have reported that writers or comparable categories of workers for reality shows in that country are non-unionized and often suffer from precarious working conditions, including a lack of healthcare and benefits, and longer working hours without overtime pay (Gamson, 2014; Hearn, 2014; Ross, 2014). These studies have also suggested that media companies preferred to produce reality shows because they can produce them without hiring unionized writers and actors, and therefore operate at a cheaper cost (Gamson, 2014; Hearn, 2014; Ross, 2014). In contrast, most writers for scripted shows are under the protection of the writers' union, Writers' Guild of America. According to Hearn (2014), production companies or managers of reality shows often argue that their

[70] One example is *Running Man* (SBS, South Korea, *Rŏnning Man*), which has shown since 2010 and has had several hosts and cast members (entertainers and celebrities) who play games and complete missions.

[71] One famous observation show, *I Live Alone* (MBC, South Korea; *Na Honja Sanda*), has been airing weekly since 2013. This program shows a video recording of one day in the life of a celebrity or professional entertainer who lives alone. It also includes a mini talk show of celebrities who have observed the celebrity's one day through the video in the studio as audiences do at home.

[72] At the annual International Emmy Awards in 2021, the International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences presented the "Non-Scripted [unscripted] Entertainment" category. This category was defined as "any program devoted primarily to entertain, or entertain and inform, with unscripted dialogue (i.e., reality show, variety show, game show, awards show, docu-reality, etc.)" (The International Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, 2021).

shows are unscripted and have no writers (or story editors) but “in fact they rely on editors to build the story in the editing bay, simply renaming writers ‘segment or field producers’” (Hearn, 2014, p. 440).

The term “unscripted” is likely not the most precise term to refer to Korean entertainment shows. Korean entertainment shows have writing positions and outlines, or rough plans, for shooting (hereafter, shooting outlines). A quote from an executive PD with around 20 years of experience indicates the meaning of shooting outlines:

> All entertainment shows, including reality shows, have basic written outlines that play the role of scripts (*taebon*). Entertainment show outlines describe a simulation of what may take place in shooting locations. They have a structure of storytelling or narratives and flow for each episode, rather than a tightly structured or fixed script. For reality shows, we do not provide screen directions and dialogue. However, the outlines are there to help production staff and cast members understand the main topic of each episode and what will take place. (ENT PD 1, personal communication, October 2, 2018)

Korean shooting outlines take various forms ranging from cue sheets (with narration and cast member lists) to screen scripts (with screen directions, narrations, and dialogue) depending on the format of the show. My interviews suggest that, for production staff, the content of an episode is constructed through cooperation between the writers and cast members. Specifically, writers produce shooting outlines for the entertainment shows based on cast members’ stories and/or specific performances (e.g., talks, signing, showing their daily lives). After that, cast members continually participate in producing the storytelling and performances in the production process. Furthermore, the shooting outlines are detailed and transformed by the cooperation of the production staff and cast members in the shooting process (See Section 5.5). Therefore, for the purposes of describing the labour process involved, I describe entertainment shows as semi-structured. Real-variety and observation shows are less structured than other types of shows, such as music shows, where cast members perform for their audiences.

5.4. The gendering of writers’ work

Writers in the Korean entertainment television industry have been predominantly women since the late 1990s (See Figure 1.3). Meanwhile, a critical change occurred by the late 2000s, one that was highlighted by my interviewees—writers’ work expanded from simply writing scripts to carrying out other kinds of work in the production process.

Before women became so heavily represented in the profession, individual writers were limited to the very clearly defined work of writing scripts. For example, one writer recalled that writers did not need to participate in the shooting process in the mid-1990s and said, “when I went to shooting locations before 2000, I was scorned by other staff,” although in recent years doing so has become almost one of the writers’ essential duties (ENT Writer 14, personal communication, October 1, 2018). By the late 1990s, PDs were expected to perform various duties, such as casting, coordinating, directing and editing as described in Chapter 3.

Between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s, the division of labour between writers and PDs was broadly and systematically reshaped (ENT Writer 14, personal communication, October 1, 2018). Except for one head PD and a few PDs in the production team, PDs have become primarily engaged in directing and editing rather than producing. As the introduction of the reality show has diversified the production process of shows and made it more complex such that it has required more diverse tasks, these new kinds of tasks have been assigned to writers (ENT Writer 16, personal communication, October 18, 2018).

Why did taking on the duties that PDs had previously performed and the tasks that new forms of shows required fall on the writers, and not on other staff? The answer might be related to the employment status of writers. In the 1990s, writers were freelancers (self-employed workers), but most PDs were permanent, full-time employees of broadcasters (C. K. Lee, 2009). While PDs began to be hired as temporary workers in the late 1990s, most PDs were not freelancers but workers with employment contracts who received wages and social benefits until the late 2000s, and, therefore, had more security and stability than writers (D. Kim, 2010) (See details in Chapter 3).

At present, writers conduct diverse duties that vary depending on the show, in addition to the creation of series and development of storylines. One interviewee’s comment clearly showed this diversity of tasks: “When I move from program to program, I get to do an absolutely new kind of work, from A to Z” (ENT Writer 17, personal communication, October 19, 2018).[73] To give a sense of the diversity of these tasks, for

[73] While contacting or interviewing writers and PDs, I occasionally faced moments when interviewees hesitated to participate in my research because they thought that they could not explain what entertainment writers do generally. For example, when I arranged an interview with

a talent show, one writer performed duties such as recruiting contestants, interviewing/caring for contestants and their family members, training contestants to sing songs, and selecting and/or adjusting songs. On a game show, one writer searched for, created, and played the games in order to determine how the cast members would play them.[74] More clearly, the tasks entertainment writers undertake are subject to regular transformation and thus require notable adaptability. In other words, when a new show involves a new type of task, writers are often supposed to accept and carry out this task.

The fluidity of the writers' duties stands out conspicuously when compared with the very set duties of PDs. In recent years, except for a head PD and a few of the main PDs, PDs tend to mainly engage in directing, shooting, and/or editing in the production and post-production stages (ENT PD 4, personal communication, October 22, 2018). For observation shows and real-variety shows, far more footage is shot than actually makes it into the show. The rise of reality shows has increased the editing work that PDs do and, therefore, the number of PDs needed for each show (Roh, 2019). However, although the number of PDs has increased, after shooting, the PDs each edit different parts of one episode separately.

Since writers' work has been expanded to include a range of additional responsibilities, the number of writers per show has increased from one writer in the early 1990s up to, in some cases, over 10 in recent years depending on the characteristics of the show, which is described in detail below (ENT Writer 16, personal communication, October 18, 2018). Entertainment writers work cooperatively on a team with other writers. In the industry, an in-house PD (who, important to remember, is a permanent, full-time employee of the broadcaster) generally plays the role of the head

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an executive PD with around 20 years of experience, he said that "I could not give you a general idea of writers' work because all writers work differently, and their working conditions are different as well" (ENT PD 1, personal communication, October 2, 2018). In some cases, several writers I interviewed did not know how writers worked on shows with formats on which they had not worked due to the difference in writers' work between programs. For example, one writer with 10 years of experience had not worked on a production team of an observation program and asked me what writers do for observation programs (ENT Writer 9, personal communication, September 10, 2018).

[74] Other examples are as follows. One writer on a quiz show made quizzes and interviewed contestants. For a reality show, one writer selected/contacted cast members, searched for and visited shooting locations, directed cast members with a PD at shooting locations, and edited together with a PD. Even within the same format, writers carry out different tasks according to the content of the shows. For instance, the topics of real-variety shows include camping, dancing, and blind dating, for all of which production staff have to conduct the different tasks of planning and shooting.

PD, who is the leader of a production team. The head PD has the authority to organize a production team—including the writing team—and to finalize all decisions in the production process (J. S. Park et al., 2015). Except for one head PD (and a few in-house PDs) and some technical positions, such as sound, light, filming or editing staff, most workers—including writers—have non-standard employment on the production team of terrestrial broadcasters (B. S. Kim & Kim, 2011).

In recent years, as one writer suggested, “entertainment writers create the original series and, after the launch, writers make storylines and detailed outlines for episodes” (ENT Writer 14, personal communication, October 1, 2018). Except for the head and a few in-house PDs, my interviews suggest that most of the workers who participate in the creation of a new series these days are writers. Generally, when a broadcaster launches a new show the head PD and the executive or head writer start devising a show together.[75] As a show is being developed, writers are gradually added to the production team. After a show is launched, writers tend to engage in both the pre-production and production stages, while writing scripts (or shooting outlines) and participating in other tasks, such as casting, researching, coordinating, and interviewing cast members. They also partially engage in the post-production stage by helping PDs edit.

The executive or head writers organize the writing team mainly through an informal network of writers. The precise number of writers for any single program is determined by the features of the show, such as its format and production budget (ENT Writer 17, personal communication, October 19, 2018). For example, while some smaller music shows have only 3-4 writers, larger-sized shows like talent shows may have closer to 15. In fact, within the total salary budget for the writing team which is set by the broadcaster, the executive or head writer organizes a writing team that consists of several writers with different ranks. As I have mentioned previously, the organization and components of a writing team vary from program to program as do their duties, and

[75] Executive writers sometimes develop entertainment shows first, and then broadcasters decide whether to produce these shows. Nevertheless, the heads of the production teams for shows developed by writers are in-house PDs.

therefore cannot be easily summarized. The following table illustrates the composition of an average writing team on a large show (See Table 5.1).[76]

Table 5.1 The composition of large writing teams

Roles	Writers' experiences	Number of writers
Executive writer (*wang mein chakka*)	More than head writer's experience	1
Head writer (*mein chakka*)	More than senior writers' experiences	1
Senior writers (*k'onŏ mein chakka)*	Between nine and 12 years	2 or 3
Junior writers (*sŏbŭ chakka*)	Between five and eight years	2 or 3
Assistant writers (*pojo chakka*)	Almost four years	Between 1 to 3

Note: This table is based on the analysis of the interviews for this dissertation.

The team in this example has five categories of writers (i.e., executive, head, senior, junior, assistant writers) but only a few programs have an executive writer. Executive writers usually work across several shows at the same time. After a show is launched, an executive writer usually participates in meetings with the writer and the production team once or twice a week. The head writer, as the title suggests, manages and supervises the other writers. All writers in one team are ranked according to seniority (which correlates to age), and this very hierarchical relationship between the writers is a notable feature of how the production process is structured.[77] Except for executive and head writers, most writers get paid according to how long they have worked in the industry, with the standard pay per week being around $100 multiplied by the writer's number of working years (as described in Chapter 3). Most entertainment writers work like full-time employees at companies, although they are technically classified as freelancers. In many cases, writers work in a designated room that is assigned to a particular show.

[76] Except for 'main writers,' the interviewees refer to the writers' titles in their working groups in slightly different ways. Practically, writers use a range of titles for other writers and no official terms seem to exist. Sometimes, another subgroup exists between the senior and junior writers.

[77] The hierarchical relationship is relevant to both seniority and age and is reflected in how they address one another: writers usually refer to their (older) colleagues with longer careers as 'older sisters' (*ŏnni*), whereas their (younger) colleagues with shorter careers are addressed by their names, instead of their official positions. The term 'the youngest writers' (*mangnae chakka*) is used to refer to assistant writers as a job title. Titles, such as "older sister" and "the youngest," are generally not used at work because they are used in private relationships based on a hierarchy by age in Korean society.

5.5. Communicative labour in cooperation

Korean entertainment writers work to produce shows while undertaking intensive amounts of communicative labour. The significance of cooperation is shown in the following quote from one writer with almost 25 years of experience:

> With writers' work, you must cooperate with others (*hyŏbŏp*), which is complex and has many meanings. It is difficult to define cooperation. It also is impossible to divide writers' labour into sub-categories…. Cooperation takes place between writers and between writers and PDs or cast members. Writers always discuss everything together… In a writing team, we do not need a genius. We need someone who can move in harmony like a cog in a machine. (ENT Writer 6, personal communication, August 30, 2018)

As can be seen from this quote ("we do not need a genius"), the actual model for an entertainment writer in the Korean television industry is far from the aforementioned masculinized artist trope idealized in the creative labour discourse. My interviews suggest that the labour process for writers is not a linear one. Generally, writers make an episode every one or two weeks, engaging in several sub-production processes at almost the same time in a short term. For example, while writers communicate with cast members to develop a storyline, they discuss the outcome of the communication with cast members to develop a shooting outline and interact with other production staff to prepare for shooting. Writers play a key role in making the connections among all workers, including writers, and between other staff and cast members in the overall cooperative production process. Individual writers are supposed to have an evolving, yet comprehensive grasp of the whole production process while completing their own work.

In the next section, I show how writers undertake communicative labour in the three dimensions of cooperation. First, writers cooperate in creating a variety of series, moving between shows with diverse formats in the industry. Second, writers interact with cast members to develop content for shows that are semi-structured. Lastly, writers design a shooting outline for an episode and produce the episode, while cooperating with writers and other production staff on the production team.

In creating a new series, moving from show to show

As the format of a show defines a particular mode of production (Andrejevic, 2015), the production processes of entertainment shows vary depending on the format

of each show. A television format is “a set of experiences and skills” (Moran, 2014, p. 75), based on a “complex and coherent body of knowledge” (Moran, 2014, p. 76). In other words, the format of each show defines what distinctive experiences and skills are needed in its production. The topics of entertainment shows are also diverse, including love, marriage, family, parenting, cooking, health, celebrity, and fashion (Cha & Park, 2012), which also differentiate the required tasks. Regarding the creation process of new series, one head writer I interviewed said:

> Nobody may be able to define what the writers’ work is and how entertainment television programs are created in the Korean television industry. …The production processes of entertainment shows vary from show to show and, accordingly, so do writers’ duties. In fact, there is no systematic production process in the Korean television industry. We make an entertainment show by asking each other and sharing our experiences. Experience is important. (ENT Writer 17, personal communication, October 19, 2018)

In particular, this quote, “we make an entertainment show by asking each other and sharing our experiences” indicates that writers enable diverse formats to be created and produced in the industry by sharing their lived experiences and skills with one another. This writer told me that “we can learn how to produce the show in particular, how to make the show more entertaining and enjoyable by working on several shows. It is not impossible to conceive the process mentally, but it is not enough” (ENT Writer 17, personal communication, October 19, 2018). She provided a specific example of this by explaining that if one head writer were on the writing team for a cooking show, she or he would seek out an individual who had previously worked on a cooking show and subsequently possessed the knowledge and skill set unique to that specific type of television show (ENT Writer 17, personal communication, October 19, 2018). Another writer’s interview reveals the importance of writers’ work experience and skills:

> In a talent show, our writing team did not have any writers who knew how to make a specific outline for a music stage shoot. Thus, just for the simple outline, we had to join someone who was familiar with working on the document. (ENT Writer 13, personal communication, September 30, 2018)

When writers prepare to launch a new series, writers usually search for and recruit other writers through informal networks which span across different programs in the industry. Thanks to the informal networks, Korean broadcasters launch a variety of new series cheaply and quickly according to market trends.

My research suggests that entertainment writers are required to develop different types of skills and experiences that are needed to create different kinds of programs, rather than become experts in a specific sub-genre. Specifically, most of the writers I interviewed said that those individuals in this profession have to build their careers by working on several different sub-genres one by one when they are assistant and junior writers. This, in turn, assists them in learning how to create a larger variety of programs. Even when writers work on longer-running shows that have been airing for several years, they often still move to other shows after a few years. In fact, writers who do not develop a broad range of experiences are often penalized. For example, one writer I interviewed revealed that she only had experience working on music shows, and consequently, this lack of breadth in her experience rendered her unable to move to another genre. Ultimately, she was forced to take a lower-level job at much less pay in the same genre (ENT Writer 7, personal communication, September 4, 2018).

While writers' experiences and skills are necessary to develop a new series, broadcasters tend to redirect the production costs and risks on to writers by exploiting the underpaid or unpaid labour of writers when developing a new series. When writers create and prepare for the launch of a new series, broadcasters generally pay most of these writers only between 50 to 70% of the regular pay received by those writers who are working on shows that are already being aired. During the launch of a new series only assistant writers get full pay because their regular pay is already so low. Broadcasters justify this low pay for writers' labour by arguing that the working time for writers on a new show is generally shorter than the time writers work on shows already being aired. When the launch of a show is delayed for a matter of weeks, interviewees reported that the writers are often underpaid or unpaid for an extended period of time.

In addition, as previously mentioned, since the early 2010s broadcasters have also made a habit of quickly cancelling shows as a result of low audience ratings. As a result, writers who were not fortunate enough to work for a popular, regularly-scheduled program with high audience ratings have experienced increased job insecurity and have had to look for new jobs and work to create new series more frequently.[78] To offer one example of the relationship between this rapidly-changing portfolio of shows and writers'

[78] By the late 2000s, writers worked as freelancers, and their employment was more secure because most Korean entertainment shows aired year-round and for several years.

job insecurity, one interviewee I spoke to had worked on a total of 16 programs in less than seven years between the late 2000s and mid-2010s (ENT Writer 18, personal communication, October 29, 2018). This resulted in the interviewee experiencing a pay decrease despite the fact that she worked year-round. Only writers suffer from such underpaid or unpaid labour because only writers are expected to engage in the creation of shows with the exception of salaried in-house PDs.

In constructing a storyline with cast members

My interviews suggest that most Korean entertainment shows have, to different degrees, fictional and non-fictional aspects, regardless of whether they are called reality shows. Broadly, non-fictional aspects of shows result from the fact that the main content generally is based on cast members' interviews (e.g., their experiences, opinions), performances (e.g., singing a song, playing a game), and/ or daily lives (particularly in observation shows). Fictional aspects of the shows basically stem from the fact that the production staff puts the cast members into specific settings that are devised to make cast members' performances entertaining. This production process requires interaction between the production team and cast members to generate entertainment. "Entertainment writers are in charge of communicating with cast members, which is one of the most evident differences between writers and other production staff" (ENT Writer 17, personal communication, October 19, 2018).

During the production process, writers are tasked to constantly communicate with cast members, who could be professional entertainers or ordinary people.[79] Writers search for, contact, and choose the cast members who appear in their shows. Additionally, after interviewing cast members, writers will also develop storylines for the show's episodes. This work involves several types of communication methods, from the written words of shooting outlines (such as scripts) to face-to-face discussions which involve complex verbal and/or non-verbal communication.

In several cases, shooting outlines include examples to show what the cast members could say and do in a specific situation, but cast members are not supposed to

[79] 'Ordinary people' refers to "people who are not professional experts or celebrities (and this definition has very little to do with 'averageness' or typicality)" (Grindstaff, 2012, p. 22). In particular, this term is used to refer to non-professional entertainers on reality television shows (e.g., Grindstaff, 2002, 2012; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008).

act *as actors* like those individuals in fully-scripted fiction shows such as television dramas. One writer told me:

> Entertainment shows require cast members to complete scripts by themselves in comparison to television dramas. It does not matter if the cast members read and follow scripts. Cast members should carry out their own roles and performances based on, but beyond, the shooting outlines. (ENT Writer 10, personal communication, September 11, 2018)

One writer elaborated on the process: "Entertainment show scripts are sometimes porous or contain missing parts that still need specific details worked out by the casts" (ENT Writer 14, personal communication, October 1, 2018). Even in talk shows, cast members need to deliver their own stories in an interesting way. While on shooting locations, writers usually facilitate communication between the production team and cast members.

Shooting outlines are often open to revision and development during the shooting and editing processes. For example, real-variety shows, which are more semi-structured than other shows, need communication for impromptu revisions and completion at shooting locations. As one writer explained:

> Nowadays, the impromptu work of writers in shooting locations is often more important than scripts. In real-variety shows, writers' activities, such as understanding what is going on and providing impromptu scripts, are critical. An impromptu script is called an 'Ad Lib Script.' (ENT Writer 16, personal communication, October 18, 2018)

Therefore, it is common that "the head writers behind the camera write down instructions on boards and show them to cast members" (ENT Writer 16, personal communication, October 18, 2018). In other words, writers sometimes revise the structure of shows by providing impromptu scripts at shooting locations while communicating with casts.[80]

[80] In observation shows that are the most semi-structured, writers often describe some possible situations in the forms of dialogue or direction in shooting outlines to help cast members and production staff understand the shooting process. For example, if an episode is about going fishing, production staff should know that the party will occur on the shooting day and who will participate in fishing. By doing so, the production staff can prepare for shooting, such as casting the shooting locations. While the production team does not direct what the cast members will do in the details, they intervene in the process. However, if it suddenly rains and the cast member cannot go fishing, writers should think of a new storyline (what the cast member does in the shooting location) and have the cast member follow a new plan (ENT Writer 6, personal communication, August 30, 2018).

When cast members sometimes do not agree with the production teams' thoughts or plans on shooting locations, writers, on behalf of the production team, have to communicate with cast members in order to convince them to follow the production team's opinions. In particular, when writers think that what cast members want to do is unappealing or impractical, they need to persuade them that this is the case. One interviewee explained: "The ultimate role of entertainment writers is to encourage people to say what is necessary for entertainment shows" and "entertainment writers communicate with cast members more directly than drama writers [who communicate through written words in scripts]" (ENT Writer 2, personal communication, July 31, 2018). In this process, they have an emotional interchange with cast members, and that exchange involves emotional labour. This form of communication will be discussed later (See Section 5.6).

In producing an episode with production staff

Writers cooperate with each other in a writing team and, more broadly, in a production team in order to design an episode and prepare for shooting. To understand the degree of cooperation, a quote from one writer's interview is helpful: "Writers should share with each other and discuss everything from big issues, such as main themes and casting, to small parts, such as costumes and stage props for shooting" (ENT Writer 8, personal communication, September 7, 2018). In discussions, writers must offer their own ideas to make their shows entertaining. As one executive writer said: "All of the writers, including executive and assistant writers, need to engage in the discussion actively and provide their own ideas, although the executive or head writer leads the discussion" (ENT Writer 16, personal communication, October 18, 2018). One writer said that these discussions can last for as long as eight hours, describing, "Basically, my writer team has a meeting at 2 PM every day. In some cases, the meetings are over early. However, when the meetings go long, they do not end until 10 PM or 11 PM" (ENT Writer 8, personal communication, September 7, 2018). All writers have regular, official meetings for discussions.[81] However, in many cases, no clear division exists between meetings and working on individual tasks because writers have to share their tasks and

[81] In contrast, among other production staff, only the head PD tends to participate in the meetings as the leader of the whole production team (if the size of the production staff is large, then a few main PDs attend) (ENT PD 5, personal communication, November 16, 2018).

provide ideas to other writers while conducting their own individual tasks (ENT Writer 2, personal communication, July 31, 2018).

Writers' tasks in one team are not determined by their expertise or the inherent nature of the tasks in question. Each writer takes on specific tasks (e.g., casting, writing scripts, managing shooting, interviewing) depending on her or his rank in the writing team. More important and complicated tasks tend to be assigned to writers further up the hierarchy with more working experience. A head writer is generally charged with organizing and supervising writers (ENT Writer 16, personal communication, October 18, 2018). Senior writers write shooting outlines. Junior or assistant writers research and collect data and assist other writers. In particular, assistant writers do miscellaneous work, such as ordering delivery food, photocopying and distributing documents, and taking meeting minutes (ENT Writer 13, personal communication, September 30, 2018).

