

Producing a First Feature:

Exploring the lived experiences of emerging UK film producers

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Abstract

This thesis explores the lived experiences of emerging UK film producers and specifically focuses on what producing a first feature film has meant to them. The role of the producer is crucially important in the filmmaking process and requires a broad skillset. As such, it is considered vital that we seek to further understand this formative stage in their career development. There has been no empirically grounded research on emerging UK film producers or the process of producing a first feature, so this research is, in part, intended to remedy that neglect.

The thesis takes a qualitative, inductive and micro-level approach and has adopted Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a methodology. A purposive, homogenous sample was employed to identify suitable participants. Seven emerging UK film producers who had recently made their first feature films were recruited and data was gathered using semi-structured interviews. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, before being individually analysed and then cross referenced to produce three superordinate themes that describe their lived experiences.

Participants articulated a sense of ambition and struggle for status within the UK film industry. They took steps to overcome their own inexperience and were driven to succeed. They considered their hopes and fears for the futures and reflected on the issues they felt were preventing them from progress. Participants also focused on the creative aspects of film production and described how they used their taste when choosing material; how they have intervened and set boundaries in the creative process and the sense of validation they received from the audience response to their films. Finally, participants were focused on the value of their relationships: reflecting on networks as a source of opportunity, the need for a 'good' team and on exploitation of cast and crew in low budget productions.

The study has contributed to new knowledge as it is the first empirically grounded research that focuses on emerging producers. Furthermore, it utilises a previously unused methodology within research on media production.

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Abstract.....	3
Contents.....	4
1 Chapter 1: Introduction.....	7
1.1 Introduction	7
1.2 Purpose Statement, Aims & Research Question	9
1.3 Justification for the research.....	10
1.3.1 Personal background as a reason for undertaking the study	10
1.3.2 Justifying the study of emerging UK film producers	14
1.4 Methodology.....	24
1.5 Delimitations.....	26
1.6 Layout of the Thesis	28
2 Chapter 2: Contextualising the Research	29
2.1 Introduction	29
2.2 Contextualising the Role of the Film Producer	31
2.2.1 Complications and caveats: The difficulty of defining the role of the producer	31
2.2.2 Understanding the role of the film producer	38
2.3 Conclusion.....	54
3 Chapter 3: Contextualising the UK Film Industry.....	56
3.1 Introduction	56
3.2 A (brief) historical perspective of state intervention in the UK film industry	58
3.2.1 New Labour Cultural Policy	63
3.2.2 Film Policy & the UK Film Council	64
3.2.3 The Coalition Government	71
3.3 Defining the term 'UK film industry'.....	74
3.4 Defining the 'independent' film industry	78
3.5 Conclusion.....	87
4 Chapter 4: Methodology	88
4.1 Introduction	88
4.2 Methodology: Part 1	89
4.2.1 Various approaches in Film and Media Industries Studies	89
4.2.2 Film Studies	90
4.2.3 Media Industry Studies.....	91

4.2.4	Cultural Labour	94
4.2.5	Production Studies	98
4.3	Methodology: Part 2	101
4.3.1	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)	101
4.3.2	Qualitative Approach.....	102
4.3.3	Ontological and Epistemological assumptions	103
4.3.4	Theoretical Underpinnings of IPA	107
4.3.5	Alternative Methodologies	112
4.4	Methodology: Part 3	115
4.4.1	Method & Research Design	115
4.4.2	Recruitment.....	115
4.4.3	Ethical Considerations	121
4.4.4	Data Collection	122
4.4.5	Analysis.....	128
4.4.6	Validity and Quality	131
5	Chapter 5: The Participants	134
5.1	Introduction	134
5.2	Participant Information	135
5.3	'ANDREW'	136
5.4	'BETH'	139
5.5	'CHRIS'	141
5.6	'DAWN'	143
5.7	'ETHAN'	145
5.8	'FRAN'	147
5.9	'GARETH'	149
6	Chapter 6: Findings	151
6.1	Introduction	151
6.2	Superordinate Theme 1.....	153
6.3	Ambition: A struggle for status.....	153
6.3.1	Theme 1 – Sense of Insignificance: Feeling like an Outsider	155
6.3.2	Theme 2 - Overcoming Inexperience.....	163
6.3.3	Theme 3 - Drive: Hunger to succeed	175
6.3.4	Theme 4 – Hopes and Fears for Future Status.....	178
6.3.5	Theme 5 – Desire for Independence	189
6.3.6	Theme concluding remarks	203
6.3.7	Superordinate-theme 1: Summary	209

6.4	Superordinate Theme 2.....	211
6.5	Focus on Creative Purpose	211
6.5.1	Theme 1 - Exercising taste: connecting creative endeavour with commercial aspiration	214
6.5.2	Theme 2 - Intervention and boundaries in the creative process	222
6.5.3	Theme 3 - Feelings of validation gained from critical and audience reaction....	231
6.5.4	Superordinate-theme 2: Summary	239
6.6	Superordinate Theme 3.....	240
6.7	The Value of Relationships and Networks	240
6.7.1	Theme 1 - Exploiting contacts and networks as a source of opportunity	241
6.7.2	Theme 2 - Focus on the enabling qualities of a 'good team'	244
6.7.3	Theme 3 - Exploiting human resources as a necessity of micro/low budget film producing	251
6.7.4	Super-ordinate theme 3: Summary	257
6.8	Chapter Summary.....	258
7	Chapter 7: Concluding Chapter	260
7.1	Evaluating the research	260
7.1.1	Summary	260
7.1.2	Limitations.....	262
7.1.3	Recommendations for future research	266
7.1.4	Original Contribution to Knowledge	268
8	Appendices.....	269
8.1	Appendices Content	269
8.2	APPENDIX 1: Reflexive note on development of the interview schedule	270
8.3	APPENDIX 2: Reflection on developing the sample criteria	277
8.4	APPENDIX 3: Invitation to participate in the research	280
8.5	APPENDIX 4: Consent Form	282
8.6	APPENDIX 5: Ethics Risk Assessment.....	284
8.7	APPENDIX 6: Screenshot example of annotated analysis transcript.....	286
8.8	APPENDIX 7: List of Alphabetised Emergent Themes from Transcript 'A'	287
8.9	APPENDIX 8: Screenshot of Excel Worksheet 'Theme Organisation'	301
8.10	APPENDIX 9: Superordinate themes for single case 'F'	303
9	Bibliography	304

1 Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Regardless of how many feature films a producer will make during his or her career they must always make a first; this makes it a uniquely significant event, or phenomenon, in their professional development. However, there has been no empirically grounded research that specifically focuses on emerging film producers or the process of producing a first feature. It is considered vital that we seek to understand this formative stage in an emerging producer's career and it offers a unique vantage point from which to further our understanding of film producing in the UK. In doing so we may begin to appreciate the implications their experiences have for the futures of other emerging UK producers, the futures of those they work with and, perhaps, the long-term health of UK film production.

The research is a qualitative, exploratory and inductive investigation into the ways that emerging UK film producers have perceived the process of making their first feature film. It explores the ways in which they reflect on their own lived experiences: what producing a first feature has meant to them and how they understand the cultural practices of filmmaking in the UK. The thesis aims to describe the shared or common aspects of those experiences.

The research draws on the work of scholars such as Caldwell in focusing on the self-representations and self-disclosures of a specific type of film industry practitioner (Caldwell, 2008); and aims to analyse and describe their lived experiences, the '*lives, dispositions and mentalities*' of those who are at an early stage in their film producing career (Mayer, et al., 2009; Spicer, et al., 2014).

To focus on the meaning of those reflections and experiences a phenomenological approach has been adopted. Specifically, the research utilises Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA); an approach underpinned by phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography which has been

conceived as a tool to study and interpret how people make sense of major life experiences (Smith, et al., 2009). IPA is considered to be an epistemologically appropriate approach to the kind of micro-level, exploratory research that is the focus of this thesis.

This introductory chapter will set out the purpose, aims and research questions that frame this research before providing personal reasons for its undertaking. It will then provide some context for the study and argue for the importance of studying emerging producers. Finally, it will provide an introduction to the research methodology, set the parameters of the study and describe the layout of the remaining chapters of the thesis.

1.2 Purpose Statement, Aims & Research Question

Setting out the purpose and aims of a research project advances the primary intent of the study and signals the scope of the investigation. It also anchors the study, narrowing its focus and providing the basis for 'methodological congruence' throughout the rest of the thesis whilst helping to appropriately code a research question (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 127-138).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this IPA study is to explore and describe the personal meaning and sense-making of emerging UK film producers who have experienced the process of producing a first feature film.

Aims

1. To describe the shared experiences, beliefs and attitudes of emerging UK film producers towards their own practices and the industrial conditions in which they work;
2. To gain insights into the process of producing a first feature film.

Research Question

What meaning have emerging UK film producers ascribed to the process of producing their first feature film?

Sub Questions

1. What have emerging UK film producers thought about negotiating the various stages of production on their first feature?
2. What have emerging UK film producers thought about their 'creative' responsibilities?
3. How do emerging film producers feel about managing professional relationships?
4. What do emerging film producers think about working in the UK film industry?

1.3 Justification for the research

1.3.1 Personal background as a reason for undertaking the study

In thinking about the reasons for this study it is useful to start with a summary of my own, admittedly limited, background as a film producer. The purpose of this short autobiography is to highlight my own personal interest in the subject and to provide some context for the study. As noted by Creswell, a good qualitative study “*reflects the history, culture and personal experiences of the researcher*” (Creswell, 2013, p. 54).

Another reason to start here is to acknowledge that my own experience has implications for the way in which I approach the research. Caldwell has warned about ‘*working both sides of the fence*’; that is, how scholar-practitioners negotiate access to insider technical knowledge and maintain critical arguments about their human subjects (Caldwell, 2009, p. 214). Whilst I do not consider myself to be an industry ‘insider’ I do have some knowledge about, and experience of, the subject under investigation and have undoubtedly formed some preconceptions about it. My role as a researcher is to attempt to understand the perceptions of others whilst remaining aware of my own assumptions; a process which I will expand upon later in this thesis.

Here then, is a brief history of my experience as a film producer; it describes some of the key developments during my time as a filmmaker and attempts to provide some honest reflections about how I felt about those developments as they happened.

Autobiography

In 2002, I enrolled as mature student to study Film & Video BA (Hons) at the University of Wales, Newport. During the three years of the course I collaborated on the production of several short films. Initially, I performed in a variety of roles (director, sound, camera, etc) but, as the course progressed, I gravitated towards producing. I had found that the organisational responsibilities

of producing matched my own skillset and by the time of my third-year graduation film I was clear that producing was the role to which I was best suited.

I graduated in 2005 at the age of 28. Most of my peers, who were several years younger than me, had begun the process of searching for runner's jobs and internships – many of whom relocated to London. Neither the prospect of being a runner, working for free or moving to London appealed and I imagined that if I remained in education I might be able to bypass industry entrant positions for which I felt I was too old.

That year the University of Glamorgan was, for the first time, running a master's degree in Film Producing and Business Management. The course seemed a good fit as it promised to develop new knowledge and skills but also, as a partner institution with Skillset Screen Academy Wales, it promised to help gain links to industry.

Ultimately the course failed to deliver what I had hoped for and by its end I felt that I did not know a great deal more about producing than when I had started. There had been a significant emphasis on the organisational aspects of producing and it provided very little insight into the difference between short and feature filmmaking. Other areas of the course were disjointed and felt bolted on. Furthermore, the promised links to industry failed to materialise.

However, there was one particularly positive outcome. 'Mummy's Boy', a short film I produced as my master's graduation piece performed very well at several high profile international film festivals and, in April 2007, it won a BAFTA Cymru award for Best Short Film. The film also earned me personal recognition by Edinburgh International Film Festival as an industry 'Trailblazer', part of an up-and-coming talent initiative that was co-organised by Skillset. These achievements provided some positive momentum and encouraged me to further pursue producing as a career with the ultimate goal of producing feature films. This had always been the goal; film school lecturers and industry professionals had always been careful to point out that short films were

only 'a calling card' and had no other economic value. They were for learning a craft and not to be practiced as a career.

Following the BAFTA win I spent two years working intensely on the development and production of several new projects. I completed three new short films, produced some commercial work and won a scholarship to attend a professional feature film development scheme at a prestigious film school in Poland. Sadly, the short films failed to replicate the success of 'Mummy's Boy' and the two features I was working on both ran into problems at early stages of development.

My decision to concentrate on producing my own work had its disadvantages and was placing some strain on my personal life. Significantly, I was not earning sufficient income for life essentials and as a result I found myself in need of 'regular' work as a means of support. Initially the plan had been to allow a new job to provide some stability in my home life whilst continuing to work on and develop projects as I worked towards my goals. However, the reality of full time employment restricted those ambitions and, over a space of several months, I ceased meaningful work developing those projects and I also began neglecting my network of contacts. By late 2010, I had significantly scaled back my filmmaking activity and had started having serious doubts about it as a legitimate career path.

During this existential dilemma, I developed some cynicism towards the film industry. I lamented missed opportunities and began to resent what I perceived to be a seemingly elitist industry. Whilst that cynicism was unjustified my focus was not only on external forces, I also reflected on my own failings. Where had I gone wrong? Why did I fail? Had I been naïve or unrealistic to assume that I could succeed?

In hindsight, I think a lack of knowledge about the industry and the complexity of feature filmmaking had certainly played a part. Despite my confidence and ability as a producer of short films I had under-estimated the challenges of making the step up to feature film production,

perhaps assuming that it was simply an economy of scale and not appreciating the other skills, beyond the organisational, required of a feature film producer; skills such as the ability to find and develop material, raise finance and arrange distribution.

As a counterpoint to my own failure I also considered the success of other new producers; with particular interest in my contemporaries, those that had until recently been in a similar situation to me. How had they made the transition? How had they succeeded where I had failed? How did they overcome the barriers to achieve their ambitions? What had they done differently to me? What was the secret to their success?

Looking back at that period of my life I realise that I had been naïve about how to progress through a career towards feature film producing, as well as having some doubts about my innate suitability for the role. However, I also think that my experience is typical of many people that attempt to enter the film industry (whether they'd been to film school or not) and I have known many people that have tried and failed in similar ways.

The starting point for this research then, has been to service a curiosity about achieving the goal of producing a feature film. I have hoped that in the process of this undertaking I may find some answers to the questions that plagued me in some of the difficult times in my journey as a filmmaker and, I suppose, in doing so I may find out something about myself.

1.3.2 Justifying the study of emerging UK film producers

1.3.2.1 Defining 'emerging' UK film producers

This research focuses on 'emerging producers' and asks them to share their experiences of producing a first feature film. Their reflections on that process will be the focus of analysis in later chapters.

For the purpose of this research the term 'emerging' signifies a particular class of producer: those that are at an early stage in their career but are seen as active filmmakers working within or on the edges of the UK film industry. The British Film Institute (BFI) has described an emerging producer as someone who is *'already working independently with a few film projects in development, one or two close to production, who may have previous film production credits'* (BFI, 2016, p. 6).

There has been some difficulty in alighting on the term 'emerging' as in truth the research is about a transitional period of a producer's career; where at the end of the process they may no longer be classed as emerging at all. However, it was considered that 'emerging' best describes their position at the beginning of that process and their intent as up and coming film producers. 'New Producer' and 'First Time Producer' were terms also considered but rejected due to the potential connotations of those terms¹.

1.3.2.2 Understanding the role of the film producer and the UK film industry

"A film producer is the manager of the process of creating a film. He or she is usually the first person involved in a project and the last person to follow it through to completion. The producer initiates, co-ordinates, supervises and controls matters such as fund-raising, hiring key personnel and arranging for distributors. The producer is involved

¹ It was considered that both 'New' and 'First Time' Producer may signify that the participants had no previous experience as filmmakers.

throughout all phases of the filmmaking process from development to completion of a project.”

(Finney, 2010, p. 222).

The above definition is provided as an introduction to the role of the producer. Whilst limited (a full discussion about the term ‘film producer’ will be undertaken in the contextualising chapters that follow), it does suggest the scope of the producer’s job; encompassing end to end responsibility and engaged with each phase of production.

Taken at face value, and given the suggested importance that this definition provides, it might be expected that the film producer is afforded an esteemed position by scholars wishing to understand the complexities of UK film production and, from a broader perspective, our cultural industries. However, that has not, until recently, been the case. The study of film producers *‘remains largely misunderstood and under-analysed’* (Spicer, et al., 2014); producers are seen to occupy the *‘shadowy realms of business interest’* (Spicer, 2004: 33) and as such the furtherance of our understanding of their role in filmmaking has suffered. Furthermore, much of the work that does exist has tended to focus on producers working in the Hollywood studio system.

However, that position is beginning to change. In the last few years there has been much more interest in the contribution made by film producers and scholars have begun to investigate their work from a variety of approaches and contexts. A recent book entitled *‘Beyond the Bottom Line: The Producer in Film and Television Studies’* has focused on the role of the producer to engage with many of the *‘dominant debates within Screen Studies’* (Spicer, et al., 2014) and there has been an uptake of interest in producers in fields such as Media Industry Studies, and the cultural studies sub-fields of Production Studies and Cultural Labour. These fields have grown in tandem with the growth of the media and cultural industries themselves (Hesmondhalgh, 2010, p. 3).

The study of producers takes on additional importance at a time where the film industry plays a significant role in the UK economy; spending has been on the rise with a record high of £1.596billion spent on UK production in 2016 alone (SPI Olsberg, 2017, p. 5). However, much of that spending has been a result the inward investment² of Hollywood studios who have been attracted to the UK by government tax breaks and access to talent, locations and facilities (Sweney, 2017). Furthermore, despite the historic level of spending, much of it is being spent on a small number of high budget films but the vast majority of films are made on much smaller budgets. Between 2007 and 2015, 90 films were made with budgets above £10million in comparison to 1,612 that were made by small, independent production companies with budgets below £500k over the same period (SPI Olsberg, 2017, p. 3).

A report on the independent film production sector has shown 2007-2015 to be a 'cataclysmic period' for those operating at the lower end of the budgetary spectrum, having been beset by a number of 'cyclical and structural' difficulties (SPI Olsberg, 2017, pp. 3-6). In particular, the global recession has weakened access to public and private equity and distributors are more conservative with the films they purchase; in this environment financiers and distributors are looking to mitigate risk by '*investing in projects that have elements that have audience pre-recognition, such as major talent*' (ibid, p.7; BFI, 2012, p. 22). Furthermore, in an effort to save money it has also been the 'regular practice' of financiers to demand that producers reduce their fees which leaves them in a position where it becomes difficult to do business (Relph, et al., 2002, p. 14).

Digital disruption, the changing of delivery systems from physical forms of media (such as DVD) to online, is having a similarly deleterious effect. Fall in the rental and sales of video and DVD plus the collapse of that release window have meant far less money for all elements of the

² Inward investment is the spend on film production from companies that are not based in the UK, usually the Hollywood studios.

industry meaning that *'producers now operate in a much more difficult and uncertain climate'* (SPI Olsberg, 2017, p. 8). In this environment, smaller and lower budget producers without the reputation or finance to attract 'major talents' are struggling (ibid, p. 3).

This is not made easier by the fragmented nature of the independent film project value chain in the UK film industry. The concept of this value chain will be discussed in further detail in later chapters, but, put simply, UK film production companies are not 'vertically integrated', that is there are no film companies within the UK that own and control all of the various stages of the film value chain under one roof. Those stages include: development, finance, production, sales, distribution and exhibition/exploitation (Bloore, 2013, p. 34). Instead, producers are required to negotiate each of these stages independently bringing together and managing a significant number of individuals and companies to coordinate a film project from inception to the point at which they sell their films for distribution. Furthermore, undercapitalised producers, especially those without a slate³ of films, are expected to *'start from ground zero on every project'* (Finney, 2014, p. 2).

There are many difficulties and risks throughout this chain. At one end, development is considered to be most high risk *'due to its distance from the recoupment chain'*⁴ (Bloore, 2013, p. 40); whilst at the other attaining distribution is becoming increasingly more difficult with it now being *'arguably tougher to bring an independent film to market with success than it is to actually make one'* (Finney, 2010, p. 121).

Further still, low barriers to entry as a result of the 'democratisation' of the production sector have had a massive impact on levels of competition from rival producers, making it harder for smaller producers to make their projects stand out and be noticed. This democratisation, a result of access to inexpensive, digital filmmaking technology, has, arguably, made it easier and

³ A slate is where a producer or production company own, control and develop multiple film projects.

⁴ Recoupment is the process of repaying financiers and investors from income streams generated by film sales.

cheaper to make films than ever before. However, film producers still require access to finance and distribution to get their films to market. Unfortunately, these sectors of the film industry have been much slower to democratise, with systems such as crowdfunding and self-distribution still a long way off challenging the supremacy of the industry's traditional 'gatekeepers'. This leaves a huge number of producers vying with each other for limited, and dwindling, resources (Steele, 2011; Finney, 2010).

1.3.2.3 *Argument for the significance of studying emerging producers*

Whilst the above problems are the same for many, if not all, UK producers it is argued that they are particularly difficult for emerging producers. A combination of inexperience, difficulties accessing support and the limitations of film education make it particularly hard for those trying to establish themselves in the industry.

With regards to their inexperience, emerging producers may find themselves limited in their ability to negotiate the stages of the film value chain. Finney has argued that project management of the film value chain is very complicated and a producer's '*personality and experience*' are vital components of this process:

"Each area is extremely demanding. A producer who is inexperienced in certain areas will fail if they do not delegate effectively; a producer who cannot co-ordinate executives and representatives and drive timelines will be unable to achieve financing. A producer who can complete the package and finance for a film but has not considered the market for distribution and exploitation will almost inevitably fail to recoup. In summary, a producer needs to know a huge amounts about a) themselves, and b) effective, specialised project management, if they are to succeed" (Finney, 2010, pp. 172-173).

Whilst personality maybe an innate characteristic that can benefit (or hinder) individual producers their level of experience is not, and if they do not know how to negotiate the process

then financiers and distributors may consider them to be a bigger risk. As noted above, those 'gatekeepers' have been wary of smaller and lower budget projects and with a 2008 report noting that 69% of films (that they surveyed) operating on budgets below £1million are made by first time producers this suggests that many will find themselves in a difficult position as they try to negotiate deals (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 16).

Access to support for emerging producers trying to find their way through this stage in their career has been varied. Up until 2010 the New Producers Alliance (NPA) had provided some of that support. The NPA was a charitable organisation formed in 1993 by several producers who were '*frustrated with the existing sources of funding and lack of recognition in first and second time film-makers*' (Jones, 2000). Its website boasted that it '*supports, encourages and enables new filmmakers, providing the industry with some of its brightest new talent*' (New Producers Alliance, 2005). However, it closed its doors in 2010, leaving a gap in support and training provision that had been specifically designed with new and emerging producers in mind. Former member of the NPA's executive committee, Stephen Follows, explained why support for emerging producers is so essential:

"I know plenty of young, new and wanna-be producers who are lost in their careers. They don't know where to turn for information and advice. Most take the same journey – make a few shorts, take a few basic courses and turn up to industry events like Cannes. After that they're left to fend for themselves, learning on-the-job, making mistakes and figuring out as they go.

This is made all the worst when you consider the role of the producer. The producer is meant to be the person with strategy and vision to take a project from idea/script right through to distribution. They gather together a large group of people, all under the same banner and for the same goal. They ask massive favours, pull strings and demand the commitment of a huge amount of time and money from an army of people. So to have

their main source of knowledge and training to be 'on-the-job' is simply not good enough.

I can name 100's of projects where producers have moved mountains only to discover they've made rookie mistakes and fallen into easily-avoided traps. But by then it's too late for that project. When this happens it's not just the producers who suffer but the large number of people they convinced to join them on this journey, the very people who trusted in the producer's vision and invested in their belief in the project. In short, everybody loses."

(Follows, 2010).

Of major concern is the suggestion that the problems new producers face is both quite common ('most take the same journey') and easily avoidable. This raises questions about emerging producer's readiness for industry and how they can prepare for making feature films, if they can at all. The idea that producers must learn on the job is common and repeated by many throughout the industry. Eliot Grove, Raindance guru and author of the 'Lo-to-No Budget Filmmaking Guide' claims that: '*no one can teach you how to make a film. You have to learn by doing it*' (Grove, 2014, p. 1)

It is unlikely that such a claim would be found in the pages of a film school prospectus although it could be argued that such an environment would be an obvious place to begin the education of aspirant film producers. However, this is problematic because a film school cannot easily replicate the 'real world' conditions of the film industry for producers (MacPherson, 2009). Besides the obvious commercial imperative that is missing from the film school environment, student producers work alongside other students with vested interests; as such they are not able to control or own the project as they might in the real world. The issue of ownership becomes more problematic because student producers will have done little to earn the trust

and confidence of their writer-director team leading to potential battlegrounds where decisions are questioned (ibid.).

Admittedly, film school is not the only route into film producing and many emerging producers will come to filmmaking from widely varied backgrounds. However, a problem remains in that there is an apparent gap between what producers can be taught (or teach themselves) and, as Grove has suggested, what they must learn from doing. There is a wide range of material that can provide emerging producers with an overview of their role but may not be enough to give them the full picture:

'[There are] many elements of knowledge, practice, and so on that are reproduced and are derived from fairly explicit codifications of what producers do. Case studies, biographies, master-classes, producer guidelines, manuals on low budget producing and a host of other source material provide the 'below the line' material of producer teaching. But significantly there really is no overarching philosophy, handbook or set of principles by which producers-in-waiting are guided' (MacPherson, 2003).

As will be discussed in the next chapter, creating such a handbook or set of rules would be a very difficult, if not an impossible undertaking due to the huge amounts of variables of each individual production and the overall complexity of the role. However, that is not to say that sources such as these, along with the provision of formal education and training, are not helpful to emerging producers. They can provide an overview and set expectations for producers, but the question is, can there be more? What else can be provided that might prevent the '100s' of emerging producers from making 'the same rookie mistakes'?

From an academic perspective what is missing is any empirically grounded data that specifically focuses on emerging producers and/or the process of making a first feature. Whilst there are renewed efforts to understand the role of the producer there is nothing that focuses on this

exceptionally difficult career stage and it is a problem that we lack an understanding of how emerging producers begin the journey to becoming established producers.

Significantly, the industry is now beginning to place new emphasis on the idea that producers in the early stage of their career are worthy of support. In 2014, the BFI created the BFI.Network with the aim of developing the skills of emerging writers, directors and producers and to prepare them for making a first feature film (BFI, 2013). Furthermore, a scheme launched in 2016, Vision Awards 3, emphasised the importance of supporting less experienced producers or '*a new generation of diverse and ambitious film producers*' whilst acknowledging that the future success of the industry '*relies on a wealth and breadth of talented producers*' (Wiseman, 2016). The guidelines for the scheme recognise the '*challenges and difficulties placed on producers who are yet to establish themselves*' noting that an inability to support themselves financially through the early stages of their career often leads to them leaving the industry altogether (BFI, 2016, p. 3).

Whilst these are not the first initiatives designed to support emerging filmmakers they do go further than previous schemes by specifically targeting emerging producers. Previous iterations of the Vision Awards had only been available to more established producers who had made two or more feature films and other talent development has tended to focus only on 'new writers, directors and artists', leaving the 'risky' producer out of the equation (BFI, 2012, pp. 18-19). Furthermore, they have initiated 'corridor entitlements' and 'Locked Box incentives' that enables producers to benefit from their own productions and provides a framework for producers to reinvest capital into future films (BFI, 2017; BFI, n.d.). These initiatives are done to encourage and support emerging producers and above all recognises that:

"The future success of the UK's film industry and the vitality of its film culture depend on the ability to nurture new talent and skills" (DCMS, 2012, p. 67).

1.3.2.4 *Conclusion*

This new commitment to supporting emerging producers shows that the industry is focused on the long-term health of the industry. However, there remains plenty of challenges in a financially difficult climate where financiers and distributors are committed to minimising risk and may be reluctant to back emerging producers. Furthermore, not all, or even most, emerging producers will be able to benefit from the kind of support being offered by BFI, with that organisation also having to make difficult choices about who they support with their finite resources. The majority will likely find themselves in a situation that countless emerging producers have found themselves in before: moving mountains but making rookie mistakes.

As noted above, the film industry is growing and so too is the academic interest in producers. However, until now that academic interest has not extended to focus on emerging producers and does not reflect renewed industry interest in these individuals. The hope is then, that this research will address the lack of empirically grounded data that focuses on emerging producers and the process of producing a first feature. Furthermore, it is hoped that the results might be useful for members of the film industry, particularly emerging producers themselves, and that it adds to the available number of sources that they can use to bridge the gap between the learning and doing of film producing.

