

How to Do Media and Cultural Studies

Second edition

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4

RESEARCHING INDUSTRIES: STUDYING THE INSTITUTIONS AND PRODUCERS OF MEDIA AND CULTURE

Aims and Objectives

- The main aim of this chapter is to show how production industries have been researched in media and cultural studies.
- We offer some guidance on conducting your own research into the media and cultural industries.
- The chapter discusses the opportunities and challenges provided by selected approaches to research, and offers some case study examples. In this chapter we focus on four research methods:
 - 1 archive research
 - 2 discourse analysis
 - 3 interviews (including oral history interviews)
 - 4 ethnography.
- Some suggestions for further reading are offered.
- We finish the chapter with some suggestions for follow-up exercises, and activities for private study and for teachers to use in class.

WHAT ARE THE MEDIA AND CULTURE INDUSTRIES?

In this chapter we are considering media and culture as the product of an **industry**, and also considering the different ways we can research cultural

production. Both the terms 'media' and 'culture' are very complex words with contested histories and diverse, though frequently intersecting, etymologies. We may think of the culture industries as including the press, publishing, drama, music, cinema, broadcasting (television and radio), computer games, the internet and mobile telephony. However, within academia some areas have been more thoroughly studied than others. Researchers of the media have often had quite a narrow range of interest, concentrating largely on *broadcasting* and *the press*. The area of *cinema* is left almost exclusively to film-studies scholars while many industries, such as *publishing* and *print-making*, receive scant regard. Within the field of cultural studies, as opposed to media studies, the focus is more likely to be on culture from the point of view of *communities of users* and less commonly on culture as the product of an industry. Academics follow trends which also restrict the kinds of things we research. Thus, during the 1970s and 1980s media research was dominated by paradigms derived from *semiotics* and *structuralism* with a concomitant focus on media *texts*. These were later displaced by a focus on *audiences* in the 1980s and 1990s, as *reception theory* became more fashionable. The vast terrain of the media and cultural landscape has been well-trodden in relatively few places. The paths worn by previous academic study are there for you to learn from and consider, but you should feel free to make your own way; there are no rules about where you may roam. After all, many of our key media forms today, such as social networking or viral messaging, are relatively recent phenomena and new modes of investigation have arisen to investigate them.

The idea of a *culture* as an *industry* has highly political (and politicized) origins, as we saw in Chapter 2. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer are often credited with first coining the expression in their essay, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', which was first published in 1944 (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1993). As political Marxists and cultural conservatives, the idea of industrializing culture was something quite abhorrent to them and to many other scholars in the 1940s and 1950s. The romantic myth of the charismatic artist creating '*art for art's sake*' retains a powerful potency. The aspiration for culture to be transcendent or 'sublime' and to be uplifting remains, although often overshadowed by the imperative for culture to have an *economic* significance. In many countries around the world, the *culture industries* are promoted not only as a public good, but also as a means of wealth production. The communications, media and culture industries contribute a large amount to the economies of modern Western societies. In Great Britain, the contribution of those industries to the economy is estimated to be about 5.6% of GVA (gross value added), employing 2.3 million people directly and indirectly and constituting about 8% of all businesses (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2010). The culture industries, including film, music and other media, have an important role materially as well as culturally. How do we reconcile the spiritual, enlightening qualities of culture with the economic imperatives of contemporary realpolitik?

As researchers of the media and culture, we spend a lot of our time thinking about a range of ideas relating to the role of the various industries in society. We sometimes forget that the vast majority of people who work in the business of making cultural artifacts do so in order to make money, and, as in any other industry, the profit motive is a strong determinant of why particular decisions are made. When studying the media and culture it is important to bear in mind that market forces and economics are the most significant forces determining what is done. The culture industries are involved in the production of artifacts which need to compete in the market place. Even the most charitable arts organization needs money to survive, and acquiring funding is a major part of the activities of private companies and non-profit-making organizations alike. The economics of the market place applies to everybody, and there are no culture industries which operate entirely outside these forces. The drive to survive is what spurs on most organizations, whether they be profit-making or charitable concerns, and in the real world that means making money. Whatever culture industry you are going to study, you must make sure that you understand the economics of the industry and how organizations make their bread and butter.

Most of the research into media industries is *instrumental*, conducted by and for particular companies with the purpose of advancing their own aims and objectives. There are several research organizations which collect reliable information about specific parts of the media industries. For example, information on television-viewing is collected by the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board (BARB) and is used widely by the television industry to monitor programmes and to develop programming strategy. In addition, companies conduct research into their own market position and that of their competitors. There is a wealth of administrative research which is produced solely for business purposes, and can also have value to academics; public companies are obliged by law to publish their accounts, and most companies issue an annual report which contains information on their activities for the year. Administrative data can be used by academics as a secondary source in their research, especially where it can provide facts and figures which would otherwise be too expensive to collect. Most research into the culture industries, then, unlike academic research, does not have the growth of knowledge as its goal, and the information is not gathered to advance a theory of any kind. The vast majority of research into the media and culture industries is *administrative* and *functional*, having practical uses and applications for the relevant industries.

Some of the research which is conducted in the private and public sectors is not available to the general public because it is considered proprietary; that is to say, it is the property of the company which commissioned it. Often research costs a lot of money to support, and the funders do not want to share the knowledge they have acquired because they have obtained it in order to improve their status in the market place.

In most countries in the West, including the UK and the USA, governments take an active interest in the media and culture industries. Broadcasting is one of the most heavily legislated media industries in Britain, with each successive broadcasting institution established by an Act of Parliament. The BBC, for example, funded by licence fee, was established in the UK during the 1920s at a time when many other industries were nationalized or being brought under state control. The director-general of the BBC is appointed by the board of governors, who are in turn selected by the government of the day. Successive governments have left their mark on the development of the BBC and the media system in the UK. During the Thatcher period, the philosophy of *laissez-faire* which instructed Conservative economic policy fed into media and cultural policy (Goodwin, 1999). Whether or not state funding exists for a particular culture industry is clearly dependent on prevailing governmental attitudes. At various times, support for media and culture industries has been justified on the grounds that cultural products can help to forge national identities or push political agendas. At other times, they have been supported on the same grounds as other industries: to provide employment and economic opportunities.

National governments clearly have the strongest influence on the shape of media industries in their own countries, but the European Union has increasing powers to influence the shape of the media in its member states (Collins, 1999). The significance of legislation and the regulatory environment on the culture industries provides an interesting research area. The impact of changes in regulation on particular industries and their operation could provide an interesting focus for your work. Whatever your topic, it will help you to understand the way the culture industries work if you find out about current legislation and follow the debates about pending changes in regulation. The relationship between politics and the media is particularly valuable for anyone interested in the power of the media (Wheeler, 1997). The idea that one should 'look to the money' to understand the workings of the media underlies the project of material analysis which is at the heart of the work of much media scholarship.

STUDYING THE MEDIA AND CULTURE INDUSTRIES

In the history of our field, the workings of the media and cultural industries have been much less studied than the texts they produce or the audiences who consume them. It seems that scholars in the humanities and social sciences are all too willing to study media texts, such as films, games and television programmes, but are reticent to study the media industries. Michele Hilmes goes as far as to note that: 'to propose the serious study of media industries is a bold and iconoclastic task' (Hilmes, 2009: 30). Partly, as Hilmes explains, this is because of a long-standing tradition of a separation between the business world and that of universities. Partly, it is that the social sciences

and humanities within academia are too ready to dismiss 'business' as outside of their sphere of engagement. Moreover, within media studies education there has always been an uneasy relationship between 'theory' and 'practice'. At stake in this dichotomy is the way that theorists and practitioners interact, which in turn relates to the relationship between the 'academy' and the 'industry'. In the past, scholars of the media and culture have neglected to engage with the industry while the media industries, in turn, have refused access to scholars. This is now shifting, with the publication of some important books on the culture industries including David Hesmondhalgh's *The Culture Industries* (Hesmondhalgh, 2007) and Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perrin's *Media Industries: History, Theory and Method* (Holt and Perren, 2009). Since 2000 we have seen a greater engagement by scholars with industry.

The most significant imperative behind the re-invigorated interest in the media and culture industries has been the changes in the processes of production themselves. Perhaps we are living in the *Network Society* (Castells, 1996; 1997; 1998) or the *Digital Age* (Negroponte, 2000) – call it what you will, there can be no doubt that, in the Western world at least, computer technology is engendering one of the epochal revolutions of our social and cultural lives. There will inevitably be a new form of social consciousness as a consequence, a revolution as important as that which occurred in the shift to print culture (Balvanes, Donald and Shoesmith, 2009). The changes wrought by the silicon chip and its related technologies overshadow in scale those of the steam engine and all the machines of the Industrial Revolution. The technological transformation of the media industries in the last 20 years has been unprecedented, revolutionizing the means by which media and culture products are made, distributed and consumed. Where the media were once considered 'mass media', produced on a *factory* scale for *mass* consumption, there is now greater potential for domestic-scale production. Where, until about 30 years ago, a printing press was something which you might find only in the city – now a printer can probably be found in most of the private homes of any street in any city in the developed world. The film stock alone to make a film used to cost more than the average monthly salary; today you can save a film on a data stick costing the price of a lunch (probably a cup of coffee by the time this book is published!). Media production is no longer the sole preserve of big business: the revolution in media technology means that the old barriers to entry no longer exist. Whether they have been permanently eliminated or are simply being rebuilt elsewhere, time alone will tell.

The introduction of new technology has caused a revolution in the processes of production in the media and cultural industries. In the UK, as in many other countries, the media industries were among the most centralized and highly unionized. The era of conservatism in the late 1970s and 1980s,

with the twin figureheads of Ronald Reagan in the US and Margaret Thatcher in the UK, brought devastating assaults to working conditions of people in the traditional industrial sectors. The media and cultural industries were the targets of a right-wing backlash which saw public funding for the arts dramatically reduced and a commercialization of the sector. The impact of the introductions of new 'labour saving' technologies allied with a Keynesian economics policy resulted in a massive transformation of the media industries. When News International moved their entire printing press and editorial office to Wapping in 1986, it created one of the biggest confrontations between unions and employers to be seen in Britain. The breaking of the unions at News International and their diminution in power has been well documented elsewhere (Gopsill and Neale, 2007). The ability of the media to act as an effective check on the state, to comprise a powerful 'public sphere' or 'Fourth Estate', was seriously hampered by the close relationship between media conglomerates such as News International and the policy of the state. For them to be working hand-in-hand created serious damage to the democratic function a free press should perform. At a time when the press are subject to a continuing examination by Parliament in the UK at the hands of the Leveson Inquiry we may well ask – are the press fulfilling their role as executors of the public sphere?