It is significant to note that, although specific tasks are assigned to a particular writer, writers work together and take common responsibility for their work. For example, when an assistant writer conducts research, a junior writer reviews it, performs additional research, and submits it to a senior writer. A senior writer performs the same kind of role as the junior writer has done for the assistant writer. In other words, "the work of an assistant writer is to assist a junior writer, whose work is to assist a senior writer" as one writer said (ENT Writer 19, personal communication, November 3, 2018). Writers tend to conduct many tasks concurrently (instead of consecutively) in order to get their show up and running in a short amount of time. As production schedules are generally tight, if an issue occurs in one part of the production process, then it can delay the completion of an episode that is airing soon. Writers, therefore, work together with a sense of common responsibility and purpose: a process which ensures the completion of the work. One writer said:

> The writers do not find it easy to build real intimacy between them because there is a hierarchy between writers, and one writer's performance has an impact on another writer. For example, if one writer does not work hard or well, other writers work more to make up for the shortcoming that impacts the whole project. For instance, if one writer does not complete the casting process, then I need to try to look for cast members instead of taking a rest on the weekend. (ENT Writer 8, personal communication, September 7, 2018)

This division of work makes it so that a few more experienced writers who are relatively better-remunerated deal with multiple tasks on one show in a short amount of time, depending on the support of less experienced and less well-remunerated writers.

For the production staff, shooting outlines indicate particular production processes on shooting locations for an episode that production staff prepare for and complete. While cooperating with other professionals on their production team, writers often play a critical role to ensure that their plans are executed in a short time frame. Although writers plan, they do not order other production staff to actualize the plan. Instead, writers tend to communicate with other production staff to check whether their plan can be executed and how their plan needs to be changed. If the shooting plan is difficult to actualize, they often revise their plan or find an alternative. For example, when one music show writer plans a theme for a music stage with a singer, she discusses designs for stage props and make-up with other staff to actualize the theme (ENT Writer 7, personal communication, September 4, 2018).

The requirement for intensive collaboration generates an imperative for connection with other writers and production staff (sometimes with cast members). This collaboration is generally conducted through the Korean messenger service Kakao Talk using smartphones, which sends messages between co-workers regardless of the time. While conducting the interviews for this research project, I observed that some writers checked their messages during the interviews with me or left the café to perform work-related tasks afterward, even though the interviews were during the writers' days off.

As Jarvis and Pratt (2006) suggested, the writers' situation demonstrates the extent of "the overflow of work into social life" and shows clearly that writers perform unpaid labour (p. 338). Regarding this communication, as one writer underscored:

> There is no boundary between work and life. We have to hold a mobile phone at all times. We need to be prepared to handle whatever takes place at any time. I always feel pressured and stressed out. Whenever my mobile messenger rings, I feel anxious. (ENT Writer 19, personal communication, November 3, 2018)

For example, if one cast member cancels their appearance, then the writing team must scramble to look for another person and revise their outlines accordingly. This expansion of their work into their private spaces and times is due to the fact that their work is cooperative and thus dependent upon others during a hectic production schedule. A

large part of their work is impacted by their colleagues and cast members. While the work is collaborative, it is also hierarchical in its division of responsibilities and requires the constant mediation of communicative labour from writers in order to make it run smoothly.

5.6. Emotional labour as a gendered precarity

Throughout the course of discussions with entertainment writers, with the exception of job insecurity caused by their employment status as freelancer, the majority of interviewees ranging from head to assistant writers pointed to emotional labour as the most difficult part of their work.[82] Several writers in my interviews even directly used the term *emotional labour* (*Kamjŏng nodong*) to speak of these difficulties.[83] These difficulties were clearly expressed in one interviewee's statement: "The most difficult part of my work is having to deal with people. I feel tired from communicating with people" (ENT Writer 10, personal communication, September 11, 2018). In this section I explore how writers perform emotional labour and how the writers feel emotionally and mentally drained from this labour and eventually become alienated from their emotions.

My interviews indicate that most Korean entertainment writers often perform emotional labour in cooperation with each other, cast members, and/or other workers in the hierarchically structured production environment. One writer I interviewed revealed:

> Entertainment writers have a unique way of talking. "Oh, you are right," "That sounds so funny," "Really?!" [This interviewee mimicked a very feminine voice with a high tone]. Writers often employ a fabricated language and tone. After talking with a cast member, many writers often say that "it's annoying." [This time, this writer mimicked a very masculine voice with a low tone]. (ENT Writer 7, personal communication, September 4, 2018)

[82] When I interviewed drama and CJD writers for this dissertation, a significantly lower number of writers (mainly assistant writers) mentioned emotional labour as a difficulty in their work. Several drama and CJD writers who had worked to produce entertainment shows stated that they did not want to work in the entertainment production sector because of emotional labour. In the interviews with PDs, I rarely heard about emotional labour.

[83] In South Korea, the expression 'emotional labour' is often used in media and conversation in everyday life. Although not all interviewees who mentioned the term 'emotional labour' knew the exact meaning defined by Hochschild (2003), I found that the labour they referred to with the term 'emotional labour' was the type of labour that Hochschild (2003) defined.

The management of voices and the fabrication of emotional reactions are typical forms of emotional labour (Grindstaff, 2002; Hochschild, 2003). The quotation, “entertainment writers have a unique way of talking,” gestures at how writers undertake emotional labour as one of the occupational requirements following tactical norms between writers, and this writer is aware of how she fabricates a way of talking and demonstrating emotional reactions while talking with people. The feminine and masculine voices that this writer mimicked represent the fact that writers undertake this emotional labour *in a feminized way* (Mayer, 2011), and that she recognizes a difference between her occupational identity and herself.

I found that writers tend to try to read the implied meaning in their conversations with others, including cast members and their colleagues, prior to responding to messages. The above writer clearly illustrated this tendency:

> When I communicate with people who are entertainers or production staff, I try to find good timing in order to achieve what I need. My everyday life is rife with thoughts and concerns, such as “the person seems to be in a bad mood. Therefore, it is not a good time to discuss this issue. It will be better to have a chat later.” I always think like this. “What should I talk about first?” “It might be better to mention this point in the middle of the discussion.” “Is it good to speak about the most important points right before the final decision at the end of the discussion?” Because I think this way, I always feel tired. (ENT Writer 7, personal communication, September 4, 2018)

This writer tried to read and understand non-verbal as well as verbal signals. In other words, this writer tried to read the implied meaning in conversations with others prior to responding to messages. This writer’s labour indicates “the differences in social positioning” between writers and their coworkers: as Fröhlich (2004) stated, the reading behaviour usually appears among people of lower social status who try to decrease the risk of being placed at a disadvantage by misinterpreting people with high social status. Considering the fact that writers often read their colleagues and fabricate their relations, it is understandable why one writer felt that “discussions require emotional and mental engagement, which causes writers to be tired” (ENT Writer 7, personal communication, September 4, 2018). The hierarchical cooperation and writers’ emotional labour are shown more directly in one writer’s comment on her labour: “I often feel that I’m asking other people for help while doing my work. I suppress my anger at rude people. Writers are usually situated in a weaker position. … I always handle that kind of relationship” (ENT Writer 9, personal communication, September 10, 2018). Because writers very

frequently perform communicative labour in an in-depth form as described in the previous section, it is not surprising that this writer felt that "I always handle that kind of relationship."

Writers' emotional labour is often relevant to the hierarchies between workers. Specifically, many writers highlighted communication issues with colleagues with more power. For example, in-house PDs are those who can directly impact writers' employment. When these professionals refuse writers' suggestions, writers often have to do extra work to generate a new plan. This power relationship also appears between writers on one writing team. For example, most assistant and junior writers I interviewed told me that they tried to accommodate the senior writers' feelings in order to understand their intentions without verbal explanations. In other words, cooperation between writers (at all levels) is organized based on and sustained by junior writers' emotional labour.

Nevertheless, I argue that the problem is not just from *the hierarchical relationship* between people but also from *the hierarchical cooperation* in their labour process because writers often undertake emotional labour in order to achieve specific goals through cooperation, not just to do what people in power want. For example, one writer told me that "the difficulty is from the work, not from a personal relationship. If [head or in-house] PDs want to do something one way, and I disagree with that approach from a writer's perspective, this is a conflict that I have to resolve" (ENT Writer 10, personal communication, September 11, 2018). Writers must persuade others to follow the ideas they think are best for making the shows better, or to complete their duties within a designated timeline to air an episode on time. Similarly, regarding interacting with cast members, the above writer told me that "writers should curry favour with cast members because their performances directly impact the quality of the shows" (ENT Writer 10, personal communication, September 11, 2018).[84] After all, it is the primary duty of writers to make their shows more entertaining (to increase the value of shows) so that they receive high audience ratings.

[84] This writer told me that she sometimes has contradictory feelings when she has to persuade reluctant or resistant cast members to follow shooting plans due to a designated budget and timeline to air, although she is not sure of whose opinion is right (ENT Writer 10, personal communication, September 11, 2018). Only writers in one production team undertake this form of emotional labour.

As mentioned above, since writers' jobs have become more short-term and project-based in recent decades, writers have had to work with new colleagues more frequently. Thus, writers are often forced to work with others with whom they are not familiar, intensifying the emotional labour required in coordinating with other writers in one writing team. One writer with around 10 years of experience said:

> Please imagine that you have to work with strangers every time you work on a new program. How tiring would this be? … Therefore, if some colleagues do not have big shortcomings, it is better and more effective to work with these colleagues rather than strangers. So, writers try to work with previous colleagues and form a writing team. (ENT Writer 9, personal communication, September 10, 2018)

Entertainment writers tend to work together and take common responsibility for their work while staying in a writing room almost all day. Therefore, the people with whom they work are very important to writers. The above referenced interview shows that the post-Fordist labour organization imposes extra emotional labour on writers and, to decrease this labour, writers attempt to work with colleagues they know and get along with.

In my interviews, the qualifications of writers were often described in terms such as having sensitivity, good communication skills, and a nice personality. A male executive PD who has worked in this field since the late 1990s told me:

> Did you ask me why most writers are women? It is because women are better at communicating than men. Writers' work includes a lot of communication, which has increased the number of women writers in the Korean television industry. (ENT PD 1, personal communication, October 2, 2018)

Since this interviewee's position was as an executive PD who managed several programs at the time when I interviewed him, he had not played a role in selecting writers for several years. Thus, this quotation should be understood as a broad stereotype being circulated in the industry, not as his personal experience. It implies that the nature of communicative and emotional labour that writers perform is based on gender-based expectations of the Korean society. However, writers clearly understand that communicative and emotional labour is the work that they perform in the industry based on the skills they have learned. For example, one woman writer with 10 years of

experience told me that “writers need social skills, such as managing their anger, and smiling at rude people” (ENT Writer 7, personal communication, September 4, 2018).

Communicative labour involving emotional labour in the workplace has also been found to negatively impact writers’ personal relationships. One writer said,

> I am tired of people and stressed out by emotional labour in the workplace. ... I have found that because I’m tired of relationships, I cannot be friendly and kind to a person outside of my workplace. I find myself indifferent to my family or others in my personal life outside of the workplace. (ENT Writer 9, personal communication, September 10, 2018)

This writer directly used the term ‘emotional labour’ in the interview with me. Some of the other interviewees even expressed that the intensity of emotional labour they were subjected to in the workplace meant they did not want to be involved in emotional engagement or human interactions outside of the workplace. One writer said that she wanted to be alone at home without meeting people on her off days because she was so tired of dealing with people at her work (ENT Writer 7, personal communication, September 4, 2018).

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Korean entertainment writers are gendered and how they perform communicative and emotional labour as a crucial part of their work. By the late 1990’s while the Korean television industry continued its transformation, most of the entertainment writers became women. This group of writers has come to perform feminized work along the lines of that suggested by Mayer (2013). At present, the writers undertake a very fluid set of duties according to a show, performing multiple tasks at the same time, and engaging in communicative and emotional labour most of the time.

In particular, writers undertake communicative labour across several dimensions: creating new series including a format, making up storylines, and designing shooting outlines including the production process for episodes. First, writers cooperate with other networked writers, while moving between shows with diverse formats in the industry. This form of labour enables the industry to produce new series with diverse formats quickly and cheaply according to market situations. Second, writers interact with cast members to develop storylines that are semi-structured. Third, writers produce shooting

outlines for an episode, while cooperating with writers and other production staff in the production team. Communicative labour is essential for making the creative aspects of shows. It contributes to procuring value that is informative and entertaining. This communicative labour is often undervalued and underpaid. This labour forces writers into working in precarious conditions, such as unpaid labour, longer working hours, job insecurity, and no boundaries between workplaces and private lives.

Writers conduct emotional labour due to hierarchical cooperation. Because writers are in charge of facilitating the entire cooperation process, the emotional labour writers undertake is very broad and in-depth. Consequently, writers are emotionally and mentally exhausted and their jobs are also existentially precarious. This results in additional levels of intense tiredness and alienation for the writers. I argue that emotional labour is gendered precarity because writers are forced to undertake the labour due to the feminized form that communicative labour takes, and the low status of writers as feminized workers in the hierarchy among workers in the production team.

The case of Korean entertainment writers therefore serves as an empirical counterpoint to the masculinized artist trope in terms of the production of cultural work. At the same time, it shows how the Korean television industry has exploited entertainment writers' experiences, skills, and communication and imposed gendered precarity and emotional labour onto writers.

Chapter 6.

Between invisibility and having a voice: The valorization of marginalization from invisible women

6.1. Introduction

Culture/journalism/documentary (CJD) television programs refer to non-fiction shows that include culture programs, journalism shows, and documentaries in South Korea.[85] CJD writers are referred to in several ways, including as culture writers (*kyoyang chakka*), culture and journalism writers (*shisa kyoyang chakka*), and storyline writers (*kusŏng chakka*). I use the term CJD writers to indicate the genres that this group of writers works to produce. In an interview for this dissertation, a writer who has worked for around 20 years producing CJD programs critically asserted that:

> Even though we are grown ups, *we are hidden, and nobody knows us.* My friend, who is a writer, defined writers as *children kept inside a closet*, which I think is like the status of writers in the Korean broadcasting industry. However, in the Korean broadcasting industry, without writers, who would make television programs? I do not think that without writers, television programs could be made. Therefore, this industry continually reproduces the writing workforce. (CJD Writer 17, personal communication, September 8, 2018)

In her description, the phrases “we are hidden, and nobody knows us” and “children kept inside a closet” exemplify a unique difficulty that writers experience. One male writer with around 20 years of experience confirmed this sense of hiddenness, telling me that “writers are like *shadows*, as many people are not aware of the existence of writers for documentaries and in-depth investigative programs. I think that the writers’ existence [in these genres] has been hidden” (CJD Writer 21, personal communication, September

[85] Culture programs (*kyoyang*) are a Korean television category (See Chapter 1), in which ‘culture’ refers to ‘enlightenment’ and ‘education’ (C. Y. Joo, 2004; J. Oh, 2014). Korean scholars have argued that a definition for culture programs is unclear (C. Y. Joo, 2004; J. Oh, 2014), but the term is used to refer to non-fiction programs from a variety of genres and formats. The practical method to describe culture programs is to define them as all other non-fiction programs that are not journalism shows and documentaries. One example of a cultural program is the Korean daily morning talk show *AM Praze* (KBS, 1991−), where experts, celebrities, and ordinary people provide diverse forms of information and stories, such as medical information and life lessons. Examples of Korean journalism programs are MBC’s *PD Note* and SBS’ *Unanswered Questions*. Examples of documentaries are the *KBS Special*, *MBC Special*, *SBS Special*, and *EBS Docuprime*.

19, 2018). These writers' sentiments engender a central question: Why did the writers use words such as "hidden" and "shadows" to describe their roles?

In this chapter, I examine CJD writers' experiences of labour and precarity, focusing on the invisibility described in these quotations. I define the concept 'invisibility' as being historically, socially, and/or culturally hidden from others, and, thus, being socially, culturally, and/or economically marginalized as the term is utilized in fields such as cultural and media studies, labour studies, and sociology (Currie, 1998; Hall et al., 2013; Poster et al., 2016; Said, 1993). In particular, this chapter shows how the Korean television industry has made this women-dominated workforce of writers invisible in contrast to the male-dominated, in-house producer-director (PD) workforce of relatively visible workers at Korean major terrestrial broadcasters, such as KBS, MBC, SBS, and EBS.[86]

I compare these two groups to highlight the invisibility of writers because while they perform similar duties, their working conditions (including their forms of employment) in the Korean broadcasting industry are entirely different. Specifically (and as described in Chapter 3), a CJD writer usually works with a PD as part of a team, while participating in the entire production process, performing tasks, such as choosing topics, researching, casting, devising plots, and editing.[87] As the cooperation between these two professionals is very tight, they have sometimes been called "a couple" (Song, 2011, p. 104). Despite such intense cooperation, in terms of the dominant employment form and their gender, writers and in-house PDs at major broadcasters could not be more different. Among the writers, 99.3% were freelancers in the CJD sector at the three major broadcasters (i.e., KBS, MBC, SBS) in 2021, while 89.7% of PDs were full-time,

[86] In the CJD production sector, the relationship between writers and PDs at broadcasters is different from that at independent companies. In this dissertation, I focus on how CJD writers work at broadcasters, since the relationship between writers and in-house PDs shows the distinctive labour and precarity of CDJ writers' work in the Korean television industry. Originally, I planned to include another chapter that focused on the CJD writers' work in the independent production sector. The plan was changed because of the scope of this dissertation. In this chapter, I do not focus on the labour of assistant writers, who are closer to aspiring writers. The labour conditions and precarity for assistant writers were discussed in Chapter 3. I have to mention that I acknowledge that contingent PDs exist at broadcasters; one freelance PD described the invisible labour that he was suffering from in my interview (W. Ji, personal communication, September 17, 2018).

[87] Assistant writers participate in only part of the CJD production process. Since they mainly conduct research, they are often referred to as researchers or research writers.

permanent employees (Y. Kim, 2022).[88] The proportion of women among the more experienced CJD writers was approximately 97.6% (1326 out of 1359) in 2019 (KTRWA, 2019). In contrast, men have been over-represented in in-house PD positions across genres. For example, men accounted for 68.7% of in-house PDs across genres (1589 out of 2312) at Korean major broadcasters (KBS, MBC, SBS, and EBS) in 2019 (MSIT & KCC, 2020).[89]

My research shows that the patriarchal, capitalist and intensely hierarchical labour management in the Korean broadcasting industry has created and shaped an invisible writing workforce in the CJD production sector. I found that this industry exploits CJD writers who are primarily women by devaluing and underpaying their labour and putting writers' viewpoints and experiences as marginalized people into the production process of CJD programs.

In discussing my findings, I first introduce the concept of invisibility. In particular, I discuss why we need to explore the process of how specific workers are made to be invisible rather than just the invisible work, in focussing on workers in the cultural industries. Second, I show how major broadcasters have differentiated writers and in-house PDs in the CJD production sector through forms of employment, recruitment processes, and pay systems. Next, I discuss how the two workforces enter into a highly patriarchal relationship when they form production teams and make programs. After that, I describe how writers as invisible workers experience their precarity through discrimination and exclusion as employees of broadcasters (members of a work community) and therefore as labourers with basic labour rights (citizens) in Korean

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[88] The proportion of freelancers and full-time permanent employees overall in the Korean broadcasting industry indicates the differentiated employment types between CJD writers and PDs. Freelancers accounted for 41.5% of the overall workers (1125 out of 2711), which was not much different from that of full-time permanent employees (39.8%, 1078 out of 2711) in the CJD and news reporting production sectors at the three major broadcasters (KBS, MBC, and SBS) in 2021 (Y. Kim, 2022).

[89] The stereotypical PDs were men until the late 2000s in the Korean television industry (H. M. Kim, 2005; Y. Kim, 2007; C. K. Lee, 2009). As described in Chapter 3, from 2003 to 2010 80% to 90% of in-house PDs across genres were men at major broadcasters (Sohn & Kim, 2004; S. Lee, 2004). However, many interviewees have suggested that the proportion of women among new in-house PDs increased in the 2010s and, as a result, in the late 2010s, the gender imbalance among less experienced in-house PDs at the broadcasters was less evident than among their seniors. However, as late as 2019 women still accounted for only around 31.3% of the overall in-house PDs (MSIT & KCC, 2020). In addition, my interviews for this research suggest that more experienced in-house PDs, including those PDs who have supervisory roles, are predominantly men at broadcasters.

society. Finally, I show how writers feel that they are marginalized and how the Korean television industry derives the cultural values of CJD programs from the marginalization of these writers. This chapter is based on the analysis of my in-depth interviews with 33 CJD writers and four PDs.

6.2. Invisibility of women, and invisible workers

Feminist scholars in the communication and media studies fields have explored how women workers have historically contributed to cultural production in cultural industries but their contributions have been hidden in a range of national settings, including Korea (B. Kim & Baek, 2009; T.-H. Kim & Na, 2012), the United States (E. Hill, 2016; Mahar, 2001), the United Kingdom (Ball & Bell, 2013), and Australia (Baker & Lloyd, 2016). These scholars have argued that women's contributions have been devalued precisely because of this invisibility. Specifically, the discussion about the invisibility of women in cultural industries is divided into two intersectional forms of invisibility, the invisibility of particular forms of work, and the invisibility of women as subjects. The latter approach is more relevant to the case of CJD writers, which shows how women have become a new form of invisible worker in the Korean television industry in contemporary capitalism.

The term invisible work is derived from socialist-feminist scholars' discussions about reproductive labour in households, a form of labour which is often referred to as 'women's work' (Daniels, 1987; Federici, 2012; Hatton, 2017; Leonard, 1998; Weeks, 2011). Daniels (1987) coined the term 'invisible work' to explain why *traditional forms of women's work,* such as housework and volunteer work, are devalued and underpaid. This devaluation is because traditional forms of women's work have historically been conducted in the household and this setting has not been recognized as a workplace in the formal sense because the work occurs out of the view of the public (Daniels, 1987). They have also been historically and culturally linked to women's allegedly inherent features (e.g., empathy, caring, sensitivity) rather than skills obtained through training (Daniels, 1987). As a result, even when the work that is categorized as women's work is

performed in paid workplaces, such as emotional labour in the service industry, it is often devalued (Warhurst, 2016).[90]

Utilizing the concept of invisible work, feminist media scholars have shown that jobs that are predominantly done by women tend to be devalued and are often thought of as *women's work* in the cases of costume designers (M. J. Banks, 2009), secretaries and assistants in the film and television industries (E. Hill, 2016), and social media managers (Duffy & Schwartz, 2018) in the United States. These scholars have shown that such jobs involve emotional labour, interpersonal skills, and/or other kinds of work traditionally associated with women and caring labour in the home. In unpacking the forms of invisible work performed by women, some feminist scholars have challenged the highly gendered criteria used to assess the value of a particular form of work (M. J. Banks, 2009; Duffy & Schwartz, 2018; Hill, 2016).