1.4 Methodology

“What would happen if we turn CMS⁵’s recent interest in embodiment, affect, and phenomenology away from its normal screen-viewer dyad and direct it towards better understanding how media is made?” (Caldwell, 2013, p. 160)

This research is partly intended as a response to Caldwell’s question and aims to contribute to the ‘bigger methodological toolbox’ he has claimed is needed in this kind of study (ibid, p. 158).

The purpose of this research is to uncover and describe the shared experiences of emerging producers who have produced a first feature film. It was considered that a qualitative approach would be the most suited to this task. Of the various qualitative approaches that could have been adopted a phenomenological approach was deemed most suitable due to its compatibility with the research aims (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an approach to qualitative inquiry that utilises three philosophical areas of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, as a tool to investigate lived experience (Smith, et al., 2009). Lived experience is a term that emphasises the importance of the individual experiences of people as conscious human beings (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 314); and is related to the concept of ‘lifeworld’ which describes our pre-reflective consciousness of our everyday lives (van Manen, 1997).

In relation to the philosophical ideas that underpin IPA: phenomenology is a human science research approach that attempts to systematically uncover and describe the internal meaning of lived experience (ibid, p. 10); and asks participants to begin a process of reflection on a matter that is of importance to them. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation and is concerned with the ways in which language helps us to make sense of the world. IPA recognises that pure experience is not accessible, so interpretation is required in order to attempt to uncover the

⁵ CMS – Cinema & Media Studies.

intentions of the participant, as far as that is possible. However, this has implications for the role of the researcher within the uncovering process who is trying to make sense of a participant as they are making sense of their own lived experience. Finally, IPA is idiographic in that it is committed to understanding the particular details of the research rather than trying to establish universal or causal laws (Smith, et al., 2009; van Manen, 1997).

IPA calls for detailed, nuanced analysis of empirically grounded data and as such advocates for small sample sizes (Smith, 2004, p. 42); seeing in large datasets the potential for loss of 'subtle inflections of meaning' (Brocki & Wearden, 2006, p. 22). As such, seven emerging producers were employed as participants in this research. Data was gathered using semi-structured interviews where participants were asked to reflect upon the process of making their first feature. Interview questions were orientated towards the participant's: background and pathways into film production; experience of the various processes/stages of feature film production; their 'creative' contribution to the process; how they felt about the UK film industry; and how they felt about their future career prospects. Interviews were recorded and transcribed into verbatim accounts for textual analysis.

Analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted at several different interpretive levels. Six levels of analysis were dedicated to uncovering the meaning and sense-making of the participants on a case by case basis with emergent themes being grouped together to create super-ordinate themes. There followed a cross case process focusing on the convergent and divergent aspects of the participant's accounts before a final return to the original transcripts to deepen the level of interpretation. The results of this process are written up in the Findings chapter of this thesis.

A final stage of analysis contextualises the findings against extant literature: drawing on disciplines such as Production Studies and Cultural Labour as well as current debates about the UK film industry to frame a discussion.

1.5 Delimitations

Perry argues that researchers should attempt to ‘build a fence’ around their research and set the explicit boundaries of what is under investigation within the thesis (Perry, 1995). This is important here given that film producers need to be ‘*understood within the specific industrial and economic context within which they operate*’ (Spicer, et al., 2014).

The research specifically focuses on emerging producers as opposed to all producers or more established ones. There is only a limited amount of empirically grounded data that looks at the role of the producer, much of which is focused on Hollywood producers, and none that focuses only on emerging UK producers. The research is therefore exploratory and, in part, aims to understand what is unique about producing a feature film for the first time. However, providing context about the producer’s role and discussing the results against the extant literature will enable a better understanding of any similarities or differences.

The research limits itself to exploring the lived experiences of emerging producers in the UK film industry. The UK film industry is investigated in a later chapter but is considered to be different to other film industries and has its own histories, policies, organisations and structures that will contribute to the experiences of individual producers.

Recruitment of suitable participants and data gathering was conducted throughout Spring and Summer of 2014. The participants that have been selected produced their first feature and had it distributed between 2009 and 2013. Film industries are dynamic and are subject to ‘structural and cyclical’ changes over time (SPI Olsberg, 2017). Therefore, the research speaks of a specific ‘historical milieu’ of UK film production (Long & Spink, 2014). This ‘milieu’ is further described in the contextualising chapter on the UK film industry.

Participants were selected using a homogenous, purposive sampling criterion that targeted emerging producers who had recently produced a first feature. The details of the sample will be

fully outlined in the methodology chapter. However, factors that were not included in the sample criteria included the budget size of the produced film or any socio-economic, socio-demographic or geographical (UK regional) differences between the participants. It is understood that these differences may very well affect the experience of the individual participant but as this is the first study that focuses on emerging producers the sample criteria were designed to include any individual who had recently produced a first feature film. It is considered that future research may be able to account for many of the differences between individual producers that have not been the concern here; this will be considered in further detail in the conclusion.

Murray and Beglar have argued that '*no study is designed to apply to all persons in all situations*' and it is important to apply caution when attempting to generalise the findings of qualitative research to a wider population (Murray & Beglar, 2009, p. 157). This is certainly the case with IPA which is committed to its idiographic approach and emphasises the importance of the particular claims of individuals over broader generalisations (Smith, et al., 2009).

With these delimitations and caveats in place it is noted that this research does not claim to be representative of a wider cohort of producers than those defined throughout this thesis. Furthermore, due to the small sample sizes indicative of IPA research, it is recognised that any generalisations about emerging producers should be approached with caution.

1.6 Layout of the Thesis

The thesis begins with two contextualising chapters that look at the role of the film producer and the industrial conditions of the UK film industry. Then follows a methodology chapter divided into three parts: the first provides an overview of the approaches that have been used in studies of the media industries and the practitioners within them; a second provides a more detailed look at the chosen methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; this is followed by a section describing the research design. Chapter 5 introduces the research participants, providing contextual information about their backgrounds. Chapter 6 is a detailed look at the findings of the research and is split into three superordinate themes: Ambition & Struggle for Status; Expressions of Creativity; and Value of Relationships; the chapter also refers to the extant literature to provide a discussion which contextualises the results. Finally, the conclusion summarises the thesis, discusses its limitations and outlines how it has made a contribution to new knowledge.

2 Chapter 2: Contextualising the Research

2.1 Introduction

This research is concerned with the lived experiences of emerging UK film producers. The purpose of this chapter is to review the existing literature in order to provide the reader with a contextual overview of the producer's role and the industrial environment in which the participants of this study work. However, it should be noted that studies of producers have, until recently, suffered from relative neglect in academia in comparison to other prominent figures in film production (such as the director).

"There has been little critical analysis of the of the specific roles performed by producers, or the context in which they operate" (Robinson, 2012, p. 145). The producer remains a *'largely misunderstood and under-analysed figure'* (Spicer, et al., 2014).

Given the centrality of the producer to the filmmaking process it is perhaps a little surprising that this has been the case, but their work has remained *'largely untheorized'* (MacPherson, 2003). As such *'the public are largely unaware of the three-dimensional contribution that a producer makes to their favourite motion pictures'* (Priggé, 2004, p. 1).

Of further concern has been that, of the literature that does exist, much of it is focused on the producers of the Hollywood studio system (Spicer, et al., 2014). Of course, there is plenty to learn about producers from those studies but for those seeking to understand more about UK producers and the industry they work in, studies of Hollywood producers can only tell us so much. As noted by Leggott:

'It is deeply unhelpful to apply any discussion or definitions of the Hollywood studio system to the under-capitalised British film industry given that the latter has always been smaller, less stable and more subject to outside pressure than its American counterpart' (Leggott, 2017, p. 339).

To highlight the paucity of work on the producer, it is worthwhile mentioning the 2014 publication 'Beyond the Bottom Line: The Producer in Film & Television Studies', whose introduction states that it is '*the first collection devoted to the subject*' of producers working in industries other than Hollywood (Spicer, et al., 2014). Over a hundred years of cinema history, yet a book dedicated to the work of (non-Hollywood) producers does not appear until 2014! This tells its own story about how much producers have figured in the interests of academics. Needless to say, that book has been a key source of information for this study.

To top of this trifecta of neglect (work on producers slim; work on non-Hollywood producers slimmer), it should not come as a surprise to learn that emerging producers have received so little attention that a literature search failed to reveal a single academic study on any aspect of their working lives. This research is, in part, intended to remedy that neglect.

Before moving on, it should be noted that the neglect of film producers within academic discourse is a relative one. Whilst producers have not piqued the interest of scholars in quite the same way as directors, there is still a body of work to draw upon. Furthermore, the interest in the role of the producer is growing especially in fields such as Media Industry Studies and Production Studies.

This chapter will now attempt to describe and define the various issues that are pertinent to this research. To do this effectively it has been split into two sections: the first will focus on understanding the role(s) of the film producer and includes discussions on why the role has been undervalued and draws attention to the complexity of this field of study. The second section will look closely at the industrial context that UK film producers work in. The section will include: a historical perspective of the UK film industry, a definition of the industry as it is today, an overview of the structure of the industry and a guide to the various agencies and funding opportunities that are available to UK film producers.

2.2 Contextualising the Role of the Film Producer

2.2.1 Complications and caveats: The difficulty of defining the role of the producer

This literature review began by stating that the film producer has been neglected in academia; so, before starting the process of defining the role of the producer, it is worth investigating the reasons why that maybe the case. Spicer has suggested two main reasons for this neglect: *'the negative image of the producer and the difficulties in defining the role'* (Spicer, 2004, p. 33).

2.2.1.1 Negative Image

It is true that the film producer has traditionally suffered from a poor public image and the literature provides plenty of evidence that this is the case. The stereotypical image of the producer is that of a champagne swilling, cigar-chomping, power-mad ignoramus (Adler, 2006, p. 3).

Spicer, who has written extensively about this issue, has himself suggested that the producer has been seen as *'a highly suspect figure, hard-nosed, philistine and avaricious'* (Spicer, 2004, p. 33), and has pointed to the historical origins of these myths about producers.

In the introduction to the book *'Beyond the Bottom Line: The Producer in Film and Television Studies'*; Spicer (along with co-authors AT McKenna and Christopher Meir) offers a number of explanations for the producer's poor reputation. The origins of the fat cat caricature can be traced back to the early movie moguls such as Irvine Thalberg, powerful figures operating within the Hollywood studio system (Spicer, et al., 2014).

These 'moguls' were perceived to have little skill and got to the top through good fortune rather than talent, having exploited low barriers to entering the film industry. It is argued that these perceptions were as a result of social, intellectual and cultural prejudices against the early producers who were considered to be nouveau-riche chancers; self-made men who lacked class and sophistication (ibid.).

Spicer presents how cynics have viewed the producer; men whose duplicitous (even multiplicitous) aims were to obfuscate the 'whole equation' of film production and as such maintain control over it. Surprisingly, it is noted that one of the main perpetrators (and perpetrators) of this image has been Hollywood itself; citing films such as *The Last Tycoon* (1976) and *Sullivan's Travels* (1941) as examples of its warped reflection on the role of the producer (ibid.).

However, chief among the reasons for the producer's poor reputation has been that they are usually associated with the financial/commercial aspect of filmmaking and excluded from its more glamorous, creative side. MacPherson says we have chosen to define the producer's worth in relation to their economic contribution to film production (MacPherson, 2003). It is certainly not difficult to find definitions of the producer that restrict their role to that of the '*chiefly financial and organisational*' (Bordwell & Thompson, 2000, p. 14).

In this worldview, producers represent '*the unfortunate vulgarity of filmmaking*' (Spicer, 2004, p. 33) and are, perhaps, not seen to be as worthy of study in the same way that other, ostensibly more 'creative' film professionals have been. They have been depicted as being in constant conflict with the director; producers are seen as money obsessed philistines whose interests are naturally at odds with the '*romantically constructed director intent on personal expression*' (Meir, 2009, p. 471). This represents '*a wider prejudice in film studies which stereotypes producers as the enemies of creativity*' (Hoyle, 2012, p. 79).

If the producer is only to be judged by their financial contribution to film production, it would follow that their work goes beyond the purview of those interested in the study of film as an art form. This may explain the reluctance of some scholars to look more closely at the role of the producer which, as will be discussed, is more closely linked with 'creativity' than they have chosen to look.

As a result of this misrepresentation the producer has suffered reputational damage on account of being 'the enemy of creativity'. Auteur Theory has played a significant part in fostering that myth.

2.2.1.2 *Auteur Theory*

Auteur Theory has its origins in the *Politiques des Auteurs* which was initiated by the Cahiers du Cinema group in the 1950s. Focusing on the work on French New Wave directors such as Godard and Truffaut, the theory asserts the central significance of an individual auteur (or author) responsible for creativity within the filmmaking process; making the claim that the director should be considered as that authorial voice, positioning him/her as the key creative influence in filmmaking and reduces the role of the producer to financier and organiser (Small, 2014; Crofts, 1998, p. 310; Spicer, 2006, p. 1).

This idea was later popularised by the American film critic Andrew Sarris, who enthusiastically championed the auteur status of the director arguing for three 'criteria of value' by which a director's work should be judged: technique, personal style and focus on creation of interior meaning (Sarris, 2004). Sarris later went further and claimed that directors were valued in auteur theory because of their ability to express themselves despite the '*money orientated environment*' in which they worked; an implied criticism of film producers (Bernstein, 2008, p. 180).

The theory has subsequently been described as a critical device to record the history of American cinema (Crofts, 1998, p. 311; Hayward, 2000, p. 22), celebrating the director as '*the sole purveyor of film art*' who has a '*discernible message or attitude [or style] running through their work*' (Adler, 2006, p. 5) and conceived the director as '*an artistic visionary who produces art in a commercial setting*' (Bernstein, 2008, p. 184).

This ideal of the 'romantically constructed' director has persisted, pushing them to the forefront of the public consciousness and has, without doubt, led to an undervaluing of the producer in academic discourse (Spicer, et al., 2014).

However, Auteur Theory has not gone unchallenged: critics of Auteur Theory tend to argue that film is a collaborative medium and should not single out one person as the sole creative voice. Adler has described it as 'a simplistic theory' (Adler, 2006, p. 7) and has argued that film making is a collaborative process (ibid, p. 5). This is widely recognised elsewhere with some colourful denouncements: Vince Gilligan has said of Auteur Theory '*It's a load of horseshit! You don't make a movie by yourself*' (Martin, 2013, p. 265); and legendary screenwriter William Goldman has claimed it is damaging for a director to receive all the credit for work that they are not responsible for (Goldman, 1996, p. 237).

Whilst specifically referencing Hollywood film production, Bernstein has noted that collaboration better defines film artistry than auteurship (Bernstein, 2008, p. 184). Small argues that the producer's input is vitally important to the outcome of the film's success and as such traditional understanding of authorship should be challenged, claiming that the producer and director should collaborate to overcome the various artistic and commercial challenges they face (Small, 2014). Furthermore, without the producer's input we will see '*films that have little regard for their audience*' implying that the producer's job is to keep the inherent self-indulgence of directors in check (MacCabe, 1992, pp. 23-24).

In refuting this 'director as auteur' theory Adler has gone as far as to claim that it is possible to consider the producer as an auteur: '*if some film-makers do clearly have a recognisable style or theme, then the producer can be auteurs as much as directors*' (Adler, 2006, p. 7). However, making this claim seems to contradict his earlier assertion that film is collaborative. Furthermore, Meir criticises this approach and has stated that Adler has committed the '*fallacy of accepting marketing discourse as historical fact*' (Meir, 2009, p. 469) – Bernstein had noted

that in the 1960s Hollywood recognised the value of the auteur label as part of their marketing efforts (Bernstein, 2008, p. 186). Both Bernstein and Meir, along with Spicer have refuted the idea that we should consider the producer as an auteur on the same terms as that of a director (Meir, 2009; Bernstein, 2008; Spicer, 2004).

Auteur Theory has 'stalled' film criticism and has contributed to the notion that the producer's sole concern is money (Spicer, et al., 2014). However, Spicer notes that it is now time to stop blaming it for the producer's '*absence from scholarly discourse*' (ibid.). If we are to accept that film is a collaborative process it is therefore important to understand what the producers place in the collaboration is.

2.2.1.3 Complexity of defining the role

Spicer's second reason for the producer's neglect in academic literature considers the complexity of defining the role.

Understanding the exact nature of the role of the producer is intensely complicated and '*extremely difficult to describe in generic terms*' (Mayne, 2012, p. 41). I will now try to explain some of the reasons for that complexity. However, it should be noted that several of the reasons given will themselves require further contextualisation, something which will be attempted at later stages of the literature review.

One of the problems of defining the role of the producer is that the role is not fixed: it can change from producer to producer and even from project to project. A producer, unlike the director, actor or cinematographer (for example) does not possess a defined set of craft skills (Spicer, 2006, p. 2) and their duties are spread across a wide range of potential sites. This makes it difficult to judge their role and can lead to confusion or disagreement about what it is that a producer is actually responsible for.

Because of this multi-disciplinary nature of their work, scholars have been careful to highlight the difficulty of defining what a producer is. It has been noted that the term 'producer': "*is unstable, signalling a wide range of potential roles*" (Kember, 2014); '*ambiguous in that it covers a range of different tasks and responsibilities*' (Petrie, 1991, p. 181); '*the role and contribution of the producer is intangible*' (McKenna, 2012, p. 612); and that it is '*atomised and splintered*' (Adler, 2006, p. 11).

It has also been noted that the rationale and resultant strategies of producers are 'not identical' and change according to the producers aims (Engelstad & Moseng, 2014). The aims of the producer are important in considering the way they work and will affect everything from choice of material to the way they approach production related situations.

Given the potentially varied nature of the role it is no wonder that this has led to a wide interpretation of what it is they do, with even well-established film industry names left to question the validity of attempting a unified definition: '*There are almost as many ways of functioning as a producer as there are producers*' (Puttnam, 2006, p. 15); '*I don't think any two people you talk to are going to agree on what a producer does. Every producer is different...For me there is no definition*' (Sydney Pollack in: De Winter, 2006, p. ix); and '*there are many different types of producer*' (Adler, 2006, p. 3).

It certainly adds to the complexity of defining the role if no consensus can be reached about how individual producers perform their roles. But this is not simply a discussion about the personal strengths and weaknesses of individual producers. The complexity goes beyond the individual, with the work of producers needing to be '*understood within the specific industrial and economic context within which they operate*' (Spicer, et al., 2014).

As we have seen, understanding the role of the producer is complicated by the multiple ways that individual producers can approach their work. But as Spicer suggests the way they perform their role is also complicated by the environment in which they work. Deshpande explains: "*Film*

producers have to work within paradigms of existing practices of production. They have performed various roles, responding to various practices and institutions” (Deshpande, 2010, p. 1). Another layer of complication is added to this mix when factoring in that these practices and institutions are not fixed either; the film industry is a changing landscape and has, throughout history, responded to and been transformed by rapid changes to technologies and business practices (Ryan, et al., 2014).

This is particularly true of the UK film industry which has been characterised as being ‘*volatile and unstable*’ (Pratten & Deakin, 1991, p. 1). What does this mean for the role of the producer in that territory? Porter argues: “*...contribution of the producer to the history of British cinema has been variable. It frequently depended on the limits which were imposed on the producer’s creative freedom by changes in technology, the availability of production finance and the resultant division of labour*” (Porter, 2012, p. 8). Indeed, there are many factors that affect the way a producer performs their role including time, geography, policy, technology and distribution practices.

To summarise the above: when it comes to the role of the producer and the environment they work in nothing, or at least, very little, is fixed! This obviously causes some significant issues in defining their roles. Coupled with the producer’s negative image this has presented significant problems to those attempting to do so. However, as we now move forward to look at the existing definitions of the producer’s role we should not consider these complexities as barriers to the task but rather as caveats.

2.2.1.4 What does the term ‘producer’ signify?

In the context of this research the term ‘film producer’ signifies and denotes a specific role. However, it has been noted that the term has been ‘abused’ which has added to the confusion about what a film producer actually does (Goodridge, 2010). It has been noted that there has been an inaccurate, vague and profligate use of the term to describe a number of different roles

that each contain the word 'producer' but denote something else, such as: line producer, associate producer, co-producer, assistant producer, executive producer (Houghton, 1991, p. 1; Goodridge, 2010; Priggé, 2004, p. 2; Lewis, 2016, p. 1). This proliferation of the producer credit has degraded the actual producer's credit and respect for their role (Ortner, 2013, p. 292).

Bloore notes that executive producer and associate producer credits are usually given for one of four different reasons: they have help raise funding; they are 'friends' of the project and whose involvement helps to attract investment and are as such rewarded with a credit; employees of associated '*broadcasters, studios, public funds or private tax-finance-driven funds who demand a producer credit*'; or a well-known scriptwriter or actor who has negotiated a producer credit for prestige or financial reasons (Bloore, 2013, pp. 20-21).

Co-producers are usually producers from another country but sometimes are just executive producers under another name and line producers are those responsible for the day to day shooting and production management of the film (ibid, p. 21).

Ultimately, there is a difference between the producer who has overall allocative control, those who are employed to implement decisions and those that serve to attract finance to the project but do not get involved with creative or administrative responsibilities (Spicer, et al., 2014).

Finally, it should also be noted that in some academic discussions of the creative industries the term 'producer' has been used '*in a broad sense to mean anyone whose labour, however, small contributes to...production*' (Ryan, et al., 2014; Mayer, 2011). That is not the case here and the term 'producer' refers specifically to the person(s) responsible for the strategic and operational control of the film production.

2.2.2 Understanding the role of the film producer

The complexity outlined above provides a caveat for the way in which we can approach understanding the role of the producer. This caveat essentially warns us that we cannot define the role of the producer in a '*normative or absolute sense*' (Spicer, et al., 2014) but that we should instead attempt to understand the role in the context of the '*historic and social milieu*' in which their role is performed (Long & Spink , 2014).

A full discussion of the specific conditions in which the participants of this study work takes place in the second part of this chapter. However, whilst we may not be able to 'define' the role of the producer we can at least seek to understand it by examining the type of work that they do, the areas of production that fall under their remit and provide a general sense of what is required to be a film producer.

2.2.2.1 '*Normative and absolute*' descriptions

Despite warning of the difficulties of providing an exact definition of the producer's role, outside of academia many formalised descriptions do exist. Whilst it is maintained that these descriptions need to be considered in context they do provide a useful jumping off point; an at a glance overview of the type of work that producers are responsible for.

As such this section begins with some definitions of the role of the producer taken from selected sources:

Producer's Guild of America

"A Producer initiates, coordinates, supervises and controls, either on his/her own authority, or subject to the authority of an employer, all aspects of the motion-picture and/or television production process, including creative, financial, technological and administrative. A Producer is involved throughout all phases of production from inception to completion, including coordination, supervision and control of all other

talents and crafts, subject to the provisions of their collective bargaining agreements and personal service contracts”

(Producers Guild of America, 2017)

Creative Skillset

“Producers have overall control on every aspect of a film's production. They bring together and approve the whole production team. Their key responsibility is to create an environment where the talents of the cast and crew can flourish. Producers are accountable for the success of the finished film. They steer the film from beginning to completion and beyond”

(Creative Skillset, 2017).

Cinema Studies: Key Concepts

“The producer manages the entire production and works closely with the director. The producer sorts out the locations, studios, schedules of production, controls the management of budgets, hires the stars, director of photography, screenwriter and special effects studios” (Hayward, 2000, p. 286).

The Film Finance Handbook

“Producer – The person, either corporate or individual, who oversees and is ultimately responsible for the management of a film from concept to market and all stages in between. The Producer typically acquires the rights to make the film, engages the cast and crew, is ultimately responsible for obtaining and repaying finance, and ultimately owns and controls the copyright in the finished project”

(Davies & Wistreich, 2007, p. 11).

These attempts at formalising the role of the producer have been taken from some limited key sources; however, it is not difficult to find similar versions in the countless number of books and websites on filmmaking and elsewhere. Despite varying amounts of detail, they can all generally be paraphrased thus: the producer has end to end responsibility for all aspects of a film production! Whilst the descriptions do take a broad account of many of the areas in which a producer intervenes they have been criticised for being overly simplistic.

Further to the reasons already discussed, the problem with attempting to formalise a description in this way is that they end up not being 'fluid' enough to account for the various interventions that producers need to make at all stages of production (Ryan, et al., 2014). Furthermore, they fail to account for the various qualities, skills, strengths and weaknesses of individual producers. Bloore notes that a producer has a complex parcel of skill and leadership styles that are required at different stages of production (Bloore, 2013, p. 78).

It has been noted that few individual producers have all the necessary skills to perform in all of the arenas that are set out in these descriptions (Adler, 2006, p. 11). However, good producers are able to identify their own weaknesses and bring people in to compensate for those weaknesses and, as such, enhance the overall operation (Puttnam, 2006, p. 15; Finney, 2010, p. 30). Or, as Jeremy Thomas notes, invoking John Donne: '*no man is an island and you work with the experts*' (Thomas, 2006).

2.2.2.2 Understanding the role of the producer using the independent film value chain

Whilst there may not be sufficient nuance in the above formalised accounts, there is merit in taking a macro view to guide how we understand the role of the producer. Lyons has argued that one way to do that would be to consider the independent film value chain. This model, developed by Peter Bloore, is useful for allowing us to disaggregate the areas of production into

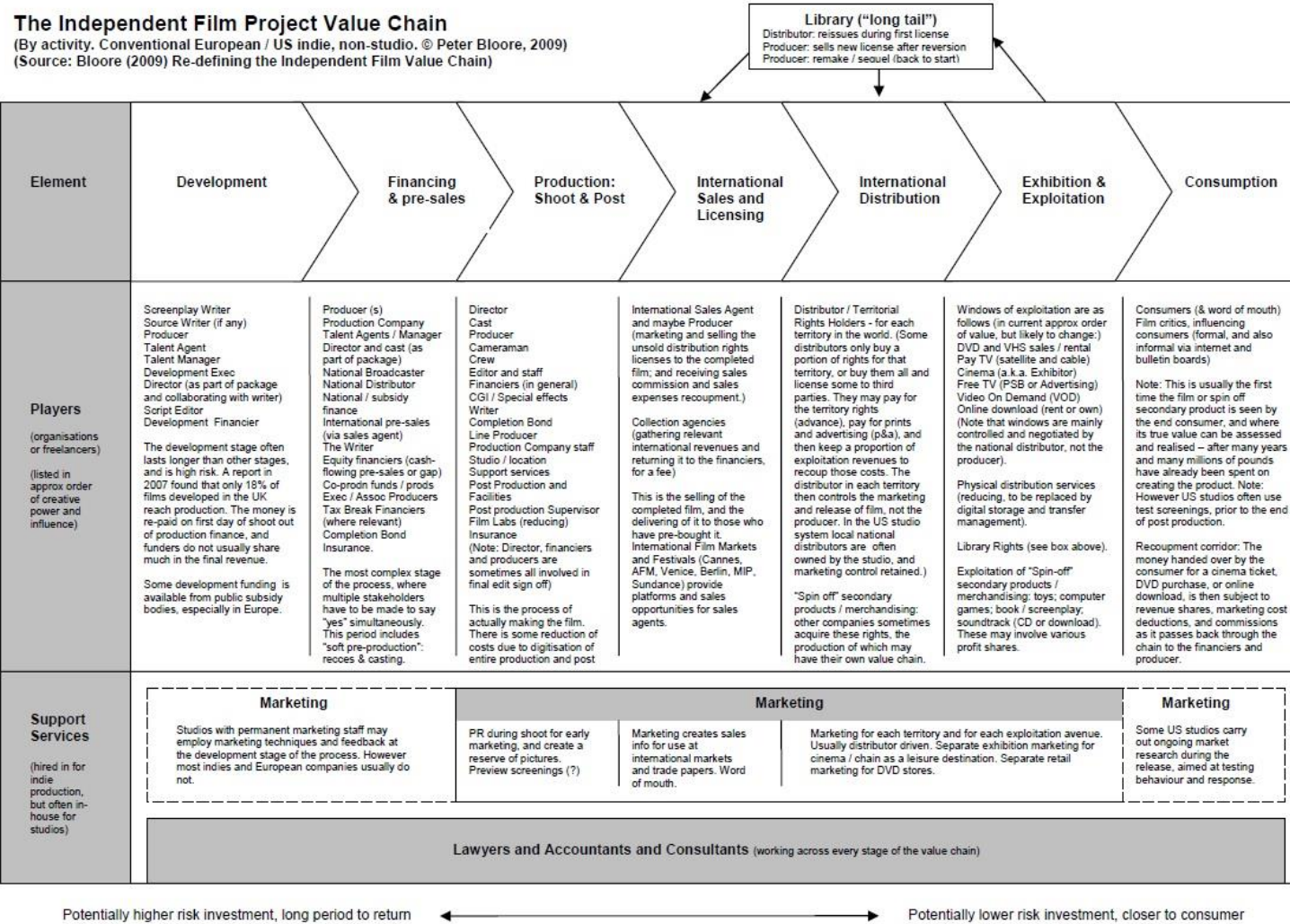
a series of separate activities and shows the relative influence of a producer within each of those areas (Lyons, 2014).