The digital revolution may have changed the means and processes of production; it may have altered the kinds of companies which dominate the list of media corporations – but not so greatly as to influence the basic relations of capital. The capitalist system has proved remarkably resilient. Bill Gates, the CEO of Microsoft, may be the presentable face of computer capitalism, but his empire remains a dominant capitalist force in the media landscape. Steve Jobs, head of Apple, died a multi-millionaire, having built up a massive media empire. The new media forms are produced by surprisingly old-fashioned means, often using outsourced labour and exploitation of labour on a massive scale. In the culture industries a creative working environment does not always exist at every stage of production.

It is our task as media and cultural researchers to address these issues head on. We can recognize that the industry is in a state of almost permanent revolution; but at such times scholarly reflection can offer valuable interpretation. Think about how the social revolution of the post-war period in Britain produced the foundations for the later development of cultural studies in the work of Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and E.P. Thompson, founders of our field (see Chapter 2 pages 41–42). The challenges they faced in understanding the enormous social and cultural changes of their time were desperate. Ours, although far different, are every bit as dramatic. We, too, are in a phase of phenomenal technological revolution, great social change and enormous economic transformation. Much of this change is taking place at the interface between media and society. We have the privilege of being able

to research these dynamics; the study of the media and culture industries just gets more and more interesting. Here are some examples of the kinds of areas of enquiry that you might investigate in researching the media and cultural industries.

- 1 The response of a particular organization or industry to new technology.
- 2 The impact of new legislation, changes in the regulatory environment, or public investigations such as the Leveson Inquiry, on an organization or industry.
- 3 The reasons for the introduction of a particular media phenomenon such as cable television or mobile telephony.
- 4 The industrial rationale for an expansion of a genre, for example the birth of 'scripted' reality shows like *The Only Way is Essex*, spawned as the progeny of the internationally franchised brand *Big Brother*.
- 5 The impact of a change of personnel or management on a company or industry, such as in the case of a take-over or the appointment of a new director or CEO.
- 6 An exploration of how different genres of cultural products are related to different patterns of work and professional practice.
- 7 The impact of the ideology or belief systems of people who work in the media and cultural industries.
- 8 A comparative study of working practices either in two different workplaces or at two different points in time.

FOUR METHODS OF RESEARCHING THE MEDIA AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

There is a wealth of research into the media and cultural industries by economists and business researchers who consider them just as they would any other industry. Organizational communication, media economics and political economy are all areas of scholarship with long and distinguished histories. The industries themselves, and various agents of the state, also undertake research of an 'administrative' nature. What are the methods student researchers can utilize to investigate the media and cultural industries? In this chapter we concentrate on four of the main methods the student researcher can use to investigate the processes of production. Figure 4.1 shows the methods we will be discussing in this chapter, including the possible object of analysis for each method and listing the specific case studies we will discuss in the following pages.

FIGURE 4.1 Four methods of researching the media and culture industries

Method	Object of Analysis	Case Studies
Archive Research	Documents (e.g. institutional records in letters, memos and publications); journals and books (contemporary and historical); recorded interviews and digital archives and databases.	<p>Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, 1991. <i>A Social History of Broadcasting. Volume 1: 1922–1939. Serving the Nation</i>. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.</p> <p>Sue Arthur, 2009. Blackpool goes all-talkie: cinema and society at the seaside in thirties Britain. <i>Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television</i>, 29(1): 27–39.</p>
Discourse Analysis	The talk and conversation of media workers; literature produced by media industries for internal purposes; trade literature and advertisements; published and unpublished comments and observations of industry insiders; cultural products addressing media and culture, for example, television programmes about television such as <i>Curb Your Enthusiasm</i> .	<p>John T. Caldwell, 2008. <i>Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television</i>. Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press.</p> <p>Chrys Ingraham, 2008. <i>White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture</i>. New York/London: Routledge.</p>
Interview	Opinions and attitudes of industry workers; people's ideas and perceptions about the industry; Reflections and recollections about the past (oral history interviews).	<p>Jeremy Tunstall, 1993. <i>Television Producers</i>. London: Routledge.</p> <p>Stefan Haefliger, Peter Jäger and Georg von Krogh, 2010. Under the radar: industry entry by user entrepreneurs. <i>Research Policy</i>, 39: 1198–213.</p> <p>Stuart L. Goosman, 2005. <i>Group Harmony: The Black Urban Roots of Rhythm and Blues</i>. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.</p>
Ethnography and Participant Observation	Working practices of an industry, company or organization; the behaviour of people at work; the social interaction and relationships between people at work.	<p>Hortense Powdermaker, 1951. <i>Hollywood, the Dream Factory: An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie-Makers</i>. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.</p> <p>Anthony Cawley, 2008. News production in an Irish online newsroom: practice, process and culture. In Chris Paterson and David Domingo (eds), <i>Making Online News: The Ethnography of New Media Production</i>. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 45–60.</p>

Archive research is the most commonly used research method in any kind of project; it involves exploring published and unpublished sources collected in archives, libraries or databases. These may be physical, such as books, magazines or memos; or virtual, for example electronic or internet-based resources such as digital archives. In our discussion we focus on two case studies that use archives to research media history: Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff's *A Social History of Broadcasting* (1991) and Sue Arthur's 2009 essay, 'Blackpool Goes All-Talkie: Cinema and Society at the Seaside in Thirties Britain'. We discuss the differences between 'library', 'archive' and 'desk' research and consider how these constitute vital components of any research project. Archives comprise just one part of the *discourse* about media and culture and we consider here how we can analyse the discursive practices which surround the industries. John T. Caldwell investigates the discourses of professional practice among 'below the line' film and television workers in Los Angeles (Caldwell, 2008). Chrys Ingraham's research looks at a much less frequently studied cultural industry, that of the *wedding industry*. In *White Weddings* the author takes a *feminist materialist* approach to the study of the white wedding industry to unravel discourses of *heteronormativity* across a range of cultural products related to weddings (Ingraham, 2008). Asking questions of people who work in the industry can provide an excellent way of collecting original, first-hand data for your research project. Jeremy Tunstall has been a prolific investigator of the media industries and uses *interviews* as his primary method in his classic study from 1993, *Television Producers* (Tunstall, 1993). *Interviews* and *ethnography* are combined to research the phenomenon of *machinima* and its 'user entrepreneurs' in a more recent study by Stefan Haefliger, Peter Jäger and Georg von Krogh (2010). Under this category we also consider the *oral history interview* as a means of researching industry workers about the past and take as a case study Stuart Goosman's study of 'doo-wop' groups of the 1940s (Goosman, 2005). Our fourth method is *ethnography*, which is the method preferred if you want to investigate people's *behaviours* and *social interaction* in the workplace environment. One of the first people to apply ethnographic methods to the study of contemporary Western media was Hortense Powdermaker whose study of the Hollywood film industry during the aftermath of World War II provides a 'classic' case study (Powdermaker, 1951). Ethnographers since have often taken news production as their object of analysis, and our second case study by Anthony Cawley looks at the newsroom of the online edition of *The Irish Times* (Cawley, 2008). The following sections of this chapter will guide you through each of these four methods in turn, highlighting the possibilities for student researchers.

ARCHIVE RESEARCH

One of the most frequently used of all methods of research is *archive research*. This is not to be confused with 'library' (sometimes referred to as 'desk') research. In most of your university assignments you will have been required to do some kind of *library research*, for example, going to the library to find books and articles, searching online databases to find relevant journal articles or using online newspapers to find out some background information. In writing your dissertation you need to use all these archive resources and more. As discussed in Chapter 3, it will be necessary for you to identify and investigate the three key elements of your research questions: the *object of analysis*, *research method* and *theoretical paradigm*. In the process of this preliminary work you will inevitably be required to undertake library research. We use the term archive research to refer to any project in which the contents of an archive constitute your *primary* source or your object of analysis. Thus, for example, if you wanted to research the history of *Vogue*, an important part of your research would involve identifying an archive where you could find copies of the magazine which would comprise your primary object of analysis. Examples of the kinds of material you could investigate using archive research include contemporary newspapers, television documentaries, art work, websites, blogs, books and journal articles.

Electronic archives are growing at a rate which will make this section of the book outdated as soon as it is written. There are some wonderful online archives available as libraries and museums around the world see the publication of material on the internet as fulfilling an important part of their mission to disseminate knowledge of their collections. Thus the great art galleries of the world, the *Louvre* (www.louvre.fr/llv/commun/home), the Victoria and Albert Museum (www.vam.org.uk), the *National Gallery* in London (www.nationalgallery.org.uk) and the *Guggenheim* in New York (www.guggenheim.org) all have terrific online archives and collections. The *British Library*, *Bodleian Library* (<http://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>), *Library of Congress*, *New York Public Library* and *Boston Public Library* – all of these have great printing-history archives and collections. The *British Universities Film and Video Council* (BUFVC) provides film and television programmes to schools and colleges. Its website is also home to a 'federated search engine' which enables you to access nine different search engines of relevance to researchers in film and television studies (<http://beta.bufvc.ac.uk/>).

When researching the culture industries we find huge variability in the amount and kinds of material held by different archives and collectors. If we take the example of British television, we find a wealth of information about the BBC at the *BBC Written Archives Centre* in Caversham, England.

This extensive archive includes letters, memoranda and BBC publications dating back to the founding of the BBC. The Written Archives Centre has provided the basis for one of the biggest histories of the BBC, initiated by media historian Asa Briggs (1961; 1965; 1970; 1979; 1995) which draws extensively on the archives. Other scholars have used the archives for smaller, more focused studies. For example, James Chapman researched the BBC's relationship with the anti-war film, *The War Game*, commissioned by the BBC and never shown. Previous studies on the controversy surrounding the film had focused on reports in the press, and the director Peter Watkins' own account of what happened. Chapman is able to reach a different interpretation by examining the correspondence found in the BBC archive about the programme, in his book, *The BBC and the Censorship of 'The War Game'* (Chapman, 2006).

The *Paley Center for Media* (formerly the Museum of Television and Radio) house their physical collections in New York and Los Angeles. They include extensive libraries of material related to the media industries with a special emphasis on broadcasting. If you can't get to New York or Los Angeles you can access their large and expanding online collection at www.paleycenter.org with a good range of interviews, presentations and seminars by media professionals. The section 'She Made It', for example, is about women in the television industry and includes interviews and debates with female television workers (The Paley Center for Media, 2008). In 2011 The Paley Center for Media hosted a conference on the 'Next Big Thing' which focused on digital media and the direction of new media – many of these presentations are available online (The Paley Center for Media, 2011).