Invisible work that is linked to the traditional type of women's work is not applicable to the case of CJD writers in the Korean television industry because the work of CJD writers is not directly relevant to the traditional types of women's work. Rather, the idea of the invisibility of subjects is more useful to explain the labour and precarity CJD writers experience. Critical scholars have used the concept of invisibility in order to explore how capitalism, patriarchy, and/or imperialism—forms of power and domination—differentiate and divide people into, among other categories, visible and invisible, and how they exclude the invisible people from society and history (Currie, 1998; Hall et al., 2013; Poster et al., 2016; Said, 1993). Indeed, as Spivak (1998) highlights, the exclusion of marginalized people from representation in history and

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[90] Hatton (2017) has argued that the meaning of invisibility in the concept of invisible work is broad and imprecise. This scholar narrowed down the meaning of invisible work as economically devalued labour "through three intersecting sociological mechanisms" of invisibility: cultural, legal, and spatial mechanisms (Hatton, 2017, p. 337). "Sociocultural mechanisms" refer to "hegemonic cultural ideologies" of gender, race, class, sexuality, and age (Hatton, 2017, p. 337). For example, women's emotional labour is devalued due to the gender stereotype that women are naturally good at managing emotions. Hatten (2017) argues that "sociolegal mechanisms" works "when labour is devalued because it is excluded from legal definitions of 'employment'" (p. 337). For example, illicit work and informal work are often underpaid. "Sociospatial mechanisms" mean that labour is devalued because a worksite is physically segregated from "a culturally defined worksite," such as domestic work at home (Hatton, 2017, p. 337). These mechanisms are useful in that they can be used to clarify how specific labour is economically undervalued due to invisibility. However, Hatton's concept focuses on economic devaluation rather than the social, cultural, and economic marginalization that CJD workers experience.

society as a kind of “epistemic violence” (p. 24). Feminist scholars have explored “how women have been excluded as actors and authors of history, their voices muted” (Charkravarity & Roy, 1988, cited in Currie, 1998, p. 2). Specifically, feminist media scholars have shown how some women who have actively engaged in more privileged or creative positions, such as directors, producers, and writers, have been less visible as compared to their male counterparts, and how their contributions have been devalued (e.g., Baker & Lloyd, 2016; Ball & Bell, 2013; Mahar, 2001; Moseley & Wheatley, 2008).

I focus on how CJD writers, most of whom are women, have become an invisible workforce, and how invisibility impacts the writers and their work in cultural industries. Since one of the characteristics of cultural work is making meaning and representing people and the world (Hall et al., 2013), I argue that the visibility of cultural workers is directly relevant to the power held by more privileged workers in cultural industries. The visibility of cultural workers is intimately connected to the reputation among workers in the field the workers engage in and among the general public in society, and these visibility and reputation are subsequently converted to social and economic values (Bourdieu, 1980). In this regard, for invisible cultural workers, their work is socially, culturally and economically devalued. This devaluation further intensifies the invisibility of workers. In the following sections, I show how the current patriarchal, capitalist labour management system in the Korean broadcasting industry formed and has managed this CJD writing workforce as a new form of the invisible workforce. Furthermore, I show how CJD writers work with subjectivities as invisible workers and how their subjectivities impact the production of programs.

Before discussing their labour, it is important to underscore the degree to which CJD writers have been invisible in Korean media history. More broadly, Korean television writers across genres tend to not figure in governmental documents and scholarly articles in Korea. As described in Chapter 1, statistics on writers, such as the number of writers and/or their working conditions, including the level of pay and working hours, are not recorded in governmental reports like the *Annual Survey of the Korean Broadcasting Industry* (MSIT & KCC, 2020). Most academic studies that discuss labour conditions in the industry tend to focus on historically male-dominated jobs, such as PDs (e.g., B.-S. Kim & Kim, 2011; D. Kim, 2010; Y. H. Kim, 2008; C. K. Lee & Song, 2010; C.-K. Lee & Song, 2014).

More specifically, it should be noted that writers have faced different degrees of invisibility depending on the genre they work in. Most Korean studies have mainly examined the labour of drama writers (e.g., M. Kim & Hong, 2016; M. Kim & Lee, 2013; M.-S. Kim & Hong, 2017; Na, 2011; J. S. Park et al., 2015). In fact, since they are often well-known to the general public and scholars, drama writers have historically been in the public eye (e.g., Jeong, 1998; M. Kim & Hong, 2016; M. Kim & Lee, 2013; M.-S. Kim & Hong, 2017; Na, 2011). In contrast, only a few studies on CJD writers exist (e.g., Shin & Han, 2015; Youk & Youn, 2013). Media scholars had not paid attention to CJD writers and their work. This disregard was demonstrated by Korean media scholars, Youk and Youn's (2013) revealing statement that "only in recent years we became aware that writers in the CJD production sector play a key role in producing programs, not just performing assistant roles to PDs" (p. 128). In fact, the most prominent aspect of the invisibility of CJD writers is that CJD writers have recognized collectively through the doing and experiencing of the work that they and their work are invisible through their working experiences, which is the most important and significant point in their invisibility.

6.3. Two labour models at Korean broadcasters

CJD programs aim to provide instructive and educational information or live up to an ethos of journalistic production. These programs play a critical role in delivering information and contributing to public and/or political discourse around current events. While drama and entertainment programs are now widely circulated in the global media market, most Korean CJD programs usually end up being consumed domestically. As a result, Korean CJD programs tend to be less valuable commercially, and Korean broadcasters tend to set correspondingly lower production budgets for them in contrast to drama and entertainment shows (H. Oh et al., 2019). Nevertheless, major terrestrial broadcasters still produce a large number of CJD programs every year because the *Enforcement Decree of the Broadcasting Act* requires broadcasters to schedule news reports and CJD programs for over 50% of their total programming time (Won, 2007, p. 15), as described in Chapter 1.

Based on my review of the research, the existence of writing positions in the Korean CDJ production sector is distinctive in that such positions do not exist in comparable countries such as Japan (C. K. Lee & Song, 2014), the United States (Christopherson, 2009; C. K. Lee & Song, 2014), and the United Kingdom (D. Lee,

2018a).[91] Other workers such as directors or producers conduct some of the responsibilities that Korean CJD writers do in Japan and the United States (C. K. Lee & Song, 2014). It is possible that I just failed to pinpoint independent positions that are comparable in the existing studies or that, in fact, a form of invisible workforce exists in other countries. Notably, several writers I interviewed have asked themselves why the writing positions in the CJD production sector exist in the Korean television industry, and how they could be better defined. For example, one writer asked me during the interview whether North American media industries have a position that is comparable to CJD writers, and what the title for such a position is (CJD Writer 1, personal communication, June 14, 2018). Another writer argued that the existence of writing positions in the Korean CJD production sector is distinctive, saying that "most directors or producers around the world write the scripts by themselves" (CJD Writer 21, personal communication, September 19, 2018).

As described in Chapter 3, in the early 1990s, Korean broadcasters produced most CJD programs in-house and, *with the exception of the writers*, most workers on these programs were employed as full-time, permanent workers. In particular, most in-house workers were men. In the 1980s, broadcasters introduced women workers into the CJD production department by creating writing positions and expanding writers' duties. At that time, writing positions were one of a few positions that were freelance (See Chapter 3). Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, the duties of CJD writers expanded from writing scripts and researching to include devising program plots and casting actors, which previously fell under the duties of PDs.

Notably, Okyoung Kim, who has worked in the Korean broadcasting industry since the early 1980s, talked about writing positions in the CJD production sector:

> Why did the Korean broadcasting industry employ CJD writers? The Korean broadcasting industry developed a very distinctive professional workforce, "broadcasting writers" [she used this term to refer to CJD writers], which cannot be found in other countries. The Korean broadcasting industry chose a similar strategy to one of the economic development strategies that South Korea generally chooses. The strategy is the exploitation of labour based on underpaying labourers in order to achieve economic growth in a short time. For example, women workers for

[91] To avoid confusion, in this dissertation, I define reality television shows as entertainment shows because they are technically not non-fiction programs and they are usually categorized as entertainment shows in the Korean television industry (See Chapter 5).

> wig factories were exploited for Korean economic development.[92] In the Korean broadcasting industry, writers have been exploited. (O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018).

After the creation and expansion of the writing workforce at major broadcasters, the precarization of labour in other male-dominated jobs, such as PDs, began. As described in Chapter 3, as the Korean government implemented the compulsory outsourcing policy for programs in 1991, broadcasters began to use independent production companies as subcontractors in order to decrease their production costs for CJD programs (B. S. Kim & Kim, 2011; C. K. Lee & Song, 2010; Y. Song et al., 2019). Producing CJD programs at the lowest possible cost is a matter of life and death for independent production companies because when these companies are unable to secure contracts with broadcasters they often fail. As a direct result of this contracting process, workers for these companies tend to suffer from high job insecurity in an industry that relies on their unpaid or underpaid labour (C. K. Lee & Song, 2010, 2014). After the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s, broadcasters transitioned a large portion of *in-house men workers* from full-time, permanent workers to contingent workers in diverse forms of precarious employment, such as freelancing and temporary agency employment (B. S. Kim & Kim, 2011). It should be noted that, while writers have been forced to work as freelancers in this industry, broadcasters have employed some PDs in standard employment forms, even though they decreased the proportion of in-house PDs among all PDs (B. S. Kim & Kim, 2011; Y. Kim, 2022).

Notably, some CJD writers have made their work visible in the academic sphere through graduate theses. By the mid-2000s, several Korean graduate theses about CJD writers reported that CJD writers suffered from precarious working conditions, including job insecurity and low pay (Ha, 2007; J. H. Kim, 2003; E. H. Lee, 1997; H. H. Lim, 2004).[93] E. H. Lee (1997) observed that a majority of CJD writers in the 1990s were young women, most of whom were in their 20s, and other production staff tended to

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[92] Workers in wig factories were predominantly women in their 20s in the 1960s when wigs were one of the key export products in South Korea (Han, 2013). The industry was notorious for the exploitation of young women who were underpaid and worked in unhealthy working conditions in factories (Han, 2013).

[93] These Korean graduate theses were written by current or former CJD writers (M. H. Choi, 2017; J. H. Kim, 2003; J. K. Lee, 2001; H. H. Lim, 2004; M. J. Park, 2017; Ryu, 2009). Although several theses did not identify whether the authors had worked as writers, they included information that only people who have worked in this field can know (e.g., Ha, 2007; E. H. Lee, 1997). Most of these studies developed their arguments by drawing on in-depth interviews with writers and PDs.

devalue their labour by considering CJD writers as assistants to PDs rather than independent professionals (p. 66). Focusing on the gendered division of writers and PDs at a regional broadcaster, Lim (2004) argued that the overrepresentation of women in this writing workforce and their precarious working conditions represented 'the feminization of non-standard workers' (*pijŏnggyujigŭi yŏsŏnghwa*) in Korean society. Lim (2004) connected this gendered precarity to the patriarchal division of labour in Korean society, which is still largely based on a male breadwinner model. Moreover, feminist scholars have underscored the way that in-house PDs play managerial roles by hiring and firing writers, and how this power to hire and fire expresses the unequal power relations between women and men workers (e.g., H. M. Kim, 2005; Y. Kim, 2007).

Since the late 2000s, several theses have highlighted writers' contributions to cultural production in the Korean television industry by describing how they play significant roles in the production of influential programs such as investigative journalism shows (Ryu, 2009; Youk & Youn, 2013) and documentaries (M. H. Choi, 2017). In particular, while they criticize precarious labour conditions in the previous research, this relatively recent group of graduate theses have focused on how the contribution of writers to cultural production in the Korean television sector has been invisible. Ryu (2009) argues that previous studies of writers, including graduate theses, have tended to describe CJD writers as "young," "powerless," and "non-standard women workers" and focused on their precarious working conditions, while failing to pay sufficient attention to the writers' important contributions to the production of journalism programs (p. 115). In addition, Ryu (2009) argues against the gender stereotype that women are docile, suggesting that, on the contrary, writers often play critical roles in selecting topics for programs that focus on social and political issues, determining the programs' views on the topics in the production process, and taking leading roles in the production of the programs. M.H. Choi (2017) finds that writers' contributions have increased in the production process of documentaries, but the contributions have not been acknowledged sufficiently.

The production process of CJD programs

Since CJD programs are non-fiction programs that include a variety of formats and genres, the structures of the production teams and the relationships between the workers take a range of forms. To discuss what I have described as the invisibility of

writers and their work in the CJD production sector, I present a more or less typical account of the work of writers, as well as of their relationships with PDs, by drawing on the accounts offered by interviewees. Except for some single episode documentaries, most CJD programs are regular series that are aired weekly or daily year-round and tend to be produced in the same format for several years. Each episode in a CJD series consists of one or several discrete stories; the length of each story varies from five minutes to an hour. The production teams for these CJD series consist of several small teams, which I will refer to as story production teams.

Each story production team usually has one writer and one PD. My interviews suggest that only a few CJD programs, such as documentaries, have more than one writer on each story production team. One writer and one PD on each story production team tend to participate in the entire production process for each story. Other staff members, such as camera operators, assistant directors, and assistant writers, usually participate at specific stages of the process or in areas in which they specialize, such as researching or shooting an episode. Assistant writers often support several story production teams at a time.

Each story production team produces a discrete story during a specific time frame without cooperating with the other story production teams. For example, one weekly, hour-long, investigative journalism show explores one story per episode and have five program production teams. Each team is responsible for producing a one-hour story once every five weeks. On the other hand, one daily, hour-long, current events show airs for one hour (from Monday to Friday) and consists of six 10-minute stories per show or 30 stories per week. This program production team has 30 story production teams, and each story team produces one story every week. My interviews suggest that a production cycle is often so intense that workers reported severely compromising their sleep to complete the project near the airing date. Regarding the tight production schedule and responsibilities, one interviewee recalled a time where she found herself on her phone searching for a topic for an upcoming episode while being at a colleague's funeral ceremony, a situation which made her feel like her job was inhumane (CJD Writer 15, personal communication, August 29, 2018).

Most CJD programs have a similar production process, which consists of selecting a topic, casting contributors, researching issues or interviewing people,

shooting, devising a storyline, and editing it in rough chronological order. Theoretically, writers' roles are distinguished from those of PDs, but, in practice, the duties of writers and PDs often overlap during the actual production process (O. Kim, 2004). The notable difference between a writer and PD with regard to their roles on a team is that a writer is in charge of devising a plot for a show, while a PD is in charge of filming. As most CJD programs are non-fiction programs, writers devise storylines and write scripts, including narrations for videos, based on the results of their research and videos that PDs film. The scripts that writers produce for non-fiction shows are often created in order to direct or facilitate the editing process after the programs are shot.

Gendered labour models of PDs and writers

> The over-representation of women in writer positions is related to a social problem, in particular, gender inequity in Korea. In the past, gender inequity was more serious. Most PDs in the major terrestrial broadcasters were men. They graduated from privileged universities. Writers have been people who wanted to work to make shows at the broadcasters but did not meet the standards. Since women did not meet the requirements to be PDs, they might have come into writer positions. (CJD Writer 29, personal communication, July 30, 2019)

The quote above is from my interview with one writer who has more than 20 years of experience. It indicates how the different labour management styles are part of processes that divide the workforce up into differently gendered positions. After creating the writing workforce in the CJD production sector, Korean broadcasters managed to create gendered labour models of PDs and writers through different forms of recruitment processes, employment relationships, and pay systems.

Major broadcasters, such as KBS, MBC, SBS, and EBS, hire entry-level, in-house PDs through formal recruitment processes, such as screening CVs, conducting written exams, and conducting interviews. It should be noted that most in-house PDs hail from the more elite universities attended by the more privileged sectors of Korean society (S. G. Lee et al., 2013; J. Oh, 2014). Competition for full-time, permanent positions in major media companies, including in-house PDs, is so intense the recruitment process has been nicknamed *ŏllon' goshi*, a term which refers to "the examination for media jobs" in English, since *ŏllon'* means media and *goshi* refers to qualifying examinations, such as the Civil Service and bar examinations. This

comparison underscores how challenging it is to become a permanent, full-time worker for a major broadcasting corporation in Korea.

New entry-level, in-house PDs are trained by working on several programs at these broadcasting corporations. When in-house PDs become experienced enough, they become the heads of the production teams. One in-house PD explained that "the workers who have gotten through the formal, competitive recruitment process get superior positions. The examination determines everything in one fell swoop" (CJD PD 1, personal communication, November 1, 2018). In-house PDs receive wages according to a pre-set wage scale: all in-house workers with the same years of experience receive the same wage across all occupations (e.g., PDs, journalists, camera operators, administrative staff) (Y. H. Kim, 2008). The salary for in-house PDs is decent and significantly higher than workers in non-standard employment. For example, in 2020, new employees, including in-house PDs at KBS, were paid an annual salary of $49,000 CAD and employees with 15 years of experience made $105,000 CAD (Chae, 2021). In contrast, *the average* annual salary that KBS paid temporary contract workers was $33,000 CAD (Chae, 2021).

Most CJD writers work as freelancers and are paid by *the Pauch'ŏ system*, a distinctive labour management and payment method within the Korean broadcasting industry. Through this system, broadcasters pay writers as part of the production costs assigned to a particular program, not as part of the labour costs (H.-J. Choi & Lee, 2011; Y. Kim, 2007). Most writers I interviewed in 2018 and 2019 worked based on oral rather than written contracts agreed to after discussing pay levels with in-house PDs. Under these highly informal agreements, most writers began working without their total hours or working schedules being specified. Writers usually received their pay in the form of 'writing fees.'[94]

Most CJD writers are freelancers who are technically self-employed, but, in practice they tend to work in a kind of grey area between direct employment and self-employment. Some writers I interviewed stated that, although they are freelancers, their working schedules resembled those of full-time employees. As one interviewee described: "We are freelancers but have to go to the office and stay at the office.

[94] As described in Chapter 3, sub-writers are paid weekly, whereas main writers are paid by the episode.

Working more and longer without additional pay tends to be taken for granted. We work like people who are employed for a company" (ENT Writer 4/CJD, personal communication, August 9, 2018) .

In December 2021, South Korea's Ministry of Employment and Labour investigated the manner in which CJD writers worked at KBS, MBC, and SBS. Inspectors from the Ministry concluded that, while these writers were all employed on freelance contracts with the broadcasters, 152 out of the 363 writers they investigated should instead be regarded as direct employees of the broadcasters and, as a result, protected by the *Labour Standards Act* (Mediatoday, 2022).[95] However, Korean broadcasters have argued that they are not directly employing them in order to avoid the legal responsibility to provide benefits and formalized payment systems for these workers (Y. Kim, 2007).

As shown right above, in general, the pay levels for in-house PDs are considerably higher than workers in non-standard employment. Specifically, my interviews confirmed that the pay levels for writers are significantly lower than those of in-house PDs? Moreover, CJD writers' employment is more precarious in a range of ways. Most CJD writers are hired through informal recruitment processes and are forced to continually compete with others for the flow of contracts necessary to sustain their careers. Individual PDs (or writers on behalf of the PDs of production teams) recruit writers through their personal networks or through job postings on online communities for writers. As tends to be the case in freelancing across a range of industries, experienced writers usually secure jobs through personal recommendations. Entry-level workers who want to develop their careers as writers must work as assistant writers and develop their networks.[96] After working for two or three years as assistants, this

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[95] Y. Kim (2007) has argued that some CJD writers have *dependent self-employment* (*t'ŭksu koyongjik*) with broadcasters in Korea, which refers to "working relationships where workers perform services for a business under a contract different from a contract of employment" (ILO, 2016, p. 36). These workers "depend on one or a small number of clients for their income and receive direct guidelines regarding how the work is to be done" (ILO, 2016, p. 36). "Dependent self-employed workers are typically not covered by the provisions of labour or social security laws" (ILO, 2016, p. 36). Whether dependent self-employed workers should be considered to be directly employed is debated in Korea (Y. Kim, 2007). In fact, as writers' working conditions have been transformed and diversified in the Korean broadcasting industry since the late 1990s, the practical employment statutes should be defined based on how writers work (See details in Chapter 7).

[96] Although the title of an assistant writer would suggest that writing is among his/her responsibilities, the main duties consist of researching and casting for CJD shows. In addition, assistant writers

overwhelmingly gendered workforce may get opportunities to work in writer positions in the industry. Writers begin by producing short, five-minute stories and, as they gain experience, work to produce longer and longer programs. When writers work on one of several short segments per episode, they are referred to as sub-writers. More experienced writers who produce one-hour or longer episodes are commonly referred to as main writers (*mein chakka*). These writers work on investigative journalism programs such as MBC's *PD Note* and SBS' *Unanswered Questions* and documentaries such as *KBS' Special* and *EBS' Docuprime*. Main writers usually work without the direction of other writers. More experienced writers also work as *kwalli* writers (*kwalli chakka*, in English, "supervisory writers"), which refers to the writers who supervise sub-writers and sometimes rewrite the scripts that sub-writers, who are less-experienced, work on.[97]

The intense competition between writers makes it difficult for sub-writers to find opportunities to move up in the hierarchy and become main writers, and even when they make the leap they face precarious working conditions due to intense competition, job insecurity, and unstable pay (See Chapter 3).[98] A writer I spoke to with around six years' experience who knew the working conditions of experienced writers well described it in this way:

> A few years ago, I thought that, as my career progressed, my working conditions would improve. My working experiences have discouraged me

tend to support the entire production team rather than directly supporting writers. For example, when one writer I interviewed worked as an assistant writer, she was recruited by a PD and conducted research and casting, while communicating with the PD, not the writer on the production team (CJD Writer 14, personal communication, August 16, 2018).

[97] Kwalli writers manage writers, confirm topics for stories, and review scripts. These duties were usually done by executive PDs. My interviews suggest that these positions were expanding into many programs in 2018 and 2019. The creation and expansion of the position of kwalli writers shows another stage of the career trajectory of CJD writers.

[98] Main writers who produce investigative journalism programs and documentaries are usually paid per episode regardless of the production period, as mentioned above. As investigative journalism programs are regularly scheduled and take five or six weeks each to produce, writers can earn more or less stable income with these positions. As the number of investigative journalism programs is very low, many main writers work to make documentaries. The production of documentaries usually takes longer than a couple of months. Writers do not work continuously throughout the production period for documentaries, but are engaged in the entire production process, and their working schedules are unstable. As a result, it is not easy for writers to work on several projects at the same time. Several of the writers I interviewed talked about their extreme cases when they worked for only one documentary episode that took several months to produce, causing their monthly income to dip below that of the assistant writers (CJD Writer 1, personal communication, June 14, 2018; CJD Writer 17, personal communication, September 8, 2018; CJD Writer 28, personal communication, April 8, 2019).

> over time. I have observed how even experienced writers with 10 or 20 years of experience have suffered from their precarious working conditions. The writers also face many unfair and unreasonable situations in this industry. (ENT Writer 4/CJD, personal communication, August 9, 2018)

As this excerpt indicates, there is a lack of conviction among sub-writers that their working conditions will significantly improve even if they become main or *kwalli* writers.