There is an important distinction to make between films made under the Hollywood studio system and those made 'independently' (discussed later but for now 'independent' in its most basic sense means 'non-Studio'). According to Bloore, in the US Hollywood films are '*developed, produced, distributed and exploited without leaving a single integrated company or consortium*' (Bloore, 2009, p. 1). Independent film production is not (vertically) 'integrated'; each stage of production is a separate activity and a producer has to negotiate his or her way through each of those stages, coordinating the various effort of each of the 'players'⁶ involved in order to get a film project from script to screen.

The Independent Film Value Chain is reproduced below:

⁶ Bloore uses the word 'player' to describe the various organisations and individuals connected to a film production. I also use the term 'players' in the same context throughout this thesis. The term player also has an advantage of other possible choices of terms such as 'actor' or 'agent' as those have other connotations in film production and could lead to confusion.

Fig 2.1 Independent Film Value Chain Model (Bloore, 2009: 8)



As we can see from the diagram the independent film value chain is split into seven activities: development; financing & pre-sales; production: film shoot & post; international sales & licensing; international distribution; exhibition & exploitation; and consumption. The producer holds prominent positions in the first four of those activities – it is argued elsewhere that the producer is also an important voice in film distribution (Finney, 2010, p. 171). (As an aside, it is also worth mentioning that this value chain model functions as a corrective to Auteur Theory because as we can see the director only features in three of the seven stages and only during production are they considered to wield considerable influence, it highlights the contribution of others and undermines the ‘sole visionary’ claims of that theory (Lyons, 2014)).

During these stages a producer’s activities would typically include:

- Development: reading books (as potential source material), creating or acquiring scripts, securing development money for the writer, giving notes and ‘packaging’ the project, that is, attaching key cast and crew to the project;
- Financing & Pre-Sales: working with a huge range of businesses, investors and other stakeholders to ensure finance comes together at the same time;
- Production: co-ordinating all areas of production and overseeing budgets, locations and schedules, etc and;
- Sales: working with sales agents to find the most suitable distributor and negotiating the best deal.

(Bloore, 2009, pp. 9-10; Finney, 2010, p. 171).

Finney notes that each area of the chain is ‘*extremely demanding*’ for producers and warns that inexperienced producers will fail if they do not delegate effectively; with project management being ‘*personified by their struggle for control over the filmmaking process*’ (Finney, 2010, p. 172).

Whilst the value chain model is useful in that it can show us the areas of a production that a producer demonstrates influence it does have its limitations. Bloore himself notes that the model fails to take account of things such as reputation of individual players, personal networks/relationships, production timescales and tells us little about certain investment/recoupment practices (Bloore, 2009, pp. 14-17). Furthermore, it is considered that whilst the model does provide a much better platform to understand the role of the producer than the simplistic formalised accounts depicted above, it fails to look specifically at areas of influence from a qualitative perspective and as such can only enlighten to a certain degree. Lyons has addressed this in his own research by taking the model and applying it to an individual case study (Lyons, 2014).

2.2.2.3 *Producer 'types'*

It has been suggested that another way to conceive of the role of the producer is to consider the 'types' of producer that exist, with Finney noting that there are two types - creative and financial (Finney, 2010, pp. 29-31).

However, reducing the roles of the producer to such a simplistic binary is problematic. It is true that the producer is required to '*combine artistic sensibility with financial nous*' (Spicer, et al., 2014), or as MacPherson puts it, to '*reconcile the demands of the cultural and economic fields*' (MacPherson, 2003). What is important in both of these statements is that the producer is required to 'combine' or 'reconcile' one field with the other, not necessarily approach them as separate entities.

Bloore has also criticised this binary by noting that whilst a producer's job does involve both creative and financial aspects, the truth is that that most will exist '*somewhere on the continuum*

between the two' (Bloore, 2013, p. 18). As discussed above, good producers will delegate duties to compensate for their weaknesses in specific areas but should not forsake one area or other.

Another criticism would be that that this simple binary ignores the administrative, organisational role that the producer plays. According to producer Simon Channing, the producer is a '*caring administrator*' whose role is to look after '*the 3Ts – tea, transport and toilets*' (De Winter, 2006, p. x). Whilst this piece of wisdom may have been given rather flippantly it does at least point to the logistical effort that a producer must undertake and is suggestive of the focus on the human resources that need to be co-ordinated for productions to succeed.

To be effective a producer requires competence in all three areas; their ability to piece together these financial, organisational and creative strands are not only what makes it possible for films to get made but it is also the combination that allows the producer to gain overall control of the project (Spicer, et al., 2014). Porter summarises this succinctly:

“The producer brings together under his or her unique control an assessment of public taste, the task of raising adequate production finance, the decision as to which individuals should be employed and on what terms, and the overall supervision and management of the production process” (Porter, 1983, p. 179).

Therefore, good producers should not be seen as either 'creative' or 'financial' but as project managers who move between creative and financial spheres and coordinate the overall vision of their production.

Nevertheless, this has not prevented attempts to theorise the producer as one thing or the other. Specifically, there has been a growing and substantial effort to understand the 'creative producer', or at the least the creative role of the producer. There is less work on the financial and organisational roles of the producer. It is not clear why that is the case but returning to the logic discussed earlier in this chapter it could be that the 'creative' aspects of producing are more

interesting/glamorous for researchers to engage with. Furthermore, as producers have been perceived to have been excluded from the discussion of creativity in film, scholars are working to correct this oversight.

What follows is a discussion of how producers can be considered 'creative'.

2.2.2.4 *Creative Producers*

As we have seen, the legacy of Auteur Theory has damaged the reputation of film producers and has consigned them to a public image that does not appreciate their creative contribution to film production. If we are now to accept that producers are, in fact, creative then how should we attempt to measure or understand their creativity?

There has been a recent uptake in work that reappraises the producer's role which attempts to account for their creative contribution to filmmaking. However, as with other areas of discussion on the role of producers, there is little in the way of consensus about how their creativity is exercised. Therefore, the term creativity, in reference to producers is '*problematic*' and '*not defined in an absolute sense*' (Spicer, et al., 2014).

That 'creativity' is not defined in an 'absolute sense' poses challenges to making a convincing argument for the producer as a creative entity. However, scholars have argued that we should not think of the producer's creativity expressed in the same way as that of the director or screenwriter. One approach is to set aside the concept of 'artistry' that is implied within the term 'creative' (Lyons, 2014). Furthermore, it may not be helpful to think about the producer's creative mode as being separate from their financial or their administrative one.

Porter has argued that the producer's role is both administrative and creative (Porter, 2012, p. 2); whilst McKenna goes on to say that actually it is '*in the administration of a project that a producer's creative contribution is most keenly felt*' (McKenna, 2012, p. 611). We can go further

and suggest that, in fact, the financial and administrative responsibilities of the producer should be seen as a subset of their creative role. Lyons notes:

“As it pertains to the job of the independent producer, ‘creativity’ applies to the post-industrial worker’s need to be ‘flexible’ and ‘enterprising’ to a nexus of entrepreneurial and artistic activities, which might range from the identifying and optioning of material, the contracting and managing of collaborators, through the arrangement of production finance to the positioning and marketing of the finished film” (Lyons, 2014).

In discussing this issue, Pardo has made a differentiation between the terms ‘creator’ and ‘creative’ and as such has set out a way of discriminating between the work of authors (in the auteurist sense) such as the writer and the director and those that contribute to the collaborative efforts that go into creating film (Pardo, 2010, p. 17).

Pardo’s historical overview of the creative role of the producer also notes that whilst a producer should not be seen merely as an administrator, the boundaries of their creative input is limited to decision making over creative aspects of a film:

“The Creativity of a producer is exercised not in a direct fashion through decisions that affect the actual production of the film – as in the case of the director – but rather in an indirect way, through the selection and supervision of the creative personnel that participate in the film” (Pardo, 2010, p. 10).

These indirect decisions can include: the selection of original concept, the choice of writer and supervision of the script, the selection of a director, the approval of the creative crew, control over the editing process and the promotion and sale of the film (Caston, 2012, p. 97).

Many of these indirect interventions constitute what is known as ‘packaging’ the film for financing. Dale explains that the ‘package’ includes which directors and stars have been attached to a project as well as the script and how it has been budgeted; the package then goes to sales

agents and other potential financing partners (Dale, 1997, p. 82). Packaging can be seen as a creative act itself; something that producers can gain great satisfaction from putting together and use to successfully achieve finance (ibid, p. 96; Spicer, et al., 2014).

The financing of films itself is a deeply complex process that requires a tremendous amount of knowledge and skill. Finney provides a useful overview of the role a 'financial' producer. He notes that their responsibilities include bringing together the elements of the films budget and understanding the 'value' or 'worth' of the project in the marketplace; they require a strong understanding of these issues in order to help them pitch it to financiers and distributors (Finney, 2010, p. 31). He notes that financial producers must know:

“all the different international sales companies, key distributors in different territories, private equity and banking finance sources, public subsidy funds – both national and supra national - and key executives within the medium and larger film production/distribution companies around the world” (ibid.).

Porter concurs: *'if they are to succeed in financing their production, the film producer of today...has to understand all these windows and markets, be they foreign or domestic'* (Porter, 2012, p. 22).

The financing of the film may not, in itself, appear to be a creative act but when it is combined with the other elements of the film production it serves a creative purpose.

Another aspect of the producer's creativity can be conceived through what has been termed their 'showmanship'. This creative hallmark of the producer consists of such qualities as: instinct, artistic credibility, engagement with popular culture, self-promotion, the building of 'reputation networks' and 'salesmanship' (Spicer, et al., 2014). It is possible to break down some of these qualities further.

The importance of instinct appears with regularity in the discussion of producers and can be described as: *“an eye for a situation, a nose for a script, and a mind of his own to make the critical judgement* (Mayne, 2012, p. 46). De Winter points out that *“Instinct for material and talent ought to be far reaching* (De Winter, 2006, p. 367). Zafirau writes about producer’s ‘gut instinct’ and points to Powdermaker’s observations and the importance of a producer’s ‘intuitive ability’ and need to be a predictor of popular taste (Zafirau, 2009, pp. 196-197).

The producer’s instinct is closely linked to the equally important concept of taste. As Ortner notes a producer’s reputation for good taste can translate into not just financial success but also into respect amongst peers and influential industry insiders, an important factor in their ability to push their careers forward (Ortner, 2013, pp. 154-155). Ted Hope endorses this view arguing that a producer’s work, and choice of work, speaks volumes about them as individuals and as such should be closely guarded as it will impact on their future prospects (Hope, 2010).

In this respect a producer performs a curatorial role: *‘A good producer LOVES film, and in the end the mark of a good producer is that ability to recognise the great project and then passionately share it with others’* (Evans, 2013). MacPherson notes that creative industries operate on the intersection of innovation and standardisation and it is a producer’s job to find projects that are *‘sufficiently different but sufficiently similar’* to find a market (MacPherson, 2003).

How producers choose material is considered to be important. In their study on understanding how Norwegian producers select source material for screen adaptation Engelstad et al (2014) have identified four criteria that producers use to make their choices: originality, resonance with public, critical acclaim, helps the production company achieve its aims (Engelstad & Moseng, 2014).

Whilst that research focuses specifically on adaptations it does provide important insight into the rationale producers assign to their choice of material. Furthermore, adaptations are an

important source of that material; Englestad & Moseng note that in the UK 40% of UK film production is made up of adaptations (ibid.). Meir notes that *'adaptation has been of especial importance to non-Hollywood film industries in part because of a lack of infrastructures for script development and in part for the pre-constituted audiences that a novel brings'* (Meir, 2009, p. 478).

Engelstad also refers to the 'producer's game', a process by which they search for and approach material. That game is broken down to the following stages: search potential material, find something that appeals to mass audience, estimate cost, find a writer and director, market, repeat (Engelstad & Moseng, 2014). These stages can be seen to summarise some of the major creative influences that a producer asserts on their own productions and it is the second stage, 'finding something that appeals to a mass audience', that best tests their instinct.

Another area of 'showmanship' that has been discussed is how producers manage 'reputation networks'. Producers such as Michael Klinger and Jeremy Thomas have bolstered their own reputations by *'building the reputations of others and through capitalising on [their] associations with established industry figures'* (McKenna, 2012, p. 612). Producers are able to *'create highly visible associations'* with well-known public figures which, in turn, gives them *'stature and publicity in the trade and popular press'*; *producers who exploit themselves in this way, such as Jerry Bruckheimer, give themselves 'public presence and market value'* (Spicer, et al., 2014).

Producers are not just required to manage the reputation of themselves and others but also must be able to work with and manage creative talent. In this regard it is noted that *'a good producer, as an inspirer of creativity, must, himself, be creative'*; they should be a developer of creativity amongst the people they work with (Houghton, 1991, p. viii; MacPherson, 2003).

Ortner has noted the importance of a producer's interpersonal skills, claiming that to succeed they need to build and maintain a large network of contacts, be a 'people person' and, most importantly to care for and protect the directors they work with (Ortner, 2013, pp. 154-166).

Much has been written above about the antagonistic relationships between the producer and director, but this is, as Puttnam points out, *'the pivotal relationship'* where *'trust is key'* (Puttnam, 2006, p. 19). As a producer, Puttnam has also noted that he *'was convinced his role was to protect the director and give him everything he needs'* (Spicer, et al., 2014). Relationships between producer and director can be a complex and intense (Ortner, 2013, p. 161). A producer is required to manage creative egos which is a *'highly complex task'* (Finney, 2010, p. 30).

Beyond their relationship with directors, producers manage creative relationships across productions and at various stages – particularly during development. Finney discusses the challenges that a producer faces putting together a creative team (including writer and director) and the potential for conflict at that time (ibid, p. 161-162). Producers need to draw on their ability to build trust and long-lasting bonds which helps them to build a track record over the long term (Bloore, 2013, pp. 48-49, 222).

Ultimately, a producer is required to *"provide a nurturing environment...which fosters fruitful collaboration"* (Jones, 2005, p. 11); they need to motivate others and are obligated to attempt to keep their crew happy (Bloore, 2013, p. 156; Puttnam, 2006, p. 21). Producers organise the conditions in which creativity occurs and act in enabling, nurturing and accommodating ways (Engelstad & Moseng, 2014; Spicer, et al., 2014).

As argued above, the creativity of the producer is expressed in several ways. However, some have argued that the term *'creative producer'* has little value and claim that if the producer is not doing the financial part of film producing (i.e. raising production funds) then they are not truly producers (Macnab, 2013). Despite the academic arguments to suggest that producers are indeed creative they are nonetheless valued by industry based on their ability to make money rather than art: *'film and tv are not interested in or may not even tolerate the producer as a cultural/social entrepreneur over an economic one'* (MacPherson, 2003). Finally, whilst the term *'creative'* remains problematic in reference to producers then the legitimacy of that argument may remain open to question.

Despite these arguments, and for the reasons outlined above, this will not prevent some from making a forceful, and legitimate, case for the producer to be seen as a creative contributor to film production:

“I have the right as producer to approve all creative choices” (Vachon, 1998, p. 132).

“The producer is the creative force behind a film project. I repeat with emphasis: The Producer Is The Creative Force Behind A Project” (Schreibman, 2001, p. 1).

2.2.2.5 Agency

As discussed in the section on formal descriptions the producer performs an end to end role in film production and performance can be affected by a host of different variables. As such it is difficult for a summary of this kind to cover all of the aspects of producing. This is particularly true for the more intangible aspects of a producer’s role such as their agency (Ortner, 2013, pp. 158-160). This agency can be expressed in many ways but will include traits such as entrepreneurialism, motivations and flexibility.

Citing a study by Burns (2011) Bloore outlines the characteristics of an entrepreneur that can be seen as relevant to a film producer and include: a need for independence, achievement, internal locus of control, risk taker. Producers are also: opportunistic, innovative, self-confident, self-motivated, willing to work long hours, learn on the job, visionary/flair (Bloore, 2013, pp. 78-85). Ortner has described producers as *‘movers and shakers’* who are able to make things happen in the world; this is associated with a sense of power, freedom to act and the Bourdieusian concept of *‘cultural capital’* (Ortner, 2013, pp. 155-160).

Producers are seen to be risk takers with Adler noting that *'being a film producer is not for those who in banking parlance would be called risk averse'* (Adler, 2006, p. 26). However, the exact nature of the risk producers take is contested; risk is one thing but recklessness another. Puttnam notes that *'the fundamental task of a producer is to make the project as risk averse as possible'* (Puttnam, 2006, p. 17). Perhaps this apparent discrepancy can be explained by considering that this is the difference between the producer's personal risk taking and their duty to protect the work and investments of others.

Producer's agency is also seen in their level of motivation and drive; and can be regarded as persistent and, at times, ruthless. Adler notes that producers can be *'compulsives or obsessives, anxious about power and where they fit in the food chain'* (Adler, 2006, p. 26).

Finally, producers require flexibility to adapt to the changing nature of the film industry (McKenna, 2012, p. 626); and to help them manage in a crisis (Puttnam, 2006, p. 19).

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to provide an overview of the discussions about the role of the producer. It has looked at the complex nature of understanding that role: looking at the negative image of producers, auteur theory and the ambiguity of their role as reasons for the difficulty scholars have had in alighting on a formalised definition of what producers do.

The chapter progressed with a look at the formalised definitions of film producers before discussing the macro view of film producing via the concept of the independent film project value chain. These views have provided a useful starting point for understanding the role of the producer but were limiting due to a lack of nuance and detail and are perhaps best characterised

as a list of duties. Investigating producer 'types', particularly the creative role of the producer allowed a more in-depth look at this aspect of the producer's role.

Ultimately, understanding what they do is complex – *'If there were a recipe for being a producer, people would go to cookery school to get it. There are no rules'* (Adler, 2006, p. 17).

This chapter has summarised the role of the producer and what they do; however, their work does not exist in a vacuum and to properly understand how they operate we must also ask questions to understand the environment(s) in which they work. The next section of this chapter attempts to provide some of that context.

3 Chapter 3: Contextualising the UK Film Industry

3.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous section the role of the producer needs to be understood within the specific industrial and economic conditions within which they operate; *'each particular industry has its own specific histories, traditions and practices that make it distinct'* (Spicer, et al., 2014).

In order to fully appreciate the conditions of the UK film industry, understanding state intervention and film policy is important as these *'set the broad framework within which independent producers have to operate'*; state intervention can play *'a crucial role in the fortunes of filmmakers'* (Spicer, 2014). Furthermore, it is important to understand that film policies, which *'should be considered not just as a sequence of dry government reports'*, are a *'vital and vigorous discourse where tensions around national identity, art and commerce and the role of film within society come to life'* (Cateridge, 2017, p. 348).

However, film policy in the UK has differed from overall cultural policy as it has not been seen in the same light as other art forms or 'high culture' and governments have historically considered it as a business; this has had implications for the ways in which the state has rationalised subsidising the film industry (Hill, 2004, p. 29).

The UK film industry has also been historically dominated by American business interests, or more specifically the interests of the major Hollywood film studios. Film policy in the UK has been designed to both resist and encourage Hollywood's involvement in UK film production and as such has been termed *'Janus-faced'* (Hill, 2016, pp. 707-709).

The purpose of this section is to provide some of the context required to understand the environment in which the participants of this study work. It will aim to do that by first looking at the UK film industry from historical and contemporary perspectives whilst seeking to understand

the various conditions and policy orientations that create the environment in which producers must work.

The section will also seek to further define the boundaries of this study and provide discussions of what is meant by certain terms such as 'industry' and 'independent' in relation to UK film production.

3.2 A (brief) historical perspective of state intervention in the UK film industry

'There is an agreement across the board that the [British] production sector is best understood in terms of a series of (possibly irreconcilable) tensions: between boom and bust, the US and Europe, the truly independent and the conglomerate-affiliated, art and commerce and – last but by no means least – success and failure'

(Leggott, 2017, p. 340).

Throughout its history the UK film industry, has been characterised as being '*volatile and unstable*' (Pratten & Deakin, 1991, p. 1). This volatility has been demonstrated through a series of '*catastrophic cycles*' of growth and crash (Hibbin, 2003). It has been argued that until the 1980s the instability of the domestic production industry was a major issue and the consequence of two other factors: American cultural dominance and influence in the UK film industry and the monopoly exercised by major British business interests (Dickinson, 1983, p. 74). The influence of America still plays a significant role in the fortunes of 'British' cinema; however, those British interests, the duopoly of distributors, have perished, leaving UK film producers reliant on an inefficient and fractured, independent system of producing films and getting them to market (Hartog, 1983, p. 65; Petley, 1986, p. 31).

The UK government, or State, has attempted to intervene when problems have arisen. Initially, film policy was conceived as protectionist in character, defending the national film industry through the adoption of quotas for British films but later moved towards more 'social-democratic' forms of intervention such as subsidy and tax breaks (Petley, 1986, p. 31; Hill, 2016, p. 719). Those interventions have been seen to have had mixed results with some arguing that measures have saved the industry from extinction whilst others claimed them to be '*singularly ineffectual*' (Hartog, 1983, p. 59; Murphy, 1986, p. 69).

From its earliest days the American film industry has exerted significant influence in the British film market. It has developed at a faster rate, reacted to new cinema technologies and working practices, and used its strength to flood the British (and European) market with superior films, technologies and knowledge (Chanan, 1983). British cinema lagged far behind its American counterpart, but the state has regularly attempted to intervene to balance the interests of both parties.

In the early 1900s the American industry had already begun to adopt economic practices and a 'mode of production' which involved vertically integrated production companies and a division of labour that streamlined production in a system likened to that used in the Ford car plant factories (Staiger, 1988; Staiger, 1979).

The vertically integrated companies controlled the production, distribution and exhibition of their own film productions and went on to form what we know as the major names in the Hollywood studio system: Columbia, MGM, Paramount, United Artists, Universal, Warner Bros, RKO Pictures and 20th Century Fox (Hayward, 2000, pp. 363-364).

The 'Fordist' organisation of film production had been developed by Thomas Ince between 1911-1916; adopting principles of scientific management with the key being to separate the craftsman from his control of the work process and establishing a division of mental and manual labour (Porter, 1983, p. 180). These systems were devised '*to keep track of a film's progress – in terms of schedule and budget – during production*' and were overseen by producers (Bernstein, 2008: 180). In contrast up until 1927 British film production was '*essentially artisanal*' with no '*specialisation of technicians*' (Kember, 2014).

This sophistication placed the American film industry at a distinct advantage over its competitors and they were able to flood overseas markets with high quality films. In an attempt to catch up with these American innovations and to protect the UK's own fledgling industry, the government introduced the 1927 Cinematograph Act. The primary measure of this act was an introduction

of quotas which stipulated that a proportion of films screened in British cinemas (by 'renters') had to be British. The hope was that the Act would help an 'industry' emerge (in the model of the vertically integrated studios) (Chanan, 1983).

However, the Americans hijacked the quota system; making cheap, inferior films for the market, which came to be known as 'quota quickies' (Kerrigan, 2010, p. 65). This was seen as an 'abuse of the spirit' of the act (Petley, 1986, p. 33). This abuse came down to the definition of what was deemed British; *'the main factor was the proportion of labour costs paid to British nationals. The creative team could in fact be American as long as a sufficiently large labour force was employed on production'* (Dickinson & Street, 1985, p. 2).

Despite this abuse, it has been argued that the Cinematograph Act played a major part in forming the character of the fledgling industry in the long term (Hartog, 1983, p. 59). But this period in the industry's history also set the tone for the relationship between the British film production and its American counterpart, which has worked on similar lines ever since:

"In the long term the British film industry came to recognise that it could only sustain its position by accepting symbiotic allegiance to American leaders in the field – that is to say, through a mutual agreement to share the exploitation of the British market – since neither party was properly able to do without the other. But it was an agreement in which the British played the junior partners and acceded to American domination."

(Chanan, 1983, pp. 41-42).

This highlights the paradox at the heart of the UK film industry in that despite wanting to protect indigenous production the state has always needed to encourage the inward investment of American (and international) businesses; this has provided a dilemma for UK film producers and those tasked with making the industry viable on its own terms (Petley, 1986, p. 31).

Hartog notes that *'since the passage of the quota legislation, British producers and those who financed production have found themselves on the horn of a dilemma'* (Hartog, 1983, pp. 66-67). In trying to compete with American interests UK producers have faced the conundrum of opting to make big budget films that can succeed internationally or to make smaller budget films for the domestic market (ibid.). However, domestic markets are often undercapitalised, too small to support higher budget productions (Spicer, 2014). As such producers need to access *'global distribution networks that offer guaranteed distribution as part of a film financing package'* and it is at this stage that the reach of state intervention reaches its limits; whilst the state can protect its own markets and provide incentives for producers it is unable to influence the global distribution industry (ibid.).

Again, American interests have often dominated access to these distribution networks. For UK film producers, access to distribution *'has been one of the principle problems faced by European filmmakers'* (Kerrigan, 2010, p. 65). This is in large part due to the fact that *'distribution has long been in the hands of large multi-national corporations with no financial or emotional investment in notions of national cinema'* (Cateridge, 2017, p. 351).

However, Hibbin has argued that attempts to play the Americans at their own game have usually ended in disaster, precipitating a crash in the stability of the UK industry (Hibbin, 2003, pp. 142-143). Leggott characterises attempts by the UK government to intervene in the film industry as *'90 years of ineffective government intervention'* (Leggott, 2017, p. 339). Furthermore, he notes that UK filmmakers have never enjoyed a stable source of finance, either commercial or state subsidised (ibid, p. 339).

Britain's subservience to American business interests became further entrenched following the second world war; as the country became more and more dependent on the US to aid its financial recovery it became less able to tackle the problem of American cinema's dominance (Dickinson, 1983, p. 75).

In 1947, Britain tried to impose a 75% duty on the import of American films (known as the Dalton Duty) but the Americans claimed it was illegal. Britain needed the tax to afford American goods, but the tax was seen as against the spirit of the Anglo-American Loan Agreement; a fund needed for post-war reconstruction (Kerrigan, 2010, pp. 66-67). Due to the power of American business interests it has been argued that attempts to regulate the British film industry have always been 'furiously resisted', meaning that a lot of intervention has been 'ineffectual' (Petley, 1986, p. 32; Murphy, 1986, p. 69).

Following a period of relative stability (Cateridge, 2017, p. 348) the British government attempted to negate American influence and boost the fortunes of its indigenous film industry through social democratic means going as far to set up its own bank to finance films and placed a levy (known as the Eady Levy) on film ticket sales that would go towards subsidising domestic production (Dickinson, 1983). These were left in place, relatively untouched for 30 years '*allowing the industry to evolve according to the logic of market forces*' (ibid.). From 1957 '*the basic elements of state assistance for the film industry have been the quota, the National Film Finance Corporation and the Levy*' (Dickinson & Street, 1985, p. 2).

However, these were all discontinued during the early-mid 1980s by the Conservatives on ideological grounds (Hill, 1996, p. 101). The Conservatives had decided to '*do away with the paraphernalia of government*'; moving towards a free market approach, the government were reluctant to conceive of film in artistic or cultural terms and focused instead upon its commercial aspects (ibid, pp. 102-106). The government abolished the previous subsidies and replaced them with pro-market incentives such as tax reliefs to increase private, rather than public investment in the industry (Hill, 2004, p. 32). These tax reliefs raised the possibility, and attractiveness, of inward investment from American companies.

Further turbulence for the film industry came during the 80s as the 'duopoly of distributors' Rank and Cannon closed its doors leaving '*the film industry irretrievably broken up...never again*

to be economically sustainable or independent of Hollywood domination' (Leggott, 2017, p. 340). Hesmondhalgh notes that *'by the end of the Thatcher era, both British film production and the Hollywood investment in the UK based production of their own films was at a historically low ebb'* (Hesmondhalgh, et al., 2015, p. 105).

A ray of light came for UK film makers during this period from Film Four. Channel Four's commitment to low budget film making helped to *'re-invigorate a moribund production sector'* and gave opportunities to new filmmakers to large audiences with revenue being streamed from ITV's advertising income (Cateridge, 2017, pp. 348-352). However, arguments arose focusing on the health of the UK film industry with many claiming that it wasn't actually a film industry at all but was rather *'a small service sector of the British television industry'* (Gibson, 1992, pp. 29-30).

Another consequence of the Conservatives adherence to economic neo-liberalism and the ascent of globalising market forces, film policy was geared to place an *'emphasis upon the 'market-friendly' incentives (such as tax reliefs) designed to attract investment in an industry increasingly orientated towards 'global' production'* (Hill, 2006: 719).

3.2.1 New Labour Cultural Policy

In 1997, the New Labour government came to power in the UK and set about attempts to transform cultural policy. Among their first significant acts was to create the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) which replaced the *'traditional sounding'* Department for National Heritage (Cateridge, 2017, p. 353). This was part of an overall plan to repackage and modernise arts and heritage as the *'cultural and creative industries'* (Hewison, 2014, p. 28).