Online archives and interviews can also be found on more generalist sites such as *YouTube*, *Wikipedia* and the *Internet Movie Database*. These sites should be approached with caution because of the more subjective nature of the way they are collected, but they can provide excellent sources for your project and provide a lot of rare material, especially in relation to the television industry. Alan McKee has compared the strengths and weaknesses of *YouTube* versus Australia's *National Film and Sound Archive* (NFSA) (McKee, 2011). He compares the two sources for their suitability to his research into Australian television history in an article published in the journal *Television and New Media*. In terms of access, McKee finds *YouTube* preferable and more 'user-friendly', but the information about the items lacks the kind of production details necessary for serious research such as personnel records and transmission dates. When considering the ranges of the collections, he finds that the NFSA is stronger on news and current affairs while *YouTube* better reflects the popular history of Australian broadcasting. The internet, through open access services like *YouTube*, enables everyone to contribute to an archive and this necessarily reflects a broader range of interests. Official

archives like the NFSA (one might include here the BFI in Britain or the American Film Institute) have institutional biases which come through in their collections. The bias of these archives towards news and documentary and away from popular output has often been noted and has left the national collections of many countries with massive lacunae. There are an abundance of specialist sites online which provide archives of varying degrees of inclusivity and usability.

According to Brendan Duffy, there are broadly two different kinds of approach when it comes to archive research – *source-oriented* and *problem-oriented* (Duffy, 1999). *Source-oriented* document research is undertaken when the investigation of the source material motivates the research. In this kind of research, one would begin from the position of having access to an interesting archive or set of resources which one wishes to investigate. For example, a student at the University of California Los Angeles might have access to the extensive film library held there; alternatively, students at the University of Kent can access the archive of the British Centre for the Study of Cartoon and Caricature. In the course of your initial investigation, you may find that there is a physical archive or collection local to where you work or study on which you could base your research. The research question you developed would depend on your own interests, but the archive itself will have given you the initial impetus to conduct the research.

The *problem-oriented* approach to document research takes as its starting point a problem which one has developed out of reading other accounts or secondary sources. Here the documents may provide the object of analysis, but the research question has been generated independently of the documents themselves. The problem-oriented approach ‘involves formulating questions by reading secondary sources, reading what has already been discovered about the subject and establishing the focus of the study before going to the relevant primary sources’ (Duffy, 1999: 107). One might thus develop a question about the formation of a particular media company or of a piece of media legislation from reading around the subject. The archives of that company or relevant trade journals may then form the primary source. Rebekah Lynn Burchfield wrote her PhD based on the archive of nearly one million items held at Bowling Green State University’s Music Library and Sound Recordings Archives (Burchfield, 2010). The University of East London is home to several archives, including the Refugee Council Archive and the East London Theatre Archive (ELTA) (<http://www.elta-project.org/home.html>). Find out whether your university has an archive which you could access.

Our first case study, by Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff (1991), looks at the social impact of broadcasting in its early days. Scannell and Cardiff draw on archive material from a wide range of sources to tell the complex and fascinating story of the beginning of radio from a social perspective

Case Study

Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, 1991. *A Social History of Broadcasting. Volume 1: 1922–1939. Serving the Nation.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Scannell and Cardiff's *A Social History of Broadcasting* (1991) is an exploration of the social significance of British broadcasting focusing on the years 1922–39. During this period, broadcasting in the UK became coterminous with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The primary sources for Scannell and Cardiff's research were the archives of the BBC Written Archives Centre (WAC) at Caversham. At the WAC, the authors were able to consult minutes of BBC management boards and departmental meetings, policy files, production records, transcripts of broadcasts, press cuttings and other documents to piece together an account of the routine work of broadcasting. They also researched various BBC documents and publications, including the *Radio Times* and the *Listener*. The BBC archives did not provide their only source: the legislative context was gained through researching official government sources, including the reports of various government committees and *Hansard* (the official report of proceedings in Parliament). An awareness of the social impacts of broadcasting was garnered through analysis of periodicals of the day, including *Radio Pictorial* and *Radio Magazine*, and the music press, including *Melody Maker* and *Musical Times*.

Although the BBC is a central player in the narrative Scannell and Cardiff create, they insist that their book is not a history of the corporation. Instead, they make a larger claim for their project, arguing that it 'attempts to account, historically, for the impact and effect of broadcasting on modern life in Britain' (p. x). This is planned as the first volume in a series and concentrates on the early days of broadcasting in the pre-World War II period. This is when broadcasting became 'a state-regulated national service in the public interest' (p. x).

Key to the social history of British broadcasting is the idea of *public service broadcasting*, which is explored in the introductory chapter. In Part 1 Scannell and Cardiff focus on: the relationship between broadcasting and politics, looking at how controversial subjects were dealt with by the BBC; at the management of news and political debate; and at broadcasting and two key issues of the 'between the wars' period in Britain – unemployment and foreign affairs. Part 2 looks at the production of information in the BBC departments responsible for news, features and talks. Part 3 looks at music and variety, with chapters on various aspects of music policy, taste, entertainment and variety. The final part looks at how broadcasting relates to its audiences and how the BBC negotiated relationships between the 'national' and 'regional' services. Scannell and Cardiff's book is a large-scale study of nearly two decades of broadcasting history. It is an example of how historical accounts draw on a wide range of archive material.

Scannell and Cardiff's social history provides a model for how we could approach the study of any cultural industry. Radio had an important effect on the lives of British people in the 1930s. This study highlights various factors which shaped those developments. Scannell and Cardiff's work is wide-ranging and comprehensive, drawing on multiple sources and based on many years of study, reflection and research. Readers of this book may not be able to emulate this study in terms of scale and depth. However, in an example of how small-scale, locally-based studies can produce great research, we can consider the article by Sue Arthur from the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*. Arthur's essay about the cinema economy in Blackpool in the 1920s and 1930s draws on local newspaper archives to study the cinema industry in the important transitional period from 'silent' to 'talkies'. It provides a terrific example of how interesting, thoughtful research can be conducted using relatively humble resources such as the local history library held at any town hall or municipal library around the world (Arthur, 2009).

Case Study

Sue Arthur, 2009. Blackpool goes all-talkie: cinema and society at the seaside in thirties Britain. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 29(1): 27–39.

In the late 1920s, Blackpool, in North-West England, had a lively entertainment industry with state of the art amusements and music hall theatres catering to the growing numbers of working-class people who could afford to take a day-trip or a week's holiday to the seaside. The theatre owners of Blackpool produced shows featuring performers of national and international acclaim and exhibited the latest American films.

In 1927 the 'talkies' were introduced to British cinema audiences when Al Jolson sang to his 'Mammie' in *The Jazz Singer*. This was the first time sound was synchronized with image in a feature-length film. The UK was the first country in Europe to adopt the new technology but the equipment was expensive and there was no guarantee of a long-term return. How did the exhibitors in Blackpool respond to the introduction of sound? Did they risk losing their established audience by introducing an expensive new technology which many thought was just a passing fad?

To answer the question of how Blackpool cinemas responded, Sue Arthur takes as her *object of analysis* advertisements and editorial copy in two local newspapers, the *Blackpool Times* and the *Evening Gazette*. By researching articles and advertisements for the cinema in the period 1929–30, Arthur is able to chronicle the introduction of sound and to follow some of the surrounding debates.

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The first cinema to convert to sound was the *Hippodrome*, cashing in on the early Easter holiday by showing Al Jolson in *The Singing Fool* in March, 1929. Gradually other cinemas followed suit until, by July 1930, Blackpool was 'all-talkie' – and the film listings in the local papers showed every cinema exhibiting a sound picture. Arthur argues that this study has implications for our knowledge of the cinema industry more broadly. She says:

The Blackpool example adds to our understanding of film-going in the 1930s by showing that where people had a real choice of entertainments and the spending power to choose, talking pictures very quickly constituted a real competitive attraction. (p. 37)

This study shows how a relatively small research project based on local history libraries and archives can generate valuable insight into the history of the media and cultural industries.

Whether you are using physical or virtual archives, you will need to prepare your research carefully. You will need to manage the amount of material held in the archive; if you are doing what Duffy calls 'problem-oriented' archive research, make sure that the archive in question houses the material you need. Your problem or research question needs to be well-defined – make sure you have discussed it with your supervisor. The main problems you need to avoid are: too much information and too little. Contact the archive well in advance of your visit to ensure that you can get access to the collection and that the material you want to look at is available. You will almost certainly need to visit more than once, so ensure that you allow sufficient time for this at the planning stage. Draw up a list of questions that you want to have answered by your analysis. Think about your overall research question – how can the material you are going to see help to address your thesis?

Researching an archive collection, whether it is of films, ephemera or written material, can be immensely rewarding. If you are researching a collection which has not been previously studied, it is exciting to uncover something which no one has looked at from a scholarly perspective before. Using an archive of original material allows you to generate data first-hand from primary sources. However, what you find in the archive is not always what you expect, so be prepared to be flexible and ready to shift your focus in the light of the discoveries you make.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis (also discussed in Chapter 5) is a method which requires you to undertake close analysis of texts, visual and verbal. Discourse analysis of the media and cultural *industries* requires you to analyse the texts which are not those produced for the media market, but the 'extra-textual' messages which are part of any industry. This might include internal information, promotional matter, corporate websites or annual reports. The media and culture industries don't only produce media texts for distribution in the media and cultural economy. They also produce material which is for industry consumption only. The 'discourses' they produce about themselves, for example in trade cards, industry-oriented marketing and press releases, contribute to a discourse about the industry which we can usefully analyse. These form the basis of John Caldwell's research which provides our next case study, looking at the industrial culture of film and television workers using discourse analysis as a major research method.

Case Study

John T. Caldwell, 2008. *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*. Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press.

John T. Caldwell (2008; 2009) considers the language and images industry insiders use to communicate with one another as objects of analysis in his research into the Los Angeles film and television industries. Caldwell's work focuses on publicly available 'discourse' and on participant observation among those who work in the industry. He integrates several methods, including textual analysis, interviews, fieldwork and historical and archive research to investigate the cultural practices and belief systems of 'below-the-line' workers in Hollywood. Caldwell undertook his fieldwork in 1995–2005 when new working practices were being introduced in Hollywood including the increasing use of short-term contracts and the casualization of labour. In the chapter, 'Trade Stories and Career Capital' he explores the discourses of work found in conversations between people who work in the industry. Caldwell studies the stories insiders tell one another, applying the kind of narrative analysis usually applied to the films themselves to the stories producers tell one another. He considers 'trade story-telling' an important element of this discourse and he shows how ideas and attitudes of entertainment workers help engender a set of cultural values which runs through the industry.

Caldwell discusses how difficult it is to get access to workers in Hollywood and refers to the work of Hortense Powdermaker, an anthropologist who had researched Hollywood in 1951 (Powdermaker, 1951) (discussed later in this chapter – see pages 103–107). The access that Powdermaker acquired some 50 years before Caldwell did his research allowed her first-hand access to some of the most powerful decision-makers in Hollywood. By the time Caldwell conducted his fieldwork, access to such people was highly limited, ruling out much ethnographic research of the powerbrokers. But finding ways to get access to workers lower down the hierarchy, for example at trade fairs and conventions, was much easier. These people and their ‘discourses’ provide a vital resource.