6.4. The production team: A patriarchal division of labour

In this section, I first describe how CJD writers at Korean broadcasters experience a highly patriarchal relationship with in-house PDs. I show how in-house PDs play a significant role in determining writers' employment and working conditions, such as their pay levels and workloads. I also present that the labour process of writers is subordinate to that of in-house PDs in the production of programs. Finally, I discuss how writers play a crucial role shaping CJD programs.[99]

Korean broadcasters grant in-house PDs the comprehensive rights to organize and manage their production teams. In particular, in-house PDs perform the functions of hiring and dismissing writers at their own discretion. These rights are often regarded as a distinguishing feature of the PD's directorship (*yŏnch'ulgwŏn*), a form of creative autonomy they enjoy in producing shows (CJD Writer 22, personal communication, September 28, 2018). For example, one writer lost her job for a program she had worked on for several years because an in-house PD moved into the program production team and wanted to work with another writer (Drama Writer 13/CJD, personal communication, November 22, 2018). In fact, many writers I interviewed suggested that writers have pseudo-employment relationships with in-house PDs: they told me that they sometimes felt that in-house PDs played roles as employers, while they were colleagues in the production of programs. Most of the writers I interviewed were working without documented contracts, meaning that the in-house PDs could easily dismiss them. One

[99] In this section, I used several quotes from my interviews with in-house PDs in order to represent my analyses of all of my interviews as the quotes revealed how crucial writers' contributions are to the production of television shows. Simply drawing on interviews with writers to explore their work might carry the risk of exaggerated self-assessments, so I verified their accounts through these discussions with in-house PDs. In the same manner, the discriminatory labour conditions for writers at broadcasters were supported by using quotes from in-house PDs.

writer, a man with more than 20 years of experience, described the extent to which the relationship with PDs is hierarchical by stating that “PDs regard writers as lower class. Even though PDs and writers work together, the former act as bosses who can command writers” (CJD Writer 21, personal communication, September 19, 2018).

In hiring writers, formal criteria for evaluating writers’ abilities and performances do not appear to exist. “PDs just evaluate that this person does well or not” and “the criteria are subjective and abstract,” according to one PD with more than 20 years of experience (CJD PD 1, personal communication, November 1, 2018). Another PD said:

> I search for and hire one main writer for my program based on personal recommendations. After that, I look for several things. First, I see if a writer is passionate and provides novel ideas. Next, I consider if the writer has a similar viewpoint and worldview as mine. … A good writer, from my viewpoint, is one who sufficiently engages in a program with a sense of ownership and does not work on too many programs. (CJD PD 2, personal communication, November 9, 2018)

This excerpt suggests that PDs’ preferences, working styles, and viewpoints have at the very least a major impact on job security for writers. One writer told me that, even in the independent production sector, the writers who have produced major programs were able to get jobs as main writers because PDs who work for independent production companies prefer main writers who have worked at major broadcasters (CJD Writer 17, personal communication, September 8, 2018).

In the production process, individual PDs’ skills, capacities, and performances often dictate what and how writers work, as one PD described:

> For writers, working hours and workloads are not clearly defined. Even the boundaries of writers’ work seem to not be designated. If a writer works with an incompetent PD, she has to perform the work the PD is supposed to do. I have seen several cases where the workload of writers depended on the capacities of the PDs. For example, when one PD is not confident in interviewing, the PD asked one writer to go together and help the PD interview people at shooting locations. As a result, the writer had to do extra work ….Writers receive the same amount of pay regardless of their actual workload, which is unfair. (CJD PD 2, personal communication, November 9, 2018)

As this quote indicates, writers’ duties generally do not include going to shooting locations and interviewing people. Nevertheless, writers sometimes take on these and other responsibilities without additional pay. Indeed, due to the power imbalance

stemming from the pseudo employment relationship, writers cannot easily refuse these types of requests.

Beyond this direct power relationship between the two workers, another significant factor is how the patriarchal labour management system in this industry defines the duties of writers. While writers' roles are supposedly distinguished from the roles of PDs, in practice the duties of writers and PDs often overlap in the production process. As one PD described:

> There is no clear line to divide writers' work from PDs' work. Depending on the capacities of the writers and PDs and the features of a program, the division of a writer's work and a PD's work can vary. Therefore, it is hard to define the occupation of writers (CJD PD 1, personal communication, November 1, 2018).

I found that the overlapped duties of writers and PDs have been structured in this way due to the change in the workforce composition at the broadcasting corporations; while the number of experienced writers is increasing, the number of experienced in-house PDs who produce programs is decreasing. This decrease is partially due to the fact that, after working as production staff for 15 to 20 years, in-house PDs usually move on to supervisory positions, such as executive PDs (Y. H. Kim, 2008, p. 103). Moreover, since broadcasters are employing fewer in-house PDs than in the past and more often outsourcing programs, less experienced PDs are being assigned to programs that more experienced PDs tended to work on in the past (CJD PD 2, personal communication, November 9, 2018).

By contrast, we can find workers with more than 20 years of experience as writers on production teams. As one writer clearly illustrated, this change has had a significant impact on the nature of the working relationship between writers and PDs:

> Generally, in recent years, in-house PDs come to prime investigative journalism program X [which title is anonymized] when they have under 10 years' experience. In contrast, writers need over 15 years of experience to get a job at program X. Writers have to make the same quality of programs regardless of who their partner PD is. It does not matter if writers work with in-house PDs with five years' or 25 years' experience. If the quality of a program is low, then the broadcasters view this writer as incapable…. In fact, writers are supposed to back up the PDs' shortcomings. We can't make any mistakes. If writers fail once, then they will not get another chance. (CJD Writer 29, personal communication, July 30, 2019)

As we can see from this quote, in-house PDs' capabilities and performances structurally impact the work of writers. In fact, because of this structure, in-house PDs can be trained well and develop their careers with fewer risks in the industry. As this writer stated, "if writers fail once, then they will not get another chance" (CJD Writer 29, personal communication, July 30, 2019). As broadcasters only consider in-house PDs to be their employees who they have to support, writers must develop their careers without support and complete all projects successfully regardless of the extra effort that is required. On the other hand, broadcasters can manage the labour of in-house PDs efficiently thanks to writers. When less experienced in-house PDs are put in charge of programs, such as investigative programs and documentaries that need more skill and experience, more experienced writers often train and support the PDs, while supplementing the shortcomings of the PDs in their work. For example, one writer told me, "When I don't trust the abilities of a PD, although the PD operates the editing application, I lead the editing" (CJD Writer 2, personal communication, June 22, 2018).

My interviews suggest that the roles of writers are centered on planning and defining the content of programs. Most of the writers I interviewed suggested that writers play a significant role in determining episode topics for their programs and how the programs frame the topics because writers often decide how to approach episode topics (CJD Writer 21, personal communication, September 19, 2018). Many of the writers I interviewed highlighted their contributions to defining storylines. Two of the writers described their work in the following ways:

> A writer's key duty is to devise a storyline, not write captions or narrations. We devise how to lay out a story, the opening for this story, and how to link the opening to key points in this story. In other words, we have to determine sequences for a show to deliver a story to audiences. Narrations and captions are a small part of the storyline. If the plot is designated, even PDs can write narrations and captions. (CJD Writer 29, personal communication, July 30, 2019)

> Whether or not PDs research a topic and shoot footage well, writers must devise a storyline and turn the footage into a television show. I don't think that the key capacity of CJD writers comes from their writing skills. It is from comprehensive abilities, such as identifying key points in a topic, understanding the information and context, and organizing scenes. If PDs are excellent, then writers can discuss the structure of the programs, such as the inclusion and exclusion of certain content and the order of sub-topics, with them. However, writers usually have to organize plots alone. (Drama Writer 13/CJD, personal communication, November 22, 2018)

Through the process of devising a storyline, a writer produces a *paper cut*. A paper cut in the Korean CJD production sector refers to an outline for editing with timecodes [*p'yŏnjim kusŏngan*]. After reviewing all of the recorded videos, the writer devises a plot, hones a storyline, selects footage, and writes a paper cut by looking at and referring to the transcriptions of the footage. For this task, the writer evaluates the importance of the issues, analyzes the data and footage, chooses images, and arranges the order of the scenes. In this way, the writer plays a critical role in making arguments and suggesting agendas. While the writer's partner PD conducts editing by using editing programs on computers or other types of editing machines based on the paper cut written by the writer, the writer is the one who generates the final script, including the narration. After that, the writer and PD perform the final editing process together. More broadly, in the current Korean broadcasting industry, more experienced writers' contributions play critical roles in maintaining the quality and defining the messages of the programs they work on. However, such high contributions do not mean that writers possess more power than in-house PDs in terms of their employment statuses. It is in fact the opposite; writers' power is much lower compared to their PD counterparts.

6.5. Invisible precarity as discrimination and exclusion

> To be honest, I hesitated to accept this interview when you contacted me. As a writer, I am proud of myself. I always work hard and do my best when making programs. I am happy to talk about what I do as a writer; however, I am hesitant to talk about the labour rights of writers, the interests of writers, and the current labour conditions for writers. I would like to avoid how I work under these precarious working conditions. (CJD Writer 28, personal communication, April 8, 2019)

This excerpt is from an interview with a writer with almost 20 years of experience. It shows that, while having a high level of confidence and pride in her contribution to the production of programs, this writer feels precarious as a labourer who makes a living from her work. As Thompson (1966) argues, people understand their statuses through their experiences and develop their class consciousness as labourers in their workplaces and society. Many writers define their statuses and work through their experiences in their everyday lives. This section discusses how CJD writers feel precarious as independent professionals, workers, and citizens, and how they experience their precarity as forms of discrimination and marginalization at broadcasting companies and in Korean society in general.

Many of the writers I interviewed were conscious of their precarious working conditions through the discrimination and/or unfairness they endured. They recognized that their labour is devalued in contrast to that of in-house PDs who perform similar work, but enjoy much better working conditions. In the interviews for this dissertation, many CJD writers compared themselves with PDs rather than with writers from other genres while describing their work. For example, one writer directly asked me to "please compare the pay for in-house PDs and writers" (O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018).[100] Notably, by reflecting on the working conditions of in-house PDs, writers recognized how their working conditions are exploitative and discriminatory. For example, one writer told me that:

> I feel that I have been exploited. I do the same work, and sometimes do more work, but I receive lower pay without social benefits. There is a class difference between writers and [in-house] PDs and, regardless of my labour and contribution, PDs are the heads of production teams and get paid more. (Drama Writer 13/CJD, personal communication, November 22, 2018)

Moreover, because they work closely with in-house PDs, writers are regularly reminded of their distinctively precarious status. For example, one interviewee described:

> I am a freelancer, but my colleagues are in-house PDs and news reporters,[101] who are full-time employees. While working with them, *I have sometimes become aware of the different stances and statuses between them and me. It seems to me that I have developed a victim mentality*. For example, when my broadcaster decides not to air my show for one week, the in-house PDs are happy with that decision. As PDs are salaried employees, they receive a salary without airing a show for a week. However, writers get worried about a lack of pay. If the airing of a show for one week is cancelled, then writers do not receive one week's pay. Writers receive pay according to an aired program. PDs sometimes even try to put effort into cancelling an episode in order to get more time to produce a program. When PDs do that, they are not concerned about how a

[100] In the interviews with the Korean drama and entertainment writers presented in Chapters 4 and 5, they rarely used the types of metaphors of hiddenness that CJD writers used and did not compare their work with PDs. The responsibilities of drama and entertainment writers are clearly distinguishable from those of PDs, a fact underscored by one drama writer who told me that it is inappropriate to compare the duties and working conditions directly between writers and PDs because the two professionals do different work (Drama Writer 12, personal communication, November 2, 2018).

[101] My interviews suggest that the working areas of CJD writers are expanding into news reports, where writers worked with news reporters in the late 2010s (See Chapter 1 for the categories of programs in the Korean television industry). In-house news reporters are predominantly men, like in-house PDs. Of the news reporters, 98.5% were full-time and permanent in the news reporting production sectors at the three major broadcasters (i.e., KBS, MBC, SBS) in 2021 (Y. Kim, 2022).

> postponement of the airing of a show for one week impacts writers' pay. (CJD Writer 31, personal communication, August 13, 2019)

When I interviewed this writer, she was considering quitting her career as a writer because she felt frustrated by the discriminatory, and precarious working conditions, which included unpaid labour for overtime work, and the marginalization that she described as leading to "a victim mentality."

This writer was hardly alone in feeling this way. Several interviewees stated that they felt as if writers were 'outsiders' at the broadcasters for which they worked.[102] For instance, one writer who began her career and worked on several programs at one broadcaster for more than 10 years described:

> I was loyal to broadcaster X. Whether or not in-house workers recognized me as a member of staff for broadcaster X, I thought that "I am broadcaster X's writer." I have a lot of memories relevant to all places in broadcaster X's building, from the basement level to the roof. Although the people did not regard me as a member of the staff, I thought that "broadcaster X is my workplace." (CJD Writer 17, personal communication, September 8, 2018)

This writer told me that when she noticed that she was recorded the same way as "other workers who are not employees" on her career certificate, she reminded herself that she was not a member of the community of the broadcaster that she had thought she belonged to. Another interviewee also stated that she was concerned that "I'm a worker who is not allowed to become an employee" of a broadcaster (CJD Writer 29, personal communication, July 30, 2019).

As most writers only work as freelancers, they are not entitled to certain basic rights and social resources that are guaranteed to other workers who have employment contracts and, therefore, are considered 'employees' including full-time permanent or temporary employees in Korea. In particular, as freelancers, these writers are deprived of legal labour rights (under Korean labour laws). For example, one writer told me that, in order to recover payments that she had not received, she tried to get help from several organizations, including the Ministry of Employment and Labour, but she received responses suggesting the organizations could not help her because freelance writers are

[102] Since the independent production sector was created, most writers have worked by moving between broadcasters and independent production companies; however, some writers often work to produce programs at one broadcaster for several years.

not legally considered ‘employees’ who are protected under labour rights laws. One writer communicated, “I sometimes face barriers in my everyday life because I cannot get protection and benefits under basic rights as a labourer” and “it is demanding to survive as a television writer in Korea” (CJD Writer 8, personal communication, July 18, 2018). Specifically, when she tried to get a loan from a bank for her housing, the bank declined her application and told her that she did not qualify because she was a freelancer.

> I was earning good money every month. One bank clerk told me to “please apply again when you have a different job and earn a salary.” I was dumbfounded. The employee of the bank told me, “Change your job.” The employee meant that I should change my job in order to get a loan. Am I jobless? I made the monthly income by working hard and staying up many nights. The outcome of my labour was not valued as much as others’ salaries. … Through these kinds of experiences, I have arrived at one conclusion that writers should get basic rights as labourers as other employees do. (CJD Writer 8, personal communication, July 18, 2018)

While describing her experience, this writer referred to the bank clerk as “the employee (*chikchangin*) of the bank” - the usage of this phrase stresses how the writer, as a freelancer, felt marginalized by the bank clerk, as an employee of the bank. Broadly, the Korean social insurance system consists of four major insurance schemes: national pension insurance, health insurance, employment insurance, and workers’ compensation insurance. While all Koreans receive national pension and health insurance by law, employment insurance and workers’ compensation insurance are only available to employees and not freelancers (i.e., those individuals who are self-employed).[103] As freelancers, writers are excluded from the labour rights to resist, such as the right to collective bargaining rights, which will be discussed in Chapter 7 in detail.

I need to highlight that all the experiences surrounding their work in their everyday working lives construct how workers understand and experience their work and their status as workers. Many writers I interviewed found discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization in their experiences as they were excluded from the communities of people with whom they worked, the workplaces where they worked, and the Korean

[103] As freelance writers have not been entitled to employment insurance, they cannot get parental leave (Choe, 2021). In 2020, the Korean government announced that it would amend the current social insurance system to ensure that freelancers would be entitled to employment insurance and paid parent leave beginning in 2025 (Choe, 2021).

legal labour rights that workers should have. These experiences and their recognition show how writers have been invisible workers in their working lives, which statistics or employment forms cannot show.

6.6. Valorization of marginalized subjectivities

In this section, I show how a number of CJD writers I interviewed saw themselves as invisible workers and had developed marginalized subjectivities. By subjectivities, I mean "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself, and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). I discuss how writers' subjectivities as marginalized people contribute to the valuation of the CJD programs that they produce.

The descriptions offered by writers in this chapter's introduction clearly demonstrate how writers feel precarious because their roles and their work remains invisible. In addition to their everyday working lives, several experienced writers mentioned that they were reminded of their existential precarity as independent professionals when one broadcasting company tried to remove the writing position, and another company had dismissed a group of writers. Specifically, in 2009, KBS established a policy that forced in-house PDs to write scripts for CJD programs, which effectively meant that most writers would be dismissed. KBS abolished the policy two months later due to intense disagreements by PDs as well as resistance from writers (M. H. Choi, 2017). This aborted management strategy illustrated the degree to which broadcasters devalued the labour of writers and did not acknowledge them as workers who were valuable or even necessary to the production of CJD programs. Three years later, in 2012, MBC dismissed six writers from *MBC PD Note*, one of the most renowned investigative journalism shows in Korea (M. H. Choi, 2017). It turned out that, while all of the writers had contracts with MBC, the contracts did not ensure the writers' job security.

I found through my research, therefore, that the feeling of marginalization is rampant among writers, and the precarity these workers feel due to writers' statuses in the Korean television industry colours every aspect of their work, including their approach to producing CJD shows. For example, one writer told me:

> I had fundamental frustrations with my work. I think that the occupation of writers has been formulated in order to make up for the insufficient labour

> power from in-house workers [referring to in-house PDs]. I have wondered why I am not allowed to be an employee of broadcasters and what the roles of writers are in the Korean television industry. … I have worked within the identity of a marginalized person both as a woman and a powerless person. To be honest, I have resolved my frustration and rage by making journalism programs. I can understand marginalized people. My viewpoints and words give them a voice based on my identity at broadcasters. (CJD Writer 29, personal communication, July 30, 2019)

As this interviewee was aware, although the labour of writers has been exploited, writers' work has the potential to contribute to bringing attention to the plight of marginalized people through the programs they produce. In particular, as most in-house PDs are men or otherwise privileged people in the Korean television industry, the viewpoints of writers as women or marginalized people are distinctive. Even when writers do not intend to give voice to marginalized people directly, it is worth noting that "women writers have participated in the production processes of most CJD programs" and "when a production team chooses a social issue, develops it into a story for an episode, and chooses a viewpoint on it, the women on the team provide a voice for this process to some degree" (CJD Writer 29, personal communication, July 30, 2019). Many of the writers I interviewed asserted that their programs reflect their specific interests, opinions, and viewpoints. They defined themselves as not following the suggestions made by PDs and being quite critical of PDs' ideas. Specifically, many writers described arguing with their colleagues or bosses in order to push for their viewpoints and thoughts to be reflected in the programs they produced. In extreme cases, some writers reported that they decided to quit their jobs in the middle of production because they had different viewpoints on certain topics, but failed to put them in the programs due to unfair power relationships with their partner PDs (CJD Writer 4, personal communication, July 6, 2018; CJD Writer 8, personal communication, July 18, 2018; CJD Writer 17, personal communication, September 8, 2018).

As these examples illustrate, while writers seek autonomy in working on programs, the autonomy remains limited in that they can in the end see their voices reflected in the programming only so long as in-house PDs agree. Nonetheless, it is important to note that writers' viewpoints as marginalized people directly contribute to enhancing the socially valuable role of CJD shows, which many interviewees pointed out as motivating and satisfying aspects of their jobs. For example, several writers told me that documentaries and investigative journalism programs allow them "to make social

agendas and contribute to social justice" (CJD Writer 29, personal communication, July 30, 2019) and "to approach truth and learn about people and society" (CJD Writer 17, personal communication, September 8, 2018). As one writer said, "her role allows her to "impact society through [her] programs, which is exhilarating" (CJD Writer 26, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

While satisfaction drawn from work is a significant consolation for these workers and is, thus, to be celebrated, one could also suggest that the Korean television industry produces the economic and cultural values of programs through its hyper-exploitation of writers' marginalized subjectivities. Through my interviews, I found that more experienced writers tend to criticize unfairness and marginalization more decisively, suggesting that experienced writers are more critical of precarity and unfairness. Another possible explanation is that broadcasters prefer to hire writers with critical viewpoints. For example, regarding what writers do, one experienced writer told me that "writers are supposed to provide their ideas, and opinions on the issues from their viewpoints" for making qualified journalism programs, and that "in-house PDs sometimes asked her to provide critical comments in the production process" for making qualified journalism shows (Drama Writer 13/CJD, personal communication, November 22, 2018).

In addition, my interviews suggest that, because many writers are concerned about the cultural and social values of CJD programs, some are willing to work unpaid hours to improve the quality of their programs. For example, one writer said, that "I do not think that the low pay is an excuse for me to work less and, thus, produce a low-quality show" (CJD Writer 28, personal communication, April 8, 2019). Another writer told me that she often performs unpaid labour to enhance the quality of shows because she thinks that "it is our responsibility to provide quality shows for audiences" (CJD Writer 17, personal communication, September 8, 2018). As writers have deep ethical concerns about the cultural values of programs, writers tend to put more time into their work voluntarily. Similarly, Lee (2012) has reported that workers who produce non-fiction programs, including documentaries, tend to be motivated by ethical concerns and the cultural value of their programs in the United Kingdom television industry.

6.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how CJD writers are an invisible labour force—in labour law, to management, and even to academia—in the Korean television industry, and their lack of visibility is both a cause and effect of patriarchal labour management. The job title of *writer* hides the gender and class inequity that these writers face in the industry and taints what they do in the industry. It obscures or misrepresents the roles and work of CJD writers because the traditional concept of television writers refers to people who write scripts and create their own stories. As a result, this industry and employers, such as broadcasters, hide their unfair labour management and exploitation of the labour of workers and workers overall.

My research has demonstrated how the hierarchical, patriarchal, and capitalist labour management system in the Korean broadcasting industry has created, structured, and differentiated between feminized and masculinized workforces, condemning the former to invisibility. These two workforces are differentiated based on their employment forms, pay levels, payment methods, and recruitment processes. The concrete labour of writers on production teams is defined by the patriarchal relationship between writers and in-house PDs. Moreover, as broadcasters have accorded in-house PDs the right to hire and fire writers, in-house PDs and writers have a pseudo-employment relationship. As a result, the whims of in-house PDs determine writers' labour conditions such as workload and pay. Furthermore, Korean broadcasters make the labour process of writers subordinate to that of PDs. In particular, PDs' performance and their labour on the job in the production process tend to define the labour processes of writers. Even though some in-house PDs are less experienced and/or less skilled, broadcasters support their work to produce CJD programs successfully by using the precarious labour of experienced writers.

Through their work experiences, writers recognize their precariousness as a form of discrimination against their labour and their exclusion as legitimate workers at broadcasters. In addition, as most writers are freelancers, they get insufficient protection under the Korean legal and social systems that differentiate workers according to their employment statuses. As a result of this discrimination and exclusion, writers have developed marginalized subjectivities, while criticizing unfairness and gender and class inequities in their working lives.