Cultural policy during this period was driven by *'instrumentalist', 'economistic' and 'social'* principles where the need was to demonstrate that culture had, first and foremost, economic and social value over any intrinsic value (Hesmondhalgh, et al., 2015). A major criticism of this approach was that it enforced target driven culture on to the creative/cultural industries and

'forced artists and cultural organisations to jump through hoops that were not of their own choosing, in pursuit of goals that were not of their own making' (Hewison, 2014, p. 121; Hesmondhalgh, et al., 2015, p. 102).

For some, New Labour's reluctance to make the case for public sector support for the arts on cultural terms was seen as a continuation of Conservative neo-liberal policies. Indeed, New Labour's cultural policies have been framed as neo-liberal in three ways: increased emphasis on corporate sponsorship of the arts, increased emphasis on running public sector bodies as if they were private industries and a shift towards economic and social goals (away from cultural ones). However, despite being pro-business and pro-private sector, New Labour's increased expenditure on arts and culture has been used as evidence that, in practice, their objectives differed from previous administrations (Hesmondhalgh, et al., 2015).

Indeed, compared to the 'parsimony' of the previous Conservative governments, New Labour's approach and financial commitment was considered to be generous (Hewison, 2014, p. 121). This was, in part, enabled by the allocation of National Lottery money into the cultural industries (between 1997-2010 over £3billion of Lottery money was committed to the arts) but New Labour also benefitted from an 'unprecedented economic bubble' that allowed them to increase cultural expenditure (Hesmondhalgh, et al., 2015, pp. 103-104).

3.2.2 Film Policy & the UK Film Council

As part of the overhaul of the creative industries, the new found DCMS, announced a review of film policy that went on to have far reaching consequences for the industry. The review, entitled, *A Bigger Picture*, was authored by the Film Policy Review Group, which was headed by the new Minister for DCMS, Chris Smith and eventually led to the formation of the UK Film Council (UKFC) (Hill, 2004, p. 34).

Film policy was central to New Labour's focus on the creative industries and the review called for a new approach to the UK film industry: one that was 'self-sustaining', 'distribution led' and moved towards the vertically integrated model of Hollywood; the report also courted inward investment and encouraged a greater commercial mindset than had been seen in the industry previously (Film Policy Review Group, 1998; Hesmondhalgh, et al., 2015, p. 106).

Courting American interests was a priority; even before the Film Policy Review had been published, Chris Smith spoke at a general reception for the British Consul in Los Angeles where he set out a seven point action plan to improve the fortunes of the UK industry including encouraging inward investment and setting out new generous tax incentives (Smith, 1998). Later, following a recommendation in the Film Review, an office was set up in Los Angeles, partly to support British filmmakers in Hollywood but also to encourage US filmmakers to investment in and use UK facilities and locations (Film Policy Review Group, 1998, p. 43; Hibbin, 2003, pp. 143-144).

Another significant outcome of the Review was the 'rationalisation' of the existing film bodies into the UKFC, a single body to provide strategic leadership on film policy and was done in the interest of putting the '*business and economic aspects of film well above its cultural dimensions*' (Hesmondhalgh, et al., 2015, pp. 106-107; Kerrigan, 2010, p. 69).

Previously, the film industry had been overseen by four separate bodies: the Arts Council (distributor of Lottery funds), British Screen Finance (funding body), the British Film Commission (responsibility for attracting inward investment using Britain as a location) and the British Film Institute (BFI) (Doyle, 2014, p. 3; Hill, 2004, p. 34). Of those, the remit of the first three was taken over by the UKFC with only the BFI keeping its cultural remit, retaining its role due to a Royal Charter preventing its incorporation; however, it was now to be funded by the UKFC which lead to an awkward relationship between the two organisations (Cateridge, 2017, p. 354; Doyle, 2014, p. 4).

The plans made by the UKFC helped to change the fortunes of the UK film industry. It was argued that the UKFC 'professionalised' the industry; they were allowed to pursue their mission with little interference from the government and they introduced schemes that fostered a business minded and market-led approach through the Premiere and Development funds but were also able to make some commitments to the cultural needs of the film industry via the New Cinema Fund and through subsidy of regional screen agencies (Doyle, 2014, pp. 5-6 & 14).

However, there were failures as well as success which have been subject to much debate. Doyle (2014) has written about the challenges facing the UKFC in their aims of trying to create a 'sustainable' or 'commercially self-sustaining' industry, arguing that this goal was impossible to achieve and ultimately proved to be a failure (Doyle, 2014).

The initial impetus for wanting to create a sustainable industry was that the disaggregated nature of production put the UK at a disadvantage and there was an over reliance on public subsidy. Up until that point in time very few films that had been given Lottery funding had any positive commercial returns, with many even failing to gain distribution. Sustainability as an idea was to encourage producers towards self-sufficiency (ibid, pp. 4-5).

The push for sustainability was considered to be consistent with the 'defensive instrumentalism' of New Labour's cultural policies where economic value was of greater importance than cultural value. The UKFC had initially been reluctant to adopt the term 'sustainability' as they had seen it as unhelpful, it lacked clarity and was likely to make film businesses think that over the long-term a subsidised industry was likely to come to an end; a situation that, outside of Hollywood, had no precedent. However, they had been steered towards its use by DCMS Minister Chris Smith, who eventually '*hung it around [their] neck*' (ibid, pp. 5 & 14).

On this point, Hesmondhalgh et al, note that:

'What is most indicative of New Labour in all this is the way in which film policy, like much else in its cultural policies, delivered subsidy (via the lottery) but implicitly accepted and reinforced the view that cultural rationales for subsidy were illegitimate, or at least hard to defend' (Hesmondhalgh, et al., 2015, pp. 107-108).

Alan Parker, the Chair of the UKFC, also committed the organisation to this new distribution-led, sustainable worldview. In a key note speech entitled *Building a Sustainable UK Film Industry*, Parker argued that the UK industry needed to reinvent itself and be more competitive. He also saw the future of the UK industry being a place that followed the Hollywood studio model and encouraged inward investment from American film productions, with good tax incentives, in to the United Kingdom to use facilities, technicians and locations. He argued the other side of the industry, which relied on subsidy could not survive on its own (Doyle, 2014, pp. 6-7).

Of Parker's priorities, Cateridge notes:

'The Council's principle aim, as described with characteristic bluntness by its first Chairman Alan Parker was to use public money to make better, more popular and more profitable films in real partnership with the private sector...unlike the Arts Council, the Film council would be allowed to directly solicit applications from the biggest and most successful production companies'. (Cateridge, 2017, p. 354).

However, Parker has been accused of being mistaken and criticised for 'despising' the idea of cultural subsidy for film. The decision to turn towards the studio model was 'ideologically ill-founded' as it failed to understand that what was required to be a '*globally integrated distribution entity*' was '*billions of dollars of capitalisation*' and the UK did not have the capital to compete on that level (Doyle, 2014, p. 7).

Another criticism of the UKFC's 'distribution led' approach to the film industry was that it marginalised smaller, independent producers and was termed a 'grave mistake' as it potentially

sacrificed the cultural importance, originality and unique style of British cinema for simple box office figures (Hesmondhalgh, et al., 2015, p. 107; Hibbin, 2003, pp. 145-146).

With regards to inward investment, Hill notes that the industrial policy has been to promote the UK as a centre for filmmaking and the advocacy of fiscal incentives for doing so (Hill, 2004, p. 34). However, on this front the UK has faced similar problems to other industries across the globe. Hill & Kawashima argue that global film industries are working in the shadow of Hollywood and have had to abandon cultural ideas of national cinema and had to '*engage with trans-national opportunities for funding and creative support*' (Hill & Kawashima, 2016, p. 669). In this regard, the character of UK film policy has traditionally been 'Janus-faced' as it has attempted to both resist and encourage Hollywood involvement in UK film production at the same time (Hill, 2016, pp. 707-709).

By 2005, the UK industry was the third largest in the world and was already a prime destination for inward investment (Aylett, 2005). However, an introduction of the Film Tax Credit in 2005 was aimed at attracting even more. To access the tax credit filmmakers had to pass a cultural test; however, in its original form the aim of the test was to '*attract inward investment rather than the pursuit of any particular cultural goal*' (Hesmondhalgh, et al., 2015, p. 108). The test itself had been developed in consultation with Hollywood studios and featured a points-based system defining Britishness based on the cultural content, hubs and practitioners involved in production. This was relatively easy for offshore companies to pass (Hill, 2016, p. 712). Whilst Film Tax Credit was, on face value, a desirable social democratic cultural policy it often served as way of subsidising Hollywood productions which '*makes clear how far New Labour had moved in the direction of economically driven understandings of the rationale behind film and cultural policy*' (Hesmondhalgh, et al., 2015, p. 108).

Following a ruling by the European Commission, a revised version of the cultural test appeared in 2007; ostensibly leading to a shift back towards cultural objectives for film; however, this did

little to deter inward investment. Rather than be the social democratic cultural policy that it outwardly appeared to be, it is argued that the redrawn guidelines were successful in blurring the boundaries between the 'cultural' and 'economic' aspects of film policy as well as concepts such as 'national' and transnational' and as such provided a continued basis to court American business interests as its primary focus (Hill, 2016, pp. 707-719).

Despite the focus on inward investment, the UKFC did try to support cultural production (and emerging UK filmmakers) in some ways: mainly via the New Cinema Fund, the regional screen agencies and they also commissioned a report on low budget film making but the recommendations in that report were never implemented (Spicer, 2014).

The Relph Report, named after its principle author, Simon Relph, explored the increasing costs of lower budget films and looked to find ways to further support certain areas of the production sector. The report found that there were 'endemic' weaknesses on the UK film production sector: notably that '*very few independent production companies*' were able to '*create lasting value*' in their companies as the high cost of production forced them to dispose of the value in order to get their films made. This was exacerbated by 'interventionist' financiers and investors putting cost pressures on to producers (Relph, et al., 2002, pp. 1-2).

On this front, the UKFC arguably did not help matters. Doyle notes that in the process of acting like a commercial business they were quick to fashion themselves as 'investors' in film rather than public servants. It was of major concern to producers that the UKFC would not allow them to share in recoupment; they were 'emphatic' about retaining returns and acted very 'aggressively' over positioning and issues such as screen credits. Doyle argues that this stance undermined the '*espoused mission of improving financial viability of the UK industry*' (Doyle, 2014, p. 10).

Elsewhere, the New Cinema Fund was set up to support lower budget features and short films from across UK filmmakers. With an annual £5million budget it specifically looked to fund

'original', 'dynamic', 'innovative' and 'cutting edge' films and filmmaking talent (Davies & Wistreich, 2007, pp. 396-397).

The UKFC also provided funding to the regional screen agencies which had come into existence following several economic viability reports and scoping studies (Newsinger, 2017, p. 373). The agencies were: EM Media, Film Agency for Wales, Film London, North West Vision, Northern Film & Media, Northern Ireland Film & Television Commission, Scottish Screen, Screen East, Screen South, Screen West Midlands, Screen Yorkshire and South West Screen (Davies & Wistreich, 2007, pp. 398-411). It was through regional film policy, the UKFC was best able to allow the cultural support of films and emerging filmmaking talent; however, this still needed to be done through the New Labour ideological commitment to 'economic value'. Whilst there was some emphasis on the cultural role of film in the regions it was against a backdrop of needing to attract inward investment, facilitating business development and 'investment' in film production (Newsinger, 2017, pp. 373-374).

The commercial mindset of the UKFC superseded any real commitment towards the cultural importance of film. The rationale for public subsidy of the film industries institutionalised by the UKFC was that they added value to the economy (Newsinger, 2017, p. 374). As Hewison notes, making the case for spending on cultural terms is much more difficult and cannot be boiled down to the kind of 'quantitative evidence' New Labour seemed to advocate; cultural value is articulated via qualitative means and lies in its ability to create expressive meaning (Hewison, 2014, p. 228).

The quest for sustainability ultimately proved to be too big a task for the UKFC and in the third (and final) Three Year Strategic plan (2007-2010) the term 'sustainable' was dropped and replaced with a call to develop '*an internationally competitive industry*' (Doyle, 2014, p. 10). They had also struggled to foster the studio model they had initially desired and the industry was still '*fragmented and predominantly consist[ed] of small and under-capitalised firms*'; on

this note, Doyle argues that these overarching goals were not possible *'on account of persistent structural and competitive disadvantages faced by the indigenous production sector in the UK'* (ibid, pp. 10-14). Furthermore:

'creating a 'commercially sustainable' production industry is not realistically within the power of any public support body for film. The fact that the Film Council were steered strongly towards industrial sustainability is consistent with a 'defensive instrumentalism' which some have argued is characteristic of New Labour's general approach to policies of support for culture' (ibid, p. 14).

Despite these failures the UKFC did 'professionalise the industry' and created a unified body that oversaw all areas of production, distribution and exhibition with high levels of expertise (ibid, p. 12). And for that reason, it came as a shock to many when it was suddenly closed down in 2010.

3.2.3 The Coalition Government

A Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition came to power in May 2010 and one of its first acts, in relation to film policy, and as part of their (arguably) ideological 'bonfire of the quangos', was to announce the closure of the UKFC (Newsinger, 2012, p. 139). The abolition of the UKFC was in keeping with the austerity aims of the new government and part of a commitment to reducing public expenditure. A way to do this was through a further rationalisation of the film bodies governing UK film and ultimately the responsibilities of the UKFC were taken over by the BFI (Leggott, 2017, pp. 344-345). Many of the regional screen agencies were also 'consolidated into Creative England' (DCMS, 2012, p. 8).

The announcement of the UKFC's closure came as a shock to many in the industry and the government were criticised for a seemingly short-sighted approach. Doyle has used the closure to argue that film policy in the UK is often not rational: the UKFC was closed without any prior consultation, there was a lack of evidence to support the rationale for doing so with no analysis

of the potential consequences (Doyle, 2014, p. 16). This was not about any particular strategic concern for the film industry but about ‘political expediency’ and a manifestation of the inconsistency towards supporting film in the UK (Newsinger, 2012, p. 141; Leggott, 2017, p. 345).

An open letter from 50 ‘leading film and television actors’ noted that under the UKFC the quality of films being made in the UK was of a very high standard but also that under their strategic guidance the value to the UK economy had flourished. However, other voices were less upset by the move noting that the majority of UKFC efforts were designed to benefit the Hollywood studios, with Alex Cox even going as far as to speculate that the demise of the UKFC would be ‘good news for anyone involved in independent film’ (ibid, p. 140).

It wasn’t until a month after the closure of the UKFC that a new review of film policy was announced; an irony perhaps given that a reason given for the review was to ‘provide greater coherence and consistency in the UK film industry’ (Doyle, 2014, p. 16).

The review, entitled ‘A Future for British Film: It begins with the audience...’, acknowledged the successes of the industry at the time, singling out titles such as *The Kings Speech* (2010) and the Harry Potter franchise, but was also keen to stress the ‘challenging economic climate’ for the industry, a consequence of the 2008 financial crash (DCMS, 2012). In relation to the production sector the report noted that apart from the success of individual films there had not been sustained success and criticised the fragmented nature of the film value chain:

“The traditional business model for UK film production companies is economically inefficient and structurally defective because it repels rather than attracts investors, except on a project-specific basis.” (DCMS, 2012, p. 45).

The report called for producers to be empowered to attract more investment into their companies and announced measures to help them including revised proposals on recoupment (something the UKFC had initiated in its final three-year plan); also a joint venture to encourage

closer ties between producers and distributors and an urgency placed on the need to connect filmmakers with their audience (DCMS, 2012).

The measures in the report were met with cautious approval. At the launch of the report *'writers, producers, distributors, financiers and academics enthused'* about its contents noting that the report was informed by the experiences of practitioners rather than ideology and that its recommendations were progressive, although some noted that expectations should be qualified (MacNab, 2012).

However, on closer analysis the document was criticised for being a continuation of much of the same policy orientations of the New Labour years. Newsinger notes that there was *'little evidence of overall change of policy outside of the more general reductions on the size of government expenditure in response to the global recession'* (Newsinger, 2012, p. 141); and later that *'the main planks of policy – production funding, the tax credit system – remained in place'* (Newsinger, 2017, p. 374). Encouragement for inward investment also remained in place (DCMS, 2012, p. 4).

There were also calls from the Prime Minister for UK producers to become more 'dynamic and entrepreneurial'; and to get away from a reliance on public subsidy or what Lord Puttnam labelled the UK's 'soup kitchen mentality' (Stratton, 2012; Wiseman, 2012).

Newsinger noted that despite some of the positive elements of the report he expected the *'social and cultural aspects of film policy to suffer'* and that cuts to spending on film would *'spell trouble for independent filmmakers in Nottingham or Newcastle...these cuts will disproportionately affect poorer, more independent and vulnerable parts of the film sector, particularly those outside the metropolitan elite'* (Newsinger, 2012, pp. 142-143).

Although it is recognised that *'casting judgement of the state of contemporary film production is difficult'* (Leggott, 2017, p. 345); it is certainly true that conditions for independent and

domestic film production in the UK have been very difficult, especially since the global financial crash (SPI Olsberg, 2017). These difficulties, some structural (digital disruption) and others cyclical (global financial crisis), have had the net effect of reducing the international market for UK independent films. This has been especially difficult for films at lower budget levels (SPI Olsberg, 2017, p. 3); with a major decline in the annual production of films under the £500k budget level from a high of nearly 250 in 2010 to around 70 in 2017 (Follows, 2018). Furthermore, pressures on production companies have persisted with producers finding it difficult to retain any value in their films (SPI Olsberg, 2017, p. 3).

Whilst it is difficult to say how much the current malaise in the UK film industry is attributable to government policy, it is clear that an overall trend, that has existed throughout the history of the UK industry, continues: that larger productions benefitting from inward investment do well whilst the smaller, independent producers struggle. As Cateridge notes:

'the good news stories for the UK's production sector, such as the post-production triumph of Gravity (2013) or Star Wars: The Force Awakens (2015) shot at Pinewood Studios, mask the financial scarcity faced by first time filmmakers at the other end of the spectrum' (Cateridge, 2017, p. 355).

3.3 Defining the term 'UK film industry'

We began this chapter by focusing on the historical conditions that affect film production in the UK film industry. However, the term 'Industry' is broad and can signify several things, therefore it requires further definition in order to understand the conditions in which producer's work.

Caldwell has argued that it is unhelpful to think of '*the industry*' as a 'clear self-evident sphere' (Caldwell, 2013, p. 157) and has described it, amongst other things, as 'rhizomatic' and 'messy' (ibid, p. 157-165). The industry is not simply the site where films get made, it is a structure made up of several loosely connected companies and groups. Caldwell notes that the industry is not a

'monolith controlled by five or six conglomerates but rather a series of dense [rhizomatic] networks of subcompanies held at safe distance, loosely structured to flexibly adapt to new labour markets, new digital technologies and new consumer unruliness' (ibid, p. 161).

Furthermore, he remarks that understanding the industrial rhizome is complicated by its messy complexity and that it is not simply constituted by the companies and individuals that make films but also by a number of different interest groups which include (for example) professional groups, industry aspirants, even film schools and researchers themselves (ibid, p.164).

The UK film industry is also not a 'monolith' and is in fact made up of a set of separate '*sectors and constituencies*' (Doyle, 2014, p. 9). A 2012 Oxford Economics report has helped to further define those sectors and notes that the industry is comprised of '*those activities which arise in the UK from the companies and/or individuals employed in the: different stages of film production in the UK (including pre and post production); distribution of films (both UK and foreign made); and exhibition of films (both UK and foreign made)*' (Oxford Economics, 2012, p. 4). In other words, the industry can loosely be divided in to three sectors: production, distribution and exhibition. However, the report goes on to further define what it terms the 'core' UK film industry which they state is a 'narrower range of activities' which excludes the distribution and exhibition of foreign made films (ibid, p. 4).

Primarily, the work of the producer is concerned with activities that occur within the production sector. Of course, they are also involved with distribution and have a stake in exhibition, but, as the film value chain model shows, their work is generally undertaken in this sector. Activities in the production sector include: development, financing, pre-production (preparation for the film shoot), the shoot itself and post-production (editing, VFX, sound mix, etc) (Bloore, 2013).

Furthermore, the production sector itself can be also looked at as a set of separate groups which can be divided on the basis of sources of finance and budget levels. The BFI Statistical Yearbook

delineates the former groups into co-productions, domestic UK features and inward investment, defining them as:

-Co-production: "A film made by companies from more than one country, often under the terms of a bilateral co-production treaty or the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-production"

- *Domestic UK Feature – "A film made by a UK production company that is produced wholly or partly in the UK"*

- *Inward investment – "A film substantially financed and controlled from outside the UK and which is attracted to the UK by script requirements (e.g. locations) and/or the UK's filmmaking infrastructure and/or UK film tax relief". (BFI, 2016, pp. 271-276).*

It is also worth noting that UK film productions can operate on low, mid-range or higher budgets and, for producers, operating at different levels will have an impact on their role. Furthermore, such is the difference between films being made at the high and low end of the budget scale that many will consider them to be sub-sectors in their own right. There are several sources that define the budget bands. An analysis of the UK production sector identified the following bands:

- Over £10million;
- £5-10million (upper mid-range);
- £2-5million (lower mid-range);
- £0.5-2million (low budget);
- Below £0.5million (micro-budget).

(SPI Olsberg, 2017, p. 11).

However, there are alternative definitions for films at the low end of the budget scale. The Relph Report from 2002 is broadly consistent with the above and defines 'lower' budget films to be those operating on a sum between £2-4million (Relph, et al., 2002); but, a Northern Alliance

report from 2008 considers £1million to be the upper limit for a 'low budget' film (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 9). Furthermore, that report 'loosely divides' low budget films into sub-categories:

- £250,000 - £1million (low budget);
- £50,000 - £250,000 (micro-budget);
- Below £50,000 (no-budget).

(ibid.).

There are often many different issues for films on lower budgets and they often attract first time filmmakers who use it as an opportunity to learn, to showcase their talents and to progress within the film industry. Within this low budget sector, films are typically paid for by private investors, but some are subsidised by the public sector via the BFI and screen agencies; some of which are funded through specialist low and micro-budget film schemes. However, many of these films underperform throughout distribution and exhibition and most do not see it as a long-term financially sustainable business model (Northern Alliance, 2008, pp. 3-4 & 22).

It has been noted previously that UK film production is undercapitalised and reliant on inward investment. Taken together with its rhizomatic nature has led some to argue whether or not the UK has an 'industry' at all. Adams notes that in the UK:

'there is simply not an organised 'industry' in any meaningful sense, nor is there the critical mass to create a sustainable monolith. There is however, a complex, dynamic and diverse production culture across the United Kingdom creating a vast output of original works below the existing statistical radar' (Adams, 2014, p. 114).

3.4 Defining the 'independent' film industry

UK film production is often referred to as being 'independent' and as such it is important to clarify what that means in the context of this research.

Bennett (2015) provides a discussion on the different potential meanings of the term 'independent' and 'independence', arguing that it is possible to understand them at four possible sites of enquiry: the socio-political (where media is essentially free from repressive state control to publish what they choose); the industrial (which focuses on the 'economic and regulatory' arrangements of an industry); the formal (which relates to the aesthetic 'authenticity' of the work being produced); and finally, the rhetorical or discursive (a 'utopian ideal' expressed as an idea about a particular form of media [i.e. Indie film or Indie music] and guides the working practices of companies and individuals within it). These sites are not necessarily distinct but often overlap and reinforce one another (Bennett, 2015, pp. 3-4).

Furthermore, Bennett notes a differentiation between the terms 'independent media' and 'media independence'. The former 'refers to the specific, industrial' form that media takes whilst the latter is focused on '*the wider role that independent media might play within society, particularly the functioning of a better, more democratic, diverse, just and open society*' which includes '*the working conditions available to individuals*' (ibid, p. 3).

These distinctions are important and provide a framework to define the types of independence that are discussed in this study.

3.4.1.1 Industrial Meaning

First and foremost, the term 'independent', where used in this study, relates to its 'industrial' meaning and refers to the model of film production that is typical within the UK film industry. According to the BFI Statistical Yearbook (2017) an independent film is: "*A film produced without creative or financial input from the major US studio companies. These are: Fox Entertainment*

Group, NBC Universal, Paramount Motion Pictures Group, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Walt Disney Motion Pictures Group and Warner Bros Entertainment” (BFI, 2017, p. 266).⁷

Therefore, in its most simple definition the term ‘independent’ relates to any film ‘*whose financing has come...from outside the studio sector*’ (Davies & Wistreich, 2007, p. 11).

As noted previously, the major Hollywood film studios are ‘vertically integrated’ which means that each studio can control the development, financing, production and distribution of their own films (ibid, p. 8). In contrast, ‘independent’ production refers to the process that a producer must embark upon each time they make a film; where they are required to initiate and manage the efforts of a great number of individuals and companies on whom they are then reliant to provide the facilities and services that will get their film to market (Finney, 2010, pp. 10-11).

If the term ‘independent’, as it relates to the UK film industry, is to be understood as independent from the Hollywood studio system, it does not necessarily mean that producers are fully independent in the sense that they are free from the economic and regulatory arrangements or other commercial imperatives required to make a film. Returning to Bennett:

‘Ultimately of course, there is no such thing as absolutely true independence, in the sense of any form of cultural production that is one hundred percent lacking in dependence on anything of any sort’ (Bennett, 2015, p. 6).

In this regard, being ‘independent’ for a UK film producer only means that they are not financing, producing or distributing their film under a studio system. They are still dependent on other players within the film value chain and as such ‘independent’ should be considered as a ‘relational term’ (King, 2015, p. 52).

⁷ At the time of writing this was correct however, on 14th December 2017 The Walt Disney Company proposed a takeover of 21st Century Fox. This takeover is under review by the United States Department of Justice Anti-Trust Division (Johnson, 2017)

As such, it is important to understand what and who UK producers are actually dependent upon. It is also important to note that dependency levels may be different for each producer; this study focuses on emerging producers whose level of dependency may be greater than that of a more established producer. As Finney notes:

'While it is often said that 'the buck stops with the producer', the truth is that unless that same producer is an A-list, heavy weight power-broker, or backed by a heavyweight entity in the form of a Studio or major independent, he or she will find it harder to manage and control the range of tasks and differing third parties to achieve a successful outcome. That is...all 'Independent Producers' are really 'dependent'.

(Finney, 2010, p. 173)

So, what and who are UK producers dependent upon? Returning to Bloore's Independent Film Value Chain model can help to provide a deeper understanding.

As noted previously, the independent film value chain consists of seven separate stages:

- Development;
- Financing and Pre-Sales;
- Production: Shoot and Post;
- International Sales and Licensing;
- International Distribution;
- Exhibition and Exploitation; and
- Consumption.

(Bloore, 2013, p. 34)

Also noted above, the producer is instrumental in the development, financing, production, sales and distribution of their films. A brief overview of each of these key stages (development, financing and sales & distribution) follows; with a focus on the producer's level of dependency

at each stage. Owing to the number of variables in each single film production it should be noted that the processes described below will rarely be the same from one production to another; therefore, the following descriptions are generalisations based on the available literature that describes the various stages for UK domestic films.

Development

Development is the '*work that surrounds the initial concept or story idea, the acquisition of that idea, the screenwriting process, the raising of development finance and the initial stage of production planning*' (Finney, 2010, p. 22). For producers it can be a particularly high-risk stage of production; development can incur significant costs without any guarantee that a film will reach production (ibid, p. 25); Bloore notes that in 2007 only 18% of films developed in the UK reached production (Bloore, 2013, p. 34).

For a producer, their level of dependence on outside agencies will itself depend upon their ability to bear the cost of the development process or to find a source of funds for that purpose. Development is time consuming, with the possibility that it might take several years. During that time funds will be needed to pay screenwriters, to build the project package and from the costs incurred by the organisation of, and travel to, countless meetings with any number of potential partners. These costs can run into the thousands of pounds (Davies & Wistreich, 2007, p. 64; Finney, 2010, pp. 23-25).

In order to support this development finance will need to be found, either from the producer's own pocket or from their company reserves or slate funding (obviously this is unlikely to apply to emerging producers), from a public development fund, a broadcaster, a private financier or a distributor (Finney, 2010, p. 25).

This period in the value chain is especially difficult for emerging and low/micro-budget producers who have may little equity to put into their own films. Dale notes that the biggest

obstacle for a first-time film producer is how to pay the rent while trying to get their project off the ground; he also notes that they often seek parallel areas of work to subsidise their development activity (Dale, 1997, p. 231).