We can all recognize the film and television industry as part of the ‘culture industry’, but what about weddings? Chrys Ingraham’s research makes us realize how important ‘white weddings’ are to maintaining an ideology of *heteronormativity*. This research also helps us to understand the significance of weddings as part of the culture industries. Events management generally is a relatively recent area of research, and reading this study convinces me that it is one which we should consider researching more often.

Case Study

Chrys Ingraham, 2008. *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*. 2nd edition. New York/London: Routledge.

Weddings may not usually be considered among the culture industries, but Chrys Ingraham shows how the white wedding industry is very much a part of the ideological construction of what is ‘normal’ in Western society. Ingraham shows how the discourses of ‘heteronormativity’ assumed in the wedding industry have become a dominant ideological position. The exclusion of homosexuality, bisexuality or transsexuality from cultural representations makes everyone feel not only under an obligation to be straight, but to consider that everyone else should be, too. This ‘normative’ imperative, Ingraham argues, creates an environment in which anyone who does not conform to the norm is treated prejudicially.

This study explores the operation of the ‘ideological complex’ of weddings – including both the economic phenomenon of the wedding industry itself and the films and television programmes which daily support the ideology of heteronormativity. The white wedding industry is analysed for both its economic and ideological power. Chapter 2 of the book explores the ‘wedding–industrial complex’ in order to ‘make visible the historical and material foundation upon which the operation of the heterosexual imaginary depends’ (p. 39). Ingraham notes that,

despite the decline in the number of people getting married in the US, the amount of money spent on the wedding industry is increasing. Globalization and travel is one key factor in the expansion – more Americans are getting married overseas, inflating costs. People are being encouraged to spend more and more money on their weddings as a cycle of increasing consumption is stimulated by the prevalence of weddings in the media and popular culture. This industry is big business – and growing.

Ingraham shows how, despite the apparent advances in feminism, the content of popular culture, especially films and television programmes, serve to support the idea of the wedding as the most important day in a woman's life.

By providing compelling images, popular film, television and the internet commodify weddings and create the market, the desire, and the demand for the white wedding. (p. 172).

This creates an anti-intellectualism which reinforces traditional ideas of femininity and the 'heterogendered division of labor' (p. 205).

When Ingraham's book was first published in 1999 there was little research into white weddings as a cultural and media phenomenon. In the years since then it has been studied more widely, but Ingraham's work is a model for critically analysing the relationship between media content and the operations of a particular culture industry – weddings themselves.

This book is supported by a website hosted by the publishers, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, which also provides some useful slides and weblinks (Routledge, 2011).

Discourse analysis, then, can be applied to a range of media and cultural phenomena. The television industry discourses of Caldwell and the wedding industry discourses of Ingraham are subject to careful analysis of the subject positions of the speakers. Within any discourse analysis, the *interlocutors* (speakers) need to be identified and their subject positions specified. It is necessary as a first step to identify *who* is speaking. With what authority (ethos) do they speak? How are the discourses framing the subject? Whether it be weddings or television production – what is the attitude towards the subject? What *frames* are being invoked? It is necessary to consider the different kinds of 'voices' and how these are set within broader 'frames'. Furthermore, who is the assumed audience? Who is being addressed and what is the assumed nature of the relationship (e.g. friend, colleague, boss)? What is said and what is unsaid? What is the tone of the discourse? What are the functions of the discourse (explicit and implicit)? You may wish to refer to

the Aristotelian devices of rhetoric – *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* discussed in Chapter 1 (see pages 11–13); for discourse analysis goes to the heart of understanding how speakers are positioned and the kinds of truth claims being made.

Discourse analysis is often associated with Michel Foucault and his work on the role of discourse in securing inequalities of power. See, for example, Foucault's work on *The History of Sexuality* (1998 [1976]), on prisons and criminality in *Discipline and Punish* (1991 [1975]), and on *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002 [1972]). You need to consider what kinds of power are at stake in the discourse you are studying and how the discourse contributes to the articulation of power. The analysis of power relations in discourse helps to identify the ideological position from which media products are made.

Industry discourse can be found in advertisements and i-dents, in trade journals and corporate and industry level websites. The internet has opened up whole new areas ripe for discourse analysis as media corporations like the BBC or the *New York Times* adopt a web presence to serve their brand. The work of the players in the media and cultural industries in self-promotion or peer-to-peer communication provides us with terrific resources for our research as Caldwell and Ingraham both show. The more typical application of discourse analysis is to texts made by the media and cultural industries, as we discuss in the next chapter. However, these texts are what Roland Barthes (1984) might have called 'motivated' in that they are carefully controlled and produced. Subjecting trade discourses to analysis as Caldwell does, or identifying an ideologically loaded economic exchange in an everyday cultural practice, as Ingraham does, provides us with a very rich analysis of ideology at work in the media and cultural industries. The next method we are going to examine explores how we can use media workers themselves as subjects, by asking them about their work.

INTERVIEWS

The interview as a method in media and cultural research enables us to find out about people's ideas, opinions and attitudes. Interviews are a useful way of researching the media and cultural industries, not least because the method is familiar to industry workers. In this chapter we will consider how to interview people in the workplace while in Chapter 6 we consider interviews of audiences (see pages 176–187). Interviewing workers in the culture industries enables us to study attitudes towards cultural industries as workplaces, the rationale behind the production process, and the relationship of workers to their audiences. One of the pioneers of using interview research to investigate the culture industries is Dorothy Hobson. Hobson's 1982 investigation of the early evening British soap opera *Crossroads* used both producers and audiences as subjects. Her investigation of the audience for *Crossroads* was one of the first pieces of major research in Britain to look at the way the viewers of such a

devalued television programme enjoyed, appreciated and used the television text. *Crossroads: The Drama of a Soap Opera* (Hobson, 1982) was instrumental in bringing greater emphasis to the audience's role in interpreting the text. It was especially timely in raising the level of debate about women's genres and is now a classic of feminist television studies (See Chapter 2, page 45 for further discussion). But this ignores the large part of the book that is devoted to the analysis of the attitudes and opinions of the people who made *Crossroads*. Hobson investigated the processes of production of *Crossroads* and interviewed the producers, editors, writers and performers of the programme. She found that, despite the fact that the show was perceived as depressing and downbeat by many critics, the producers felt they were making an uplifting programme in which characters overcame adversity with a spirit of hope and optimism. It is interesting that Hobson also interviewed the performers and found that in several cases their real-life character bore a resemblance to their on-screen personae – an observation which, for Hobson, explains the high level of 'realism' of the performances.

Interviews have often been used to study British soap operas. The research of Lesley Henderson (1999), for example, elicits some interesting insights into how and why soap operas address serious social issues such as breast cancer or domestic violence. Henderson interviewed personnel who worked on the leading television soaps in Britain, including *Coronation Street*, *Brookside* and *EastEnders*. People at various levels of the production process were interviewed, including writers, producers and script editors. One scholar whose work has tended to use a large sample of employees in the media industries is Jeremy Tunstall (1977; 1983; 1993; 1996; 2007) whose work on the British television industry provides our next case study.

Case Study

Jeremy Tunstall, 1993. *Television Producers*. London: Routledge.

In writing *Television Producers* (1993), Jeremy Tunstall and his research assistants, Mark Dunford and David Wood, interviewed 254 producers working in British television. Tunstall focused on the role of 'series producer' or 'series editor', as this post was considered 'the highest level of person who is in regular daily editorial or "hands-on" control of the content of a series or programme' (p. 5). The management role of the producer is given careful consideration and Tunstall raises the question of whether the producer can be seen as an 'auteur'.

The role of television producer was in a state of flux at the time of the interviews. Between 1955 and 1982, there had been only two large

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organizations, the BBC and ITV, running television and there was a very stable pattern of employment and career paths for producers. The era of the mature duopoly, in which the BBC and the ITV networks pretty well controlled British television history, was coming to a close by the early 1990s. Moreover, the full impact of the launch of Channel 4 and the Thatcher revolution was taking effect on the British television industry, so there were many factors to create uncertainty for all television workers.

Subjects for the study were identified by looking through trade publications and at credits listed in the *Radio Times* or at the end of broadcast television programmes. Tunstall insists that no particular attempt was made to make the interviewees representative of the industry as a whole, beyond the fact that they were selected from across the main programme genres, including documentary, sport and comedy. Letters were written requesting interviews and were followed up by telephone calls. Interviews were arranged to take place in the offices of the subjects during the period March 1990 to July 1992, and the standard length of an interview was about 70 minutes. The interviewers followed a prepared list of questions, administering the same open-ended questions to each producer, although these did change slightly as the study progressed. The interviewees were given assurances of anonymity at the time of the interviews, and although some gave permission for their names to be used, most of the subjects are quoted anonymously.

Subjects were interviewed about their careers and the changes in the role of producer during their time working in television. Tunstall found that the producers were aware of their employment becoming more casualized. Jobs which had once been seen as secure for life were now more typically offered as short-term contracts. At the same time, the research found that producers were becoming more autonomous and had greater freedom in their work. Tunstall concludes that, although producers are key players in television, they cannot be said to operate as *auteurs*. Instead, he finds that the *genres* according to which television programmes are made are the most important determinants of professional mores and values. In British television, it seems that departments operate along fairly fixed generic conventions which shape the working patterns within the industry.

This wide-ranging interview method is typical of Tunstall's work. Tunstall has explored the changing culture of the workplace of culture industries in the increasingly global media economy. For example, Tunstall interviewed over 200 people working in the British newspaper industry in the 1990s, comparing their contemporary experience with that of the 1960s in his book about *Newspaper Power* (1996). He identifies dramatic changes in the constitution

of the newspaper and increasing power of the editor. Tunstall examines the relationship between media systems around the world. He has charted the period from the rise of American control and domination of the media in *The Media are American* (Tunstall, 1977) to the increasing globalization of media control in his more recent book, *The Media were American* (Tunstall, 2007). Changes in the processes of production have been multivalent since Tunstall's study as he himself is the first to observe (Tunstall, 2007).

One of the key relationships Tunstall was keen to explore in the case study above was that of the relationship between the 'creative' and 'non-creative' workers in the television industry. The prevalence of 'creative' workers is often viewed as one of the key characteristics of the culture industries and has thus attracted a great deal of academic interest (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Holt and Perren, 2009). Relatively little work has focused on our understanding of the 'non-creative' staff in the media and cultural industries. One recent study which uses interviews to investigate the relationship between 'creative' and 'non-creative' people in the television industry is by James Paul Roberts (Roberts, 2010). Roberts interviewed 45 people working in British television, mainly within drama departments during 2007–08, to find out more about 'the activities of British television companies involved in programme selection and development' (p. 761). He asked them about the relationship between the 'creative' and 'non-creative' personnel in the companies they worked for with the aim of identifying 'the perceived differences in agenda between commercial and creative constituencies' (Roberts, 2010: 761). Roberts found that the interests of people in the 'creative' and 'non-creative' divisions of any given company were not so different – people were quite mobile in moving from role to role; the people in the 'non-creative' side of the industry (such as accountants and managers) had chosen their careers because they wanted to work in the culture industries and considered themselves to be creative minded. The differences between Tunstall's findings and Roberts' highlight several changes in the television industry over the intervening 30 years. Employment patterns have become much more flexible, the labour force is more casualized and there is an absence of any clear career structure for new entrants. The media more generally no longer operate along the factory system of specialization which led to the development of the Hollywood studio system or the bureaucratic model of management which dominated the BBC for most of its life.