The exploitation of this writing workforce takes two forms: the devaluation of their labour (decreasing the labour costs for producing programs) and putting their marginalized subjectivities to work in the production process in order to enhance the quality of programs. The subject position of CJD writers is presented with some autonomy and power in the production of CJD programs. CJD writers increasingly have voices as marginalized people, but they are precarious labourers in cultural industries within patriarchal, contemporary capitalism.

Chapter 7.

Struggling for the right to struggle: Organizing the labour rights of cultural workers

7.1. Introduction

As described in Chapter 2, in recent decades media and communication scholars have explored the efforts of cultural workers, including freelance screenwriters, toward the goal of establishing unions or other forms of collective organization to improve their working conditions in South Korea (e.g., I. Choi, 2019; C. Kim, 2019) as well as in Europe and North America (e.g., Bain & McLean, 2013; M. Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2016; M. J. Banks, 2015; Bodnar, 2006; Caldwell, 2008; Cohen, 2016; Coles, 2016; Conor, 2014; de Peuter, 2014; de Peuter et al., 2015; Kompatsiaris, 2015; Percival & Hesmondhalgh, 2014; Ross, 2000). At the same time, there is a dearth of research (M. Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2016; M. J. Banks, 2015; I. Choi, 2019) on the distinctive difficulties encountered by these workers *after* their organizations have been formed, and what features might distinguish such efforts and organizations from more well-established and longstanding mainstream trade unions.

As introduced in Chapter 1, Korean writers have established five collective organizations: the Korea Television and Radio Writers Association (KTRWA), the now-defunct Writers' Union, the four Non-fiction Broadcasting Writers Councils (NBWCs), the Broadcasting Writers Union (BWU), and the Broadcasting Staff Union (BSU). These organizations take different forms, ranging from a professional association, to informal communities, a women-only trade union, and a union of media workers in non-standard employment. In this chapter I examine the labour activism of writers in these five collective organizations, documenting how these writers have developed and participated in collective organizations to improve their working conditions, along with the difficulties their organizations faced. I pay special attention to why writers have felt a need to establish new forms of labour rights and organizations.

The research conducted for this dissertation found that, before even being able to make basic demands for higher pay and job security, writers have had to struggle for

the very right to resist as labourers. By this I mean that writers have struggled for recognition as employees or more broadly as labourers in the Korean legal system, a status which allows the opportunity to bargain collectively with broadcasters. I also find that while each organization has its own unique focus, the collective subjectivity and labour activism of these Korean writers reflect the intersection of different identities, ranging from that of women, to freelancers and cultural workers. Writers and other activists emphasized the pivotal role played by whether they were classified as 'self-employed' and what rights did or did not stem from such a status. Finally, their labour activism promoted the idea that working creatively, autonomously, and without inequities should be recognized as a basic labour right.

The chapter begins with a literature review covering discussions of Korean scholarship examining the features of mainstream unionism and the alternative labour movement in the Korean political, economic, and social context. Next, I show how writers established new organizations and faced multiple challenges in their collective actions. This chapter is based on interviews conducted in 2018 and 2019 with 23 research participants, who included organizers, activists, and directors of collective associations in which Korean writers engaged.[104]

7.2. Korean mainstream and alternative unionism

In this section, before zeroing in to explore writers' unions in the lineage of alternative unionism, I discuss the development of Korean mainstream and alternative unionism. The configuration of labour movements and unions varies depending on the specific historical, economic, political, and cultural context that is examined. Korean governments promoted rapid economic growth through 'export-oriented industrialization' (Koo, 2007b). From 1961 to 1987 authoritarian military governments in Korea implemented a range of regulations that were "geared to guarantee the supply of cheap and strike-free labour" to industries for economic growth (B.-H. Lee, 2008, p. 156). Due to these regulations, most Korean workers suffered from extremely low wages and long working hours across industries and occupations under the Fordist production system

[104] In this dissertation, I do not identify who is or was, a current or former director because the interviewees did not want to be clearly identified due to confidentiality issues. Since the former directors conducted their roles in collective organizations in recent years, the distinction between the current and former directors is not essential for this dissertation.

(Koo, 2001, 2007b). In addition, the governments suppressed the establishment of independent labour organizations and collective labour actions, including strikes, by establishing legal restrictions (Koo, 2001; Minns, 2001a). In addition, a distinctive Korean political situation gave the governments an excuse to suppress labour movements. Specifically, after World War II and the Korean War, the country was divided into the mutually hostile nations of South and North Korea. “In the intense Cold War environment, anti-communism was always an overarching ideology” and, in South Korea, the ideology, which historically provided “a ready justification for the suppression of political freedom and civil liberty,” which “served as a powerful tool in controlling labour activities and dissident movements” (Koo, 2001, p. 12).

Although the country’s economic and political environments were extremely disadvantageous, Korean industrial workers continuously resisted labour exploitation and developed solidarity beginning with the workers at the lowest levels of employment, up through and including workers at higher levels (Koo, 2007b, p. 273). Notably, women workers were more actively engaged in labour activism, and the unionization rate for women outnumbered that of men, in all industries from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s in Korea (Koo, 2001; J.-L. Nam, 1996). In particular, Korean scholars have pointed out that, at that time, women working in export-oriented, labour-intensive industries, such as garment and textile production, played a primary role in leading in the labour movement in the 1970s and early 1980s (S. Chun, 2003; Koo, 2001; J.-L. Nam, 1996; Ogle, 1990). These women suffered from extremely poor working conditions due to the double oppression that consisted of labour exploitation and gender discrimination (Koo, 2001; J.-L. Nam, 1996). For example, the Korean government strongly controlled the working conditions of these export-oriented sectors, and the average wage for women factory workers was significantly lower than that of their male counterparts (42% of men’s wages in 1975, 42.9% in 1980, 46.7% in 1985, 53.4% in 1990) (Koo, 2001, p. 59).

Against these multiple forms of exploitation and inequity, women workers fought for democratic and independent trade unions because employers and the state controlled the existing unions (S. Chun, 2003). During this time women regularly and actively participated in collective actions such as strikes and social protests (Koo, 2001; J.-L. Nam, 1996), and some of them engaged in collective bargaining, holding leadership in the unions (J.-L. Nam, 1996, p. 332).

The women workers' movement showed how a highly precarious, gendered workforce could at the same time become the most resistant agents in the labour movement. Indeed, many scholars have highlighted that the accumulated resistance by women laid the groundwork for the Great Workers Struggle (*Nodongja taet'ujaeng*) in 1987 in South Korea (S. Chun, 2003; Koo, 2001, 2007b; J.-L. Nam, 1996). The Great Workers Struggle refers to a series of autonomous labour movements from July to September 1987 (and, more broadly, to 1988) (Koo, 2001; Suh, 2003). It is not surprising that this struggle was directly linked to the political democratization movement, referred to as the June Democratic Struggle in 1987, as Korean governments had managed economic policies and controlled labourers since the early 1960s, as described above. The June Democratic Struggle led to the 'Declaration of Democratization,' which resulted in several forms of political democratization and liberalization, including the direct election of the president by the people and freedom of the press (B.-H. Lee, 2008, p. 156). In the summer of 1987, the Great Workers Struggle occurred with over 3,700 labour conflicts across industries nationwide (Minns, 2001b, p. 1033). Through this struggle, workers achieved a revision of the labour laws that had suppressed democratic unionization and the improvement of working conditions, including wage raises (Koo, 2001). Consequently, the unionization rate of Korean workers drastically increased from 12.3% in 1986 to 18.6% in 1989 (H. J. Kwon, 1999, p. 85).[105]

For their part, Korean mainstream trade unions have been based on enterprise unionism [*kiŏppyŏl nojo*], which refers to a type of unionism that organizes all occupations of a specific company and manages collective bargaining at the company level (J. Kim, 2005, p. 32). In enterprise unionism, large Korean companies' unions have succeeded in mobilizing large memberships since the late 1980s to achieve better working conditions, such as increases in wages and securing permanent, full-time

[105] Korean scholars have explained that the labour movement during the Great Workers Struggle was closer to class struggles and went beyond industrial disputes (Koo, 2001; C. K. Lee, 2018a; Minns, 2001a). Korean workers put forward slogans that represented the labour movement, such as 'the emancipation from labour (*nodong haebang*),' 'For the world where people can live full and dignified lives (*in'gandapke sanŭn sesang*),' and 'To struggle against monopoly capital's violence' (*tokchŏm chabon hoengp'o kyut'an*)' (C. K. Lee, 2018a, p. 168). However, as the reformation of the relationship between employers and employees was not successful, workers have depended on industrial actions for better working conditions rather than institutional processes. Labour movements have often involved intense conflicts between industrial actions by workers, suppressions by companies, and the state's interventions (C. K. Lee, 2018a, p. 167).

employment and welfare benefits (J. J. Chun, 2008). In contrast, workers at small- and medium-size companies have not mobilized to pressure companies and, therefore, find it difficult to unionize (Koo, 2007b). This means that the successes enjoyed by enterprise unions at large companies are not shared with workers of other companies in the same industry. Korean enterprise unions tend to be exclusive in that they have granted membership only to workers in standard employment relationships (J. Kim, 2005). Enterprise unionism is therefore contrasted with industrial unionism in Korea, a term which refers to "a form of unionism where industry-wide unions directly participate in multi-employer collective bargaining at the industry level" (T. Lim, 2019, p. 168). Koo (2007b) has argued that, since the early 1990s, Korean workers have been stratified by the size of the firms for which they work and their employment types, and this stratification tends to determine whether they can gain union memberships.

Since the late 1980s, mainstream unionism has represented mainly male, permanent, and full-time employees at large companies in manufacturing industries (J. J. Chun, 2008; S.-B. Hong, 2017; K. Kim, 1999; Koo, 2007b; H. J. Kwon, 1999). Several Korean scholars argue that although many workers want to have union membership, they could not find any unions they could enter (S.-B. Hong, 2017; H. Jung, 2022; J. H. Yoon, 2005). More specifically, in the past few decades, the unionization rate of Korean workers has been higher among men than women workers, for standard rather than non-standard workers, for workers at large rather than small scale companies, and for workers in manufacturing rather than non-manufacturing industries, such as services (S.-B. Hong, 2017). These categories of company size, employment type, and sector are directly relevant to women workers in that women are more likely to work in small scale companies and non-standard employment types in service industries (J. J. Chun, 2008; S.-B. Hong, 2017). As a result of these multiple forms of exclusion, women workers have been keenly aware that they need unions geared specifically for the very serious challenges faced by working women (J. J. Chun, 2008; G. Kong, 2009).

The aftermath of the Asian financial crisis in 1997 was a critical moment which motivated women workers to establish women-only unions. As described more fully in Chapter 3, the Korean government conducted neoliberal structural reforms of labour policies as a requirement for the bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the wake of the crisis. Not surprisingly, since then, non-standard employment has become more prevalent overall, and furthermore, workers have been more likely to

suffer from the experience of precarization. At the same time, it should be emphasized that this precarization has been a strongly gendered phenomenon for the last two decades (J. Lee, 2017; Yulee, 2021). In the late 1990s companies dismissed or casualized women first among their workforces due to the widespread and dominant patriarchal ideology of the male breadwinner model (S.-K. Cho, 1998; J. J. Chun, 2008; K. Kim, 1999). Since mainstream unions did not tend to take action against these layoffs and the casualization of women in order to protect men, women workers needed their own unions "to respond to the discrimination and mistreatment of women by the Korean labour market and the inadequacy of mainstream trade unions to protect women workers" (G. Kong, 2009, p. 217).[106] In 1999, women workers began to establish women-only trade unions, including the Korean Women's Trade Union (KWTU), which supported the unionization of writers at Masan MBC, as described in the later part of this chapter. The KWTU represents all women workers across occupations with all employment types from all industries. As the KWTU began to organize non-standard workers earlier than other unions did, it was called "the union incubator" by other unions (S.-S. Kim, 2017, p. 214).

As labour precarization has worsened, Korean union organizers and activists have endeavoured to unionize non-standard workers. Korean labour activists have put their efforts into developing industrial unions and building solidarity among workers, and many enterprise unions have become affiliated with industrial unions (B.-H. Lee, 2008). However, industrial unions have not been empowered to participate in collective bargaining at the sectoral level, and enterprise unions still engage in bargaining at the enterprise level (C. K. Lee, 2018a, p. 180).

It should be highlighted that workers who are excluded from mainstream unions have created new organizations autonomously, just as women created women-only trade unions. In particular, short-term, temporary or part-time workers arguably need different kinds of unions from enterprise unions because of their intermittent employment status. As such, they have established new forms of organizations that represent workers regardless of employment status and industries, such as the Youth Community

[106] The unionization rate of women workers increased from 10.5% in 1986 to 13.4% in 1989 and then plummeted to 5.6% in 1997, while that of men increased from 13.2% in 1986 to 21.8% in 1989 and decreased to 14.9% in 1997. Through this route, the gap in the unionization rate between women and men widened from 2.7% in 1986 to 9.3% in 1997 (H. J. Kwon, 1999, p. 88).

Union[107] formed in 2010 and the Arbeit Workers' Union (in English, "the union of part-time workers")[108] formed in 2013 (H.-G. Yoo, 2015). Social movement trade unionism has a goal of achieving both labour and civil rights because it supports marginalized workers (S.-S. Kim, 2017). The Hope Solidarity Union which was established in 2009 based on social movement trade unionist principles and includes workers across occupations and companies, falls into this category of organizational forms (C. Park, 2021). The Hope Solidarity Union is the parent union of the Broadcasting Staff Union in which writers participate, as described in a later section of this chapter.

Mainstream unionism in the Korean broadcasting industry

As in other sectors, most unions in the Korean broadcasting industry have been based on enterprise unionism. A distinctive feature of Korean broadcasters' unions, including public broadcaster unions (i.e., KBS and MBC unions) is that they have tended to push for a particular set of issues, such as securing freedom of speech, journalistic independence, and autonomy from government interference (H.-J. Cho, 2017, 2018; Y. H. Kim, 2008). From the beginning, these goals strongly motivated workers of KBS and MBC to unionize. By the late 1980s, operating under the control of Korean military regimes, broadcasters were forced to produce broadcasting programs which advocated for the state's political and economic objectives, promoting nationalism and economic development (H.-J. Cho, 2017; S.-H. Kwon & Kim, 2014). In the aftermath of the 1987 Declaration of Democratization, reflecting back on the role they played in contributing to the Korean military regime, broadcasting workers established unions whose primary focus was to struggle against possible future governmental intervention and crackdowns against the press (H.-J. Cho, 2017, p. 32). These workers saw trade unions as a powerful tool to use against governments because labour unions are guaranteed three key labour rights under South Korean constitutional law: to organize, to bargain collectively, and to strike (in particular, it is the right to strike which professional associations are not generally granted) (H.-J. Cho, 2017, p. 32). For this reason, salaried PDs and journalists at MBC and KBS played a leading role in establishing unions in

[107] The Youth Community Union is a general union for workers between the ages of 15 and 39, including workers in all employment statuses, including unemployed (H.-G. Yoo, 2015).

[108] The Arbeit Workers' Union is a general union for part-time workers. It conducted a social movement for an increase in the minimum wage (H.-G. Yoo, 2015).

1987 and 1988 (D. Kim, 2010).[109] During the last 30 years the two major Korean public broadcasters' (KBS and MBC) unions have staged 22 strikes. Most of the reasons for the strikes were political in nature, such as ensuring *kongjŏng bangsong,* a term which refers to the broadcasters' right to produce programs autonomously without interventions from outside forces, including governments (more broadly, the freedom of the press) (H.-J. Cho, 2018). A Korean media scholar, H.-J. Cho (2018) highlighted that "for media workers, the freedom of expression is the basic labour right in their labour process" as it allows them to autonomously produce cultural products (p. 119).

In terms of labour conditions such as job security and wages, broadcasting unions have the same characteristics as other enterprise unions. Specifically, these unions have members who are workers across different kinds of occupations, but only those individuals who have standard employment contracts are allowed membership (C. K. Lee, 2009). Broadcasting unions have rarely engaged in the economic inequity between standard and non-standard workers in their own companies (C. K. Lee, 2009). As described in Chapter 3, during the 1990s broadcasters hired women workers for non-standard employment rather than bringing them into standard employment relationships (which were mostly the domain of men), but the unions did not bother to negotiate around this issue. After the Asian financial crisis, the unions did manage to limit the broadcasting companies from laying off permanent, full-time employees, such as PDs and journalists, to some degree (Y. H. Kim, 2008, p. 209). However, when major broadcasters laid off non-standard workers, including art designers, cleaning staff, security guards, and drivers, the unions did not take action (D. Kim, 2010). For the last 20 years, major broadcasters have significantly differentiated the working conditions, such as pay levels and social benefits (i.e., four major insurance schemes: national pension insurance, health insurance, employment insurance, and workers' compensation insurance national pension insurance), between standard and non-standard workers (Noh & Chung, 2018; Y. H. Song, 2011). To improve their working conditions, non-standard workers across various occupations did attempt to establish their own unions, but these efforts were disbanded within a few years (C. K. Lee et al., 2006).

[109] SBS, a commercial broadcaster, has a union that represents permanent, full-time workers. This union was established by the end of the 1990s (D. Kim, 2010, p. 232).

The collective organizations of Korean writers

The activism of Korean writers has led to the establishment of several collective organizations with different characteristics. These organizations have ranged from a professional association, to informal communities, to a women-only trade union, and a union of media workers in non-standard employment. These organizations are shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Korean writers' organizations

Organization	Characteristics	Parent organization	Bargaining rights
Korea Television and Radio Writers Association (1962−)	Professional association for experienced writers	None (Independent organization)	Collective agreements
Non-fiction Broadcasting Writers Councils (the late 1990s−)	Communities for culture/journalism/documentary (CJD) writers	KTRWA	No legal rights, informal discussion
Writers' Union of Masan MBC (1999−the early 2000s, now Defunct)	Trade union for women workers	Women-only union across occupations, employment status, and industries	No collective bargaining
Broadcasting Writers Union (2017−)	Trade union for all writers	Industrial union of standard workers in the media industry	No collective bargaining
Broadcasting Staff Union (2018−)	Trade union for non-standard workers across occupations	Social movement Union across occupations and industries	No collective bargaining

Although they have faced obstacles in achieving bargaining rights, writers have struggled in various ways within activist organizations for better working conditions, whether or not these organizations have defined themselves as trade unions.

Most prominently, the Korea Television and Radio Writers Association (KTRWA) was established in 1962 as a professional association for experienced broadcasting writers, i.e., television and radio writers across all genres (KTRWA, 2000). My interviews suggest that KTRWA, at least in part, has served a de-facto role as a craft union, a form of union that organizes a group of skilled workers who share a common job or occupation (J. Kim, 2005).

In 1999 writers at a regional broadcaster, Masan MBC,[110] established the now-defunct Writers' Union as a branch of a larger, women-only trade union, the Korean Women's Trade Union, or KWTU (Y. Lee, 2001). This writer's union was not able to obtain the legal status of a trade union with collective bargaining rights and was disbanded in 2002. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, culture/journalism/documentary (CJD) writers of the four major terrestrial broadcasters (KBS, MBC, SBS, and EBS) created the four Non-fiction Broadcasting Writers Councils (NBWCs)—the KBS NBWC, the MBC NBWC, the SBS NBWC, and the EBS NBWC—as sub-organizations of the KTRWA (T. Song, 2000).[111] These councils have survived without formal bargaining rights as informal communities that represent writers' rights to improve their working conditions and facilitate mutual support among writers. In 2017, Korean writers established the Broadcasting Writers Union (BWU), a union for all writers, regardless of work experience and genres, as a branch of an industrial union, the National Union of Media Workers (NUMW). A year later, writers also participated in the establishment of the Broadcasting Staff Union (BSU) as a branch of a social movement union, the Hope Solidarity Union (HSU) (H. Jung, 2022). To date both unions still have had no collective bargaining negotiations. In the following sections, I discuss the activism of writers in each organization in detail.

7.3. Writers in craft solidarity and their intellectual rights

This section shows how the writers of the KTRWA have conducted collective actions to improve their working conditions. In particular, I show that while the KTRWA in Korea is a professional association their activities can be characterized as what has been referred to as a craft union along the lines of the Writers Guild of America in the United States. More specifically, I focus on how the KTRWA secured collective agreements with broadcasters that ensure regular negotiations regarding writing fees and writer copyright rates. I also show how, while the KTRWA works in favour of craft solidarity, it faces limitations in its ability to support less experienced writers.

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[110] Masan in 'Masan MBC' refers to a city, and Masan MBC is a regional broadcaster.

[111] It is not clear when KBS and EBS were established because no records exist. Interviewees recalled that KBS writers established the KBS NBWC in the late 1990s (O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018).

The KTRWA began in 1962 as an association which was initially composed of writers for fiction programs (KTRWA, 2000). In the 1970s it expanded to include people who wrote scripts for non-fiction programs (KTRWA, 2000). The organized writers of the KTRWA struggled to increase their pay through continual collective action such as strikes in which writers refused to provide scripts to broadcasting companies (KTRWA, 2000).

To help understand why writers engaged in collective actions in the 1970s, we need to consider the fact that, at that time, most writers received the same level of pay (KTRWA, 2000), a fact which contributed to building writer solidarity based on a common situation and therefore agenda regarding their working conditions. As this quote from the KTRWA (2000) suggests, writers generally felt hostile toward meritocratic and individualized approaches to determining pay:

> One day, broadcasting companies announced that they would classify writers into several ranks and set different pay standards for each rank of writer. This announcement made writers upset. … Writers strongly argued that "evaluating individual writers and pricing their work was an insult to the writers and a defamation of their humanity" and "therefore, we cannot accept the rating of writers." (KTRWA, 2000, pp. 91–92)

Notably, since the mid-1970s intellectual property has become a key issue among writers. In the 1970s and 1980s, broadcasting companies syndicated and reran television shows without permission from, or remuneration to, writers within South Korea and the United States (S. Kim, 2014, p. 5).[112] Some writers within the KTRWA sued broadcasters for infringement of writer's intellectual property rights, recognizing the litigation as a legal struggle to establish a precedent acknowledging such rights (KTRWA, 2000, p. 116).