For most emerging producers the most likely source of funding for development will be from the national and regional screen agencies. Prior to a review of UK film policy following the 2010 election those agencies were the UK Film Council plus Film Agency for Wales, Northern Ireland Film Television Commission, Scottish Screen and nine English regional agencies: Screen East, EM Media, Film London, Northern Film & Media, Vision + Media, Screen South, South West Screen, Screen West Midlands and Screen Yorkshire (Davies & Wistreich, 2007, pp. 395-411).

However, since the review those agencies are now: British Film Institute, Creative England, Creative Scotland, Ffilm Cymru Wales, Northern Ireland Screen and Film London (BFI, 2018).

Financing

Financing independent films in the UK can be extremely complex and the whole budget for a film will frequently be raised through multiple sources. Arranging this process has been described as a *'jigsaw puzzle of distribution deals, tax deals, equity participants, ancillary licensing, deferrals, foreign subsidies and anything else the film-maker can think of'* (Dale, 1997, p. 96). As with many other areas of film production it can be intensely complicated and there are 'no rules' (Finney, 2010, p. 61). One consequence of the UK industry being 'independent' from Hollywood is that producers need to go through this complex process for each separate production (SPI Olsberg, 2017, p. 39).

There are certain distinctions that need to be made to further understand film financing. Finney argues that it is important to distinguish between film finance and investment. Both are essentially cash contributions towards the film production costs, but financiers and investors have different objectives and goals. A financier is not 'investing' money but rather giving money

to the producers in the form of a loan; once the film is sold (or the producers recoup their money from elsewhere) financiers will be the first to be repaid, usually with a small commission or interest payment but then take no further place in the recoupment schedule (the order in which financiers/investors are repaid) and will not stand to benefit from any net profits the film makes. Investors, on the other hand, are lower down on the recoupment schedule but have placed equity in the film and expect to make a return, profit, on their investment in perpetuity (Finney, 2010, pp. 61-62).

However, finance and private equity investment are not the only source of funds for film producers and there is a cocktail of other options that they can use to raise the money to meet their budget. The main sources include:

- **Public/State Subsidy:** This is the 'cornerstone' for many UK independent films finance plans. Much of the money comes from the National Lottery and is administered through a variety of schemes by the national and regional screen agencies (see Development above) as well as Channel 4 and the BBC.
- **Film Tax Relief and other tax incentives:** Most importantly here is the film tax credit which producers can apply for if their film qualifies as British (via the Cultural Test) and has a value of 20%-25% of the overall budget. Other tax driven schemes include Enterprise Initiative Scheme (EIS) and Seed Enterprise Initiative Scheme (SEIS) which provide incentives for investors to invest in, often high risk, industries.
- **Gap Finance:** Where there is a 'gap' between the equity/finance raised and the films budget specialist lenders will provide a gap loan, usually at a high cost. However, gap finance has been affected in recent years due to 'the UK banking sector almost completely withdrawing from independent film financing in the wake of the global recession'.

- Pre-Sales: Where a distributor of any particular territory purchase the rights to the film before it is made; however, this is becoming less common especially with low budget films that have no 'bankable cast' attached.

(Davies & Wistreich, 2007, pp. 16-17; Dale, 1997, pp. 93-103; SPI Olsberg, 2017, pp. 32-62; Finney, 2010, pp. 61-74; Grove, 2014, pp. 421-441)

Other sources of finance include, but not limited to: Broadcaster equity, Post-Production Provision, Sales Company Advance and product placement (ibid.).

Putting together these multi-party sources can be extremely complex, especially for emerging producers or those working on low and micro-budget productions which account for the majority of the films made in the UK. Between 2007-2015 almost 18 times as many films were made in the UK that were under £500k than there were at a +£10million budget level (SPI Olsberg, 2017, p. 10); with a total of 1,612 films were made in the micro-budget level during this period (ibid, p. 3).

For low/microbudget and emerging producers there are also a number of schemes that that can access via the screen agencies such as Cinematic (Ffcw), iFeatures (Creative England, BFI, BBC, Skillset), Microwave (Film London). Furthermore, there are other options for emerging producers such as asking key cast and crew to defer part or all of their payment in return for an share in profits; in kind support where service providers lend equipment, goods and services for less than their market value; crowdfunding and self-financing (Grove, 2014).

For producers with low levels of capital to put into their own films it means that they are dependent on the above sources of finance and investment to get their film made. This can leave them in a vulnerable position where it is easy for them to be exploited (Relph, et al., 2002, p. 70). Investors can often make high demands on producers which weakens their position when it comes to recoupment leaving them and their businesses struggling (SPI Olsberg, 2017, p. 39).

On micro-budget films, producers are also dependent on the in-kind support and deferrals of their cast, crew and other stakeholders; when cashflow is low this can sometimes mean that there is further downward exploitation where producers flout minimum wage regulations, health and safety practices, and have inappropriate contracts (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 35).

Sales and Sales Agents

Film sales is the process where a producer sells or licenses their films to a distributor. Sales agents are often used in this process and have the expertise to negotiate the rights to a film with distributors on behalf of the producer (Davies & Wistreich, 2007, p. 116). Sales agents often perform an important function in the financing of films, sometimes even going as far as to provide an advance on sales and can be given an executive producer credit for their work (Finney, 2010, p. 223; Grove, 2014, p. 281).

For producers, sales agents can play a vital role in getting a film to market; however, Finney argues that it is important that a producer chooses the correct sales agent as they might otherwise find that their film is either not marketed to its full potential by overstretched agents or that they are being represented by someone with insufficient 'weight' in the industry to get it noticed by the right distributors (Finney, 2010, p. 51).

A downside of using sales agents is that they can be expensive, especially for films in the lower budget ranges which has led to many producers attempting to bypass the traditional sales route and negotiating directly to distributors or even attempting self-distribution models (Smits, et al., 2016, p. 11).

Distribution

Distribution is the intermediary stage between film production and exhibition. Producers sell/licence the rights in their film to distributors (often via sales agents) to exploit the film in the theatrical and subsidiary markets (DVD, Video on Demand, etc) (Finney, 2010, p. 217). The

UK's distribution sector is dominated by a small number of Hollywood studios; however, the majority of films are released by a large number of smaller producers (Knight, 2017, p. 389).

Obtaining distribution is often the hardest stage for producers, it is '*arguably harder to bring a film to the market with success than it is to actually make one*' (Finney, 2010, p. 121). For several reasons, distributors are a powerful player in the value chain; however, due to the high costs of distribution and marketing they are also perceived to carry much of the risk. Distributors are seen as 'gatekeepers' to film markets and they obtain the power to dictate many of the terms of the film's release and recoupment strategy and are usually the main beneficiary of any profits. Crucially however, they also get to decide what films audiences see (ibid, pp.14-15, 122; (Knight, 2017).

The relationship between the producer and distributor is 'inherently unstable' and the UK distribution sector is highly competitive. Whilst the balance of power is tipped in favour of distributors, experienced producers are able to bring elements, such as strong cast, that distributors value. However, this is much less the case for emerging producers who are perceived as higher risk, which undermines their position to profit from the distribution deal (Finney, Angus, 2014, pp. 3-4).

This presents a difficult position for emerging producers; however, digital technologies now provide an opportunity for producers to bypass traditional distribution models all together and allows them to market their film directly to their audience (Finney, 2010, p. 123; Finney, Angus, 2014, p. 5; Smits, et al., 2016). Self-distribution models are becoming much more attractive to producers, allowing them more control over the distribution process. However, the self-distribution market is small and usually only utilised by low and micro-budget and specialist films. Furthermore, without the marketing budgets and expertise of established distributors, producers can often find it difficult to get their films noticed (Smits, et al., 2016, p. 11; BFI Network, 2016).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the conditions of the UK film industry. First it focused on the state intervention in the UK film industry and noted its 'Janus-faced' qualities in that it has historically tried to simultaneously encourage and resist the influence of the Hollywood studios.

In recent years, under the New Labour and coalition governments, policy was set up to encourage the 'sustainability' of the UK film industry and focused more on its economic importance than its cultural one. However, owing to the fragmented structure of the independent industry that sustainability has not been achievable.

The chapter has also attempted to further define the meaning of the term 'UK Film Industry' and noted that it is not one monolithic structure but is, in fact, a number of smaller sectors that can be broken down into activities (such as production, distribution and exhibition) as well as by geographical source of finance and budget amounts.

Finally, the chapter looked at the term 'independent' and noted its potential different meanings. But it has highlighted the industrial use of the term which refers to the film project value chain and how producers are required to manage the various stages of the filmmaking process in order to bring their films to market.

4 Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This is a qualitative, exploratory and interpretative study, utilising an approach known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a method and methodology. The research focuses on the micro-level, subjective and experiential accounts of emerging UK film producers. In doing so it has drawn influences from the growing sub-fields of Media Industry Studies such as Production Studies and Cultural Labour.

Caldwell has argued that there is a need of a '*bigger methodological toolbox*' within these kinds of research and that '*industry research is too important to leave solely to economists, political economists and media social scientists*' (Caldwell, 2013, p. 158).

In response, this research has utilised IPA: a phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic approach, to understand emerging film producers themselves; specifically focusing on the meanings that they have assigned to the lived experience of producing a first feature film. There are no previous instances of IPA being used in this field and as such this study makes a 'deep and narrow' contribution to our knowledge about emerging film producers.

This chapter outlines the philosophical assumptions and rationales that underpin the research and describes the practical methods that were employed. Split into three parts, the chapter covers: an overview of the approaches that have commonly been found in the study of media industries; the rationale for the use of IPA and finally, an overview of the methods used.

4.2 Methodology: Part 1

4.2.1 Various approaches in Film and Media Industries Studies

A central concern of the study has been to locate a suitable methodological approach. However, this has posed some challenges. Whilst it is noted that the research draws on fields such as Production Studies, it is noted that these fields often lack ‘a historical [methodological] tradition’ of their own and have instead borrowed ideas, methods and theories from a diverse set of disciplines (Mayer, et al., 2009, p. 6).

Therefore, the question has been what approach should be taken that is most suitable for the research? To answer this conundrum, I have turned to Smith who advises that selecting a qualitative approach should be dictated by the epistemological position of the research question (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 46). Following this rationale has led to IPA.

However, before I turn to the reasons why I have adopted IPA, I first provide a brief overview of various approaches that are pertinent to the study. Specifically, I look at the fields of Media Industry Studies, Cultural Labour and Production Studies; noting where the aims of those fields are consistent with the aims of this research.

The purpose of this undertaking is to acknowledge the existence of these disciplines and to recognise the influences that this IPA study draws upon whilst also providing some contextual background to the methodological choices that have been made. Caldwell notes the importance of acknowledging the connections between various theoretical registers because it opens up the possibility of dialogue between them (Caldwell, 2013, p. 158). This overview addresses the need for the thesis to engage with relevant methodological literature but is not intended to be comprehensive, that undertaking would be beyond the scope of the chapter.

Before going any further, it is worth noting that in studies of this kind labels such as ‘cultural industry’, ‘creative industry’ and ‘media industry’ are often used interchangeably and the terms

share several similarities. The cultural industries, as defined by Hesmondhalgh are '*those institutions (mainly profit making companies, but also state organisations and non-profit organisations) that are most directly involved in the production of social meaning*' and include the 'core' industries of: radio, television, film, music, publishing (print and electronic), video/computer games, advertising, marketing, public relations, web design and then other border line cases such as consumer electronics, IT, fashion and sport (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, pp. 16-20).

The creative industries, as a term, came to prominence in the UK following the election of the New Labour in 1997 (Hewison, 2014). Spearheaded by Chris Smith, the government had rebranded the Department of National Heritage to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS); the focus on these industries has been on their economic potential (ibid, p. 28). A recent statistical analysis of the creative industries shows that the DCMS recognises the following creative industry sectors: advertising and marketing, architecture, crafts, design (product, graphic and fashion), film, television, radio, video, photography, IT (software and computer services), publishing, museums, galleries, libraries, music and performance and visual arts (DCMS, 2015, p. 33).

The media industries focus on a rather smaller cohort and is limited in scope to consider activities in film, radio, television, advertising and new media (Holt & Perren, 2009).

Whilst these terms may overlap they signify a broad range of economic and artistic activities that are all potential sites for research.

4.2.2 Film Studies

An initial assumption of the research was that it would be considered as a contribution to Film Studies; however, there is a problem with this approach. As noted by Dyer, Film Studies primarily focuses on the aesthetic and social value of film texts themselves rather than the

industries that produce them (Dyer, 1998, pp. 8-10). Film studies can, and does, occasionally consider the influence of creators on those texts, notably in Auteur Theory (see Chapter 2), however, film producers have not figured highly in that discussion, and where they have it has rarely been in a positive way. Furthermore, the research is not about film texts but about the process of film production.

As such, a different approach was sought, one that prioritised film industries and accounted for the individuals who work within them.

4.2.3 Media Industry Studies

Media Industry Studies have grown substantially in recent years partly as a result in the growth of media industries themselves (Hesmondhalgh, 2010, p. 3). Hesmondhalgh notes that these studies focus on the *'people (producers) and processes (production) that cause media to take the form they do'* and that studies of media industries can be approached in a number of ways. He delineates four 'groups of approaches' to the study of media industries: 'mainstream organizational sociology of culture', which focuses on the close analysis of organisations and 'political economy approaches to the media' which focuses on questions of justice, power and equality in relation to the consumption of symbolic goods. Both of these are characterised as 'ageing' approaches which have stagnated in recent years (ibid, p. 147).

More fashionable approaches include 'management studies, business studies and organizational studies' and approaches that have been influenced by cultural studies, which is itself split into two groups. One group has been influenced by post-structuralist theory and is interested *'analysis of public policy under the 'creative industries' rubric'*; whilst the other, final group, and of most importance here, leans towards questions of subjectivity and argues for attention to be paid to quotidian production practices, for close analysis of those practices and the beliefs and discourses of media practitioners. Hesmondhalgh notes that this approach is more closely

influenced by fields such as anthropology and eschews the kind of Marxian concerns of the other approaches (ibid, pp145-148).

Holt & Perren note the difference between 'top down' and 'bottom up' approaches to media industry research. Top down approaches, which include media economic and industry analysis, tend to look at industrial and organisational structures of media industries from a macro-perspective; whilst bottom-up sociological and anthropological approaches, have used ethnographic orientated research to investigate '*the complex nature of power relations in the media industry*'. Calling for an integrated approach to investigating the media industries, Holt & Perren highlight where this has previously been attempted in political economy and cultural studies (Holt & Perren, 2009). Political economy approaches have been described as being historical and pay attention to the long-term changes of state, corporations and media; concerned with the balance between capitalist enterprise and public intervention and engage with moral question of justice, equity and the public good (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 43). Cultural studies, which have historically concerned itself with the interpretation of texts, have in recent times '*foregrounded the role of individual agents within larger media structures*' (Holt & Perren, 2009).

Havens et al (2009) also argue for the importance of a unified way of studying media industries, proposing an ecumenical approach that brings the varying macro and micro level theories into dialogue with each other. However, in an overview of the often-complex array of competing theories the authors criticise perspectives that privilege the macro-level structural, industrial, political and economic issues over the micro-level practices of individual media workers (Havens, et al., 2009, pp. 234-253).

To articulate their preference for micro-level examination of media industries, Havens et al use the analogy of flying over a city. A flight in a jet allows for a broad overview of the city (industry) but lacks detail whereas the same flight in a helicopter allows for a closer, more detailed

inspection of the issues under consideration: one that takes account of nuance and meaning making in the quotidian practices of media workers. However, this close inspection necessarily narrows the perspective and limits a broader understanding of industry (ibid.).

Schatz (2009) attempts to explain the macro/micro media industry studies approaches as they apply to the (Hollywood) film industry in a discussion on the industries 'modes of production'. Schatz, notes that the macro-industrial level assesses the structure and operations of the industry as a whole and understand it to be a '*commercial enterprise requiring enormous capital investment*' and is shaped by a tendency towards oligopoly, integration and distribution control. Micro-industrial level focuses more on individual production companies as well as producers and is concerned with questions of authority and power over the production process rather than the process itself (Schatz, 2009, pp. 45-56).

With regards to methodological approaches Havens et al advocate for '*grounded institutional case studies that examine the relationships between strategies (here read as larger economic goals and logics of large scale cultural industries) and tactics (the ways in which cultural workers seek to negotiate, and at times subvert, the constraints imposed by institutional interests to their own purposes)*' (Havens, et al., 2009, p. 247).

Paterson et al (2016) also reflect on methodological choices in contemporary media industries research. However, they do not advocate for a specific method noting that researchers should '*expand production research across boundaries of genre and medium, [and] to liberally borrow theory and method across previously rigid disciplinary borders*'. They also note that there has been a theoretical shift towards the subjective experience of cultural workers and to newer forms of research that draw on cultural studies such as Production Studies. These have three main characteristics: critical so grounded in questions of power and how cultural producers inhabit and exercise it; to understand how people work through professional organisations and

informal networks to come to shared practices and understanding of the world and; interest in micro-level, everyday interactions of cultural production (Paterson, et al., 2016, pp. 3-19).

The above works provide a useful overview of the various approaches to media industries studies. Those works tend to highlight such concerns as the macro versus micro perspectives of investigating the media industries, political and economic matters, the tension between art and commerce, and the power dynamics of the industry, that is, who wields it and for what purpose (Holt & Perren, 2009; Hesmondhalgh, 2010 & 2013; Havens et al, 2009; Szczepanik & Vonderau, 2013; Paterson, 2016; & Schatz, 2009). They also note a trend towards addressing the questions of film/media industry studies from a subjective, cultural studies perspective and note the emergence of subfields such as Cultural/Creative Labour and Production Studies.

4.2.4 Cultural Labour

The approaches within Media Industry Studies that draw on Cultural Studies have tended to focus on a number of key questions. One such question has been: 'What is the nature of work in the media industries?' (Hesmondhalgh, 2010, pp. 157-159). Academics concerned with this question have tended to focus on the field of Cultural Labour, which examines the relationships between media workers, institutions and media policy; highlighting issues such as self-actualisation, entrepreneurialism and the intrinsic motivation of those who engage with media production activities (ibid.).

Contemporary debates in this field have also focused on precarity and the availability of work; inequalities in the global cultural workforce; associations between aesthetic value and cultural work and; the invasion of cultural work into previously protected leisure time (Banks, et al., 2013, pp. 4-5).

Florida has argued that a new 'creative class' of people are transforming everyday life with new attitudes towards work. This shift has been driven by the need to satisfy a growing creative

impulse and has led to creative people eschewing traditional hierarchical systems of employment. Instead they have gravitated towards new values such as a desire for autonomy and peer recognition; they have moved to 'creative hubs' (cities with large populations of other creative workers and an abundance of creative work opportunities) and seek out creative experiences (Florida, 2004, pp. 1-17).

A driver of the move towards cultural work has been the need for self-realisation through 'good work' (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, pp. 1-8); which means that workers are no longer happy for what they see as traditional working environments and instead seek autonomy, choice and independence (Leadbetter & Oakley, 1999). However, this comes at a price and often involves self-exploitation, precarity, multi-tasking, anxieties about low pay and job insecurity plus a collapse of the boundaries between work and leisure (Gill & Pratt, 2008; Paterson, et al., 2016, p. 4).

Those affected by these issues have been labelled with terms such as a 'class in the making', the 'Precariat' and victims of globalisation because they bear the consequence of neo-liberalism's concerted effort of shifting the risks of employment on to workers themselves (Standing, 2014). This precarity can, and has, led to several deleterious effects on workers including the need to work long, unsociable hours, poor work-life balance and difficulties with organising collective bargaining (Gill & Pratt, 2008, pp. 15-20).

There are several studies that now focus on both positive and negative aspects of work in the cultural industries. Of note, there are empirical studies that have shown how individuals employed in the UK film industry work long hours on a project by project basis, suffering from 'structured job insecurity' and where networks become central to finding work (Blair, et al., 2001, pp. 182-183). Networks become a way for individuals to minimise and limit the uncertainty of this insecure form of employment; where they can build their reputation and form groups that will refer them for work (Blair, 2003, pp. 689-690).

Similar findings have been found in studies of UK television production: Lee finds that creative occupations are sites for exploitation and intense insecurity which is the cost workers are prepared to pay for self-actualisation and work they are passionate about (Lee, 2012, p. 497). Lee has also noted the significance of networks in finding work in television production; finding that networks can be exclusionary, can 'negate cultural diversity' and to be a beneficiary, individuals need a high level of cultural capital (Lee, 2011, pp. 561-563). The possession of 'capitals', whether social, cultural or economic (such as privileged education or recognised reputation), are a major factor in the advancement of individual careers; which is why the social composition of the workforce in the UK's film and television industries is not reflective of the diversity of the population and is weighted heavily towards white, middle class men (Randle, et al., 2015).

These studies emphasise the personal cost that workers are prepared to pay to do a job that will bring them independence and 'psychic income' from the 'utopian vision' of good work (Ryan, et al., 2014; Bennett, 2015, p. 3).

Elsewhere, work has focused on professional identities and the structure and subjectivities of cultural work. Structures includes status and protection of the profession, ethical guidelines of a profession, budgets, market characteristics, routines and rituals whereas subjectivity focuses on the things an individual worker brings to their work such as life phase, motivation, relationships and political views, etc. (Deuze & Lewis, 2013, p. 172). Of significance here, Long and Spink have applied discussions of professional identity to UK film producers and focused on the '*management of reputation, the articulation of ideas about creativity, competence and industry knowledge*'; finding that '*issues of integrity, authenticity and credibility are important dimensions of [a producer's] occupational identity*' (Long & Spink, 2014).

However, we still know little about cultural industry workers as individuals and there is further need to understand how their work is constructed, managed and performed. Approaches to

undertaking this work have been varied but there has been an uptake in '*grounded and empirically rich case studies that detail the conditions and character of cultural work*' (Banks, 2007, pp. 3-7).

Cultural Labour has been '*a significant strand of management studies*' (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 253); however, there are scholars that are taking a cultural studies approach and advocate for a '*vocabulary and methodology*' that are '*able to understand at the level of experience*' how cultural work is negotiated (McRobbie, 2002, pp. 523-524). This imperative mirrors the need for a greater understanding of the producer's role, whose working conditions often exist in parallel with those described above.

It is worth noting that producers differ in some ways from the freelance and project-based employees who are often the focus of Cultural Labour studies. These employees, known in the film industry as 'below the line' workers are, whilst employed, under the control and supervision of an employer which allows scholars to debate the power, politics and conditions of the cultural industries labour market. Often below the line workers will be employed by a producer (above the line) or a 'symbol creator' who will rarely have 'an authority figure' over them (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 261). Therefore, the participants of this study, as producers, are not employed in the ways that are often central to the discourse of Cultural Labour; they are entrepreneurial and self-employed (Leadbetter & Oakley, 1999). However, it is assumed that they too are working in a straightened industry, self-exploiting for often intangible rewards. In order to achieve their goals, producers are dependent on a host of agencies (investors, distributors, etc) (Bennett, 2015). As such, many of the debates raised by studies of Cultural Labour are relevant here.

Investigating their work will provide a deeper understanding of the nature of this dependency and should make a contribution to the scholarly work on Cultural Labour.

4.2.5 Production Studies

The emerging field of Production Studies is a significant influence on this research, particularly the work of Caldwell and Mayer et al (Caldwell, 2008; Mayer, et al., 2009). Mayer notes that the purpose of Production Studies is to examine *'the lived realities of people involved in media production'* and that it can be utilised to address the subjective, self-reflexive identities of media workers as they represent themselves whilst being *'mindful of the hierarchies throughout the work worlds that bear upon'* those identities (Mayer, et al., 2009, pp. 4-7).

In that regard, Production Studies is *'less interested in the strategies of media industries or corporations or governments or their various institutions (although these goals are often constitutively important), but in the goals of producers, in their own words'* (Banks, et al., 2016, p. xi). Taking this approach provides the nuanced 'helicopter' view proposed by Havens et al; allowing for a 'deep and narrow' understanding of the lives of media production workers, filling in gaps in knowledge left by other media industry research in partial and incremental ways (Caldwell, 2013, p. 158; Banks, et al., 2016, p. xi; Havens, et al., 2009).

Caldwell's book on Production Culture explains that the purpose of Production Studies is to focus on the 'cultural practices and belief systems' of media industry workers (his book deals specifically film and television workers). The work operates on a micro-social level and focuses on symbolic processes and collective practices with production workers critically analysing their own performance in complex ways which are *'highly coded, managed and inflected'* (Caldwell, 2008, pp. 1-2).

Elsewhere, Caldwell has explained the 'messy complexity' of researching film and television industries and expresses a need for a diverse range of approaches and methods to understand the 'larger picture' of media production. In his recommendations he suggests a need for methods that can account for, amongst other things, 'the vagaries of human subjects' who are self-conscious interpretative agents; he notes that these workers make sense of the impact of

their working lives at a local level suggesting phenomenology as a possible way of seeking to understand their actions and processes which are '*affective and embodied*' (Caldwell, 2013, pp. 157-165).

It is the purpose of this research to attend to the experiential claims of emerging film producers and the way they reflect on their work. However, Mayer notes that in Production Studies it is essential to attend the '*lived experience of the producer and the scholar alike*' (ibid, p. 9). From this position the following questions arise: how do we access experience of other people? What is the role of the researcher in that process?

Pickering has commented on the difficulty of accessing lived experience and warned that although it is '*not the high road to the palace of wisdom*'; researchers must at least attempt to understand the '*subjective dimension of social relations, on how particular social arrangements and configurations are lived and made sense of*' (Pickering, 2008a, pp. 17-18). However, he also notes that experience is never pure or transparent and needs to be interrogated (ibid, p. 19).

Mayer and Caldwell also both warn about the danger researchers face in taking participant representations at face value: Caldwell noting the need to question overt or intentional explanations and that industry professionals often engage in 'spin' (Caldwell, 2008, p. 3). Quite often, producers are considered to be 'elites' or 'exclusive informants' and the more powerful they are the more likely they are to either spin answers and gaining access to them at all can become difficult (Bruun, 2016; Ortner, 2009). Mayer echoes this observation claiming the need to be sceptical, questioning and reflexive (Mayer, et al., 2009, p. 5).

Pickering also raises questions about the role of the researcher and notes that they cannot access experience first-hand but need to make sense of it using interpretation, reflection and questioning (Pickering, 2008a). Geertz notes that researchers must '*struggle to look over the shoulder of his subject who struggles to make sense of himself to himself*' (Geertz, 1973).

With regards to methods, as noted previously, Mayer has warned that Production Studies have 'no historical tradition of their own' (Mayer, 2009: 6) so adopting a methodology is not a simple task. It is noted that there has been a recent turn towards ethnographic methods in media industry studies (Spicer, et al., 2014). Caldwell has adopted a mixed method approach but has done little to offer 'clear methods' for other researchers in this field (Presence & Spicer, 2016)

What is left is to find a method and/or methodology that can account for the experiential qualities of a producer's working life and the reflexive work of the researcher who is trying to understand it. Guided by Smith's advice that methodology should be dictated by the research question (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 46) and returning to Paterson's call for scholars to '*liberally borrow theory and method across previously rigid disciplinary borders*' (Paterson, et al., 2016) I will now attempt to demonstrate IPA, with its commitment to phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, provides a useful contribution to gaining insight into the working lives of emerging film producers.

4.3 Methodology: Part 2

4.3.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA is primarily concerned with the detailed examination of personal lived experience and how research participants make sense of that experience (Eatough & Smith, 2013, p. 179; Gil-Rodriguez & Hefferon, 2013, p. 28). In IPA, experiential data is collected through semi-structured interviews and then interpreted via a subjective and reflective process (Reid, et al., 2005, p. 20).

It is a recently developed approach to qualitative research that is both method and methodology and originated by Jonathan Smith, first in a journal article from 1996 and then in his 2009 book *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method & Research*, written with co-authors Paul Flowers and Michael Larkin (Smith, et al., 2009). This is a key text which describes the theoretical underpinnings and operational methods typical of this kind of research.

IPA has been used in the human and social sciences, but its main application and contribution has been in psychology. However, Smith emphasises that this should be read as psychology with a small *p* and can be used by anyone who is concerned with any aspect of the human predicament. Whilst it may have been used primarily by psychologists, Smith notes that there is no reason why it could not be used within other disciplines (he gives Film Studies as an example), as long as the researcher is willing to engage with the psychological aspect of human experience such as personal and cultural identity (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 5; Reid, et al., 2005, p. 21).

IPA is an inductive and exploratory approach to research. That is, the research is not attempting to verify or negate specific hypothesis which are based on existing theory but rather constructs broad research questions which are flexible enough to allow for unexpected themes to emerge during analysis (Smith, 2004, p. 43). IPA is particularly suited to exploratory research where a theoretical pretext may be lacking and there is a need to discover new information about the subject under investigation (Reid, et al., 2005, p. 23; Phillips & Pugh, 2010, p. 59). As there has

been no previous research on emerging producers or the process of producing a first feature an exploratory approach is considered to be appropriate; it is anticipated that this approach will provide a basis for understanding the unique features of producing a first feature film.