When Paul du Gay and his colleagues investigated the Sony Corporation in their classic study, *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman* (Du Gay et al., 1996), they saw how the philosophy of the corporation was significant in designing and developing an important predecessor to the iPod, the Walkman. They observed the means by which the corporation executives left the designers to carry on unimpeded by their intervention beyond being given a brief. We have seen subsequently how the development of the internet by Tim Berners-Lee came about in large part because he was given a lot of

freedom to design and develop his own product (Berners-Lee, 1999). Likewise the Microsoft Corporation prides itself on having a particular kind of work environment which encourages design innovation on the part of its employees. In a post-Web 2.0 media environment, this trend has continued. Today, the design and development of some new products takes place completely outside of any formal employment structures. There is a new kind of industry worker coming to the fore, the *user entrepreneur*, who designs and develops new media and cultural products independently of any company. In the following case study, an article published in *Research Policy*, Stefan Haefliger, Peter Jäger and Georg von Krogh used a combination of methods to investigate the user entrepreneurs who helped form the Machinima industry (Haefliger et al., 2010; www.machinima.com; Lowood and Nitsche, 2011).

Case Study

Stefan Haefliger, Peter Jäger and Georg von Krogh, 2010. Under the radar: industry entry by user entrepreneurs. *Research Policy*, 39: 1198–213.

This study, published in the journal *Research Policy*, looks at the development of a new form of film-making which exploits games software features to create new texts – *machinima*.

Defined as 'shooting film in a real time 3D environment' ... Machinima is (1) a production technology, and (2) the name for the genre. It is deeply rooted in the gaming culture where gamers ... experienced the need to record, edit and distribute proof of their gaming skills on film to demonstrate their proficiency as gamers. (p. 1200)

The development of new products usually occurs from the design and development of new products by major corporations but machinima first developed as something fun for gamers to do before it became an industry in its own right. The 'user entrepreneurs' interviewed in this study identified entrepreneurial opportunities in the process of using a product (in this case games) and subsequently went on to develop and market them. Recognizing that machinima had not followed the typical pattern of product development, Stefan Haefliger and his colleagues interviewed industry insiders to find out what was the motivation behind the development of machinima and when and how it became commercialized.

A total of 26 subjects were interviewed during 2006–07, involving personnel from seven different machinima companies including both *Machinima.com* and *Rooster Teeth Productions*. Comprehensive desk

research on the machinima community and the video games industry was carried out in addition to interviews and ethnographic observation.

When interviewing professional people from a small community such as the machinima producers, it may not be necessary to anonymize interviewees and, in this case, all participants are listed in table A2 of the paper (p. 1212). In this study, professionals are talking about their role in the development of a successful new media form and are very willing to contribute. The authors' goal is to develop a model for understanding how 'entrepreneurship' takes place in an environment where users are themselves the innovators and where the usual divide between 'audience' and 'producer' has been breached. They relate their knowledge of this community of 'user entrepreneurs' and of theories of entrepreneurship to demonstrate a new style of innovation. They label the process of developing products behind the backs of the official entrepreneurs as working 'under the radar'.

One of the problems researchers of the industry report is the lack of willingness of industry insiders to be interviewed. Haefliger et al. report no such difficulty in securing interviews, nor with observing people in their workplaces. People seemed willing to talk and quotations are attributed to participants by name and role. This may be a factor of the openness of the games industry, of the new media or of a younger generation. The sample of machinima creators they have interviewed are all currently working in the games or machinima industry and these are, by definition, successful; had they interviewed the people who were *unsuccessful* or who had never had one of their products 'commercialized', it might have been a different story. There are many problems with drawing conclusions from such a selective sample which goes to the heart of industry research – people do like to talk about themselves, but are happier to do so if they have had happy experiences with a positive outcome. Haefliger et al. may well have identified a new form of 'under the radar' commercialization; they may also have found a group of successful, self-congratulatory entrepreneurs who exploit the efforts of naïve young people who work for nothing developing new software. The problems of exploitation at work are endemic in the media and cultural industries. Many people are attracted to these professions and, with the weakening power of trades unions and a supply of good, enthusiastic workers the cost of labour has been falling. Today we find that large numbers of people – students like the readers of this book – are encouraged to work as interns for little or no money. The economics of employment and the weakening power of the unions has left many workers in the sector defenceless against poor working practices and low or even non-existent pay (Deuze, 2009; Napoli, 2010).

Some interesting work has been done in the area of media production and identity, especially in research conducted from a feminist or queer perspective. For example, Frances Cresser, Lesley Gunn and Helen Balme (2001) investigated 'women's experience of publishing online and how they perceive the construction of online identities and the politics of their publications' (p. 458). They interviewed 39 female authors published in e-zines during August and September 1998. The interviews were structured at first, and followed up by more informal exchanges which solicited more textured and in-depth responses.

INTERVIEWS ABOUT THE PAST

Interviews with industry insiders are sometimes difficult to come by, but it can be easier to find subjects who are retired or who have left the industry. One such person was Monty Margetts, the presenter of an early television cookery programme, and the subject of an oral history study by Mark Williams (Williams, 1999). Oral history involves interviewing people about their past experiences and memories. It was developed as a research method by historians to study social history – it is a very loose form of interview where the subject is given freedom to speak freely as he/she wishes. Oral history has been used as a means of recording survivor testimony, for example the witness statements of Holocaust survivors. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington is home to a large database of oral history testimonies. Oral history is a technique well suited to allowing people to speak freely in order to elicit opinions and information that *they* wish to give and which the interviewer might not be able to anticipate.

Consider the following case study: Stuart Goosman's oral history of men in Baltimore and Washington who had made up the 'doo-wop' bands of the 1940s.

Case Study

Stuart L. Goosman, 2005. *Group Harmony: The Black Urban Roots of Rhythm and Blues*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Stuart L. Goosman uses oral history as a major part of his research into doo-wop bands in the 1940s and 1950s in the African-American neighbourhoods of Baltimore and Washington (Goosman, 2005). Goosman is interested to explore the relationship between *race* and *culture*, specifically in the American music industry during the height of segregation. How did black musicians respond to the racism and discrimination of a white-controlled music industry? Did growing up in segregated cities influence young men

to create a particular kind of music? What were the determinants behind the growth of the doo-wop bands such as the Cardinals and the Orioles? Goosman explores how this particular musical form grew up as a genre which integrates Tin Pan Alley with blues music. His research encompasses a range of methods including library research conducted at the Library of Congress and the Afro-American Newspapers Archives and Research Center in Baltimore, USA (www.afro.com).

Goosman uses 'the interpretive lens of oral histories provided by individuals who performed or participated in post-World War II secular black group vocal harmony' (p. ix). The book is structured around interviews conducted in 1989 and 1990. By using oral history Stuart Goosman's research allows the men who were there at the beginning of doo-wop to tell their stories and to give meaning and context to the music and archive material.

The singers who formed these groups report that they found a great sense of liberty in their work. They tell Goosman of the joy they gained in expressing themselves through singing with others. Singing gave them a sense of empowerment and control which they did not feel they could have attained through any other means. The oral history interviews put life into the story of the rise of a musical genre which was important in shifting the representation of black people in post-war America. Goosman demonstrates how black American artists articulate themes of integration and segregation, identity and difference, economic necessity and the joy of creativity.

The story of group harmony illustrates the connection between human experience and music making and these two historical and extant human actions, which have largely shaped black music in the United States – celebration and resistance. (p. 21)

This research challenges the prevailing idea that black music grew up in Detroit and Chicago by tracing the origins of this important genre of music to the street culture of Baltimore and Washington in the 1940s and 1950s. Goosman brings to light a rich, neglected aspect of America's musical history through the authentic voices of the men who made the music.

While archive history relies on what has been collected and saved, and interviews rely on people's reports of their behaviour, attitudes and opinions, the oral history interview relies on what has been remembered and can be recollected by human beings. Oral history will differ from written history in significant ways. As we saw in Chapter 1, oral 'ways of knowing' have different criteria for 'truth'. It takes a political leap sometimes to accept, when using oral history, that the subject's authority over their own recollections is paramount.

The convention is to fully respect the reports of your subject. You do need to be well prepared before the interview, so make sure that you read around the subject and understand the main debates and issues from the perspective of the media historian. As with any fieldwork, make sure you have a well-developed research question before you conduct the interview. It is most unprofessional to waste people's time unless your interviews have a clear focus. Draw up a list of questions or main points that you want to cover in advance, and, if possible, give your subjects notice of the kinds of things you are going to ask them so that they also can be prepared. Even if you are interviewing people who are well known to you, such as a close relative, they will realize that you are serious and will, in turn, take your project seriously if they can see that you have done your homework. When you treat your interviewees with respect and consideration, they are more likely to treat you in the same manner.

Begin the interview by asking your subjects to clarify relevant facts – their job title, periods of employment and so on. Don't expect them to know government legislation or the specific dates of historical events. Don't argue with or contradict them. In oral history, you give absolute respect to the person recounting the past. Make sure you record your interview, and keep to the subject. Try to let your interviewees do most of the talking – you should only chip in for clarification or to keep them on the subject.

Oral history allows the subjects to define the topic and to speak about their own experiences with minimal intervention from the interviewer. When conducting your own oral history research you may need to prompt your subject to talk about specific things related to your object of analysis, but the interviewee should be able to define the talk. Questions or general topic areas should be given to the subject in advance so that they can have a chance to think about it.

Conducting your own interviews

The first question lots of people ask when conducting interviews is 'How many interviews should I do?' For *Television Producers* Jeremy Tunstall interviewed a large number of producers – some 254 in all; Haefliger et al., in the study above, interviewed 26 people, while Williams (1999) interviewed just one. In the time frame most readers of this book have for their project a large set of interviewees would not be possible. It rather depends on what you are trying to say: Haefliger et al. are talking about a relatively specialized sector of the games industry and talking about a specific activity. Tunstall wants to make generalizations about the television production industry as a whole. Mark Williams' oral history focused on one television performer, Monty Margetts, in his study of women in early American television (Williams, 1999). The culture industries are great for 'case study' research in an interview with one key worker could be all you need.