In 1987 writers faced a critical moment regarding intellectual rights when the *Copyright Act* was amended to include new articles titled *Special Cases Concerning Cinematographic Works*. These articles stated that when a contract between a writer and a broadcasting company does not specify that the company should pay the writer for reruns or other uses of programs based on the writer's scripts, the writer cannot ask to be compensated for these later. Since individual writers do not have the bargaining

[112] KBS reproduced television dramas on VHS without permission from or rewards to the writers (S. Kim, 2014, p. 5).

power necessary to ask for such clauses to be included in contracts, the KTRWA requested that broadcasters make collective agreements with the KTRWA to pay its members for intellectual rights (S. Kim, 2014).[113]

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the KTRWA staged strikes to achieve these collective agreements (JoongAng Ilbo, 1987; The Seoul Shinmun, 1991), and succeeded in achieving collective agreements with KBS, MBC, SBS, and EBS (KTRWA, 2000). The agreements define basic writing fee standards and copyright fees, such as payments for reruns and syndications, that are set based on basic writing fee standards and mandate that the major broadcasters regularly negotiate their basic writing fee standards with the KTRWA. As a result of this success, the KTRWA came to have collective bargaining rights even though it was not a labour union. Since then, the KTRWA has expanded their collective agreements with broadcasting companies, such as cable television channels, as new broadcasters entered the market (J.-S. Kim, personal communication, October 4, 2018).[114]

In the early 1990s strikes became a major tactic of collective action by writers. They involved the withholding of scripts by drama writers, a refusal which ultimately became critical to the success of KTRWA's strikes (O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018). In particular, the participation of highly established writers in strikes also proved crucial to the achievement of collective agreements. One such writer was Soo-hyun Kim, one of the most renowned drama writers who wrote best-selling shows. She worked as chief director of KTRWA from 1987 to 1995 and played a leading role in negotiating with broadcasters and striking; such active participation decisively contributed to the success of strikes (J.-S. Kim, personal communication, October 4, 2018; O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018). Ok-young Kim, who had worked as a CJD writer since the early 1980s, was chief director of KTRWA in the late 2000s and described the leverage drama writers held this way: "As drama production has been the most profitable sector, broadcasters have been concerned about popular drama writers," and from their relatively small supply, "when the KTRWA negotiates with

[113] The KTRWA established a trustee to manage members' intellectual property rights and copyright fees in 1988 (S. Kim, 2014).

[114] While the KTRWA has engaged lawyers to explore the benefits of becoming a labour union, it "has consistently arrived at the same conclusion that it plays a role similar to that of a union" because it has collective bargaining rights, and therefore transforming the KTRWA into a formal trade union is not needed (J.-S. Kim, personal communication, October 4, 2018).

broadcasters, drama writers are influential people who could request something to broadcasters. In fact, only a handful of writers have the power, even among drama writers" (O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018).[115]

Craft solidarity underlies the way KTRWA has improved the working conditions for writers across genres. KTRWA executive office chief, Ji-Sook Kim, who has worked for more than 25 years at the organization, notes the key contribution of drama writers to the whole:

> As the KTRWA represents all writers, we have to empower all groups of writers across genres and increase their rights and interests. However, broadcasters are more likely to engage in negotiating the pay level for a group of writers that includes drama writers. From drama writers' viewpoints, they have sometimes conceded their interest in supporting the other genres of writers with their bargaining powers. (J.-S. Kim, personal communication, October 4, 2018)

In fact, many experienced CJD writers I interviewed recognized the utility of KTRWA membership as a means to improve their working conditions and bargaining power as drama and entertainment writers.

As Mosco and McKercher (2008) argue however, while craft unions might contribute to craft solidarity among skilled workers, they often come up short securing comparable benefits for less-experienced workers in their field. The KTRWA grants membership only to more experienced writers. The KTRWA justifies this exclusionary membership as the only effective one in securing demands like pay increases in collective bargaining with broadcasting companies. KTRWA executive office chief Ji-Sook Kim offered this rationale: "if companies do not recognize that our members are qualified, we cannot persuade them" (J.-S. Kim, personal communication, October 4, 2018).

During the litigation and strikes regarding intellectual property rights and copyright fees that were described earlier in this section, the employment status of writers was a major concern (KTRWA, 2000). If scripts were considered a result of work for hire, writers could not argue ownership of copyrights (J.-S. Kim, personal

[115] Korean broadcasting companies have historically generated high revenues from production of drama shows while the commercial value of entertainment shows has increased since the 2010s, as described more fully in Chapters 4 and 5.

communication, October 4, 2018). Thus, in order to receive intellectual property rights and copyright fees, the KTRWA and writers have had to prove that they had worked as self-employed workers, not employees who could get employee benefits and had job security.

By the 1990s, most writers received writing fees according to the KTRWA's basic writing fee standards (J.-S. Kim, personal communication, October 4, 2018). The KTRWA's basic writing fee standards are based on the negotiations between the KTRWA and broadcasters, which are indicated in the collective agreements between the KTRWA and the major broadcasters. Despite annual collective negotiations between major broadcasters and the KTRWA, the KTRWA's basic writing fee standards have been significantly lower than the actual writing fees that writers receive as their pay in the industry. Specifically, broadcasters categorize actual writing fees into basic writing fees that correspond to the KTRWA's basic writing fee standards and special writing fees that broadcasters set discretionally. Only basic writing fees are included in calculating copyright fees, which broadcasters have to provide writers according to collective agreements. My interviews suggest that, even while actual writing fee levels in the industry have significantly increased in the market, broadcasters have suppressed an increase in the basic writing fee portion of the actual pay and instead, raised the special writing fee portion in order to suppress the increasing copyright fees.

At first, broadcasters paid actual writing fees that were different from the KTRWA's basic writing fee standards only for writers working on a few types of programs. Currently, however, broadcasters pay writing fees to most writers by using their own pay system that consists of basic and special writing fees (O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018). Due to discretionary payment by broadcasters beyond the collective agreement with the major broadcasters, the KTRWA's basic writing fee standards have lost the meaning of real pay standards and now play a role in calculating copyright fees, figuring the minimum pay for new writers, and establishing standards for other smaller broadcasters and cable channels (J.-S. Kim, personal communication, October 4, 2018). The KTRWA has tried to increase the basic writing fee standards regularly to bolster copyright fees and minimum pay compensation to writers.

In practice, given their flexibility in setting special fees, broadcasters have differentiated pay among writers based on a meritocratic logic. By doing so, broadcasters have fundamentally undermined the power that KTRWA was able to leverage, including setting writing fee standards, and negotiation based on collective agreements. Moreover, given this pay system, KTRWA members have lost some of their drive to take collective action to increase their basic writing fees through collective bargaining. This is due to the fact that, over time, as special fees make up the majority of the pay of writers, writers are less likely to recognize the importance of the basic writing fees (J.-S. Kim, personal communication, October 4, 2018). In the CJD and entertainment production sectors, broadcasters give in-house PDs the discretionary power to determine writers' pay by having them establish the special fees for writers (J.-Y. Yeom, personal communication, September 3, 2018). As a result, the power relationship between writers and in-house PDs has become increasingly unequal, and CJD and entertainment writers' pay has become arbitrary in that it is determined at the whim of in-house PDs. Although the KTRWA has tried to revise writing fees to set a new standard that better reflects actual writing fees broadcasters pay writers, broadcasters have refused the revision using the excuse of difficulties in revising their internal pay systems (J.-S. Kim, personal communication, October 4, 2018; O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018).

7.4. The right to resist for precarious women workers

Since the KTRWA granted membership only to more experienced writers, a growing number of less experienced writers found themselves without an organization to represent their interests in the industry (E. H. Lee, 1997).[116] In the late 1990s and early 2000s, less-experienced writers in the CJD production sector at major and regional broadcasters played a critical role in organizing writers and establishing new organizations to represent themselves. Most significantly, CJD writers at major broadcasters established the Non-fiction Broadcasting Writers Councils (NBWCs), while writers at Masan MBC established the (now-defunct) Writers' Union of Masan MBC. In this section, I discuss how the identities of women workers, self-employed workers, and

[116] In 1997, the KTRWA granted memberships to writers who had written scripts for more than three years. This working experience requirement did not count the years worked as assistant writers, however (E. H. Lee, 1997, p. 22).

cultural workers were very important to the writers' labour movement, and how the employment status of these workers has played a central role in arguing for their right to engage in collective bargaining.

Non-fiction Broadcasting Writers Councils

In an interview, a former writer, Sookeung Jung, recalled how she was disappointed by the working conditions when she started working as a CJD writer at MBC in the 1990s. She lamented the way writers suffered from low pay and job insecurity, and was upset about how in-house PDs unilaterally decided writers' pay levels (S. Jung, personal communication, November 12, 2018). At MBC, less-experienced writers, often women, were trying to establish a union, but they were finding it difficult to persuade more experienced writers to join their efforts. Experienced writers thought of themselves artists, not labourers, and especially for older generations, unions were often regarded only as organizations for factory workers rather than artists.

In contrast, KBS writers succeeded in establishing the KBS NBWC in the late 1990s, earlier than at the other major broadcasters. Ok-young Kim, who led the establishment of the KBS NBWC, recalled the time when two less-experienced writers approached her suggesting she should become the leader of a new organization to marshal a resistance against writers' poor working conditions. While she herself was relatively well-paid, the activism of these writers encouraged her to participate and put pressure on the broadcaster. Recognizing that most writers work as freelancers across the broadcasting industry, she felt that a unified strategy was necessary to improve the working conditions for all writers (O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018). She persuaded more experienced writers at the other major broadcasters to establish their NBWCs (S. Jung, 2021). To cooperate with each other, the four NBWCs established one umbrella organization, the Non-fiction Writers Society (*kusŏng tak'yu yŏn'guhoe*), as a sub-organization of the KTRWA in the late 1990s (O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018). Ok-young Kim described it as follows:

> In the CJD production sector, it was necessary to increase the social, cultural, and economic status of writers. We requested that broadcasters increase writing fees and provide writing rooms. All activities are interrelated with each other. … Nowadays, the closing credits present CJD writers as those individuals who perform "*Kŭl Kusŏng*" [in English, "writing and devising plots"]. This identification is the outcome of writers' struggles. Although writers devised plots for programs and made outlines for editing,

> our work was not recognized sufficiently. Writers fought to be fairly acknowledged. Only PDs were given awards when CJD programs won in competitions. Writers' names were omitted in official announcements and medals. Newspaper companies did not identify writers' names when they reported something about CJD programs. We spoke out and fought for the writers' names to be identified. (O. Kim, personal communication, September 20, 2018)

The above quote is directly connected to the invisibility of this CJD writer group, which has been described in Chapter 6. As the NBWCs is a sub-organization of the KTRWA, it focuses only on the working conditions of CJD writers with full membership. Since assistant writers are considered only associate members, some writers felt that they needed unions beyond the NBWCs (Drama Writer 13/CJD, personal communication, November 22, 2018). For example, some writers at MBC aimed to develop their NBWC into a labour union, and they met with writers at Masan MBC to share information on unionization (S. Jung, personal communication, November 12, 2018).[117]

Writers' Union of Masan MBC (Now defunct)

In 1999 writers at Masan MBC established a trade union to counter their precarious working conditions and inequities within the industry. Mi Gyeong Park, a former writer who played a leading role in the unionization, recalled that she was inspired by the unfair conditions under which a writing colleague of hers worked. The colleague received extremely low pay and worked without specific guidelines as far as her workload was concerned, and only according to the dictates of a PD (M. G. Park, personal communication, September 25, 2018). Writers tried to discuss their working conditions with Masan MBC, but when the broadcaster did not engage in communication, the writers established a union and consulted KWTU activists appearing on Masan MBC programs (M. G. Park, personal communication, September 25, 2018). On the surface it might seem coincidental that the writers' union became a branch of the KWTU, but the latter was one of the few unions willing to support the unionization process of writers who were predominantly women and non-standard workers.[118] As a result of this openness to organizing freelance workers, the Writers' Union of Masan

[117] One interviewee recalled that she was disappointed that only experienced writers usually participated in communication with broadcasters (S. Jung, personal communication, November 12, 2018).

[118] Some writers at Masan MBC were not aware that the KTRWA existed (M. G. Park, personal communication, September 25, 2018).

MBC was quite significant in that it laid a foundation for the unionization of more than 100 freelance workers, including writers and show hosts at 11 regional broadcasters (Labor Today, 2001).

The union demanded the right to engage in collective bargaining with the broadcasting company to clarify the writers' responsibilities and establish pay standards and wage increases (Y. Lee, 2001). However, Masan MBC refused to negotiate, taking the position that since writers are not employees, they do not qualify for collective bargaining rights. In particular, the broadcaster argued that writers should be distinguished from other labourers who receive hourly wages in that "writers freely perform artistic and creative work" (Y. Lee, 2001). The union sued Mason MBC and argued that the writers are de facto employees of Masan MBC, and therefore, hold legal labour rights (Y. Kim, 2007, p. 178). The writers' union also requested that Masan MBC provide direct employment contracts, set regular bargaining tables, and establish wage, recruitment and dismissal standards (Labor Today, 2001).

Writers at Masan MBC argued that they were dependent self-employed workers, and thus held the status of de-facto employees (J.-H. Na, 2018, p. 43) (See Chapter 6, for details about dependent self-employment). Since under the *Labour Standards Act* dependent self-employed workers do not have legal status as employees, employers use this status in order to avoid assuming responsibilities such as providing social benefits, severance pay, and engaging in collective bargaining (Y.-J. Lee, 2004). However, if some dependent self-employed workers in practice worked under their employer's control and direction, they could be identified as employees under the *Trade Union and Labour Relations Adjustment Act*. As such, they could establish labour unions and request collective bargaining rights from employers (J.-H. Na, 2018). Dependent self-employment has increased since the late 1990s, which many Korean labour scholars and activists argue reflects a strategy by companies to force their employees to work as self-employed workers, thereby avoiding the legal duties of employers to provide various employee benefits, including the right of collective bargaining, to regular employees (Y.-J. Lee, 2004, p. 119).

When it comes to proving that workers have employee relationships with particular employers, the critical issue is whether employers control and direct workers (Y. Kim, 2007; Vosko, 2005). After several legal disputes and litigation, the High Court

ruled that, according to the *Trade Union and Labour Relations Adjustment Act*, writers were not employees. Consequently, the Writers' Union of Masan MBC was no longer able to pursue the possibility of collective bargaining with the broadcaster. As a result of this failure to obtain legal rights, the trade union was disbanded.[119] Regarding this failure, some Korean scholars made the following argument: "As writers are differentiated from other workers in that they input creativity into their labour process, writers fail to get the legal status of 'employees'" (H.-J. Choi & Lee, 2011, p. 476).

After the lawsuits between Masan MBC and its writers, Korean broadcasting companies removed several factors that could be evidence of an employment relationship between writers and broadcasters. For example, they abolished most of their official recruitment processes for CJD and entertainment writers (H. H. Lim, 2004, p. 5) and closed writers' rooms at their offices (S. Jung, personal communication, November 12, 2018). In the course of the interviews, I found that many writers who had been critical of writers' working conditions also tended to be sceptical about writer unionization. For example, one writer with more than 20 years of experience stated specifically that it would be difficult for writers to have a union's legal labour rights because writers are not employees (CJD Writer 2, personal communication, June 22, 2018). Another writer recalled that, when she started as an assistant writer in the early 2000s, she told her colleague that writers needed a union to fix their poor working conditions. Her colleague responded to her "Do not be ridiculous, because writers at Masan MBC tried to unionize and they lost their jobs" (CJD Writer 10, personal communication, July 18, 2018).

Nevertheless, my interviews suggest that the NBWCs have played a role in improving working conditions for CJD writers at the major broadcasters, at least to some degree. The actual roles and power of the NBWCs have varied according to the broadcaster. The organization that has worked most actively is the SBS NBWC. The SBS NBWC has partially succeeded in increasing pay and obtaining relatively minor benefits such as food vouchers, transportation fees, and vacations. The SBS NBWC has not had the right to have SBS participate directly in discussions. However, because

[119] The union decided not to proceed with an appeal because it was likely to lose the suit in the Supreme Court due to the legal and social standards of those days on labour rights. If such an appeal failed, the case would have a negative impact on writers' future cases (M. G. Park, personal communication, September 25, 2018).

more experienced, reputable writers have actively managed the organization and have put pressure on SBS, the SBS NBWC has from time to time had its concerns represented, a point confirmed by an SBS writer I interviewed (CJD Writer 3, personal communication, June 29, 2018). However, the fact remains that the four NBWCs, including the SBS NBWC, do not have the legal right to bargain if broadcasters refuse to negotiate with writers. Thus, there is no legal process to force broadcasters to negotiate. Moreover, after the expansion of the independent production sector since the late 1990s (as described in Chapter 3), many writers have worked while moving between several broadcasting companies and independent production companies. Therefore, most NBWCs have seen lowered membership numbers, and their influence has been reduced. Nevertheless, the NBWCs still play a role in representing writers at the major broadcasters. For example, in 2018 and 2019 when I conducted the interviews for this dissertation, written contracts for CJD writers were being introduced into the Korean broadcasting industry. The NBWCs directors from each broadcaster engaged with making standard contracts for the CJD writers and negotiated with broadcasters; the engagements took an informal, unofficial form in that, while the NBWCs suggested proposals for standard contracts, they had no practical method to enforce broadcasters to reflect the suggestions by the NBWCs.

7.5. Solidarity and fractures between workers

In the late 2010s, the South Korean national government under the Jae-in Moon regime (from 2017 to 2022) set policy goals that included laying the foundation of 'a society that respects labour' (*nodong chonjung sahoe shirhyŏn*), which encouraged non-standard workers to unionize (H. Jung, 2022). For example, during this Jae-in Moon regime, the Korean unionization rate increased from 10.7% in 2017 to 14.2% in 2020 (MOEL, 2021).[120] Remarkably, two Korean broadcasting industry trade unions for non-standard workers, including writers, were established: the Broadcasting Writers Union (BWU) in November 2017 and the Broadcasting Staff Union (BSU) in July 2018. While the activism of non-standard workers in the Korean broadcasting industry had already developed as I have documented thus far, the encouraging political circumstances galvanized workers to realize their activism in the form of union-building at this time. A

[120] It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explain how and why the unionization rate in Korea increased, this question, which might be a separate research topic.

BWU activist described the achievement this way, “the most important one is establishing a union,” and “we saw that Moon’s regime was the best time when writers can be unionized” (CJD Writer 8, personal communication, July 18, 2018).

During this time, writers cooperated with other occupations in the formation and development of these two organizations. The BWU was established as a branch of the National Union of Media Workers (NUMW). The NUMW is an industrial union that is a parent union of enterprise unions for standard workers, including workers in the KBS and MBC unions. The BSU is a union for all types of workers with non-standard employment in the Korean broadcasting industry. In this section, I show that Korean writers developed these unions based on solidarity with other occupations, but at the same time found fractures that threatened these nascent organizations due to complex employment relations and differences in working conditions in the Korean broadcasting industry.

Broadcasting Writers Union

The BWU stemmed from the NUMW’s project to organize non-standard workers in the broadcasting industry (Bae, 2016). Many interviewees stated that the NUMW tried to organize non-standard workers in the industry in order to increase their bargaining power in strikes. In 2010 and 2012, the KBS and MBC unions, which represented standard workers, went on strike and refused to contribute to the production of programs. However, the KBS and MBC were still able to continue to air programs by utilizing independent production companies and non-standard workers. This was done without the use of in-house workers, including PDs (Noh & Chung, 2018, p. 176). Although most in-house PDs participated in the 2012 strike, most CJD programs still aired at KBS for three months, and at MBC for six months (Noh & Chung, 2018).[121] One NUMW activist stated that the casualization of labour had weakened an important tool of standard workers, the strike (Y. R. Choi, personal communication, July 13, 2018). In 2015 the NUMW initiated a project to organize non-standard workers in the broadcasting industry. The NUMW called this project *Miro ch’atki,* and announced that the title meant

[121] Regarding this issue, the NUMW union leader at the time who was an in-house PD, stated “during the strikes, I realized how I was not aware of the labour issues of non-standard worker, and I am working as a manager, not a labourer” in an interview with a newspaper company (K. Kim, 2013).

“to get back non-standard media workers’ rights” and “to find out where non-standard media workers should go” (Y. R. Choi, 2015).

While the NUMW initiated the organizing project, it was writers who planned for the establishment of a trade union for writers (M. Lee, personal communication, October 19, 2018). In 2016, around 20 writers prepared to establish a union for writers (Noh, 2019). With the NUMW activists, the writers published a report titled *The survey of Korean writers’ working conditions* (Broadcasting Writers Union & National Union of Media Workers, 2016) discussing the human and labour rights of writers (Noh, 2019). They aimed to draw media attention and let the public and policymakers know about the precarious working conditions of writers (M. Lee, personal communication, October 19, 2018). This report detailed the demographic characteristics of writers, such as gender, age, annual working hours, pay level, and employment type.

Before the BWU was established, writers debated what parent union would be best for the nascent organization. Some writers who played a central role in preparing for the unionization of writers disagreed with the establishment of the BWU as a branch of NUMW. They were concerned that the NUMW had represented standard workers at the major broadcasters, including in-house PDs (Noh, 2019, p. 121). Noh (2019), who interviewed writers involved in the establishment of the BWU in 2016, recorded such a sentiment from a writer: “since standard workers [referring to in-house PDs] decide to hire and fire writers, and set our pay, they are powerful employers. In this regard, the NUMW plays a similar role to a type of association for employers” (p. 120). Right before the unionization, these sceptical writers left the BWU. By contrast, the writers who initiated the BWU welcomed the possibility of cooperation between writers and in-house PDs in struggling against broadcasters. As one writer described:

> People of the NUMW told us that they would need writers’ cooperation during their strikes. I thought that the current situation reflected the writers’ power. We were not the individuals who asked for in-house PD’s help. We would cooperate with in-house workers during their strikes. In return, we expected that they would cooperate with us when we struggled to improve our working conditions. … Most of all, I thought that it would be PDs who most strongly suppressed the unionization of the writers. I thought that if we are under the NUMW that they belong to, even if they dislike our union, they will not be able to directly suppress it. (CJD Writer 10, personal communication, July 18, 2018)

This activist also expected that it would be best if broadcaster enterprise unions that represented standard workers could include in their collective agreements with the broadcasters clauses on the working conditions of writers (CJD Writer 10, personal communication, July 18, 2018). In fact, when writers at regional broadcasters were unionized, the NUMW often facilitated the cooperation between writers and standard workers at regional broadcasters (Y. R. Choi, personal communication, July 13, 2018).

However, when I interviewed experienced CJD writers working at the major broadcasters, they pointed out the potential conflict of interest between writers and in-house PDs. Some of them directly stated that they did not engage in the BWU due to their parent union, the NUMW. Several writers expressed their anger, arguing that, although the NBWCs exist at the major broadcaster, the NUMW did not acknowledge the NBWCs.

Broadcasting Staff Union

The BSU relied on gathering together non-standard workers in the Korean broadcasting industry with the help of social media. This took the form of *Pangsonggye Kapchil 119* (in English, “Urgent rescue of workers in unfair working conditions in the broadcasting industry 119”—the number 119 is the Korean equivalent to 911 in North America). The *Pangsonggye Kapchil 119* (PK 119) was created in December 2017 as an offshoot of a mobile chatting room, *Chikchang Kapchil 119* (in English, “Urgent rescue of workers in unfair working conditions 119”),[122] which was initiated and managed by a civic, non-profit organization for supporting Korean workers’ labour rights with the same title *Chikchang Kapchil 119*. On the PK 119 mobile platform, precarious workers got together, talked with each other about their difficulties, feelings, and ideas, and made contact with activists who would form the PK 119. While discussing their working conditions on the platform, many workers who were working in non-standard

[122] *Chikchang Kapchil 119* created the chat room in the KaKao Talk Open Chat Room. KaKao Talk is a Korean mobile instant messaging application. This application has a similar function to a general mobile instant messaging application. KaKao Talk provides a function that allows around 1,000 (in recent years 1,500) people to get together and communicate anonymously in the group. Around 150 labour activists, lawyers, and certified labour attorneys managed and engaged in this movement (H. Lee, 2018b). In this medium, workers got together and talked about a range of labour problems, including unfair dismissals, delayed wages, and sexual harassment. In December 2017, *Chikchang Kapchil 119* staff created a separate room: PK 119. PK 119 consisted of around 25 activists from diverse areas, including organizers of social movement organizations, lawyers, and certified labour attorneys (S. Kwon, personal communication, July 3, 2018).

employment or self-employment agreed that they needed a union. They had offline meetings to actualize a unionization plan, resulting in the establishment of the BSU that summer (S. Kwon, personal communication, July 3, 2018).