This section of the methodology chapter now attempts to explain the theoretical underpinnings of IPA and why this methodology can make a useful contribution to Production Studies despite not having been previously used in this context.

4.3.2 Qualitative Approach

This research adopts a qualitative mode of inquiry. Qualitative research provides a distinctive way of looking at social or human problems and offers researchers opportunities to take an in-depth look at the subjects they are investigating (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As noted by Silverman, qualitative research methods *'exemplify a common belief that they can provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be attained from purely quantitative data'* (Silverman, 2000, p. 8).

As is the case with this research it is noted that qualitative researchers are searching for meaning; in particular, they focus on the *'social meaning people attribute to their experiences, circumstances, and situations, as well as the meanings people embed into texts and other objects'* (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 4).

Qualitative research comes from a post-positivist perspective which acknowledges reality as subjective and multiple whilst positioning researchers actively within their research (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 23).

The qualitative approach taken here is in opposition to positivist, quantitative approaches which search for general laws of social behaviour through numerical and statistical means; arguing that reality is objective and only knowable through direct observation (Silverman, 2000, p. 300; Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 23).

A quantitative approach was considered but it was decided that such an approach would not yield the desired results as it conflicted with the general aims of this study and as such it was deemed inappropriate. As noted by Crossan, a major criticism of positivist, quantitative approaches is that they do not *'provide the means to examine human beings and their behaviours in an in-depth way'* (Crossan, 2003, p. 51).

4.3.3 Ontological and Epistemological assumptions

A further reason for adopting a qualitative approach from a quantitative one is that they make different epistemological claims from one another (Gil-Rodriguez & Hefferon, 2013, p. 5). Ontological and epistemological assumptions are important because they signpost the researcher towards what can be known and the most appropriate methods for data gathering and analysis.

Ontology questions the nature of social reality (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 13). As with the difference between quantitative and qualitative research there are many different approaches to the question of ontology with the positivist response assuming that reality is rigid. Crossan notes that positivists believe in *"an objective reality exists which is independent of human behaviour and is therefore not a creation of the human mind"* (Crossan, 2003, p. 50). However, post-positivist researchers do not see reality in such rigid terms and instead consider reality to be multiple, subjective and mentally constructed by individuals (ibid, p. 54; Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 35).

Epistemology is a philosophical belief system about who can be a knower (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 13). It is concerned with such questions as: what counts as knowledge? How are knowledge claims justified? What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched? (Creswell, 2013, p. 21).

Epistemology, Maynard explains, is *"concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both*

adequate and legitimate" (Maynard, 1994, p. 10). Crotty states that this is why researchers need to explain the epistemological stance they have adopted (Crotty, 1998, p. 10).

It is noted that there are a range of epistemological positions a researcher could take from objectivism (a positivist world view which holds that truth is objective and exists separately from an individual's consciousness) to subjectivism (there is no external reality and only an individual's consciousness can be trusted) (ibid, p. 8).

Crotty also notes that *'ontological issues and epistemological issues tend to emerge together'* (ibid, p. 10). Whilst highlighting the vast array of ontological debates in existence he notes that researchers do not tend to start the research process by asking themselves what their philosophical position is and then working towards a research question; rather it is the other way around (ibid, p. 11). It is a consideration of the social and cultural context of the research question as well as the purpose of the research question that leads the researcher to adopting an ontological and epistemological position (ibid, p. 11; Smith, 2009, p. 46).

Having defined the nature of epistemology and ontology it is important to consider the various frameworks that are of significance to this study. However, it has proved to be impossible to find one particular world view which accounts for the plurality of positions one can take. It should be noted that debates surrounding philosophical positions are constantly renegotiating the boundaries between these positions and there are *"many paradigms that continue to evolve"* (Boateng, 2012, p. 19). However, despite that qualification, it is noted that, broadly speaking, many of the views held by constructionists are relevant to this study.

The main concern of constructionism is to explain the processes that people describe, explain or account for the world and that *"ontologically, constructionists believe that reality is ongoing, dynamic and reproduced by people acting on their interpretations of the world. Epistemologically, constructionists are subjective."* (Welford, et al., 2011, p. 42).

The basic assumptions of a constructionist world view is that realities are multiple, subjective, value laden and socially constructed. Furthermore, it holds that researchers are not independent of what is being researched and that they co-construct knowledge with their participants. As noted by Etherington: *“reality is socially constructed and subjectively determined”* (Etherington, 2004, p. 71).

Crotty notes that constructionism *“is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context”*. (Crotty, 1998, p. 42).

There are a number of different perspectives within constructionism including social, contextual, radical and interpretative (Burr, 2003; Madill, et al., 2000; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Interpretative and contextual constructivist approaches are particularly pertinent to this research. With regards to interpretative constructionist approaches the position of the researcher within the research becomes important. Rubin & Rubin argue that:

“Those who follow the interpretive constructionist approach recognise that researchers also make cultural assumptions that influence what they ask and how they construe what they hear. Interpretive researchers do not need to drop their cultural assumptions and assume those of their conversational partners, but researchers do need to be cautious lest they fail to hear the meaning of what the interviewees have said because their own cultural assumptions get in the way” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 29).

Not needing to drop cultural assumptions is important because *“any discoveries that we make must necessarily be a function of the relationship that pertains between the researcher and subject matter...The researcher is an inclusive part of the world they are describing”* (Larkin, et al., 2006, p. 107).

Researcher subjectivity is also a feature of contextual constructionist approaches (Madill, et al., 2000, p. 6). However, contextualism is also concerned with the way that human experience is grounded in the historical, cultural and social situations in which they were created.

Jaeger and Rosnow argue that *“the basic assumption of the contextualist perspective is that human acts or ‘events’ are active, dynamic, and developmental moments of a continuously changing reality. Individuals are here accorded a primarily intentional role rather than a passive or reactive one in this process of change.”* (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988, p. 65).

Most importantly it continues:

“Given contextualism’s emphasis on intentionality, it is important to underscore the fact that human intentionality is not perceived as developing abstractly, or in a vacuum, but rather within the context of an historical, cultural and social milieu that is in itself in transition” (ibid, p. 66).

Given the ‘context’ in which this research is situated this last statement seems highly pertinent to the choice of IPA for this research. It is considered that the context of this research is highly significant to the way that the subjects will have experienced that process. Furthermore, with regards to researcher subjectivity, it is considered that the sense-making activities of this research will be co-developed between the researcher and the participant with an understanding that the researcher will bring their own cultural assumptions to bear on it. As such the contextual and interpretivist constructionist perspectives are all considered to be relevant to the approach this research is taking.

In order to further understand the relevance of these ontological and epistemological positions we must now turn our attention to the theoretical perspectives of IPA.

4.3.4 Theoretical Underpinnings of IPA

4.3.4.1 Phenomenology

The central focus of phenomenology is on a person's lived experience and searching for commonalities and shared meanings amongst people who have had experience of a particular phenomena (Dowling, 2004, p. 31). Lived experience has been described as '*the individual experiences of people as conscious human beings*' (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 314).

Smith notes that whilst there are "*many different emphases and interests among phenomenologists*", they all have the tendency to "*share a particular interest in thinking about what the experience of being human is like*" (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 11).

Phenomenology was developed by Edmund Husserl in the early twentieth century who argued that experience should be examined on its own terms. Husserl defined phenomenology as '*the study of the essence of conscious experience*' and stated a need to '*go back to the things themselves*' (ibid, p. 12); meaning that in order to understand an object ('things') we must first address our own preconceived notions of what those things are.

Husserl's approach required a shift from 'a natural attitude' (a state of unreflective immersion in our own consciousness) to a 'phenomenological attitude' (a move away from the natural attitude to a reflective focus on our own perception of the things under examination). In order to do so Husserl suggested that we 'bracketed' out our own knowledge, bias and perceptions of the phenomena under investigation.

Critics of Husserl noted that he was '*engaged in conducting a phenomenological inquiry on his own experience*' (Shinebourne, 2011, p. 18); however, the majority of phenomenological inquiry focuses on the analysis of other people's experiences.

Phenomenological thinkers such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre moved away from Husserl's 'transcendental/descriptive' approach to phenomenology to adopt more hermeneutic

and existentialist approaches. Their contribution to phenomenology understood the subjective nature of phenomenological enquiry and sought a “*view of a person as embedded and immersed in a world of objects and relationships, language and culture, projects and concerns*” (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 21). The hermeneutic/existential approach was more focused on interpretation and recognised that people were subjective, unable to fully ‘bracket’ out their experiences.

Max van Manen has been a recent proponent of hermeneutic phenomenology and has argued for its effectiveness in *Researching Lived Experience* (van Manen, 1997). He notes that phenomenology is useful for understanding what everyday experience is like and that it is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the internal meaning structures of everyday experience. However, he warns that it is not intended to classify those experiences and is not useful for research that aims to ‘problem solve’, instead it is focused on meaning and the significance of phenomena (ibid, pp. 8-24).

This phenomenological approach is appropriate to this research as it is consistent with the cultural studies approach taken and focuses on the embedded, lived experience of the research participants.

It should also be noted that whilst the goal here is to access the experience of the participants, direct access is not possible (Gil-Rodriguez & Hefferon, 2013, p. 23). Rather, IPA researchers rely on hermeneutics, and the double hermeneutic, to get ‘experience close’ (ibid.)

4.3.4.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation and has its origins in the interpretation of biblical text (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 21). It is an important feature of IPA because it has consequences for the way that phenomenological experiences are analysed. Heidegger, along with Gadamer and Schleiermacher, was a key figure in the development of hermeneutics.

As hermeneutics are orientated towards the interpretation of texts (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 314) there is a strong emphasis on language; it is considered that human beings experience and understand the world through language. Hermeneutics is primarily concerned with the methods and purposes of interpretations and asks such questions as: is it possible to uncover the intentions or original meanings of an author? What is the relation between the context of a text's production and the context of a text interpretation? (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 22). Therefore, these questions begin to focus on the complex relationship between the researcher and participant. It is through this hermeneutic process that attention is brought to the *'lived experience of the producer and the scholar alike'* (Mayer, et al., 2009, p. 9).

Despite there being no universal principles in hermeneutics, IPA focuses on a number of very important features of hermeneutics that are worth considering here. These include: the hermeneutic circle and the double hermeneutic.

The hermeneutic circle describes an approach to interpreting texts and is concerned *"with the dynamic relationship between the part and the whole, at a series of levels"* (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 28). Smith explains that a part can only be understood in relation to the whole and the whole only understood in relation to its parts or: *"for example, the meaning of a word only becomes clear when seen in the context of the whole sentence. At the same time, the meaning of the sentence depends upon the cumulative meaning of the whole word"* (ibid, p. 28). In other words, what is required is an iteration between the interdependent meaning of the parts and the whole of the texts being analysed (Boateng, 2012, p. 24).

These contextual relationships can be seen to occur in a circular way: first there is the researcher's fore-understanding of the subject, then once he/she has encountered the subject to interpret their experience the fore-understanding is revised and so on. This cycle is of particular importance in order to obtain rich analysis of the data:

“The idea is that our entry into the meaning of the text can be made at a number of different levels, all of which relate to one another, and many of which will offer different perspectives on the part-whole coherence of the text” (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 28).

The double hermeneutic employs this part/whole system but specifically relates to the researcher and the participant:

“Double hermeneutic seeks to describe the process whereby participants make sense of × while researchers make sense of participant’s sense making. IPA always involves researchers own interpretations as they try to make sense of what is being said while remaining grounded in the interview text” (Finlay, 2011, p. 141).

This is of importance considering the nature of the world that is inhabited by the participants and, as a former filmmaking practitioner, my efforts to understand it. In the collection of essays on Production Studies Mayers, Banks and Caldwell note that studies of research in production cultures *“should not be undertaken without paying particular attention to the lived experience of the producer and the scholar alike...studies of production inevitably involve and animate complex, and sometimes problematic, relations between researchers and their human subjects”* (Mayer, et al., 2009, p. 9). Furthermore, in his own research Caldwell has pointed to Geertz whose anthropological research led him to realise that he was *‘struggling to look over the shoulder of his subject who struggles to make sense of himself to himself’* (Caldwell, 2013, p. 163). The double hermeneutic provides a way of attending to that struggle by acknowledging the role of the researcher in the process and provides a way to account for both parties in the analysis via the interpretation.

4.3.4.3 Idiography

One of the most significant features of IPA is its commitment to idiography. Idiography is concerned with the particular meaning of individual experience and does not attempt to

establish universal or causal laws. It can be seen to operate at two levels: on the particular details of each case and of the particular context of the research (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 29). As noted by Finlay:

“The idiographic sensibility of IPA is revealed in researchers’ commitment to understanding experiential phenomena from the perspective of particular individuals in particular contexts” (Finlay, 2011, p. 140).

From a practical point of view IPA is committed to ‘the fundamental principle’ of an in-depth analysis of each single case before looking at connections between them (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, p. 363). During analysis researchers focus on the particular details of each case and conduct detailed, systematic and in-depth examinations of each case before cautiously moving to the next case which must then be examined on its own terms. Once each case is completed researchers then look for convergence and divergence across cases; it is these patterns that are then reported in the write up (Smith, 2004, p. 41; Smith, et al., 2009, p. 100). Smith argues that the focus on detailed, nuanced analysis is only possible with small sample sizes which may differ to other forms of qualitative study (Smith, 2004, p. 42).

It should be noted that the analysis is an attempt to focus on the meaning of a phenomena for an individual rather than on the individual themselves and recognises that whilst experience is ‘embodied, situated and perspectival’ it is also ‘worldly and relational’; this describes, rather well, the attempt by IPA to attend to the experience of the individual whilst also seeking to understand the context in which those experiences took place (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 29).

Finally, it should be noted that idiographic approaches differ from nomothetic ones and this has consequences for how IPA research claims to be generalisable or representative.

Nomethetic research seeks to make general claims at population level and has been criticised for being actuarial and probabilistic and dealing in group averages (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 30).

This is not the case with idiography which, as discussed above, focuses on the particular details of each case. Yin and Platt have both argued for the importance of approaching research in this way claiming that something is 'intrinsically interesting' and can demonstrate 'existence' then it is worthy of study (Platt, 1988; Banks, 2007; Yin, 1989).

However, it does not mean that IPA research cannot be generalisable but simply that generalisations have to be approached in cautious way. IPA researchers do this in their analysis through 'theoretical generalisability'; following the case by case focus on the particular in the final stages of their analysis and written report researchers connect and compare results to the extent literature thus shedding new light on existing understanding (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 38). In conducting the research in this way, the results can contribute to the overall understanding of emerging film producer's in the 'deep and narrow' way that has been suggested by Caldwell (Caldwell, 2013, p. 158).

This idiographic approach is also considered to be appropriate due to the highly complex and unstable conditions in which we have to contextualise the producer's role. If we are to follow the assumption that "*there are almost as many ways of functioning as a producer as there are producers*" (Puttnam, 2006, p. 15) and that the role of the producer can only be '*understood within the specific industrial and economic context within which they operate*' (Spicer, et al., 2014) then it seems right that we should approach making general claims with caution.

4.3.5 Alternative Methodologies

Before moving on to the research design section of the methodology I will first provide a brief discussion of the other methodologies that were considered for this research and why they were discounted.

4.3.5.1 Ethnography

Ethnographic research focuses on developing a complex, complete description of the culture of a group. This is achieved through extensive fieldwork incorporating interviews, participant observation and a range of other data sources with the researcher completely immersing themselves within the culture of the group being investigated (Creswell, 2017, pp. 90-91). Ethnographic approaches have been used very successfully in the studies of film producers (and other film and media practitioners) by the likes of Rosten (1941), Powdermaker (1950) and then later by Caldwell (2008) and Ortner (2013).

However, an ethnographic approach was discounted for two reasons. Firstly, it was an important issue of this research to try to understand the process of film production from the perspective of the participant's themselves rather than to describe the culture that they belong to; as such it was considered that IPA is more suited to that task. Secondly, ethnography's commitment to extensive fieldwork is time consuming and as such was considered to be prohibitive in regard to the resources available. Following a film producer, or producers, from development through to exhibition would not have been possible. Bloore estimates the times a feature film can take to produce:

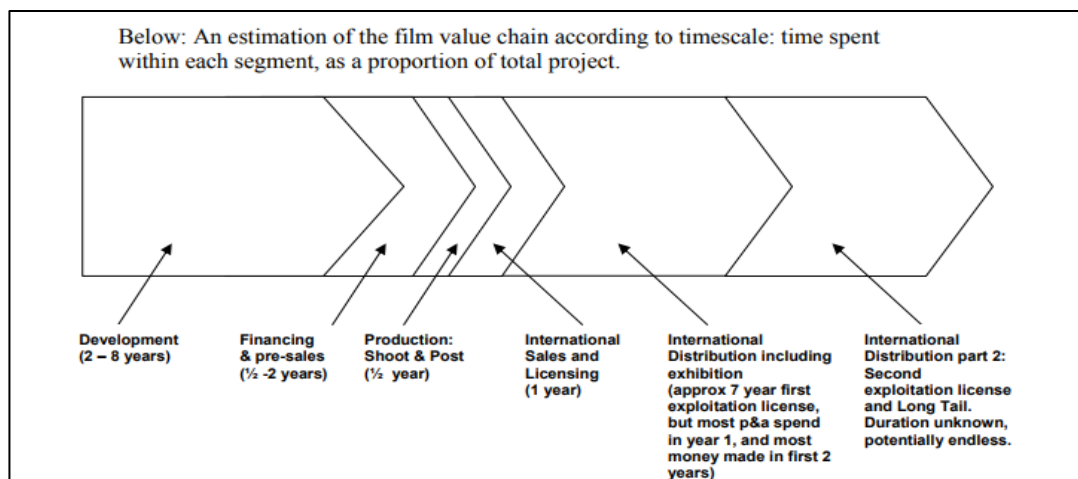


Fig 4.1 Film Value Model Timescale taken from Bloore (2013) p45

Even using the shortest possible time as a guide it could take up to four years to take a feature film project from development to distribution. Furthermore, these estimates do not account for

the high risk nature and uncertainty of film production; there is little guarantee that any given film will reach production let alone distribution and therefore the risk of project failure would have been too high. As such an ethnographic approach was discounted.

4.3.5.2 *Grounded theory*

Grounded Theory (GT) was developed in the 1960s by Glasser and Strauss and aims to generate new theory for a process or action, focusing on how people who have shared an experience do something rather than how they make sense of it (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 83; Gil-Rodriguez & Hefferon, 2013, p. 74). The purpose of GT is to develop explanatory level accounts which are generalisable and make predictions about the future (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 45; Gynnild, 2016, p. 115).

Despite their being few examples of GT in the study of film/media industry/Production Studies there are some notable examples including Jones work on the management of film production within the Australian film industry (Jones, 2005). Furthermore, this approach has been advocated by scholars such as Astrid Gynnild who argues that it is an appropriate methodology to advance media Production Studies (Gynnild, 2016). Citing the benefits of GT she notes its ability to produce valuable future predictions, its flexibility to work alongside other theoretical sources and its iterative nature, meaning it can be constantly developed and improved once new data comes to light (ibid, pp. 127-128).

Despite sharing many similarities in purpose and method its focus on generalisability, process rather than sense making and is explanatory rather than exploratory has led me to adopt the IPA approach. Furthermore, Smith argues that IPA is more likely to offer a more detailed and nuanced account of lived experience (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 202).

4.4 Methodology: Part 3

4.4.1 Method & Research Design

Many advocates of IPA state that it is not a 'prescriptive approach' (Finlay, 2011, p. 141); however, there are certain exemplar features you would expect to see during the data-gathering stage of an IPA study. Those features include: that data is collected via semi-structured interviews; sample sizes are small and should be both purposive and homogeneous. Interviews were recorded and transcribed before being analysed using the IPA method. This section provides further description of the methods that have been used in the recruitment, data gathering and analysis phase of the research and are consistent with the aims of an IPA study.

4.4.2 Recruitment

4.4.2.1 Sampling in IPA

IPA advocates for a purposive, homogenous sample (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 3). According to Langridge, in IPA:

“the sampling is likely to be purposive and homogeneous. That is, participants are recruited who share the experience at the heart of the investigation. The aim is to recruit a sample of people such that the researcher can make claims about these people and their particular shared experience. Studies are therefore idiographic, and there will be little attempt to generalise beyond this particular sample” (Langridge, 2007, p. 58).

Therefore, a purposive sample is appropriate because it *“allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested”* (Silverman, 2000, p. 104). In other words, a purposive sample allows researchers to design a criteria based on the phenomenon

under investigation and then to select individuals for participation who are representative of that criteria (Creswell, 2013, p. 156).

A homogenous sample *“involves individuals who belong to the same subculture or have similar characteristics”* (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010, p. 139). That is, all the individuals that are invited to participate in the study will have had experience with the phenomenon under investigation.

The benefit of employing this purposive, homogenous technique is that *“by making the groups as uniform as possible according to obvious social factors or other theoretical factors relevant to the study, one can then examine in detailed psychological variability within the group, by analysing the convergence and divergence which arises”* (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 49).

4.4.2.2 Sample Criteria

According to Payne *“purposive samples should be selected on the basis of criteria which must be explicitly stated when reporting the results”* (Payne, 2007, p. 74). As such, the following criteria has been applied in the search for suitable participants for this study:

- Received a full producer credit on at least one feature length film;
- UK citizen & resident during the period of production;
- Each participant’s film should be classified as a UK ‘domestic’ production;
- Their first feature film:
 - Fiction but of any genre (non-fiction producers were not considered);
 - Entered production after 1st January 2007;
 - Has been distributed theatrically, via DVD or available to the general public on at least one platform, in at least one territory.

The above criteria were designed to specifically target people with experience of the subject being studied. As noted by Smith & Osborn the topic effectively defines who the participants should be:

“How the specificity of a sample is defined will depend on the study; in some cases, the topic under investigation may be rare and define the boundaries of the relevant sample” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 56). The study aims to focus on the lived experiences of emerging UK feature film producers and the meanings they have assigned to the process of making that film. Therefore, many of the above criteria will be self-explanatory and are indeed bound by the topic under investigation.

However, some of the criteria require further justification or definition. Specifically, the criteria that feature films should be UK domestic productions. A domestic feature is a film that has been produced wholly or partly within the UK, using UK finance; this excludes co-productions (made in partnership with companies from other countries) and inward investment features (which is a film that has been substantially financed by an entity from outside of the UK but retains some UK cultural features) (BFI, 2017, pp. 264-266).

The criteria stipulates that films should have entered production after 1st January 2007. This has been included for two reasons. First, because this reflects the DCMS’s revised cultural test for film which qualified UK films for tax credits (Hill, 2016, p. 713). Secondly, I had wanted to interview my contemporaries and those that were best situated to provide insight into the conditions of film production at that time. Finally, it was important that the participants had reached distribution with their films as I was interested in talking to producers who had experience of the full independent film value chain.

However, as well as specifying who should be included in the research the criteria also shows who should be excluded. It is noted that participants should have received one ‘full’ producer credit; this stipulation is designed to exclude persons who have received any one of the ‘roll call’

of producer credits but are not producers in the truest sense. Therefore, Associate Producers, Line Producers, Co-Producers, Assistant Producers and Executive Producers are excluded.

Despite being purposive and homogenous the sample criteria did contain some random elements and had not sought to be overly prescriptive. There was no specification that the producer needed to be of any gender, age, ethnicity, from any particular geographical region of the UK, whether their film was financed through private equity or public subsidy, that their film should be of a specific genre or budget size. It is acknowledged that each of these issues will have had some affect on how the participant experienced the process of making their film but this was not the primary concern. Inclusion of these issues would have fundamentally changed the purpose of this research and would have required consideration within the interviews in order for analysis to be robust. As this is the first empirical research that focuses on emerging UK producers there was a desire to have some breadth within the sample, thereby opening up possibilities for divergent as well as convergent experiences amongst the participants.

4.4.2.3 Sample Size

Choosing an appropriate sample size was an important consideration of this study. Mason has conducted a report that extrapolates average sample sizes in qualitative PhD studies. Taken from a dataset of 560 qualifying studies the report concluded that the average sample size for qualitative studies was 31; with the average sample size of phenomenological studies coming out at 25. It is noted that this average comes from a review of only 25 qualifying phenomenology PhDs noting a high of 89 participants and a low of 7 (Mason, 2010).

However, there are significant problems with this report that make it an unreliable source from which to choose an appropriate sample size. In his review, Mason does not account for any of the methodological or operational differences between the various qualitative approaches or why some approaches (or researchers) use larger sample sizes than others. Furthermore, he does not account for the various approaches and perspectives within phenomenology itself

which includes transcendental/descriptive phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology and IPA among others. This is unhelpful and would make using his participant average as a guide for choosing a sample size arbitrary rather than in line with the purposes of this study.

Furthermore, the central premise of Mason's report is that the 'guiding principle' of all qualitative studies should be saturation. The purpose of saturation is that a researcher should continue to collect data until they stop finding any new information (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 318). Mason goes on to acknowledge that his position is '*hotly contested*' and that '*not all qualitative researchers see saturation as the aim of their study*' (ibid.). As discussed, IPA is an idiographic approach to research that focuses on the particular details of a case and does not seek generalisation in the same way as other qualitative approaches that do aim for saturation, such as Grounded Theory. As such, this study does not accept the idea that saturation should be a guiding principle of research (or selecting sample size) and asserts that sample sizes should be guided by what is most appropriate within the methodological context of their research.

Therefore, sample size has been guided by a review of phenomenological and IPA literature and in joint discussion with supervisors. Creswell advises that phenomenological studies should aim to include between 5 and 25 participants and notes that in his own research he has seen studies ranging between 1 and 325 cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 79 & 159). Whilst the suggested 5-25 provides a starting point with which to identify a suitable sample size it is noted that in IPA 'less is more' with 10 being the higher end of most recommendations (Larkin, et al., 2006, p. 22). This is echoed by Finlay who notes that:

"For qualitative researchers in general, and phenomenologists in particular, more is not necessarily better when it comes to sample size" (Finlay, 2011, p. 191).

In IPA, it has been suggested that: '*as a rough guide they suggest between three and six participants for an undergraduate or masters level...study and from four to ten data points for professional doctorates, with recommendations for PhD becoming less easy to explicate*' (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011, p. 756). Smith and Eatough states that for a PhD "*six to eight*

is an appropriate number” (Smith & Eatough, 2007, p. 40); whilst Smith has, elsewhere, suggested between 5 and 10 noting that the ‘detailed, nuanced’ approach to analysis in IPA is only possible with small samples. He has also suggested that it is possible to meet the commitments of IPA with a sample size of 1 and also that conducting a good IPA study becomes more problematic with sample sizes that are too large rather than too small (Smith, 2004, p. 42; Smith, et al., 2009, p. 51).

This literature was discussed with supervisors and it was initially decided that a sample size of 8 would be an appropriate number. The final study utilises a sample size of 7 as a result of a participant withdrawal at a late stage in the data collection process; this is discussed later in the chapter.

4.4.2.4 Method of Recruitment

Identifying potential participants was complicated by the specificities of the purposive sampling criteria. Convenience or other non-probability sampling methods were deemed inappropriate owing to the specialist skillset of producers. Despite working in the entertainment industry emerging producers are not highly visible public figures and there is a limited pool of available talent. In order to navigate the difficulties of locating participants a system was devised and spreadsheet created to track suitability. The following three sources were used to identify participants:

- Using personal contacts and networks
- Researched via online resources of relevant film agencies (such as British Film Institute)
- Researched via lists of recently released of UK qualifying films

Once a person had been identified their name was entered on to a spreadsheet; following the initial search fifty potential names were entered.

The next stage in identifying participants was to confirm their suitability. In order to do that their names and career history was cross-referenced against the online resource: Internet Movie Database. If, following that cross-reference check, the person was deemed suitable for participation they were then marked as 'ready to contact' on the spreadsheet. Initially twenty names were marked as ready to contact.

Contact details were then found via internet searches. On only one occasion could an email address or other contact detail not be found for a potential participant and then initial contact was made via the social network Twitter.

Once contact details had been found an initial email was sent to the potential participant introducing the research and asking if they wished to participate. Of an initial eight that were contacted four expressed interest in participation, two declined and two did not respond. Further contacts were made until a full quota of participants had been attained. Following expression of interest participants were sent a formal invitation to participate and consent form (see Appendix 3 & 4). Finally, interviews were arranged at a time and place convenient to the participant.

Of the eight participants contact seven interviews were completed; the eighth potential participant broke off email contact at a late date. At that stage significant amounts of data had already been generated via interviews with other participants. Rather than arrange a new participant it was agreed with the supervisory team that seven interviews had generated sufficient data for the research to progress.