Organizing an interview can be very time-consuming and you usually only get one shot at it, so you must prepare well in advance. When researching the culture industries, the people you are talking to are professionals and are unlikely to want to criticize their company or industry. Don't expect anyone to 'spill the beans' – most industry people will not be willing to talk about the negative side of the business to an outsider. When conducting research into the Hollywood film and television industry, John Caldwell found that the higher up in an organization a person was, the less likely they were to veer from the bland corporate speak you would find in the company publicity (Caldwell, 2008). It is quite likely that students will be given the official line on any controversial events from most employees within the media, or any other industry.

When conducting interviews with industry professionals you need to be aware of the status they have relative to you. Harriet Zuckermann describes how 'difference in rank' was a significant obstacle in her attempts to interview scientists who, as Nobel Laureates, were members of 'an ultra-elite'. She found that her interviewees put themselves in a role where they were evaluating her performance as a professional and as an interviewer. 'They saw themselves as judges and saw me as the object of judgment' she says (Zuckermann, 1972: 175). Tine Ustad Figenschou looks at the problems she faced as a 'young, female, Western researcher' interviewing 'senior, male, Al Jazeera officials' who she often found to have patronizing and misogynistic attitudes (Figenschou, 2010). When studying the Hollywood film industry, Sherry Ortner (2010) found a reluctance to talk among the Hollywood workers; and John Caldwell, looking at the same industry, elected to base his research on the 'below the line' workers in Hollywood film and television – they were more likely to talk, freer, less allied to corporate world view and more equal in rank. For Ursula Plesner, researching '*sideways*' caused as many problems when she interviewed journalists and sociologists who were colleagues of equal social status to the researcher; she found that interviewees wanted to negotiate a relationship with the researcher and concludes that, in the interest of good research, it is better to develop a confrontational research approach when dealing with people of equal status. The 'agent provocateur', after all, can often get people to reveal their true thoughts about a situation (Plesner, 2011).

So, when you are designing your study, try to anticipate what the likely response is going to be and whether this is going to be helpful in answering your research question. Before you begin your interviews you should always discuss with your supervisor what form the interviews should take. As an ethical consideration, every university will have guidelines for researchers who are dealing with people, sometimes called a 'human subjects panel' or an 'ethics committee'. Before you go 'into the field' interviewing people, you should make sure that your work does not compromise the well-being of any of your subjects, and find out what the procedure is at your university or college for ensuring your work is always conducted ethically.

Stages in conducting interview research

Select your interviewees carefully

You must target the right people, and get permission to interview early in the project. Don't assume that people will talk to you – some people get lots of requests to give interviews to undergraduates and are too busy to do so. Interview as few people as is necessary to conduct your study; interviews are very time-consuming for both interviewer and interviewee, so make sure that you don't waste people's time. Aim for the right level of person: if you are interested in the adoption of new technology, you will want to speak to a person in the company interested in that area; if you want to find out about employment policies, you should interview someone in human resources. Don't assume that you have to interview the chief executive officer of a company to get reliable information. If you are using personal contacts, take advice from them about the appropriate procedure you should follow to request an interview as this may differ from one industry or industry sector to another.

Conduct background research

Find out as much as you can about the structure of the industry and the company, and about the roles of the people you will be interviewing, well in advance. Make sure you understand fully the location of any industry worker you will be interviewing within the organization and the status of their company or organization within the industry overall. Be up to date with any current legislation and familiarize yourself with the main debates in the industry by reading recent copies of relevant trade journals.

Planning the interview

Draw up a list of questions or topic areas. Be ready to go with the flow, but make sure you know precisely what information you want and what questions are likely to elicit this. Practice the questions in advance so that you don't need to read them and be prepared to speak with written notes for prompts.

Conducting the interview

Be prepared and look prepared. Try to establish a rapport with the subject. Be friendly and courteous; shake hands with the interviewee and smile; thank the interviewee for agreeing to talk to you at the beginning and end of the interview. Never use academic jargon in an interview. If subjects use a term that you don't understand, apologize and ask them to explain. Make sure you record your interview – practise using the recorder in advance if it is one you

have not used before, and make sure you have spare batteries and media with you! It can be very embarrassing if your equipment breaks down or you run out of space during an interview. You should always get permission before you record an interview and before you turn the recorder on, and you should explain why you need to record the interview. Refer to your list of questions or topic areas, but don't read from it. Listen carefully to the responses and try to conduct a natural conversation – this will elicit more interesting and spontaneous conversation from your interviewee.

Take notes

Even though you are recording the interview, you should still take brief notes during the interview. It will help if you tick off the topic areas as they are covered or jot down a question while the person is talking so you don't interrupt.

Transcribe the interview

A transcript of an interview is very helpful if you are going to analyse it in detail. But it is very time-consuming to type up an entire interview – professional researchers would employ an administrator to do this. There are transcription services available if you wish and you can afford it, but these are not always necessary. If you do transcribe the interview, the transcript should be included as an appendix and will not contribute towards the final word count (see Chapter 7 for a discussion of appendices).

Reflect

The most important stage of the interview is to reflect on what your subject has said. Does he/she say anything surprising or unexpected? Does the interviewee support or refute your research question? Do you need to reconsider your research question? Have you got some fresh ideas you need to follow up? The basis of all analysis is comparison, so compare the actuality with your expectations. If you have more than one interviewee, think about the comparisons between them: what areas do the subjects agree on and where do they differ? How can you account for these similarities and differences?

Interviews can elicit rich and complex information which can form the basis of your project. They are very useful, too, in ethnographic research of industry, where the in-depth interview can be accompanied by observation. When we come to consider interviewing audiences in Chapter 6 we will discuss some of the various questionnaire protocols in more structured questionnaires and focus groups. The next section of this chapter looks at ethnographic research and how we can use observation of people in the field alongside interviews to study people in the media and cultural industries.

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Ethnography is an approach to research which derives from *anthropology* – the study of people and relationships in communities, historically of non-Western people.

Ethnography usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through formal or informal interviews, collecting documents and artifacts in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of the inquiry. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 3)

It is a method which has been increasingly used to study the working practices in the media and cultural industries, reflecting a greater interest in the dynamics of the workplace. Bronislaw Malinowski is considered by many to be the founder of modern anthropology, famous for his work with the Trobriand Islanders (Malinowski, 1997 [1932]). In media and cultural studies, however, one of the most important progenitors of the ethnographic approach is Clifford Geertz (1973). In his book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz advances the idea of anthropology as a 'thick description' of social life. This concept has been applied to the workplace within cultural and media studies, resulting in a rich body of work exploring the workplace from an ethnographic perspective – see, for example, Schlesinger, 1987 [1978]. A key concept deriving from anthropology is that of 'making strange' those things which would otherwise seem ordinary and everyday; to get behind the social systems at stake in our 'normal' routines and interactions. This is a fundamental characteristic of much cultural-studies methodology. Often researchers get a better understanding of an industry when they are part of that industry or when they can *participate* in the routines of the industry as if they were members of that community. Participant observation is a method which derives from ethnography and is used by scholars conducting fieldwork, usually living among distant peoples to understand their way of life. Participant observation requires a mixture of involvement and detachment, and scholars need to be able to judge from the situation just how involved or detached they need to be. Ethnographers may spend several months, or even years, building the trust which will enable them to learn about the lives of their subjects, as did Daniel Everett whose work we discussed in Chapter 1 (Everett, 2008). In our area, most industry-focused participant observation is conducted within corporations or companies by people who already work there or who have very good contacts, and the fieldwork is conducted over several months, such as Philip Schlesinger, (1987 [1978]). However, it is also possible to conduct observation of great

value in a shorter period, as Anthony Cawley does in his study of the online newsroom of the *Irish Times* which comprises our case study on pages 109–110 (Cawley, 2008).

Ethnography meshes well with the idea of studying culture in the sense that Raymond Williams means it when he talks about a ‘way of life’, and it has been used with great success to study domestic consumption (see, for example, Lull, 1990; Moores, 1993; Morley, 1980; 1986; 1992; Morley and Silverstone, 1991; Silverstone, 1994) – see Chapter 6 pages 191–196 for further discussion. Applying this anthropologically based method to working practices gives us a different set of opportunities and challenges. People are at work for a purpose (to make and sell a product of some kind) their roles and intentions are more readily laid out, and they usually have a ‘job description’ – all of which helps to define the situation in which they operate; however, the roles of people as ‘audiences’, usually in a domestic environment, are more flexible and less readily defined. Hortense Powdermaker wishes to study the ‘social system’ in operation among Hollywood workers. She says:

A social system is a complex co-ordinated network of mutually adopted patterns and ideas which control or influence the activities of its members. (Powdermaker, 1951: 3)

The ‘social system’ is likely to be a primary object of analysis in any workplace ethnography. By watching people as they go about their everyday routines, the ethnographer is able to identify patterns and behaviours which can be related back to theoretical ideas discussed in the academic literature. Observation is typically supported by in-depth interviews with key workers to elicit their understanding of the situation. Thus there are two different research techniques involved in the ethnographic method: ‘participant observation’ – where one joins in with the group which one is studying, often observing from a point of view of membership (as Henry Jenkins does in his 1992 study of fans, discussed in Chapter 6); and ‘in-depth interview’ – where key subjects are interviewed, typically in the workplace. In the workplace ethnography the ‘participant observer’ may participate in the routines of work, and may even be a co-worker of the subjects. Interviews may be formal, at appointed times and to given questions, or informal – occurring as part of normal conversation in the course of a working day or anything in between. The researcher needs to blend in and be as inconspicuous as possible, and this means following the workplace norms as far as possible.

Hortense Powdermaker was one of the first scholars to turn an anthropological lens on the creative industries. After a long career studying the South Sea Islanders she turned her attention on the ‘Hollywood dream factory’ in 1946 which provides a classic case study in ethnographic research.

Case Study

Hortense Powdermaker, 1951. *Hollywood, the Dream Factory: An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie-Makers*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Hollywood, the Dream Factory, is a ground-breaking and insightful study of the Hollywood film industry in its prime. 'The purpose of this study,' says the author, 'is to understand and interpret Hollywood, its relationship to the dreams it manufactures, and to our society' (p. 11). Hortense Powdermaker spent a year in Los Angeles getting to know the Hollywood film industry and conducting participant observation and interviews while officially employed as a part-time visiting professor of anthropology at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1946–47.

I went there to understand better the nature of our movies. My hypothesis was that the social system in which they are made significantly influences their content and meaning. (p. 3)

Powdermaker believes that any form of art, including the films produced in Hollywood, are shaped and conditioned by their 'particular history and system of production'. In order to understand this process, she uses the anthropologist's technique of immersing oneself completely in the lives of one's subjects, and she lived as much as she could in their culture: attending parties, visiting studios, offices and workplaces. The fact that she did not work in the industry was viewed by Powdermaker as a strength: 'I had no ax to grind in a situation where everyone was very busy grinding his own' (p. 4).