My interviews suggest that the workers who established the BSU fell into three groups of non-standard workers: CJD and entertainment writers, PDs, and drama production staff. As one activist of PK 119 stated “The three groups of workers were aware that they needed unions, and some of them were exploring how to unionize respectively,” so they “met up on the platform, and PK 119 staff just played a role in facilitating their unionization with experiences and skills” (S. Kwon, personal communication, July 3, 2018). In contrast to the BWU, the BSU organizers wanted to become a branch of an alternative union, the HSU rather than the NUMW that represents standard workers mainly because standard workers play a role as employers of non-standard workers and the interests between standard and non-standard workers conflict (S. Kwon, personal communication, July 3, 2018). In addition, the BSU organizers saw that as the Hope Solidarity Union had engaged in organizing non-standard workers, its alternative unionism and experience were beneficial to the BSU (S. Kwon, personal communication, July 3, 2018).

When I interviewed activists, the HSU was focusing on organizing and improving the working conditions of drama production staff rather than writers and PDs. Because the working patterns and conditions vary depending on genre and occupation, this union could not proceed with organizing so many different worker groups at the same time (M. Lee, personal communication, October 19, 2018). Granted, in the long term the BSU can develop into a union that includes all non-standard workers. However, this presupposes that workers have formed solidarity across occupations. Yet this requires setting common strategies and processes, which is difficult to accomplish in the short term.

7.6. Cultural workers’ labour rights

In this section, I show how writers face both complexity and new possibilities surrounding their labour rights and movement as cultural workers. A majority of the writers who prepared for the establishment of the BWU were CJD and radio writers with 4 to 10 years of experience working for independent production companies or regional broadcasters, and not the major terrestrial broadcasters—KBS, MBC, SBS, and EBS

(Noh, 2019). Writers who worked at regional broadcasters and outsourcing companies could not get support from any organizations when they faced payment delays, unfair firings, and other issues. In general, the working conditions for writers at regional broadcasters are poorer than for writers at the major broadcasters in Seoul metropolitan areas (CJD Writer 14, personal communication, August 16, 2018). In 2018 and 2019 when I conducted interviews for this research, writers for regional broadcasters accounted for a majority of the BWU membership. As Jung-Yeol Yeom, a writer in the BWU who actively participated in organizing writers circulating at regional broadcasters described:

> Most writers at regional broadcasters do not have a way of getting the minimum protection that the KTRWA provides, as writers cannot meet the criteria for the KTRWA membership. We need a sheet anchor. As we knew that if we spoke out, we would lose our job, we could not speak out. (J.-Y. Yeom, personal communication, September 3, 2018)

The activists of the BWU aimed to establish an inclusive union that could represent all writers regardless of seniority, genre, and location. In practice, they did not have in mind drama writers because drama writers were not regarded as employees or labourers as much as other writers (M. Lee, personal communication, October 19, 2018), as described in Chapter 4. Writers needed a formal collective organization through which they could ask for protection and improve their rights and interests:

> The KTRWA played an important role in supporting writers as a union does. However, it is difficult to meet the membership criteria of a professional association. We need a labour union that includes and supports all writers. According to the standards of the KTRWA, assistant writers are not writers. The writers who work in news reports are not either. We need a labour union that includes and supports all writers.… In particular, writers should be able to struggle for our labour rights and interests based on laws, not someone's goodwill. Writers get writing fee increases based on the good faith of some PDs. Writers continuously have to get along with PDs to receive contracts. In this unfair structure, it is difficult for writers to fight against broadcasters and in-house PDs. (CJD Writer 10, personal communication, July 18, 2018)

In the most successful case demonstrating the efforts of the BWU to ensure their labour rights via a trade union, the writers at Daegu MBC achieved a documented collective agreement with the company, with continued bargaining negotiations. However, while several branches have succeeded in increasing pay, they have not been able to secure collective bargaining rights. In fact, many regional broadcasters have refused to engage

in formal collective bargaining, denying that the BWU has the legal right to request it (CJD Writer 14, personal communication, August 16, 2018).

While they wished to have their labour rights acknowledged, not all BWU activists I interviewed agreed that the only means for achieving this should come by making all writers employees of the broadcasters, as described here by two writers who worked as BWU activists:

> Many people misunderstand that we are asking for employment contracts with broadcasters. …. It is true that job insecurity is a huge concern. However, writers have worked as freelancers for a long time. Most writers do not want to have permanent, full-time employment or contractual employment. We are raising a problem against dismissals without clear reasons and asking for minimum protections. (J.-Y. Yeom, personal communication, September 3, 2018)

> Writers are forced to work as freelancers. Writers in the Korean broadcasting industry can never become permanent, full-time workers. We are not even allowed to work as temporary agency employees. Writers should be freelance workers, which is the most critical labour issue. I decided to work as an activist for the BWU in order to enable writers to work with various employment statuses. (CJD Writer 14, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

This expresses the current situation where all writers work as freelancers, while PDs can work flexibly in various forms of employment (See Chapters 1 and 3). A unified form of employment status can be problematic, so some writers could be protected through appropriate employment contracts and following labour laws. For example, since less-experienced writers, such as assistant writers, tend to contribute to their teams by assisting others on the teams, most activists and writers I interviewed saw that broadcasters should adopt direct, full-time employment contracts with assistant writers. By contrast, more experienced writers I interviewed doubted that they could be legally recognized as employees of broadcasters. For example, one writer who was a NBWC director explained to me why she did not think that she was a full-time employee: “Generally, in documentary programs, writers do not work as full-time workers. Writers usually go to an office once a week. Writers should do multi-jobs to make a living” and “writers should decide how many jobs they will do at the same time, That’s the reason why many writers say, ‘writers are freelancers’” (CJD Writer 22, personal communication, September 28, 2018).

My interviews suggest that, while some writers wanted to achieve permanent, full-time employment contracts with job security, many writers did not see the path as a solution to resolve their labour issues. For example, one writer valued how she could choose what program she worked on to produce:

> While I need to work to make a living from this work, I chose this job because I like it. It is true that if I have a permanent, full-time employment contract, my job will become more secure. However, I do not want to produce work in which I am not interested. Rather than standard employment, I would like to enjoy my rights as a freelancer. (ENT Writer 4/CJD, personal communication, August 9, 2018).

Writers' desire to have autonomy and flexibility in their work is not typically satisfied in the current labour system, and is achieved only by a few privileged, successful writers. However, activists see it as the desire for a basic labour right.

Underscored here is the fact that for cultural workers, labour autonomy and labour rights often seem to conflict. When writers define themselves as employees of broadcasters, the employment relationship indicates that writers have to work under the direction and control of broadcasters (S.-J. Yu, 2006, p. 77). Therefore, if broadcasting writers, as cultural workers, are supposed to perform their work autonomously, they encounter a dilemma when defining their specific work and identities. Some writers I interviewed preferred freelancing despite job insecurity because they want to achieve autonomy in producing content as creators, and they see that employees cannot have such autonomy. For example, one writer with experience of more than 20 years who had participated in establishing a union in the late 1990s did not agree with the idea that writers should work as salaried employees, stating:

> In the past, I did not agree that writers had to be freelance, not salaried employees. …. However, now, I think that a writer needs to work as an independent creator rather than an employee of a company. In-house workers are employees of a company. Anyway, the employees of a company cannot be independent of the company to which they belong. They have to follow the orders of the organization. Writers can be free from a specific organization because they don't belong to a company. (Drama Writer 13/CJD, personal communication, November 22, 2018)

Another writer who criticized how broadcasters exploit writers argued:

> In the past, I desired to become an employee. Now, I no longer think that I am an actual employee of a broadcaster. Employees are those who work in a way which companies control and direct. I do not work under the

> direction of companies. Broadcasters cannot say, “you should do this.” I provide my creative ideas and viewpoints on a specific topic. It is possible to make an agreement through discussions. If someone tells me to bring scripts on specific days, I can say that I cannot complete them by that time. I’m working this way. I believe that most writers can work this way. Or course, only experienced writers can work this way. However, writers are not those who work as PDs direct. Therefore, I’m not an employee of broadcasters. (CJD Writer 29, personal communication, July 30, 2019)

As these quotes indicate, some writers want to produce cultural products independently and autonomously, as freelancers. Writers can determine what programs they work to produce, although they are often able to choose the programs that are offered. However, they can refuse, at least, what they do not want to make. It should be noted that many experienced writers I interviewed did not want to join the BWU because joining a trade union would mean they defined themselves as an employee of a broadcaster.

Another important motivation behind the desire of some writers to work as freelancers is the dilemma presented by the incompatibility between employee labour rights and creative copyrights in the current legal system in South Korea (S.-J. Yu, 2006). Workers must be employees to establish trade unions, which could then give them the right to conduct collective bargaining and strikes (S.-J. Yu, 2006, p. 72). In the case of writers who receive their remuneration through copyrights as well as wages, it is not easy to ask for labour rights based on employment contracts. If writers argue that they are employees of a broadcaster and request labour rights, they can lose their copyright. Conversely, if writers argue that they conduct their work independently, without direct employment relations with broadcasters, writers can get copyrights, but they cannot ask for their labour rights as employees (S.-J. Yu, 2006, p. 77). Therefore, when writers organize a trade union or advocate for other employee rights, they run the risk of losing other rights, namely, copyrights (J.-S. Kim, personal communication, October 4, 2018).

7.7. Conclusion: Writers’ resistance in the making

In the interviews for this dissertation, labour activists who have not worked in the Korean broadcasting industry pointed out that broadcasting workers (particularly writers) have distinctive working patterns and identities. For example, Man-jae Lee, an activist who participated in organizing workers in the BWU and the BSU described how:

> The working patterns of non-standard workers in media industries are different from other industries. … Not only standard workers, but also non-standard workers in the industry tend to think that they are not labourers, but influential individuals who can empower workers in other industries by making programs for them. In particular, writers tend to have such distinctive identities more conspicuously in contrast to other non-standard workers. Their working conditions and identities vary depending on occupation and rank. These distinctive features have a negative impact on organizing workers in the industry because workers tend to be fragmented. (M. Lee, personal communication, October 19, 2018)

This activist stressed: "Frankly speaking, labour activists and organizers tend to lack knowledge of the cultural sector and therefore find it difficult to figure out strategies to organize workers in this sector" (M. Lee, personal communication, October 19, 2018). Another activist who has not worked in the broadcasting industry also stated that "It is difficult to categorize the diverse range of writers' labour patterns, employment statuses, working conditions, and duties, and therefore it is challenging to build common agendas that reflect writers' demands" (Y. R. Choi, personal communication, July 13, 2018). The different responsibilities and working conditions of writers have been previously clarified in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Media and communication scholars need to engage in more research in the areas of labour and production in the cultural industries. During the course of writing this dissertation, I observed that many writers and activists, who were involved in the five organizations, reviewed existing academic research because they wanted to understand the labour of cultural workers, including writers and to explore new forms of labour resistance and activism. For example, the above activist who felt confused about the writers' work told me that he reviewed most of the research on workers in the Korean broadcasting industry (M. Lee, personal communication, October 19, 2018). However, because current scholarship on activism has focused mainly on permanent, full-time employees of large companies in the manufacturing industries, the writers and activists could not find sufficient research on the labour and activism by cultural workers (especially women, freelancers, and cultural workers). Indeed, such research is necessary, not only for labour activists but also for cultural workers seeking new forms of activism and unions.

As we've seen in this chapter, the fragmentation of writers' working conditions gets in the way of collective resistance to poor working conditions. However, as this

chapter has also shown, writers have nevertheless taken collective action and have continuously tried to build organizations to represent themselves. More than this, they have tried new and existing forms of activism in cooperation with labour activists, including experienced writers of the various parent unions and the KTRWA. Given the many efforts detailed above, I argue that the identities of writers as intersectional, not fragmented, should be recognized and understood. Indeed, because Korean writers have intersectional identities—as women, freelancers, and cultural workers—their working experiences are complex, and their labour movements are multi-dimensional.

In summary, the activism of the writers of KTRWA represents an example of craft solidarity for cultural creators. The KTRWA has struggled against precarious working conditions by leveraging their skills and market power. The most precarious and marginalized writers, such as writers at regional broadcasters, less-experienced writers, and/or CJD writers, initiated a new labour movement both in the late 1990s and late 2010s. These writers had to fight for the right to resist and conduct collective actions because Korean labour laws did not support their activism. At present, while writers struggle for better working conditions, they do not aim to follow the traditional labour model based on permanent, full-time workers. They are still developing and imagining what labour model and resistance models are suitable for a diverse set of gendered, precarious, cultural workers, and are exploring what writers truly desire in their work.

Chapter 8.
Conclusion: Feminization, valorization, precarity and feminist labour activism

Adopting a feminist political economy perspective, my dissertation has explored the formation, working lives and labour activism of Korean television writers, who are predominantly women. My research has provided a deeper and expanded understanding of cultural work, focusing on the content of cultural work and its gendered nature, as well as the precarity that workers experience in the cultural industries. In particular, this research has revealed and reflected on the feminization of cultural work in contemporary capitalism.

The primary research consists of in-depth interviews that I conducted with 91 research participants in South Korea from June 2018 to August 2019 in order to capture the experiences and viewpoints of Korean television writers. For this research, a feminist political economy perspective offered an epistemological approach and laid the conceptual foundation. In Chapter 2 I reviewed the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of concepts and debates including the cultural industries, cultural work, and gender inequity in cultural work (in particular, the feminization of labour), in order to establish the conceptual foundation for my dissertation. I also challenged and situated my research in opposition to creative industries discourse, the creative labour model, and the masculinized creative artist trope.

From Chapters 3 to 7, I presented my research findings in response to three research questions. The first research question, examined in Chapter 3, is why and how women have become heavily overrepresented in writing positions in the Korean television industry since the 1990s. The second question focused on writers' work and the valorization of cultural production within the Korean television industry, which I described in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, focusing on one genre of writers in each chapter. In Chapter 7, I answered the final question, which focuses attention to how some Korean writers struggle against their precarious working conditions through collective organizations.

In this concluding chapter, I weave together my findings presented in the empirical chapters (from Chapters 3 to 7) by summarizing and synthesizing them. In

particular, I provide the wider conceptual and empirical implications of the feminization of cultural work and the intersectionality of women, freelance workers, and cultural workers. After that, I argue for the significance of this dissertation by clarifying how my findings contribute to communication scholarship and society more broadly. Finally, I discuss this research's limitations and make suggestions for future research.

8.1. Feminization of cultural work

In Chapter 3, I explored my first question: why and how have women become an overwhelming majority of writers in the Korean television industry since the 1990s? To answer this question, I demonstrated that women's overrepresentation in writing positions is connected to the intersection of gendering and precarization, within a broader political-economic transformation in the Korean broadcasting industry.

In the 1990s, the industry faced significant transformations, such as the regulatory liberalization of the media system, increased competition, and flexibilization of production (Y. H. Kim, 2008; C. K. Lee & Song, 2010). These transformations led to the precarization of labour in the industry (Y. H. Kim, 2008; C. K. Lee & Song, 2010). In the 1980s, before these transformations, women were already increasingly participating in writing positions (See Table 3.1 in Chapter 3). Women outnumbered men in the CJD production sector in 1988 (drama in 1992 and entertainment in 2000). In the 1980s and 1990s, the work of writers was structurally precarious because most writers had been hired as freelancers at least since the 1970s, while most comparable workers, including PDs, were hired as full-time, permanent employees. Broadcasters shaped and enlarged this freelance workforce in the industry by creating writing positions in most programs and introducing women to the freelance workforce in the 1980s and 1990s. They also expanded writers' duties in the entertainment and CJD production sectors into diverse tasks beyond writing, such as coordinating, casting, and editing. This expansion made the writers' work a significant portion of work in the industry.

Notably, the increase in the participation of women in the Korean broadcasting industry occurred in different forms across genres with: the introduction of women to existing jobs in the drama production sector, to restructured jobs from writing scripts in the entertainment production sector, and to newly created jobs in the CJD production sector. As a result of this novel labour management, the writing workforce that wrote

scripts for fiction shows, like dramas, was expanded to the current form, where three writer groups perform various duties according to the programs for which they work. A majority of the work that CJD and entertainment writers undertook had previously been carried out by in-house PDs who were predominantly men in standard employment contracts. Indeed, in the entertainment and CJD production sectors, a significant portion of the workers who engage in making shows has shifted from a predominantly male, permanent, full-time group to a predominantly female, freelancing workforce. Therefore, the gendering of writers' work should be interpreted as the gendering of work in general in the industry, beyond just writing positions.

The precariousness of gendered workers worsened in the first decade of the 21st century. In the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis in 1997 and the spread of neoliberal labour policies in Korea, the precarization of labour in the industry was expanded into other occupations, including PDs. While writers were already freelancers, their working conditions became more precarious than before due to various processes, including the division of labour, the rise of extended apprenticeships, and the increase in competition for higher positions and jobs. These processes have caused writers increasing job insecurity, limitation of upward mobility, and the expansion of underpaid labour, as illustrated in Chapter 3. In other words, while the employment status has not changed, the working conditions have become more precarious. This finding shows how precarious working conditions, such as job insecurity, and underpaid or unpaid labour have worsened through various processes that differentiate and separate writers who were already gendered.

Women became predominant in writing positions at the same time as women's participation in the paid labour market increased in the Korean television industry; one of the key features of feminization. Furthermore, it should be noted that, as general working conditions have worsened, women have tended to go into more precarious jobs than men. I therefore argue that the feminization of work indicates that women are still more likely to be situated in worse working conditions, and precarity is unequally distributed to women, as many feminist scholars have noted (Bohrer, 2019; Federici, 2012; Werner et al., 2017).

The precarious working conditions that women faced in the 1980s and 1990s have become dominant in the industry since the 2000s. In other words, the precarious

working conditions, including job insecurity and underpaid or unpaid labour that women have historically experienced have become “a dominant form” in the labour market under post-Fordism in contemporary capitalism (Haraway, 1991; McRobbie, 2016; Vosko, 2000). Furthermore, the precarity under post-Fordism is still gendered right up to the present (Bohrer, 2019; Federici, 2012; Haraway, 1991; Vosko, 2000; Werner et al., 2017). Many interviewees pointed out that since the late 2000s, when freelancing began to be prevalent in PDs, the presence of women in PD jobs has drastically increased, and women now outnumber men among new and junior workers entering the profession. This change indicates that the feminization of cultural work has expanded in the Korean television industry, something that has rarely been reported in Korean academic articles or any media. Having completed my empirical investigation, I argue that the feminization of labour is a frame to understand the precarization of labour under post-Fordism in contemporary capitalism. Specifically, feminization provides a lens for understanding the phenomenon of precariousness based on the experiences of marginalized people, including women.

8.2. Valorization of cultural work

While writers across genres have worked under similar conditions in terms of the administration of labour as described in Chapter 3, each group of writers works in a different way and performs different responsibilities. Specifically, in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, respectively, I discussed three groups of writers, focusing on their distinctive valorization of cultural production, working experiences, and subjectivities. In this section, I review the distinctive forms of labour, such as the labour of cultural conception, which comprise the contents of cultural work. After that, I point out how specific forms of labour have precarious and gendered natures due to patriarchal and/or capitalist processes, which form the precarious and gendered elements of cultural work. Furthermore, I distinguish between capitalist labour processes and the patriarchal labour management of writers’ work in terms of the valorization of cultural production in cultural industries.

Content of cultural work

Drama, entertainment, and CJD production settings each have their own production cycles, logics, and other features that include various arrangements, such as the number of writers per program and relationships with co-workers. The different

production features have impacted writers' experiences and occupational identities. As described in Chapter 4, the writers' duties in the Korean drama production sector include the work of both the series creator and script writers. This process involves the intense labour of cultural conception. Remarkably, a single writer tends to develop a drama and writes the scripts for all episodes. Although assistant writers often support main writers, they tend to perform non-writing work, such as researching and providing ideas for writers.

Entertainment writers work on a writing team, as illustrated in Chapter 5, performing a very fluid set of duties according to the show, and conducting multiple tasks simultaneously. Commonly, they undertake a very broad and in-depth form of communicative labour along three dimensions: communicating with cast members, cooperating with other writers on the writing team, and interacting with production staff on the production team. Communicative labour is essential in producing the creative, informative, and entertaining value of entertainment shows.

As Chapter 6 has shown, a CJD writer usually works with a PD as part of a team. CJD writers conduct various tasks, such as choosing topics, researching topics, casting people, and interviewing sources. In particular, they perform *kusŏng*, which refers to reorganizing information and devising a plot. The work, employment, and working conditions of CJD writers are determined by the hierarchical relationships with in-house PDs.

While performing different duties, writers across genres tend to play critical roles in the conception process, including coming up with ideas and conceiving how to combine the ideas into their shows, as shown in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Specifically, they are in charge of creating new series, developing formats, choosing topics, writing scripts, and devising storylines. While writers undertake such essential duties as planning for shows and episodes, on the production team writers of each genre perform the work of conception in a unique way, according to the shows. Specifically, I demonstrated that the features of shows are connected to how writers engage in the conception of the shows. Drama writers perform the intense labour of cultural conception because dramas are works of fiction that writers must conceive. Since entertainment writers develop storylines for entertainment shows with fiction and non-fiction aspects, they perform communicative labour in order to interact with cast members. CJD writers perform

kusŏng in making non-fiction shows by researching facts, reviewing data, and editing recorded footage while cooperating with PDs on a team. The various forms of labour that writers undertake are essential in producing the cultural value of television programs.

My dissertation has shown that cultural work involves distinctive forms of labour, such as the labour of cultural conception and communicative labour. In particular, in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I demonstrated how such forms of labour contribute to producing the creative, informative, and entertainment value of television programs, and how they also involve thinking, communicating, and reorganizing processes that require significant time and effort to perform. The concepts above are significant in that they dismantle the masculinized, creative artist trope, which many scholars (e.g., McRobbie, 2016; Pang, 2009) have pointed out as a problematic labour model in creative labour discourse, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Gendered and precarious nature of cultural work

The case of writers' work in the Korean television industry shows how cultural industries exploit workers through capitalist production processes of cultural commodities, processes designed to decrease the labour costs for producing programs. Specifically, writers suffer from these production processes due to intense commercialization, increasing competition, heavy workloads, and shorter production schedules. These have been accelerated by the political and economic transformations of the Korean broadcasting industry, which I have pointed out in Chapter 3.