4.4.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was submitted on 28th February 2014 and approved on 10th March 2014. In order to protect the participants, the following steps were taken:

4.4.3.1 Informed consent

Informed consent was gained from each of the participants prior to interview. Upon expression of interest from the participant they were sent an invitation to participate (Appendix 3). This invitation provided details about the research explaining what the research was for, why they had been selected to participate, what was expected of them, what would happen with their data and details regarding their ability to withdraw from the research if they so wished.

Prior to the interviews taking place participants were emailed a consent form (Appendix 4) which reiterated the main points from the invitation and explained their rights. On the day of the interview participants were asked if they had read and understood the consent form, when they confirmed they were asked to sign and date the consent form (a copy of which was sent to them at a later date). Once the interview had been completed participants were asked if they had any concerns about the process and it was stated that if they had any concerns they could contact me at any time for clarifications or withdrawal.

4.4.3.2 Confidentiality

As the information provided by the participants was potentially sensitive to their careers they were informed, orally and in writing, that they would remain anonymous. Any reference to their own names, the title of their film and any people, places or institutions that could be used to identify them were changed or coded during the transcription process; participants were informed that these names changes/codes would appear in any publications and the final thesis. Participants were sent copies of the transcript for approval. Participants were also informed that whole transcripts would not appear in the thesis only selected extracts that illustrated the issues being raised.

4.4.4 Data Collection

The data collection phase of the research was delivered in two parts: the development of an interview schedule prior to the conducting of the semi-structured interview. The following statement, from Smith, was instructive in guiding this process:

“A qualitative interview is often described as ‘a conversation with a purpose’. This purpose is informed, implicitly at least, by a research question. The ‘conversation’ here is also rather artificial; the aim of the interview is largely to facilitate an interaction which permits participants to tell their own stories, in their own words. Thus, for the most part, the participant talks, and the interviewer listens” (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 57).

4.4.4.1 Interview Schedule

The purpose of the interview schedule was developed to guide purposeful conversations with the participants. Whilst designing the schedule reference was made to the research question but it is noted that:

“often, research questions are pitched at the abstract level and so it is not usually helpful or effective to ask them directly of the participant. Instead, we aim to set up the interview as an event which facilitates the discussion of relevant topics, and which will allow the research questions to be answered subsequently, via analysis” (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 58).

Therefore, questions were devised that corresponded to the research questions but were phrased in open ways that would allow the participants to discuss their experience at length. In addition, prompting questions were devised which anticipated the conversation to come; these prompts were seen as further aids to manage conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 165). However, these secondary questions were flexible and not be seen as a fixed part of the interviewer schedule.

Acting on advice from the academic literature and my supervisory team it should be emphasised that the nature of the interview schedule was to guide the conversation. As noted by Kvale, the semi-structured interview schedule is a guide which:

“will include an outline of topics to be covered, with suggested questions. It will depend on the particular study whether the questions and their sequence are strictly predetermined and binding on the interviewers or whether it is up to the interviewer’s judgement and tact how closely to stick to the guide and how much to follow up on the interviewee’s answers and the new directions they may open up” (Kvale, 2007, p. 55).

It was considered important that the interview schedule was not rigid and allowed the participant to discuss the issues that most mattered to them. The interview schedule with prompts and corresponding research questions can be found at Appendix 1.

4.4.4.2 *Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI)*

Semi-structured interviews are the exemplar for data collection in IPA.

“A qualitative research interview is not a situation where a person is passively reporting facts or opinions, but is better seen as an ‘encounter’ where the person is actively engaged in exploring the meaning of events or experiences that have been significant for them” (Finlay & Evans, 2009, p. 96).

According to Smith & Osborn:

“[W]ith semi-structured interviews, the investigator will have a set of questions on an interview schedule, but the interview will be guided by the schedule rather than dictated by it. Here then: There is an attempt to establish rapport with the respondent. The ordering of questions is less important. The interviewer is freer to probe interesting areas that arise. The interviewer can follow the respondent’s interests or concerns.” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 58).

It was initially planned for all interviews to be conducted in a controlled environment at the home institution of University South Wales, Newport campus. However, once interviews started to be arranged it became apparent that that would not be possible. Each of the participants had very busy work commitments and only had limited opportunities to conduct the interview. Therefore, times and places were not easy to control and were often arranged at very short notice. Of all the interviews: three were conducted in the participant's home, three in a public space (such as a coffee shop) and one took place in a hired meeting room.

Whilst these arrangements were not ideal, once in progress each of the participants engaged fully with their interview. On reflection the environment that the interviews took place is not thought to have had any adverse effects on the quality of the participant's accounts.

Following the Smith & Osborn quote above interviews began with an attempt to gain rapport with the participant; this occurred through small talk and answering questions and concerns before the interview began. Once the interview began participants were given space to discuss the areas of their experience that most mattered to them and the schedule was not rigidly adhered to.

On average interviews lasted approximately two hours with the longest lasting two hours and forty five minutes while the shortest lasted for an hour and a quarter. All interviews were audio recorded for transcription and participants agreed verbally and in writing for these recordings to take place.

4.4.4.3 Transcription

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcription process involved several stages:

- Initial transcription
- Anonymization of data
- Participant approval

- Cleaning data
- Preparing transcription for analysis

Initial transcription: Six of the interview records were transcribed by a professional transcription service. I had transcribed the first interview record but it had taken much longer than anticipated, the decision to use a transcription service was based on the speed at which the transcriptions could be made ready for analysis. Based on the length of time the first interview had been completed transcription could have taken up to two months whereas the professional service was able to complete them in two weeks.

When transcripts were returned they were checked against the original recordings and it was noted they were of quite poor quality. Two weeks of remedial work was required to correct mistakes across all six of the interviews that the professional service had transcribed.

Anonymization of data: In reference to the ethical procedures all names that could be used to identify the participant were anonymised. Each participant was assigned with an alphabetic letter dependent on the order in which they were interviewed; so, the first interviewed participant became Participant A, then B, C, D, etc. They were then assigned a name corresponding with that letter. So, for example, the first interviewee became Andrew, the second Beth and so on.

Owing to the nature of their experience interviewees tended to discuss film titles, people, places and institutions, organisations or companies with regularity. On average the participants mentioned 45 of these potentially identifying features with the low range being 11 and the high of 88. With such a large amount of names to anonymise simply replacing a name with a random alternative was not a manageable system. Therefore, all film titles, people, places and institutions were coded with a category and alpha-numeric based on the interview they belonged to. Therefore, if 'Chris' discussed five different films during his interview the third film that he mentioned would be coded as: [FILM C3] and so on. The name of the film (or other

feature) would then be removed from the transcript and replaced with the code. A spreadsheet for all of the codes was kept on record.

Categories included:

- Film Title [FILM]
- Cast [CAST]
- Crew [CREW]
- Company [COMPANY]
- Industry Players [PLAYER]
- Places [PLACE]

(N.b. 'Industry Players' which included film executives, financiers, sales agents and other non-crew personnel related to the participant's production. They have been called 'players' rather than 'actors' or 'agents' as this would add potential confusion given the nature of the industry under investigation and the job titles of people who work with in it. Furthermore, the term 'players' is used by Bloore in his independent film project value chain (Bloore, 2013, p. 34) and the term has been used here to be consistent with that).

Participant Approval: Following the initial transcription and coding the transcripts were sent to the participants for approval. They were given fourteen days to approve and asked for any amendments or omissions to be made. Only one of the participants requested (minor) omissions.

Cleaning data: Prior to analysis transcripts were cleaned of any: unnecessary words, noises and conversational filler such as 'ums' and 'ers'. Non-essential usage of phrases such as 'you know', 'kind of', 'sort of' and 'do you know what I mean' were removed following an instance by instance review of their appearance in the transcript.

Preparing document for analysis: Once the transcript was ready for analysis it was copied and pasted into a formatted document designed to aid IPA analysis. As below:

Emergent themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments

The transcript was copied into the middle column (Original Transcript) with the other two columns left for annotation during the analysis.

An example of the completed transcript will be included in the appendices.

4.4.5 Analysis

Analysis in IPA is nuanced, detailed and takes considerable amount of time to conduct properly (Smith, 2004, p. 42); it is iterative, inductive, fluid and emergent (Finlay, 2011, p. 42). The analysis has generally followed the seven-stage process developed by Smith (Smith, et al., 2009, pp. 79-107).

Each stage is a separate iteration of the analysis. The principles of this approach to analysis are now outlined below:

Stage 1: Immersion in the transcription. Prior to any annotation the interview recording was listened to and the interview transcript read several times in order to become immersed in the original data.

Stage 2: Initial noting. This involves free association where notes were made to highlight any general themes and points of interest.

Stage 3: Exploratory comments. The first pass of the analysis utilised the right hand 'Exploratory Comments' section of the transcript document. Reading the transcript closely and line by line with any points of interest or illuminating parts of the text then commented upon. These comments tended to be descriptive, linguistic or conceptual in nature and were designed to explore the *'specific ways by which the participant talks about, understands and thinks about the issue'* (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 83).

Stage 4: Emergent themes. The second stage was to reread the transcript and pay close attention to the exploratory comments. Using the emergent themes section on the left-hand side of the document these comments were turned into themes in *"an attempt to produce a concise and pithy statement of what was important in the various comments attached to a piece of transcript"* (ibid, p. 92). In essence the purpose of the second stage was to look at the data in a more abstract way.

Managing the emergent themes was a complex process. On average each transcript yielded 340 emergent themes (high = 637, low = 286). In order to manage this large amount of data the emergent themes were entered into an Excel spreadsheet. A comment was added to each individual theme with the related section of transcript.

Emergent themes were then grouped into discrete ordinate themes using the main techniques of abstraction (placing like themes with other like themes) and subsumption (bringing together a series of related themes).

This process continued until themes had been reduced to between three and five super-ordinate or main themes. These themes were compiled into a table.

Stage 5: Moving to the next case. Repeating stages 1-4 whilst attempting to treat each case on its own terms, bracketing out what had been learned from previous cases.

Stage 6: Looking for patterns across cases. Once each of the individual cases had been through this process the next stage was to look for connections across cases. Individual theme tables were compared and contrasted; finally, the themes were clustered together until a satisfactory grouping of master themes was formed.

Stage 7: Taking interpretation to a deeper level. Once a cross case comparison has been completed Smith encourages that researchers return to the original transcripts to see if any new information or 'resonant' passages are revealed in light of the knowledge revealed in through the analysis (Smith, 2009, pp. 103-105). Finlay notes that is at this stage researchers can introduce other theories, as well as personal reflections, extant literature and other contextualising material with which to view the analysis (Finlay, 2011, p. 42).

Analysis in IPA is time consuming with each analysis taking between 4 and 6 weeks to complete. Work was initially done (stages 1-4) using pen and paper; interview transcripts were pasted in to the 'Original Transcript' section of the analysis document, then analysed line by line with handwritten notes made in the right 'exploratory themes' then left 'emergent themes' column. The emergent themes were then entered into an Excel spreadsheet to begin the process of clustering (stage 5). Final case super-ordinate themes were then printed out to complete the cross-case analysis (stage 6) and a spreadsheet of master themes was created.

Qualitative data analysis software, such as Nvivo, was not utilised during this analysis.

4.4.6 Validity and Quality

There has been historical frustration amongst qualitative researchers when the validity and quality of their work has been assessed against guidelines for quantitative research projects (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 179). In response, qualitative researchers have developed their own criteria for the assessment of these issues. There are now several different approaches to assessing validity in qualitative studies, but this research adopts the four principles proposed by Yardley who notes that good qualitative research projects should be able to demonstrate: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance (Yardley, 2000).

4.4.6.1 Sensitivity to context

Sensitivity to context can be demonstrated in several ways and from the beginning of the research project. It includes showing an awareness of existing literature and the 'socio-cultural milieu' in which the research is situated. It has been achieved in this thesis by extensive contextualisation of the issues pertinent to the research in the introduction and in the two chapters that focus on the role of the producer and the conditions of the UK film industry. Sensitivity to context is also demonstrated through carefully conducting data collection. To achieve this the research adhered to University of South Wales ethical guidelines and attempted at every stage possible to show respect for participants through the recruitment and interviews. Finally, sensitivity to context can be demonstrated throughout an analysis and the thesis write up. This has been achieved through close, in-depth analysis following the recommendations for IPA outlined by Smith et al (2009) and by supporting my arguments in the write up with verbatim extracts of the interview transcripts.

4.4.6.2 Commitment and Rigour

Commitment in qualitative, specifically IPA, research can be shown by the researcher's personal commitment and investment in the research project and in their efforts to cultivate and realise the necessary methods and skills to conduct that research effectively. Whilst I recognise that I am a novice researcher great time and care has been taken throughout the research process. In addition to the wide range of reading I have done on the subject, in October 2012 I attended a two-day residential IPA workshop which covered all elements of conducting IPA research and gave opportunities (with advanced IPA practitioners) to develop and hone skills whilst preparing interview schedules, practicing semi-structured interviews in a role play environment and analysing example transcripts. I also conducted a pilot interview to develop interview techniques and contribute to the final draft of the interview schedule.

Commitment is also shown through attentiveness to the participant during the interviews and the care taken during the analysis of their transcripts (Smith, et al., 2009) which I have endeavoured to do throughout the research process. During the interviews themselves, active listening was employed to ensure that close attention was given to participant's perspectives of the issues under discussion. Following the interviews participants were thanked by email and they were sent transcripts for approval.

Rigour can be shown through care taken with the sample criteria and recruitment of participants; I have demonstrated how this was achieved in the sections earlier in this chapter. Rigour was also applied at the interview stage and in the analysis. I have aimed to conduct in-depth interviews and analysis with rigour at all times and include sections of both for audit purposes within the appendices. Analysis also needs to be sufficiently interpretative and moves beyond description. This can be shown by a reduction of themes (from an average of 340 per transcript to 3-4 superordinate themes per case) and that the analysis shows extracts from each of the participants which shows not only the shared themes but also about them as individuals.

4.4.6.3 Transparency and Coherence

The third of Yardley's principles of validity and quality asks questions about the research's transparency and coherence. Smith notes that this can be demonstrated via a clear write up of the research design, process and results and that it is consistent with the principles of an IPA study. I have endeavoured to write up the thesis in a transparent and coherent way and have included an audit trail of the various stages of the process in the appendices.

Yardley also notes that reflexivity is an important aspect of transparency (Yardley, 2000); to this end, I have included a personal background in the introduction of the study, included reflexive thoughts in the write up of the results and also included some sections of a reflexive journal in the appendices.

4.4.6.4 Impact and Importance

Yardley's final principle argues for impact and importance noting that however well a piece of research is conducted is whether it tells the reader something 'interesting, important or useful' (Smith, et al., 2009; Yardley, 2000). As such, I have included a discussion of the results which takes a deeper look at the results and asks what they mean in relation to the extant literature. The conclusions also set out the implications of the research and how it makes a contribution to knowledge.

5 Chapter 5: The Participants

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides extended contextual information about the participants, including relevant personal and professional background and post-interview reflections. It also includes details of how each of the participants was recruited. The purpose of this chapter is to allow the reader to gain some familiarity with the participants and to provide a basis for appreciating the convergent and divergent aspects of their accounts as they are presented in the Findings. To fully understand the analysis Smith asks: *'What does a reader need to know about this participant...What biographical information was important?'* (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 116). Therefore, this chapter is intended to give the reader a fuller picture of the participants in this research.

The selected participants have a broad range of experience as filmmakers and creative professionals prior to the producing their first feature. Some had made a transition from television or theatre, others had significant roles on other feature film production (just not as producer) and some only had prior experience making short films. Despite the differences in their backgrounds they each share the experience of having produced a feature film and have brought it to market.

The following participant information is gleaned from the interview transcripts, from private conversations, notes, emails and from third party sources (such as, Internet Movie Database). The Interview Reflections are adapted from extensive notes that were taken in the immediate aftermath of the participant interviews and during the analysis of individual cases. Care has been taken in the presentation of these details in order to protect the participant's identities in line with agreed ethical procedures.

5.2 Participant Information

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	MEETS CRITERIA?	SAMPLE	BUDGET CATEGORY ⁸	SOURCE OF PRODUCTION FUNDING ⁹	FILM GENRE	YEAR OF RELEASE	UK
ANDREW	MALE	YES		Low Budget	Private/Public	Horror	2011	
BETH	FEMALE	YES		Low Budget	Public	Drama	2013	
CHRIS	MALE	YES		£1.6million	Private/Public	Action/Thriller	2013	
DAWN	FEMALE	YES		Microbudget	Private	Political Thriller	2009	
ETHAN	MALE	YES		No Budget	Private	Horror	2012	
FRAN	FEMALE	YES		No Budget	Private/Public	Horror	2012	
GARETH	MALE	YES		Low Budget	Private/Public	Drama	2010	

Figure 1 Participant and Film Information

⁸ Budget category as defined by Northern Alliance (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 9); Low Budget = £1million - £250,00; Microbudget = £250,00 - £50,000; No Budget = Less than £50,000. Although Chris film is not classed as low budget in this definition his film may still be classed as low budget elsewhere; for example, the SPI Olsberg report on the UK Independent Film Sector classifies low budget films as those operating between £500,000 - £2million (SPI Olsberg, 2017, p. 11).

⁹ Signifies the main source of finance i.e. private equity or public finance (National/Regional Screen Agency) or mix.

5.3 'ANDREW'

Details of Recruitment: Following an initial meeting at a professional training event (at which the participant was a guest speaker) a line of communication was established via email. The participant was sent a letter outlining the purpose of the study and a 'Consent to Participate' form. An interview was arranged and took place at the participant's home in May 2014.

Participant Background: Following his graduation from university, Andrew set up his own production company which specialised in corporate and promotional video. This led to freelance work in television where he was employed on factual and entertainment programmes in various production roles by several different broadcasters. The income from this work enabled him to pursue his ambition of writing, directing and producing his own fiction films. Whilst self-financing several short films he created a network of useful contacts and associates. This experience and network equipped him with the confidence to undertake the production of a feature film.

Andrew and several associates entered into a conceptual stage of developing a suitable feature film idea and which imposed a 'Dogme 95' style set of restrictions, allowing for a manageable production on a low/micro-budget in a recognisable genre. Andrew was heavily involved in the development of the script and received a writer's credit on the completed film.

Despite his involvement with the development of the script, Andrew shifted his efforts towards producing and focused on raising the necessary finance from private equity investors. He had previously been awarded a small amount of money for development from his regional screen agency but was unsuccessful in an application for production funding. Andrew was able to leverage in kind support from some key organisations and added value to the production through deferred and negotiated pay rates for cast and crew. The budget for the film was approximately £300,000.00, which is considered to be a low budget feature.

Andrew successfully completed the production which went on to receive its world premiere at a highly regarded genre film festival in 2011. The film was subsequently released theatrically, on DVD and Video On Demand across several territories in 2011 and 2012. Andrew has since produced a second feature which he also co-wrote and directed.

Interview Reflections: One of the main impressions made during the interview was that Andrew found producing to be a frustrating, and at times, bruising experience. Much of the interview focused on the difficulties he faced during the production and the exhausting efforts he had to go to in order to fix a series of problems that befell the production. His main source of complaint was directed towards a number of individuals that he felt had behaved very poorly during the production and acted in such a way as to jeopardise the entire film. He described how he had been attempting to help these people by giving them a leg up in the industry only to feel betrayed by their subsequent actions. This had clearly made him cynical about the motivation of the people he chooses to work with.

Another forceful diatribe was saved for several 'gatekeepers' within the film industry. He found many of the institutions he had approached for help to be elitist and overly bureaucratic. He had received a very small development award from his regional screen agency but was very critical of the way that fund was administered and felt that their practices were dishonest and that ultimately, they were disrespectful to him and his project. However, he did qualify his criticisms, acknowledging that they have a difficult job and have to be selective with limited resources at their disposal.

He also expressed disappointment in the emergence of piracy and lamented the loss of potential income as a result; however, he also noted a sense of pride in the discussion generated by the film and the debate it initiated in online forums.

Whilst Andrew clearly resented how obstacles were placed in his way he also spent much of the interview focusing on his own agency and mused on the characteristics that he felt made a good

producer. During the interview Andrew focused on such traits as leadership, self-determination, the willingness to take risks and the importance of instinct. He was also particularly goal focused and often discussed this desire to create a sustainable business, one that would allow him to earn a living from making films fulltime. He was clearly anxious about this and he linked his ability to succeed with the need to continually make returns for those investing in his films.

Worries about raising finance and recoument were a key theme and Andrew felt that this should be his priority as a producer. In fact, he measured his own legitimacy as a producer by his ability to raise finance, claiming that he would not be able to call himself a proper producer had he not successfully performed that function.

Overall, Andrew was pessimistic about the role of producing and called it a 'thankless task' on several occasions. He stated that part of his motivation for participating in the study was, effectively, to warn other new producers of the perils of the process and to pass on his hard-earned insight. He is now clearly focused on switching roles to a more ostensibly creative role and his enthusiasm for directing was in stark contrast to his wariness about producing. At the time of the interview Andrew had just completed his second feature but as a co-producer and director of the film.

5.4 'BETH'

Details of Recruitment: I had an initial encounter with Beth following a talk she had given about her film at a major UK festival in the months prior to the data collection phase of the research. I located her contact details on her company website. Introduction to the study and interview was arranged by email; the participant was sent a letter outlining the purpose of the study and a 'Consent to Participate' form. The interview took place at the participant's home in May 2014.

Participant Background: Beth's career began in the theatre where she worked as an actress and producer. A move into television helped her gain further producing experience. Beth began producing her own short films as a way to gain more control over the types of project she worked on and to further her career on her own terms. Several of her short films won major awards and were supported by key industry organisations.

Beth's first feature film as a producer came as a response to a call for applications to a low budget film scheme that offered approximately £350,000.00 in production finance. Having selected a suitable project and assembling a creative team Beth successfully applied to the scheme. Following several months of development, the film went into production.

Following completion, the film appeared at several domestic and international film festivals before being picked up for distribution and released in 2013.

Interview Reflections: A major theme that ran through the interview was about the nature of power dynamics in the production process. Beth tended to focus on her own relative power within the hierarchy of the industry players she came into contact with. For the most part she would imply that she was in a position of weakness when compared to executives and others who were more experienced within the industry. This limited her ability to control some important decisions during the course of the production which seemed to be a source of frustration.

However, it is not to say that she was without the ability to affect meaningful change. She considered the process of making the film to be a learning experience from and claimed to have developed a realisation of her own agency. She discussed how she exercised this through her activities on the shoot and in particular in managing the demands of her lead cast member.

Another key area of importance for Beth was her engagement with the creative process. During the interview she was clearly more focused on her involvement with the development of the script than she was about other issues such as finance. In particular, she wanted to discuss her own taste and judgement for making crucial creative decisions. That said, she knew that there were creative boundaries and was careful not to encroach into the remit of the director or writer. Furthermore, she described herself more as an enabler of the creative process rather than someone who was creative in her own right. Nevertheless, she focused heavily on the collaborative process and claimed to enjoy an excellent relationship with the film's director.

Her enthusiasm for the creative endeavour was perhaps key to her disappointment with how the film performed after its release. The final part of the interview was focused on a general criticism of the way the film was handled by distributors, but this was qualified by her acceptance that the film had not performed well on the festival circuit. Despite this disappointment she was keen to focus on the more positive experiences she encountered during the promotion of the film.

5.5 'CHRIS'

Details of Recruitment: Chris was identified as a suitable candidate using online sources before being contacted via social media and a dialogue began regarding the possibility of his participation. He was sent a letter outlining the details of the study and a 'Consent to Participate' form. An initial meeting was set up but had to be cancelled; this was rearranged and occurred in a public space in June 2014.

Participant Background: Chris began his career as a theatre and music producer. Having acted as an associate producer on an international feature film co-production¹⁰ in 2007, Chris considered that a move into producing his own films would give him greater control over the quality of projects and the process of making them. Starting a production company with his business partner Chris actively sought projects and creative collaborators.

Having acquired the adaption rights to a novel Chris approached and pitched the project to an upcoming director. The director declined but offered an alternative project which would go on to become Chris's debut film as a producer. Chris was able to raise some development money and entered a lengthy development process. Eventually the film was packaged, and funds were raised via a mix of public finance and private investment. His film cost approximately £1.6million to make.

The film was released in 2013 and has secured distribution in several major territories.

Interview Reflections: Through the course of the interview it became clear that Chris's personal reputation and legitimacy as a producer were key issues. Chris discussed his status within the industry and focused on the things he needed to do in order to increase his standing and his perceived reliability as a producer. Amongst other things he focused on his own learning; he

¹⁰ Chris had originally been employed on the production as a script translator but during the production, which he describes as being a 'disaster from start to finish', he joked that he was promoted to associate producer so that they could have 'someone to blame' [Chris: 2-3]

wanted to understand the industry and talked at length about how he learned through reading, observation and personal experience. He also tended to consider the traits of a good producer and placed value on taste, vision, instinct, resilience and financial acumen. He also focused on the importance of networks.

Whilst mainly exhibiting confidence and self-belief Chris also showed some self-doubt and spoke about the difficulty of breaking through as a new producer. In this regard he was critical of aspects of the UK film industry and noted the many obstacles in the way of new producing talent.

He was also critical of the way films are developed in the UK with his focus on the creative process being another key theme of the interview. He found that the way films were typically developed in the UK to be slow and inefficient; he discussed development models of other national industries and found these to be much better. He discussed how he wished to adopt such methods into his own practice.

5.6 'DAWN'

Details of Recruitment: Dawn was contacted via a mutual acquaintance and agreed to participate. She was sent the letter outlining the research and 'Consent to Participate' form and was interviewed at her home in June 2014.

Participant Background: Dawn started her career in event management and producing corporate video. She produced her first short fiction film after a seemingly casual request for help from an acquaintance. Following the completion of this first film, Dawn was keen to apply what she had learned during the experience and so moved onto another short film project. Shot on 35mm this second short went on to be selected at many international film festivals and won several awards.

Her first feature film as a producer was on a micro-budget political thriller; she became attached to the project after being approached by the director and seeing potential in the script. Finance was raised quickly via a private equity investor whom Dawn had met at a networking event of a major European film festival; production started soon after. The film showed at several film festivals before being picked up for distribution. It screened for a limited time online and then in 2009 was released for limited theatrical and video on demand exhibition.

Since the completion of this film Dawn has made several short and feature length films acting as either producer or executive producer.

Interview Reflections: Dawn was very focused on her own inexperience and how much she felt she needed to learn in order to function as a producer. During the interview she often talked about how she felt that she didn't know what she was doing and that many of the technical and administrative duties of producing were both unfamiliar and unexpected. This lack of knowledge was exacerbated by what she described to be a very intense production process which she found to be highly pressurised, stressful and isolating.

As a result she talked at length not just about how much she had learned from the process but actually how she had learned. In particular she stressed the importance of having a mentor who was able to answer her questions and the benefits of creating a network of supportive people who were also able to fill in knowledge gaps.

She claimed to have found that the job entailed a lot of micro-management which she found inhibitive to her preferred function as a producer which was to see 'the bigger picture'.

5.7 'ETHAN'

Details of Recruitment: Ethan was contacted via email and agreed to participate; he was sent a letter outlining the study and a 'Consent to Participate' form. The interview took place at a hotel bar in July 2014.

Participant Background: Ethan began his career as a writer and director; he directed a feature in the mid-2000s but it failed to gain distribution. The disappointment of this experience pushed Ethan towards producing as he felt that he would have more control over how his films could reach a market. He spent some time as an associate producer in order to 'learn the ropes' before undertaking his own feature film debut by producing, what he describes as a micro-budget horror film. The film budget was actually considerably less than the £50k that is considered to be a micro-budget feature and is therefore classified as a 'no budget' feature (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 9).

Having decided on a project Ethan approached an investor who was able to finance the film and also advised on accessing UK tax incentives. Ethan also spent much time cultivating relationships with distributors and was able to learn key insights into what they found to be marketable investments. Using these contacts Ethan sold the film for distribution; it was released in 2013 to a limited number of territories.

Since the release of his debut Ethan has produced several more features, each following a similar business model of producing low budget horror to be distributed straight to DVD.

Interview Reflections: Throughout the interview Ethan was very focused on his ability to achieve commercial success and proved to be very goal focused. He described the dissatisfaction he had felt during the failure of his earlier film and was driven to ensure that he would succeed in future endeavours. He talked about how he had spent much time diligently learning the business side of the film trade and had opened dialogue with distributors in order to understand the kinds of

product they were looking to market. He was highly driven and would not be put off by critics; in fact he claimed to use criticism as a motivational tool. He discussed how he embraced risk as an essential factor in attaining his goals.

As a producer on his debut feature Ethan felt that understanding the business of film was far more important than focusing on creative issues. He described how he gave almost complete creative control over to his director so that during production he could attend to business affairs. However, he did note that he hoped his focus on becoming a commercial success would enable him to gain greater creative control on future productions. He was keen to point out that his films were genre focused and as such would appeal to a specific type of audience.