The interviews themselves took careful planning and before going to conduct an interview she always had 'a detailed outline of the problem' under investigation. However, in order to ensure the smooth flow of conversation, she always left this at home and took no notes during the interview except what she calls 'statistical' ones. When the interview was over she would drive her car round the corner and write up her recollections of the conversation in a notebook which she would then record into a dictaphone when she got home to be transcribed later by her secretary.

About 300 people were interviewed in total, including producers, directors, writers and actors. Interviews were held in a variety of settings: people's offices, homes, in cafeterias and restaurants. 'All human beings love to talk about themselves and are flattered at having their opinions taken seriously' (p. 6), she observed. Hollywood people made particularly good interviewees because, she says, 'The level of frustration was very high and frustrated people love to talk' (p. 6). In addition to the interviews,

Powdermaker thoroughly researched the industry, reading the *Screen Writers Guild* files, the MPAA production code, and all the industry trade papers, singling out *Variety* as the 'most important single source of printed information' (p. 6).

Powdermaker's final conclusions about the *Hollywood Dream Factory* are pretty negative. The conflict between 'creative' and 'commercial' imperatives which one would find in any cultural industry seem to have been largely resolved, in Powdermaker's analysis, with the commercial parties the clear victors – the *artists* in Hollywood work under the near-total direction of the *businessmen* who have very little understanding of art or culture.

The social organization of Hollywood has ... permitted the businessmen to take over the function of the artists and to substitute his values for theirs. The movies are the first art form of any kind, popular, folk or fine, to become a trust. (p. 316)

She argues that Hollywood has 'mechanized creativity' and that:

It is only an exceptional executive who does not give the impression that he would have been equally satisfied as a tycoon in any other industry. (p. 316)

The critical stance taken in Powdermaker's book was quite shocking, the industry vehemently rejected her findings and she was excoriated in the press. The extent to which her findings resonate with the work of Marxist scholars, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, has been noted by Kelly Askew (Askew, 2002). There is some evidence that Horkheimer and Adorno were in Los Angeles during the time that Powdermaker was conducting her research, although there does not seem to be any evidence that they ever met. Askew has observed of Powdermaker's similarity to the Marxist scholars of the Frankfurt school:

Together they shared and promoted a view of the film world as a crass and brutal industry thinly disguised as art that used its technological advantage to objectify viewers and impose on them politically numbing cultural formulae. (Askew, 2002: 4–5)

No wonder the Hollywood film industry has been so impenetrable to researchers ever since! Little surprise, then, that John Caldwell (discussed above, pages 89–90) was obliged to focus his study on the 'below-the-line' workers.

One recurrent application of ethnography to the media industries has been to the study of news (Cottle, 2007). Many scholars have observed newsrooms, using methods similar to Powdermaker's, but from the perspective of the political economist rather than the anthropologist. An important motivation for many scholars of the media is to consider its role in relation to the political realm (see, for example, Gaye Tuchman (1972; 1980) and Michael Schudson (2003) and discussion by Simon Cottle (2007)) – the idea of the press as part of our 'public sphere' (Habermas, 1989) with a special responsibility for keeping the public informed in order to have a healthy democracy.

A classic of communication theory, and one of the earliest studies of the operation of the press, is David Manning White's essay from 1950 on the work of the 'gatekeeper' in the newsroom of a local daily newspaper in the US (White, 1950). He observed the working practices of the desk editor, who he called 'Mr. Gates' during one week in 1949 as he read the press agency reports coming in to the newsroom via the telegraph. It was Gates' job to decide which stories were to be written up and published in the newspaper, and which ones rejected; White found that Gates' decision-making was subjective and lacking any systematic criteria of newsworthiness. He concluded that the role of the 'gatekeeper' was powerful in determining the content of the newspaper. The label of the 'gatekeeper' has since been frequently applied to news workers in television news (Berkowitz, 1990) and elsewhere (see, for further discussion, Shoemaker, 1991; Shoemaker and Voss, 2009).

Philip Schlesinger was quite unique in applying ethnographic methods to the study of the British Broadcasting Corporation's newsrooms in the 1970s (Schlesinger, 1987 [1978]). His study of the BBC was completed in 1977 using methods derived from ethnography to produce a study based on 'theoretically informed observation of the social practices of cultural production' (p. xxxii). Schlesinger observes the extent to which theories of news production are reflected in the operation of the BBC's radio and television newsrooms at Broadcasting House and at the television news Television Centre in London. Schlesinger's study took place over about four years and he interviewed 95 members of staff. *Putting Reality Together* is one of the first studies to take a theoretical perspective on the activities of media workers and is a foundational text in British cultural studies. An important finding of this research was that, despite the highly politicized environment, the newsroom is a place where politics are routinely denied. Few scholars picked up on the lead made by Schlesinger, whose work was particularly poorly received by the media. There have, however, been several recent studies applying ethnographic methods to the workplace, particularly to the newsroom (see, for example, Wardle and Williams, 2010). Chris Paterson and David Domingo (2008) have edited a good collection of case studies using ethnography to study newsrooms around the world during the period of the introduction of online news services. This book has a good introduction discussing the advantages of ethnography as a research method for

investigating the workplace (Paterson, 2008). Our next case study is an essay from this collection looking at the online newsroom of the *Irish Times*.

Case Study

Anthony Cawley, 2008. News production in an Irish online newsroom: practice, process and culture. In Chris Paterson and David Domingo (eds), *Making On-Line News: The Ethnography of New Media Production*. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 45–60.

Anthony Cawley conducted his ethnographic study of the online newsroom (*Ireland.com*) of the *Irish Times* for a three-week period in August 2001. The *Irish Times* dates back to 1859 and 'holds a reputation for impartial quality journalism akin to the *Guardian's* standing in Britain or *The New York Times* in the United States' (p. 49). In 1994 the *Irish Times* began their first website and in the late 1990s introduced an online edition, *Ireland.com*. They recruited an online editorial team to run the new service, which worked independently of the newspaper with separate offices and different terms of employment. At the time of Cawley's research *Ireland.com* employed 57 full-time staff, including technical, marketing and editorial.

Cawley's goal in this study is to examine:

the relationship between the old organization and the new organization, between the old media form and the new media form, and the strengths and conflicts that come from their close and direct relationship. (p. 45)

From his observation, Cawley finds that the online journalist fulfils all the tasks that any other journalist would: writing copy, interviewing sources, reviewing the press releases. In addition, online journalists also edit their own copy, upload it onto the internet, take their own photos and upload those, too. As Cawley observes, 'the traditional demarcation of news production does not apply' (p. 47).

Cawley finds that print journalists could be dismissive of their online colleagues, who are often marginalized in meetings, for example by being addressed as 'online' rather than by name, as is the case with the other journalists. It becomes clear to Cawley that print journalists have greater kudos within the organization.

The biggest change in working practices at the time of Cawley's study is the shift to a more televisual way of working as audiovisual content is added to the web; Cawley wonders how journalists will manage this new

(Continued)

(Continued)

transition. The ethnographic study could not have predicted the external changes in the economy which resulted in 40% of the full-time staff being fired in 2001 as the *Irish Times* contracted its online operations and shifted to a subscription service. The video services which were being toyed with in 2001 were handed over to a Swedish company in 2006 which provided the content to *Ireland.com TV* (p. 59). By the time Cawley's essay was published in 2008, he concludes:

Despite the new video service, and some 13 years of development, the website remains primarily a text-based news-service dependent, heavily, on the content of the newspaper. (p. 59)

The opportunities and challenges of the internet seemed not to threaten the hegemony of the traditional print room in 2001.

Anthony Cawley's study is an example of how ethnography works to create what Clifford Geertz refers to as a 'thick', that is, detailed and complex, description of an environment at a particular time and place. By the time the essay came to press, some years after Cawley's initial fieldwork, the relationship between the online and print versions had changed; no doubt the relative status of each at the *Irish Times*, in keeping with other newspapers, continues to change as print rooms are closing across the UK and in the US. The dynamic rate of change within the media industries ensures that the situation is in constant flux – this should not dishearten you, but should remind us that all research is 'historical' even if it is 'contemporary history'. Events may well have overtaken your findings before you commit them to paper. As researchers it is our duty to be as truthful as we can about the situation which we find, to record for posterity the changing situation and to make generalizations from our specific studies to the broader industry.

It is possible for students who wish to study the patterns of behaviour and activities in the workplace to conduct a small-scale study, especially if they can use contacts that they already have. With Hortense Powdermaker, you need to have an interest in a media or cultural industry and 'its particular history and system of production' – this is your object of analysis. If you work in a media environment already, or you have a work placement, then this is an ideal time to conduct your own investigation into how the 'system' works. One of the biggest challenges to ethnographic research in the media and cultural industries is access. We have noted that media professionals are often antipathetic to academics, sometimes with good reason, and where proprietorial issues may be at stake and suspicion of the researcher can run very high. However,

for people who already work in the industry, have good contacts or relevant work experience or internship, it may well be worth considering turning these into an object of analysis for your research.

Stages in an ethnographic study

Ethnographic research of the media industries requires a high level of cooperation on the part of your target organization, so you need to make absolutely sure that you get the full permission of all the people involved. This includes relevant line managers and all the people you are going to be observing. Always remember to be very courteous and show full respect to everyone involved.

Before fieldwork begins

You need to be well prepared before you begin your fieldwork in order to get the best out of your research. Read the relevant trade papers and the mainstream papers to find out as much as you can about the relevant industry and the location of the company or department within that industry. Use your target organization's own website and that of any relevant trade organizations to garner as much background information as possible. Write a description of the industry showing how your target company fits in. Draw an organizational plan of the company (use their annual reports and/or public information such as their website or the industry press to help you) and think about how the area you are going to study fits in with the whole. Design your study carefully, writing a detailed plan and a schedule. Get permission, in writing, to conduct fieldwork from the relevant people in the organization and arrange exactly what days you are going to be observing well in advance.

During fieldwork

Always be prompt and efficient during fieldwork. Take your cues on how to dress and behave from everyone else. Introduce yourself to everyone on the first day, and try to schedule a time with all subjects individually, at their convenience, to talk to you about their work. Find out about people's roles by asking questions politely when your subjects are not busy. Try to engage people in conversation in quiet periods or away from the work environment, as for example around the coffee machine. Be flexible and friendly in your approach, bearing in mind all the time your reason for being there. While others might have axes to grind, as Powdermaker says, you *don't* – so listen and smile even if and when people say things you don't like or find objectionable. You have a responsibility to get the most from your subjects and they will usually feel more free to talk if you don't challenge them.

Note-taking

Take notes as you go along. Make your writing as unobtrusive as possible – if possible, leave the room to write your notes. Don't sit with your phone on and type comments into the phone while you are speaking to people; be discrete. Note the details of key relationships and any decisions made. Who does what? Identify key roles and observe how and why things are done. Keep your notes brief and frequent. At the end of each day, make notes in your diary about what happened. Spend time after each period of fieldwork relating your observations to your research question. Before you go back to the field again, look through your notes from the previous visit and try to fill in any gaps. Make provisional analyses and sort your notes as you go along – you may need to redefine your research question as you go along, so be flexible and open minded about what you find and don't be too concerned if you don't find what you were looking for.

