Social capital and networks in film and TV: Jobs for the boys?

Social capital has been hailed as a means of virtuous, effective and enjoyable productivity through which firms can flourish. But it also confers advantage to network members and discriminates against non-members. This paper, drawing on detailed qualitative research into work in the UK film and TV industry, reveals the advantages and the disadvantages of social capital. Social capital aided recruitment, policed quality standards and ensured behavioral norms with the sort of speed and flexibility it would be hard to identify in other forms of organizing. However, it also advantaged white, middle-class men and ensured that middle-class signals came to be proxies for the most sought-after jobs. Professionals who were women, members of ethnic minorities or working class were less likely to secure jobs and were often restricted in the type of jobs they held. Significantly, the members of disadvantaged groups who succeeded did so after long periods employed by the terrestrial broadcasters or after extended apprenticeships. This is worrying, given the increasing insecurity of the labour market in this sector.

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