Remarkably, the industry has decreased its production costs by exploiting the unpaid labour of writers developing new shows. By using writers' labour in the conception stage, this industry produces new shows quickly and cheaply according to measures of market trends, such as audience ratings. At the same time, the industry significantly offloads onto drama writers the inherent uncertainty and risks of the marketability of these cultural commodities (television programs). The Korean broadcasting industry forces drama writers to perform unpaid labour to create shows by paying them based on a piecework pay system. By doing so, it does not pay for contributions to shows in development, regardless of their eventual success or failure, as described in Chapter 4. To be clear, in the piecework system of the Korean television industry, the "pieces" tend to be contributions to scripts for aired episodes, not shows. Unfortunately, entertainment shows are increasingly launched and then cancelled due to

low audience ratings (See Chapter 5). Thus, entertainment writers have faced increasing job insecurity and more underpaid labour for developing new shows than in the past.

In addition, in order to decrease their labour costs, Korean broadcasters manage the exploitative production system that hires a smaller number of workers than needed, and make workers work intensely for a short production cycle. In particular, in terms of drama writing, writers must come up with ideas to provide scripts within very short, designated timelines after their shows are chosen by broadcasters. Since writers play the role of conceivers who make blueprints for shows, they feel a sense of responsibility toward their audiences, their colleagues, and the industry. In addition to the distinctive difficulties that drama writers face, writers across all genres suffer from long working hours, heavy workloads and extra, unpaid labour (See Chapters 4, 5, and 6). As a result, in this capitalist production system, writers often struggle with high anxiety, high pressure, financial insecurity, and instability.

In terms of the gendered nature of cultural work, this dissertation has revealed how various patriarchal factors, such as the discriminatory labour management system, gender stereotypes, and the valuation standards of labour, play critical roles in devaluing and underpaying the work of gendered writers in the Korean television industry. Specifically, my research has illustrated that the communicative labour that entertainment writers perform is essential to developing creative aspects of making programs, but the labour is undervalued and unpaid because communication skills are historically and socially regarded as parts of the nature of women. In addition, in the CJD production sector, Korean broadcasters created two different forms of workforces and managed them discriminately with differing employment arrangements, pay levels, payment methods, and recruitment processes. Specifically, they have created a dual workforce of invisible writers who are mostly women, and visible in-house PDs who are mostly men. This dual work model clearly appears to lean toward gender discrimination, and give the women in the workforce precarious employment status. By making their writers invisible, Korean broadcasters have obscured their gender discrimination and the exploitation of invisible CJD writers. Based on the interviews conducted during this dissertation process writers have recognized their precariousness as a form of discrimination and exclusion and have developed marginalized subjectivities. Indeed, the invisibility writers suffer is both a cause and an effect of patriarchal labour management. These findings confirm the ideas presented by feminist scholars who have stressed that

various oppression mechanisms, such as unequal power relationships, hierarchies, discrimination, gender stereotypes, and the devaluing of culture, are entangled with capitalism (e.g., Bohrer, 2019; Federici, 2004).

By focusing on the content of cultural work, and the gendered and precarious nature of writers' work based on the experiences and viewpoints of writers, I have shown that writers suffer from various forms of precarity. For example, drama writers feel pressured and anxious due to their feeling of responsibility as conceivers. Entertainment writers suffer from emotional labour as gendered precarity because they undertake communicative labour from a low status in the hierarchy of a production team. CJD writers recognize their precariousness as a form of marginalization and discrimination against their labour by contrasting their working conditions with in-house PDs. Furthermore, as I have clarified, drama writers suffer from anxiety, pressure and stress because they continually have to come up with ideas in developing shows and writing scripts.

The reason why I recognize this as precarity, not just difficulty, is that these precarious natures are directly relevant to *their financial insecurity* as workers who make a living through their work. Furthermore, what writers experience is also about *their existential insecurity* as people who imagine and devise ideas, who feel emotions, and/or who recognize and criticize marginalization and discrimination in their working lives.

Writers, as cultural workers, see that what they make is different from other commodities, and they recognize that they produce not just commercial value, but also cultural value. For example, drama writers are aware of the significance of their role as conceivers to the success of drama productions. They know their work impacts the future of their colleagues and independent production companies and that the audience will be impacted by their content. Such an occupational identity causes drama writers to feel a sense of responsibility for their work, and so they tend to be more willing to perform unpaid labour. Moreover, as writers' subjectivities are shaped through working experiences, they often put their experiences and viewpoints into the production process, thereby contributing to enhancing the characteristics and quality of the programs they make. For example, CJD writers have developed marginalized subjectivities through their experiences, and some of my interviewees were aware that

they were making programs from the viewpoint of marginalized people, including women, and by doing so, giving them voices.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, this dissertation focused on the most distinctive precarious nature of work that each group of writers described rather than listing and describing all forms of work and precarity, as clarified in Section 1.6. In each production sector, the gendered and precarious characteristics do not appear in the same way and to the same degree. In particular, the gendered constitution of the work of drama writers seems to be less predominant than that of the other groups of writers. Regarding the drama production sector, I suggest exploring new forms of gendered nature rather than focusing on whether the existing ideas can be applied to a specific work. Clearly, a key premise of feminist political economy is on exploring and detecting something that cannot be explained in the existing knowledge system. As discussed in Chapter 1, a feminist political economy approach aims to challenge existing knowledge and theories even if they have been based on feminist viewpoints.

Indeed, drama writers' precarity in association with the labour of cultural conception suggests that we need to imagine new gendered qualities in cultural work rather than exploring how it is connected to the traditional manifestations or to reproductive work. I argue that the gendered nature of drama writing can be explained in association with the tensions between culture and commerce in cultural industries. With the intensive commercialization of Korean dramas, culture has been subordinated to commerce in the drama production sector. In addition, the labour of cultural conception is subordinated to other forms of labour that are paid a wage and organized to decrease labour costs, as described in Chapter 4. This subordination suggests that the labour of cultural conception (versus more physical labour that attracts paid wages) and, broadly, the production of cultural value (versus economic labour) has become similar to reproductive work (versus productive work). The gendered quality of labour associated with cultural conception (the labour of cultural conception) that drama writers perform is based on subordination, not the similarity of the content of reproductive work, such as caring and nurturing.

8.3. Intersectional resistance of gendered, cultural workers

In Chapter 7, I described how writers have developed various forms of collective organizations to improve their working conditions. Indeed, since writers perform different duties and have specific working conditions according to their seniority and the programs they make, their working experiences are complex, and their labour movements are multi-dimensional (See Chapters 4, 5, and 6). Significantly, my research has shown that individual writers have intersectional identities, including being women, freelancers and cultural workers in the Korean broadcasting industry, and this intersectionality has shaped their collective subjectivity and labour activism. Therefore, the intersectionality of these writers requires new forms of labour unions, labour models, and resistance models. Indeed, writers' labour movements should be multi-dimensional and intersectional.

In collective actions, including unionization, the activism of writers is distinctive in that writers' organizations are situated in a marginalized position with respect to Korean labour unionism, and more broadly in regard to the dominant forms of unionism globally. Mainstream trade unions have been developed based on men workers, who are mostly full-time workers in highly-structured workplaces in the manufacturing industry in many countries (Mosco & McKercher, 2008), and mainstream Korean unionism has the same model (J. J. Chun, 2008; S.-B. Hong, 2017; Koo, 2007b; H. J. Kwon, 1999). Indeed, since trade unions are based on the employment relationships between employers and labourers, Korean television writers, who are usually self-employed, have faced multiple challenges in their collective actions. Historically, writers in the broadcasting industry have struggled to hold the right to bargain collectively with employers. Meanwhile, broadcasters have avoided their responsibility as employers, and the labour laws have not supported writers' labour rights.

Nevertheless, writers have continuously tried to build collective organizations, which have included a professional association, informal communities, a women-only trade union, and a union of media workers in non-standard employment. They have done so by trying new and existing forms of activism in cooperation with activists of existing unions, including experienced writers of the KTRWA. These writers have developed craft solidarity for cultural creators and leveraged their skills and market power. While KTRWA is a professional association, it has played a role in part as a craft

union by leading actions, such as strikes for increasing writing fees and securing intellectual property rights and copyrights fees. However, the KTRWA has not represented the most precarious and marginalized writers in the industry as members, including writers at regional broadcasters, less experienced writers, and/or CJD writers.

Instead, marginalized groups of writers in the late 1990s and late 2010s have fought for better working conditions by initiating new forms of collective organizations in support of their rights, such as the NBWCs and the BWU. It is true that the collective organizations of writers have had to adopt alternative forms of unions due to their forms of employment. However, many of the writers I interviewed questioned the traditional labour and resistance models, which are based on male, permanent, full-time workers and union models. Indeed, these writers were developing and imagining a new labour and activism model for themselves as Korean writers who, as cultural workers, are gendered and precarious. Writers' labour activism suggests that working creatively and autonomously, without inequities, is a basic labour right. In other words, the activism performed by these gendered cultural workers suggest that labour activism should be a feminist movement.

8.4. Contributions, limitations, and suggestions

This dissertation contributes to communication scholarship and labour studies in several ways. Most of all, it provides a deeper understanding of cultural work in contemporary capitalism, the content of cultural work, and the gendered and precarious nature of such work. These topics have not been explored sufficiently in previous theoretical and empirical studies, as demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2.

This dissertation contributes specifically to further research by communication and labour scholars in that it provides several conceptual tools and ideas, such as the labour of cultural conception and communicative labour, for exploring cultural work in cultural industries. I also unpack the concrete mechanisms of exploitation, such as piecework, invisibility, and emotional labour. During my research, I concluded that these concepts and ideas can be used to analyze the labour of other groups of writers or professionals working in the cultural industries, beyond that of the original writer groups for which the concept was first developed. For example, entertainment and CJD writers intensively engage in the labour of cultural conception when they work to create new

shows. For reality shows in the entertainment production sector, PDs usually perform *kusŏng*. In terms of communicative labour and emotional labour, as seen in the labour of entertainment writers, I found that in the CJD production sector, assistant writers, who are at the lowest status in the production team, perform *communicative* labour in researching and collecting data through interviews with people, while suffering from emotional labour themselves. In this regard, I expect that such concepts and ideas are applicable to many different sectors and work in cultural industries.

More broadly, this dissertation has disclosed the feminization of labour in cultural industries, which is referred to as the feminization of cultural work, as described early in this chapter. In addition, it has developed the concept of feminization as an alternative way of understanding of the labour and precarity under post-Fordism in contemporary capitalism based on the experiences of marginalized people, such as women. Furthermore, this dissertation provides empirical evidence of, as well as an alternative discourse against creativity, the masculinized creative artist trope, and more broadly, creative labour discourse and theories. This research also contributes to illustrating and shaping the history of women, and to rewriting the history of precarization in the Korean broadcasting industry, as described in Chapter 3. It clarifies how difference, separation, and hierarchy (in particular, hierarchies based on gender) are involved in the exploitation of labour in the Korean television industry and the hiddenness of that exploitation.

Finally, I hope that this research contributes to the establishment of a fair evaluation of, and compensation for, the labour of writers in the industry. In particular, I expect that the detailed description of research on the labour process and activism in cultural industries provide supportive knowledge and evidence to cultural workers and labour in seeking new forms of activism and unions.

While this dissertation focuses on the labour aspects of writers' work, more research is needed to explore how the increasing participation of women has impacted the content of cultural products. In fact, I include discussion of how women's participation has impacted to some degree the content of programs that writers produce. For example, CJD writers have argued that their impact is significant in that they reflect the experiences of women and/or marginalized people more broadly in Korean society, as described in Chapter 6. It is valuable to examine how women's participation impacts the representation of gender and society in television shows, specifically, how it affects

approaches to particular show topics, the selection of cast members, and the representation of people in shows. Since Korean dramas and entertainment shows have been globally circulated, further research would have a significant potential impact on the global production and consumption of culture beyond the Korean production and consumption sectors.

In terms of the CJD production sector, this dissertation focuses on broadcasters' in-house productions, not on productions which have been outsourced to independent companies, as described in Chapter 6. As this dissertation only focuses on one part of the CJD production sector due to this scope, I decided to engage with in-house productions. I found that the gendered and precarious nature of cultural work at independent companies took more complicated and exploitative forms. Without describing the gendered, exploitative mechanisms of in-house productions, it is difficult to investigate the writers' work in the independent production sector. Thus, this dissertation does not unpack distinctive forms of precarity of CJD writers who work mainly for independent production companies. This research topic will be addressed in future research endeavors.

This dissertation is limited by its focus on writers who make programs for major broadcasting companies, such as KBS, MBC, SBS, and EBS, in the Seoul metropolitan area of South Korea. Due to this focus, this dissertation might miss local differences in the South Korean television industry. For example, more research needs to be conducted with writers at regional broadcasting companies. The different work experiences of writers at the major companies and those at regional companies were apparent throughout my field research.

In terms of intersectionality, this dissertation has examined the intersection of gender (women), class (the precarious working class as freelancers), and occupation (cultural workers) in their working lives. However, it is important to discuss how other forms of identities that are inherited from their family, such as economic and social class, impact writers' working experiences.

This dissertation does not engage in exploring how the gendered responsibilities for parenting and motherhood often limit women from developing their careers. As described in Chapter 2, many studies have already shown how the gendered

responsibilities for parenting and motherhood often limit women from entering into a specific labour market or developing their careers in cultural industries. Specifically, my dissertation has aimed to explore the features of cultural work and its gendered valorization in cultural industries, focusing on the intersectionality of gender, labour, and cultural production, and precarity in cultural industries from a feminist political economy approach. While socialist feminism focuses on macroeconomic organizations arranging the relationship between the waged and reproductive work (and women's lives and their unpaid labour in the household), the feminist political economy approach in this dissertation is about a viewpoint to approach a particular form of labour (See details in Chapter 1). In other words, the feminist political economy approach is a viewpoint for the exploration of labour and production and, more broadly, the political economy. This viewpoint moves beyond exploring the relationship between reproductive and waged work for women workers. For example, feminist political economists see that even when we study male-dominated positions, we need to study them from a feminist political economy perspective. Nevertheless, I am aware that the gendered responsibility for parenting is an important issue in understanding the gendered nature of labour in contemporary capitalism, which will be explored in a future study. In particular, I suggest exploring the relationship between reproductive work and waged work in a new form of labour politics considering the fact that a male breadwinner model has been transformed under post-Fordism.

Finally, I suggest that communication scholars should engage more in empirical research in the areas of production and labour in the cultural industries. In Chapter 2, I have already pointed out that several studies reported the increasing introduction of women in communications and journalism in North America (Fröhlich, 2004; McKercher, 2014; Shade & Jacobson, 2015) and, more broadly, in the cultural sector in many countries (UNESCO, 2017). Therefore, I specifically suggest exploring how the feminization of cultural work has occurred in other professions (e.g., PDs in the Korean television industry), sectors, and countries.

CODA

I would like to complete this dissertation by echoing Federici (2012):

> I am interested in building a society in which creativity is a mass condition and not a gift reserved to the happy few, even if half of them are women. Our story at present is that of thousands of women who are agonizing over the book, the painting or the music they can never finish, or cannot even begin, because they have neither the time nor money. We must also broaden our conception of what it means to be creative. At its best, one of the most creative activities is being involved in a struggle with other people, breaking out of our isolation, seeing our relations with others change, discovering new dimensions in our lives. (p. 60)

Here, the creativity that Federici refers to might be the creativity that all human beings possess. Focusing on the cultural work that this dissertation has delved into, I would like to add that cultural production is a basic human right for everyone in that we speak out by making cultural products with expressive, aesthetic or informational meanings as much as working creatively, autonomously, and equitably is a basic labour right.

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Appendix A.

List of Interview Participants

No.	Pseudonym	Interview Date (YY/MM/DD)	Genre	Job title	Collective organization
1	Drama Writer 1	2018/09/06, 2018/10/11	Drama	Writer	
2	Drama Writer 2	2018/09/15	Drama	Writer	
3	Drama Writer 3	2018/09/21	Drama	Writer	
4	Drama Writer 4	2018/09/22	Drama	Writer	
5	Drama Writer 5	2018/10/03	Drama	Writer	
6	Drama Writer 6	2018/10/04	Drama	Writer	
7	Drama Writer 7	2018/10/09	Drama	Writer	
8	Drama Writer 8	2018/10/11	Drama	Writer	
9	Drama Writer 9	2018/10/15	Drama	Writer	
10	Drama Writer 10	2018/10/26	Drama	Writer	
11	Drama Writer 11	2018/11/02	Drama	Writer	
12	Drama Writer 12	2018/11/02	Drama	Writer	
13	Drama Writer 13/CJD	2018/11/22	Drama/CJD	Writer	NBWC in the 1990s
14	Drama Writer 14	2018/11/22	Drama	Writer	
15	Drama Writer 15	2019/07/09	Drama	Writer	
16	Drama Writer 16	2019/07/12	Drama	Writer	
17	Drama Writer 17	2019/08/17	Drama	Writer	
18	ENT Writer 1/CJD	2018/07/15	Entertainment/CJD	Writer	
19	ENT Writer 2	2018/07/31	Entertainment	Writer	
20	ENT Writer 3	2018/07/31	Entertainment	Writer	
21	ENT Writer 4/CJD	2018/08/09	Entertainment/CJD	Writer	
22	ENT Writer 5/CJD	2018/08/23	Entertainment/CJD	Writer	
23	ENT Writer 6	2018/08/30	Entertainment	Writer	
24	ENT Writer 7	2018/09/04	Entertainment	Writer	
25	ENT Writer 8	2018/09/07	Entertainment	Writer	
26	ENT Writer 9	2018/09/10	Entertainment	Writer	
27	ENT Writer 10	2018/09/11	Entertainment	Writer	
28	ENT Writer 11	2018/09/12	Entertainment	Writer	
29	ENT Writer 12	2018/09/15	Entertainment	Writer	
30	ENT Writer 13	2018/09/30	Entertainment	Writer	
31	ENT Writer 14	2018/10/01	Entertainment	Writer	
32	ENT Writer 15	2018/10/07	Entertainment	Writer	BWU
33	ENT Writer 16	2018/10/18	Entertainment	Writer	KTRWA
34	ENT Writer 17	2018/10/19	Entertainment	Writer	
35	ENT Writer 18	2018/10/29	Entertainment	Writer	

No.	Pseudonym	Interview Date (YY/MM/DD)	Genre	Job title	Collective organization
36	ENT Writer 19	2018/11/03	Entertainment	Writer	
37	CJD Writer 1	2018/06/14	CJD	Writer	
38	CJD Writer 2	2018/06/22	CJD	Writer	
39	CJD Writer 3	2018/06/29, 2019/04/11	CJD	Writer	NBWC in the 2010s
40	CJD Writer 4	2018/07/06	CJD	Writer	
41	CJD Writer 5	2018/07/09	CJD	Writer	
42	CJD Writer 6	2018/07/10	CJD	Writer	
43	CJD Writer 7	2018/07/17	CJD	Writer	
44	CJD Writer 8	2018/07/18	CJD	Writer	
45	CJD Writer 9	2018/07/18	CJD	Writer	
46	CJD Writer 10	2018/07/18	CJD	Writer	BWU
47	CJD Writer 11	2018/07/23	CJD	Writer	
48	CJD Writer 12	2018/07/30	CJD	Writer	
49	CJD Writer 13	2018/08/06	CJD	Writer	
50	CJD Writer 14	2018/08/16, 2018/11/21	CJD	Writer	BWU
51	CJD Writer 15	2018/08/29	CJD	Writer	
52	CJD Writer 16	2018/09/05	CJD	Writer	
53	CJD Writer 17	2018/09/08	CJD	Writer	NBWC in the 2010s
54	CJD Writer 18	2018/09/11	CJD	Writer	
55	CJD Writer 19	2018/09/14	CJD	Writer	
56	CJD Writer 20	2018/09/18	CJD	Writer	
57	CJD Writer 21	2018/09/19	CJD	Writer	KTRWA
58	CJD Writer 22	2018/09/28	CJD	Writer	NBWC in the 2010s
59	CJD Writer 23	2018/10/01	CJD	Writer	
60	CJD Writer 24	2018/10/05	CJD	Writer	
61	CJD Writer 25	2018/10/10	CJD	Writer	
62	CJD Writer 26	2018/10/23	CJD	Writer	NBWC in the 2010s
63	CJD Writer 27	2018/10/26	CJD	Writer	
64	CJD Writer 28	2019/04/08	CJD	Writer	NBWC in the 2010s
65	CJD Writer 29	2019/07/30	CJD	Writer	NBWC in the 2010s
66	CJD Writer 30	2019/08/07	CJD	Writer	
67	CJD Writer 31	2019/08/13	CJD	Writer	
68	Drama PD 1	2018/10/05	Drama	PD	
69	Drama PD 2	2018/11/07, 2018/11/16	Drama	PD	
70	ENT PD 1	2018/10/02	Entertainment	PD	
71	ENT PD 2/CJD	2018/10/10	Entertainment/CJD	PD	
72	ENT PD 3	2018/10/22	Entertainment	PD	
73	ENT PD 4	2018/10/22	Entertainment	PD	
74	ENT PD 5	2018/11/16	CJD	PD	

No.	Pseudonym	Interview Date (YY/MM/DD)	Genre	Job title	Collective organization
75	CJD PD 1	2018/11/01, 2018/11/07	CJD	PD	
76	CJD PD 2	2018/11/09	CJD	PD	

No.	Real Name (Last name, First name)	Interview Date (YY/MM/DD)	Genre	Job title	Collective organization
77	Joo, Chan-ok (주찬옥)	2018/09/14	Drama	Writer	
78	Yeom, Jung-Yeol (염정열)	2018/09/03	CJD	Writer	Daegu MBC Writers Union (BWU)
79	Kim, Ok-young (김옥영)	2018/09/20	CJD	Writer	KTRWA (& NBWC in the1990s)
80	Ji, Wonjun (지원준)	2018/09/17	CJD	PD	Korean Independent Producers & Directors' Association
81	Park, Jung Nam (박정남)	2018/09/17	CJD	PD	
82	Park, Mi Gyeong (박미경)	2018/09/25		Former writer	Writers' Union of Masan MBC in the 1990s
83	Jung, Sookeung (정수경)	2018/11/12		Former writer	NBWC in the 1990s
84	Lee, Jinsun (이진순)	2018/11/20		Former writer	NBWC in the 1990s
85	Kim, Dongwon (김동원)	2018/06/12	N/A	N/A	NUMW
86	Kwon, Suntaek (권순택)	2018/07/03	N/A	N/A	People's Coalition for Media Reform
87	Choi, Yu Ri (최유리)	2018/07/13	N/A	N/A	NUMW
88	Kim, Ji-Sook (김지숙)	2018/10/04	N/A	N/A	KTRWA
89	Lee, Man-jae (이만재)	2018/10/19	N/A	N/A	BSU (HSU& NUMW)
90	Jeon, Gyuchan (전규찬)	2018/06/28	N/A	Researcher	
91	Song, Yonghan (송용한)	2018/09/11	N/A	Researcher	