After fieldwork

Spend some time reading through your notes and diary, and think carefully about what you have found. Reflect on your experience and write up the stages in your thinking during the observation period. After you have carefully reflected on your experience, you can begin to write your findings. Include what you found as well as what you did not find and discuss any areas where you could have done better. Write down your mistakes – it is better to reflect on them than to pretend they never happened. You will learn more from this experience if you think seriously about where you went wrong. Go back to the literature which formed your research question and see if you have different ideas about the theory after having done your fieldwork. Reflect also on the method you undertook – could you have found out more if you had behaved differently? Maybe if you had looked at a different department or been given different access, you could have made some more interesting observations – these are the kinds of thing which are worth commenting on. When you come to writing up your dissertation, you may want to include a diary or log of your visits as an appendix, but the bulk of what you write will be your interpretation and analysis of what was going on, not a simple chronology of what happened. As with all projects, write it up with reference to the theories and writings which informed your original research question. For more guidance on conducting ethnography see Mike Crang and Ian Cook's book *Doing Ethnographies* (2007). Chris Paterson and David Domingo include a number of interesting examples of ethnography from around the world in their edited volume, which also includes a terrific essay on the topic of 'Why Ethnography?' by Chris Paterson (2008). In Chapter 6 we will look at the use of ethnography for studying audiences and consider the different responsibilities of the researcher to their subjects in conducting research on members of the public.

METHODS AND APPROACHES DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

Of course, there are many more ways of researching the media and culture industries than we have space to discuss in this book. This chapter has examined four such methods: *archive research*, *discourse analysis*, *interviews* and *ethnography*. The choice of which method to adopt rather depends on your research question, as I trust you will have realized by now. Although we have discussed them separately, the methods discussed in this chapter could be used in conjunction with one another to address the same question. Indeed, some of the case studies and examples we have discussed do precisely that – for example John Caldwell’s study of the television and film industries in Los Angeles, which combines all four of these methods to analyse the culture of the workplace. We can have a look at the opportunities and challenges offered by each of the methods discussed in Figure 4.2.

Access is a key problem for many of the methods discussed, be it access to materials or people. Access to personnel is a particular problem in researching the media and cultural industries, as we have seen in this chapter and as Sherry Ortner found when she tried to interview Hollywood producers (Ortner, 2010). Access to material artifacts can be difficult, although increasing amounts of information are available on the internet. There are vast archives which are available to you, and the speed at which material is put on the internet outstrips the researcher’s capacity to keep up with it. You will find that proprietorial information such as product research will not be freely available; and some materials are liable to be withdrawn without notice. If you have a good archive close available at your university, or locally, these make excellent resources. Interviews are a valuable research method for finding out an insider’s perspective. Student researchers may find it difficult to get access to people in the culture industries unless it is through personal contact. If you already know people working in an industry who are willing to talk, this is a good method but don’t rely on getting access to key industry people. The oral history approach is terrific if you do have access to people with interesting experiences to convey. Ethnography is a great way to research people’s behaviour in their own environment, but there are always ethical issues to be addressed in conducting research on people in any situation. However, the workplace is where people are on display anyway and there are less concerns about researchers conducting this kind of work in such public places than in the home, where subjects may feel more compromised. Participant observation has the advantage of allowing you to use your work experience or internship as a research site. Ethnographic observation has an advantage over interviews in that the researcher aims to be ‘invisible’ and as inconspicuous as possible and may avoid some of the ‘experimenter

FIGURE 4.2 A comparison of the opportunities and challenges of selected methods for researching the media and culture industries

Method	Opportunities	Challenges
Archive Research	<p>An excellent way to utilize local or specialist <i>archive resources</i>.</p> <p>If you are using a virtual archive, there is the benefit that your research can be done from your computer.</p> <p>Your university library may subscribe to relevant archives.</p> <p>You may identify documents which have not been studied before.</p>	<p>There may be difficulties of access – you may have to travel to physical archives.</p> <p>You may need to pay to access some archives – make sure you budget for any costs.</p> <p>Items in physical archives are not always available for viewing – be sure to check you can access all relevant items in advance of any visit.</p> <p>Your object of analysis is limited to what has been archived or collected; much new media is not archived.</p>
Discourse Analysis	<p>A good method for analysing the <i>ideology</i> of the workplace, or of media producers, power relations and hegemony in culture. You can apply high-level theoretical concepts to your analysis; a good method for applying theoretical ideas.</p> <p>Access to some kinds of industry discourse may be readily accessible.</p>	<p>Requires a high level of discursive skill on your part; you must enjoy writing.</p> <p>Familiarity with the culture producing the discourse is required.</p> <p>Beware of using corporate or proprietorial data which may be protected information.</p>
Interview Oral History Interview	<p>The method to use if you are interested in people's <i>ideas, attitudes and opinions</i>.</p> <p>For gathering <i>people's recollections</i> of the past; a nuanced method for identifying subjective insights.</p> <p>Good for precise case-study work.</p>	<p>Access to subjects must be negotiated.</p> <p>Beware the 'interviewer effect' (people telling you what they think you want to hear) or industry people towing the party line.</p> <p>Issues of generalizability have to be addressed. You can often only talk about the experience of the person or people you are interviewing.</p>
Ethnography and Participant Observation	<p>The method to choose if you want to find out about <i>behaviour</i> – how people act in social situations. A good method for collecting data from a social situation.</p> <p>Consider this method if you have an interesting work placement.</p>	<p>There are <i>ethical</i> problems in observing people at work: issues about observing people when they are unaware; getting permissions.</p> <p>Issues around generalizability need to be addressed.</p>

effects' which can result in interviewees telling the investigator what they think they want to hear, or what they want them to be told.

Even if the production end of the communication chain is not your main focus, it is important to locate your object of analysis within the economic materiality of media production. All research projects can benefit from some research into the relevant industry. In the next chapter we consider some methods you can use to study texts which the culture industries produce before going on in Chapter 6 to consider some methods for researching audiences.

FURTHER READING

Deacon, David, Michael Pickering, Peter Golding and Graham Murdock, 2007. *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis*. 2nd edition. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

This is a good, inclusive textbook on research methods in media and cultural studies. Of particular relevance to this chapter are: Chapter 2, 'Dealing with Documentation' (for a good discussion of archives and access to them) and Chapter 11, 'Being an Observer' (a discussion of different applications of ethnographic methods to the study of media workers and audiences).

Hesmondhalgh, David, 2007. *The Cultural Industries*. 2nd edition. London: Sage.

Hesmondhalgh provides a thorough and interesting overview of some of the main contemporary debates facing the culture industries; this book is particularly strong when he discusses concepts of conglomeration and the impact of digital technology on the media.

Holt, Jennifer and Alisa Perren (eds), 2009. *Media Industries: History, Theory and Method*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

A terrific collection of essays relating to the current state of research in the media industries.

Paterson, Chris and David Domingo (eds), 2008. *Making Online News: The Ethnography of New Media Production*. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 1–11.

An international survey of ethnographic studies looking at the introduction of digital technologies to newsrooms. Highly recommended case studies.

Priest, Susanna Hornig, 1996. *Doing Media Research: An Introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA/London: Sage.

This book provides an excellent overview of some of the main methods of researching the media. See Chapter 2, 'Anthropology and the Range of Human Experience' for a good description and rationale of ethnographic methods.

Below are some links to journal articles relevant to researching the media and culture industries.

Philip Napoli's articles presents a Marxist analysis of the role of the audience in the new media economy.

Napoli, Philip M., 2010. Revisiting 'mass communication' and the 'work' of the audience in the new media environment. *Media, Culture and Society*. **32** (3): 505–516.

<http://mcs.sagepub.com/content/32/3/505.full.pdf+html>.

Brenton J. Malin's case study of the production of the hard-boiled detective series, *The Shield*, provides an interesting exploration of ideas of masculinity within the post-broadcast era television industry.

Malin, Breton J., 2010. Viral menhood: niche marketing, hard-boiled detectives and the economics of masculinity. *Media, Culture and Society*. **32** (3): 373–389

<http://mcs.sagepub.com/contents/32/3/373.full.pdf+html>.

The Sami people are a minority culture in Northern Scandinavia and Russia. In this article Sari Piekikäüinen uses interviews and ethnographic study to research Sami journalistic culture.

Piekikäüinen, Sari, 2008. Broadcasting indigenous voices: Sami minority media production. *European Journal of Communication*. **23** (2): 173–191.

<http://ejc.sagepub.com/content/23/2/173.full.pdf+html>

TAKING IT FURTHER ... ON YOUR OWN

Identifying potential research topics using trade journals

Select a trade journal of relevance to a media or cultural industry in which you are most interested, for example, *Broadcast*, *Campaign*, *Variety* or *MediaWeek*. Look through the latest issue and conduct a brief content analysis of the main stories (See Chapter 5, pages 140–143 for discussion of content analysis). Consider which topics are currently of greatest concern to your chosen industry. Next, you should find an edition from the past – 10, 20 or 30 years previous. Conduct the same exercise identifying which themes and issues are of greatest concern in your chosen journal from the past. Can you identify any changes in emphasis? What is the biggest change you notice? What is the biggest similarity between past and present coverage? Write a single page report on your findings and consider whether you might like to pursue any of the ideas arising from this for your dissertation. How could you design a study to investigate the changes which have occurred in the industry between these two times?

TAKING IT FURTHER ... IN CLASS

Identifying research topics from shared knowledge of the field in class

Look at the list of possible topics to investigate when researching the media or cultural industries on page 80 above. Working in small groups of three to six, select a media or cultural industry of particular interest to your group, such as television, the internet or advertising. Drawing on your knowledge of the industry concerned, identify an example of an *object of analysis* relevant to your chosen industry for each of the eight different topic areas in the list. Each group should then decide which would be the most fruitful to pursue, and make a presentation to the whole class of your topics. In their presentations, students should identify: a specific *object of analysis*, an appropriate *research method* and a *theoretical paradigm* they would apply to that topic.

Follow-up activity: Write a single-page research proposal on an area of researching media or cultural industries.

TAKING IT FURTHER ... BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Making the most of local resources

Identify what resources are available locally in relation to the media and cultural industries. As a class you could identify as many different resources as you can in your area. These might include a local history archive, a newspaper collection at a local library, or an art collection held by your university. Make a presentation to the class about the different local resources and the opportunities they offer to the media and cultural scholar. After selecting the most promising, make arrangements to take the class to visit and, if possible, arrange a talk by an archivist or curator.

Follow-up activity: Write a research proposal on an original topic based on the location you have visited.