Ethan was very critical of what he found to be entrenched elitism within certain quarters of the film industry. His experience had led him to conclude that access to public subsidy was heavily protected and only accessible to persons who understood, and were willing to play by, a set of rules that favoured prestige projects over viable commercial ones. He was scornful of the way that the UK's public film bodies were administered.

He discussed his own personal integrity and responsibility to others. He wanted to be seen to act with humility and was critical of those who were not.

5.8 'FRAN'

Details of Recruitment: Fran was contacted via social media to gauge initial interest and was then sent an introduction to the research letter and a 'Consent to Participate' form. An interview was arranged but was cancelled due to Fran's work schedule. It was later rearranged and took place in a hired meeting space in June 2014.

Participant Background: Prior to her first feature as a producer Fran had gained some experience of filmmaking whilst working for a video production company and through making her own short films. She enrolled onto a Master's degree in a film making discipline and used that opportunity to produce her debut feature film as a graduation project.

Development was limited as the project was subject to a submission deadline; the film was conceptualised, and a script written within a matter of weeks and was mainly managed by the writer/director. Rather than focusing on development Fran spent her time raising finance and concentrating on production management issues; due to the films being classified as a 'no-budget' feature she also performed in several capacities including production manager and location manager.

Production finance was mainly raised through private equity, but they were also in receipt of a completion grant for post-production from a regional film agency. The film was picked up for distribution and released in 2012.

Interview Reflections: Throughout the interview Fran was heavily focused on her own performance and relative inexperience as she took on the task of producing a feature film. She discussed her decision to attend university where she hoped to gain insight into the film industry; however, she described her frustration at finding the course to be geared towards the creative side of filmmaking and how course leaders were unable to provide relevant information about film as a business. One of the reasons she decided to undertake a feature was that she

felt this was the best way for her to learn. In fact, it seemed that acquiring knowledge was a primary goal in her decision to undertake the production and a desire to know was as much a motivational factor as anything else.

She described how she was anxious about her own performance as a producer and was critical about the wisdom of many of her decisions; reflecting on the process she noted she found it difficult to trust others and instead of delegating work tried to do it herself which was to her detriment. The production also had very limited resources which made things even more difficult to manage. Furthermore, as she was solely responsible for production management she was completely neglectful of creative issues; however, at the time she did not feel that this was particularly important, and her goal was to get the film made within the time and financial parameters. Despite her anxieties she was very driven, and this helped to propel her through periods of self-doubt.

She described how she was eager to perform each stage of the film production 'properly'; by this she meant that she wanted to take the film to exhibition through traditional, industry recognised channels and therefore, become a 'legitimate' producer. However, she noted her frustration at the practices of film industry gatekeepers; particularly distributors.

5.9 'GARETH'

Details of Recruitment: Gareth was contacted via email and agreed to participate in the research; he was sent a letter outlining the study and a 'Consent to Participate' form. The interview was conducted at a coffee shop in the participant's home town in July 2014.

Participant Background: Gareth's career in film began as a programmer at a film festival; he used that experience as a platform to launch his own career as a producer and made several shorts, some of which were nominated for major awards.

The director of photography on one of his shorts introduced him to a director and with whom (along with the director's writing partner) he began the development of his first feature film. The low budget film was funded via a range of income streams including public subsidy, private equity and gap finance and cost in the region of £1million, at the top end of what might be considered a low budget feature.

The film was distributed in the UK in 2010.

Interview Reflections: A central focus of Gareth's interview was on the nature of the exchange between the creative and commercial imperatives of filmmaking. As a producer Gareth was very involved with the creative process and understood the importance of having good taste and instinct; he was also very keen to be hands on with creative process and was very confident about taking on duties such as script editing. His engagement in this process helped to inform his commercial vision: he talked a lot about 'packaging' the film for sales and why that was important.

It was also important for Gareth to have a certain level of autonomy over the production process; he wanted to be able to make films that were to his particular taste and did not like that to be interfered with. However, he noted that there were a lot of power dynamics involved in the process and his inexperience when making his first film put him in a position of relative

weakness where he was not entirely able to control all of the decisions being made about the direction of the film. In this regard he was particularly critical about the involvement of regional film agencies and how they wielded creative power as a condition of financing the film.

Gareth was concerned about the challenges of independent filmmaking in general and noted the difficulties of obtaining finance, the interference of industry gatekeepers and the general upheaval of the industry as specific areas that provided challenges to new producers.

6 Chapter 6: Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this research. Following analysis of the interview transcripts, three super-ordinate themes have been identified. Each of the super-ordinate theme consists of several subordinate themes which are considered throughout the chapter.

The themes and sub-themes are illustrated in table form below:

SUPERORDINATE THEME	SUB-THEME
AMBITION: A STRUGGLE FOR STATUS	Sense of Insignificance: Feeling like an Outsider Overcoming Inexperience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naivety/Inexperience • Acquiring Knowledge
	Drive: Hunger to Succeed Hopes and Fears for Future Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation and Industry Acceptance • Career Longevity • Anxieties: Fears for the Future
	Desire for Independence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire for Autonomy • Praise and Criticism of Industry Gatekeepers
FOCUS ON CREATIVE PURPOSE	Exercising Taste: connecting creative endeavour with commercial aspiration Intervention and Boundaries in the Creative Process Feelings of validation gained from critical and audience reaction
THE VALUE OF NETWORKS AND RELATIONSHIPS	Exploiting contacts and networks as a source of opportunity Focus on the enabling qualities of a good team
	Exploiting human resources as a necessity of micro/low budget film producing

Each theme is considered in turn, with extracts taken from the interview transcripts and used to illustrate the findings. The purpose of presenting these extracts is to bring the research to life, providing an evidential basis for the descriptive, linguistic and conceptual interpretations of the analysis. It allows the reader to see for themselves that the themes exist within the transcripts. Furthermore, it demonstrates the divergent as well as the convergent aspects of the participant's accounts.

Extracts have been chosen following consideration of how well they illustrate the main or subordinate theme. Quite often there were several extracts in any given transcript that could have been used; however, where there have been several options the extract that selected has been the one deemed the most suitable to illustrate the point being made.

Extracts are verbatim; however, some small amendments have been made where it has been deemed appropriate to aid readability. The details of how changes have been made is outlined in the 'transcript cleaning' section of the methodology chapter. All the names, places and organisations that could potentially identify the participant have been anonymised and coded in line with the ethical procedures outlined in the previous chapter.

6.2 Superordinate Theme 1

6.3 Ambition: A struggle for status

Ambition (noun): a strong desire to do or achieve something; a desire and determination to achieve success.

This super-ordinate theme explores the attitudes of the participants towards this early stage in their careers. Throughout their interviews the participants regularly reflected upon: their position within the industry, where they wanted to be, how their first feature might help them get there, what they hoped for once they had arrived and what they felt was standing in their way.

These reflections have allowed for the construction of a theme that shows the participant's focusing on their personal and professional growth and has been interpreted as demonstrating their sense of AMBITION as producers. This is about being in a particular place at one point in their career but imagining a future where they might be in a more desirable position, one where they are recognised as legitimate, established ('proper') producers. However, the participants recognise that the journey is not necessarily straight forward and which they understand is riven with struggle.

In relation to the research question: 'What meaning have emerging UK film producers ascribed to the process of producing their first feature film?'; it is considered that their first feature acts as a catalyst for their careers, a first step towards their goals of stability and success.

The theme includes the sense that the participants have started their careers as outsiders, insignificant – yet to make their mark; they have reflected on their inexperience which they see as a barrier to overcome; the drive and motivation pushing them forward; their hopes and fears about the future; and their desire for independence. These themes are represented in visual form below:

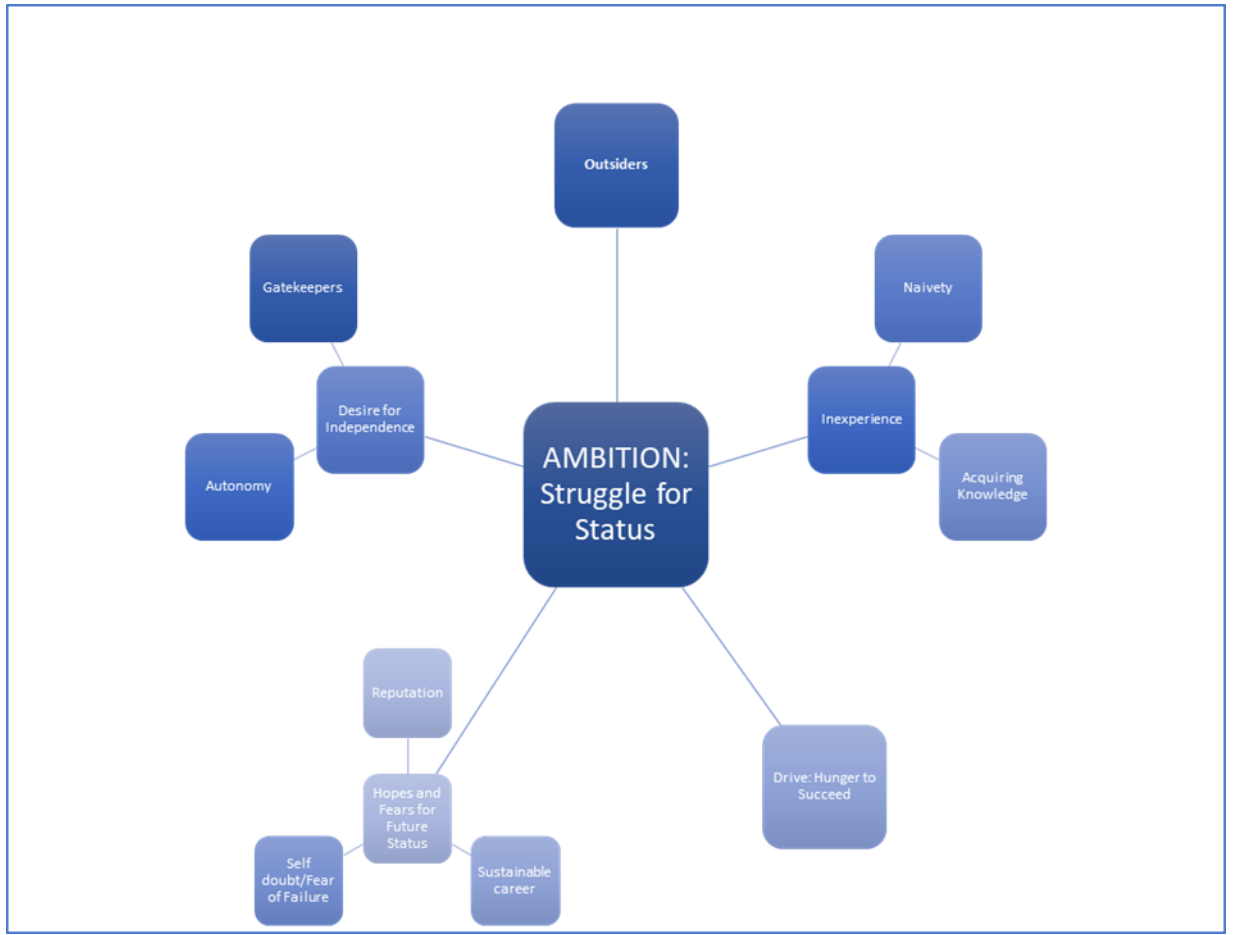


Figure 6.1 Radial Cluster of Ambition sub-themes

6.3.1 Theme 1 – Sense of Insignificance: Feeling like an Outsider

“I think that’s one of the problems actually as a first time producer, it’s like they go ‘Who the fuck are you...’” [Gareth: 37]

Each of the participants expressed a feeling that, in the early stages of their career, they lacked any significance or power within the UK film industry. As emerging producers, the participants felt that they had limited access to support and that their efforts were going unnoticed by a largely indifferent industry. Furthermore, as a result of this perceived weakness they often felt unable to effect positive change in the face of more powerful industry players and institutions.

There was a general expression from the participants that they had often felt isolated and alone; outside of an industry they wished to access. Therefore, it is considered important to recognise this theme as it represents the starting point of a journey each of the participants has had to undertake in order to fulfil their ambitions within the industry.

There is an important caveat here. Most of the participants were able to access some form of support during production; this has come from funding awards, industry mentors and other important industry players via official courses or on an ad hoc basis. However, in the early stages of their careers, each of the participants has felt, and has used language to convey that at one time or another they were somehow isolated and insignificant.

Andrew accepts his outsider status in rather a stoical fashion. Considering himself to be the architect of his own situation he nevertheless expresses the vulnerability and isolation of the endeavour of film producing:

“there is nobody to complain to because you’re the one that has put yourself out on that limb, that’s what I mean, that’s why you have to enjoy the fun bits, the little rewards that are there but you have to take everything else as it comes and there is nobody that you can turn to” [Andrew:28]

The repetition of the word 'nobody' accentuates his feelings of isolation. Despite his admission that he had effectively put himself in harm's way, Andrew seems resigned to the possibility that being on the outside of the industry may be the status quo for his career:

"you've really got to have something stand out to get into those inner circles otherwise you remain in the world of independents and, yeah, I think with our genre approach that's likely to keep us on the outside permanently" [Andrew: 75]

It is worth remembering that this is Andrew's perception. Having made a low budget¹¹ horror movie with 'no known cast' [Andrew: 74], Andrew had lamented the difficulty of accessing support from his regional screen agency throughout his interview¹². His reason for this was that he felt the agency in question were not 'commercially driven' [ibid] and that they applied a 'certain amount of snobbery' [ibid] in the selection of the projects they support. Of course, this is debatable, the guidelines of the agency he applied to clearly state that the market appeal of the project would be taken into consideration when assessing it for funding (Davies & Wistreich, 2007, p. 400). Despite this Andrew felt that the real reason for allocation of funds was prestige, what he called 'worthy projects' [Andrew: 73], rather than the pursuit of commercial success but also felt that this was something that the screen agencies 'will never admit to' [Andrew: 75].

Andrew expresses his feeling that it will be very difficult to access the 'inner circles' of the regional film agencies. He accepts that he is unlikely to be able to access their support owing to the style of film he produces claiming it would be more likely if he was making 'hard hitting drama' [Andrew: 76]. His claim that he is likely to be excluded 'permanently' brings a fatalistic air to the comment and underlines his fear that he will not be able to make significant progress with his career, if he continues to work in 'genre product' [ibid].

¹¹ As defined by Northern Alliance report (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 9)

¹² Something I reflected upon in my post-interview notes. See The Participants chapter

In using language such as 'snobbery' and discussing access to 'inner circles' the spectre of elitism is raised, and this issue is certainly a theme that recurs throughout the other participant interviews and will be returned to later in this chapter. Furthermore, it is something that I have heard anecdotally from other filmmakers in a similar position. However, without being privy to conversations of the screen agency executives, it is difficult to know exactly whether there is any truth to the idea that the regional screen agencies have an agenda beyond that which is published or whether these feelings are simply driven by resentment among filmmakers who have been rejected. What is true and undisputable is that the funding allocated by the screen agencies is limited and it cannot support every person or project that applies for it (BFI, 2012, p. 22). Andrew admits himself that *'they're inundated with applications...and they've got to assess it on criteria that works for them'* and that making funding decisions is a *'tough job'* [Andrew: 75]. Despite his criticisms this concession acknowledges that the regional screen agencies are bound to evaluate and judge funding applications on their merits rather than on factors such as film genre as he suggested has been the case with his own film.

Nevertheless, the idea that elitism acts as a barrier to the participant's ability to progress in their career has been raised; and will be further explored in a later theme and in the discussion section.

Fran also expresses this sense of outsider-ness. She shares the idea that, in the early stages of her career, she was somehow outside of the 'inner circles' she wished to access and accentuates the difficulty of entry:

"all those regional screen agencies and things like that, they always felt impossible to get into" [Fran: 63]

It should be noted that Fran was a post-graduate student at the point she produced her first feature. However, she had previously had experience making short film and claims that she *'was aware of what was going on in the industry'* [Fran: 11] prior to her return to education as a

mature student which provides the basis for her claim. Furthermore, her comments are influenced by anecdotes from her peers who she claimed also felt that approaching the screen agencies for funding was futile, noting that:

“most of them kind of don’t have any belief or faith in the government funding methods”

[Fran: 68]

Fran did eventually benefit from the award of some completion funds for her film from her regional screen agency and she went on to enjoy some limited support from them (subsidised training courses) until the restructuring of the screen agencies in 2011. She expressed frustration that after this restructuring she once again felt like she could not access their support.

Ethan, who produces ‘no-budget’¹³ horror films, is more strident in his opinion of the screen agencies and feels deliberately shut out as opposed to merely ignored. He complained that his regional screen agency operated a clique and he felt that they excluded anyone that didn’t fit in with their particular agenda:

“what they really want to do is get in to bed with known entities, you know, people who have a track record or who have done something that they consider classy, that’s what they want to do, they just want to rub noses with celebrities and that’s it and new talent can kiss their arse” [Ethan: 77]

Ethan’s use of the term ‘classy’ refers to the types of film that he perceives the regional screen agencies want to fund and support. Although Ethan has not specifically defined what he means by ‘classy’ it is interpreted to mean arthouse films, prestige projects or, what Andrew previously called ‘worthy projects’; typically, these sorts of films would likely be issue-based dramas that tend to receive critical acclaim and have a good festival run. Furthermore, by referring to the concept of class, and the social stratification that that implies, Ethan, like Andrew, also evokes a

¹³ Northern Alliance definition (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 9)

sense of elitism; as noted, this will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. With regards to these agencies, Ethan also notes that:

“If you’re a new producer with no track record, they will meet with you, they’ll even take your script and give you loads of criticism and notes, but they will never, ever support you and finance your picture - not a chance” [Ethan: 72]

Ethan is making a rhetorical point here to criticise the screen agencies, but it does tally with his own experience. Interestingly, he does not see the agencies giving notes as a form of support despite the fact that this will have been done at a cost to the screen agency themselves. This is in keeping with Ethan’s general attitude towards his regional screen agency which could perhaps be best described as disdainful.

Ethan expresses the idea that in order to gain the support of industry insiders, producers have to be able to demonstrate that they have a ‘track record’. Taken at face value, this can be seen as a dilemma facing emerging producers, that as an unknown they have not yet earned the trust and respect of the industry and therefore struggle to attract the support they need; a Catch 22.

This Catch 22 dilemma is felt throughout budgetary strata of the industry. Chris, whose film cost the most to produce (over £1.5 million), significantly more than Ethan’s no-budget horror, notes that the lack of support has knock on consequences for producers throughout the whole process. He lamented his own experience, noting that the support he eventually received did not come at the time when he most needed it:

“it would have helped us a lot if they’d backed us earlier on our production finance. That’s really it. If they said...what we can’t do, and this is the real problem with producing small films here [in the UK], is we can’t offer pay or play to anyone, so we have no guarantee that the cast that we want is going to be involved in the film, agents won’t give you a letter which says if you can finance this film this guy wants to be involved.

Therefore, you can't get financiers involved because they want to know the films going to happen before they commit part of their budget to it. The [COMPANY C27] won't give you a letter saying well if you can bring this cast and the rest of the finance we will be involved, so that's no confidence to anyone.

"If I can say to...if I can go to an agent and go look, if x actor wants to do this film, I've got a letter here that says the [COMPANY C27] will finance, [COMPANY C26] will finance, and [COMPANY C29] will finance. If I can go to them with those three letters it's kind of a no brainer if that person wants to do the film, accepts the fee and has the time in their schedule. But you're always in this kind of catch 22 situation, where you can't attract cast without finance, you can't attract finance without cast, what the hell are you supposed to do then?" [Chris: 88]

Chris remained critical of how emerging producers are supported. Talking in general terms about how he saw the next generation of producer's coming through and noted that not enough was being done to find and nurture the kinds of people that were going to make an impact of the industry:

"quite frankly you need to identify the people who are capable of doing the job. And you need to support them. Neither of those things are really happening." [Chris: 113]

The nature of industry support and the participant's inability to access it recurred throughout the interviews. However, in contrast to the above, which suggests there is some sort of de facto refusal to support emerging producers, other participants see the situation as perhaps more complicated. For instance, Gareth finds that the initial difficult of access to support may be compounded by geographical considerations:

“I think it’s quite difficult as a producer outside of London to do that. Maybe that’s a naïve reading of it but there seems to be a certain small circle that does get that support”

[Gareth: 19]

Although Gareth acknowledges that his comments might be somewhat naïve they are supported by comments made by industry insiders themselves. Ben Roberts, director of the BFI Lottery Film Fund recently noted that they *‘recognise that the number of producers working outside London is relatively small – and has its own challenges’* (Wiseman, 2016). Levels of funding for regional screen agencies would be one such challenge: at the time Gareth made his film one regional film agency reported only partially funding 2-3 films per year, whilst another (prior to regional screen agency restructuring in 2011) co-financed 17 films in its ten year existence (Long & Spink, 2014; Davies & Wistreich, 2007, p. 400). On those numbers it is unsurprising that only a ‘small circle’ benefit.

Dawn’s experience is also suggestive of a situation where this failure to attract support might just be an inconvenient luck of the draw as opposed to some sort of *fait accompli* for emerging producers. Despite raising private equity finance relatively quickly Dawn still found access support difficult when it was needed. Discussing her own inability to access support she contrasts her own experience to that of another first-time production that happened at a similar time:

“They had the whole industry support behind it, you know we had nobody.” [Dawn: 37]

As such it is important to recognise that the experience of the participants in this study may not be indicative of the experience of all emerging producers. However, the seven participants here all noted some level of isolation and inability to access industry support when and where they needed it. Beth summarises this isolation and the reasons for it when she asserted:

“Nobody gives me anything because they trust me as a producer, because I’m sort of pretty much an unknown quantity” [Beth: 4]

For the participants there was certainly a perception that, as emerging producers, they were insignificant within the industry and they were unable to access adequate support when they needed it. This sense of weakness is exacerbated by their lack of experience and knowledge. The next sub-theme looks at how that has affected their experience of producing.

6.3.2 Theme 2 - Overcoming Inexperience

This sub-theme highlights the participant's sense of inexperience during the process of producing their first feature and their commitment to acquiring relevant knowledge as a means of overcoming that inexperience. This represents a transitional phase for the participants, replacing their naivety with a new understanding of industry and process. In the context of the theme, knowledge aids the participant's performance in their role of producer and as such provides them with lessons they can take into their later careers helping them to grow their status within the industry.

A report on low and microbudget film production in the UK¹⁴ surveyed the ambitions and attitudes of several filmmakers and noted that for some:

“the process of producing the film is often very challenging but the filmmaking team regard the process as a learning experience almost regardless of the outcome for their film, and value outcome in terms of knowledge gained and lessons learned about the film industry and film production” (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 21).

Whilst this may be the case for some of the participants more than others, the quote illustrates that the learning process is in an important stage in development and realisation of their ambitions.

6.3.2.1 Naivety/Inexperience

Throughout the interviews each of the participants expressed their lack of knowledge prior to producing their first feature. Andrew, who had embarked on the process of making his film with

¹⁴ It is acknowledged that the thesis is not specifically about low and micro-budget film production but given that six out of the seven participants would be classified as such by that same report it is considered relevant.

initial enthusiasm, soon encountered problems that highlighted his lack of experience. He readily admits that he:

“...went into it completely naively and blindly” [Andrew: 95]

Andrew’s professed naivety is interesting because prior to making his feature he had produced several short films, had experience working in the television industry and had completed a film degree at university. Despite those experiences he still felt unprepared for producing a feature film and raises questions about how much someone can really prepare for the role.

Andrew had initially been optimistic about the production but was soon overwhelmed by a series of very difficult problems that he struggled to solve and felt ill-equipped to deal with; again, he acknowledges his own naivety:

“they are just unforeseen hazards, so it maybe illustrates some of the naivety that producers go into or the need to get these things” [Andrew: 68]

Both extracts use metaphors related to sight and vision to make their point (*‘blindly’, ‘unforeseen’*) which highlights the lack of experience, knowledge and foresight to be able to cope with problems as they came up.

Not being able to foresee problems is something that Dawn feels might actually be a benefit to emerging producers:

“And I think if you knew what was waiting for you the likelihood is you probably wouldn't embark on it. But because you've no idea, you happily stroll in this adventure and then you kind of, wait, where is that taking me?” [Dawn: 53]

Dawn was less experienced than some of the other participants but had still produced two shorts prior to her feature and had a background in corporate video. Sadly for her, and like Andrew, Dawn’s account shows that she had not fully realised the nature of the task or the difference

between her previous filmmaking experiences and the challenges of a feature. She describes her feelings when faced with a number of her legal responsibilities:

"I mean it was like another language, I didn't understand a thing you know?" [Dawn: 51]

By drawing upon the idea of language Dawn conveys an image of foreignness to the nature of producing and implies how difficult it is to someone who is not familiar with its rules.

Like Dawn, Fran was another recruit with more limited prior filmmaking experience, claiming to have made a few short films which she described as 'silly' and 'not proper' and worked as a camera operator for a videography company. She also quickly discovered the difficulty of her undertaking and readily acknowledges her own naivety:

"I didn't have a clue what I was doing" [Fran: 20]

"I look back on the shoot now and just cringe but, you know, I didn't know what I was doing" [Fran: 42]

"I thought I knew what I was doing, but I didn't" [Fran: 99]

There are several other examples of Fran pointing out her lack of knowledge and it is her repetition of it that accentuates her sense of being beyond her comfort zone.

The remaining participants all express how their lack of experience affected their performance.

Gareth describes his inability to manage schedules:

"I didn't have the wherewithal... I almost didn't know how the budget worked, you know, to be able to say "Let's cut this money and we can do this by reducing the rate and shooting at this thing." I didn't have that experience to do that" [Gareth: 51]

He noted similar problems with his very limited understanding of financing and schedules, which is probably best summarised by his claim:

"for me all that of was new" [Gareth: 14]

Chris, who claimed to have been ‘*somewhat naïve*’ [Chris: 12], found his inexperience affected the way he was able to engage with the development of the film:

“all of us were at an early stage in our career, and we hadn’t had...hadn’t gained this kind of understanding of the way development needs to work” [Chris: 48]

Beth reflects on her inability to influence powerful executive producers and concludes:

“I suppose it was partly our inexperience” [Beth: 35]

Each of the participants expressed a sense that they had been naïve when they began their productions and the ways in which their inexperience affected their performance. The participants also share a commitment to overcoming that inexperience and a desire to learn the lessons that would make them better producers. As noted by Ethan:

“I wanted to just learn the ropes of producing because I felt that having not had any experience at it that I really needed to concentrate on it” [Ethan: 7]

6.3.2.2 *Acquiring knowledge to overcome inexperience*

In order to overcome their inexperience, the participants described seeking knowledge from a variety of different sources. Those sources include academic education, industry training, industry experts and, most importantly, via direct experience – the act of doing as a form of learning. This section focuses on how participants reflected on accessing these sources of knowledge and the significance to their development as producers.

Fran’s feature film was made as a graduation piece for a Master’s degree; as such it is not unsurprising that she was able to acquire some knowledge from her academic environment. Commenting on the value of one of the modules to her knowledge she found that it:

“...forces you to think about audience and how the structure of a film and how the branding of a film and building a package, essentially, which is something that I wasn’t really aware of before.” [Fran: 14]

However, there was a sense that her formal education was in fact very limited and didn’t provide the knowledge she felt she needed in order to tackle a feature film:

“...if you want to be a producer you need to know about the business of film and there was nothing on that course that taught you about that and I had a problem with that the entire way through, which was really frustrating.” [Fran: 7]

“How do you make a film? I kind of felt like I was aware that that was what was going on in the industry and I was on this course, I’d paid a lot of money, borrowed a lot of money to do and they didn’t know either. They weren’t even trying to teach us that. It was all very skirting around the edges and talking about creativity, which is all well and good, but I thought this isn’t going to get me anywhere.” [Fran: 11]

As someone who has gone on to work as a lecturer on film production, Gareth also noted the difficulty of trying to make a step up from short film making and echoed some of Fran’s feelings that film business skills were not being emphasized enough in film schools:

“I suppose one thing that I kind of want to say in this, there was a huge gaps between shorts and features. There’s a different set of skills that you need and a lot of those skills are more... You need your creative skills to help you make you feature but you need business skills as well. I think that’s sometimes where people might fall down on because you’re going from having somebody give you 10 or 20 grand or whatever it is to do a feature or nothing. So then having to make and raise anything between half a million to a million quid, two million, three million, whatever it is. And that’s a big lump. I think

that's where in terms of film education, in terms of training, I think that's where there's a huge gap" [Gareth: 12-13].

This is clearly problematic and raises questions for film education establishments. MacPherson has already noted this but states that it is hard, 'if not impossible to reproduce' the industrial conditions in which a producer has to work 'in the film school environment'; and goes on to say:

'The required alloy of creative and entrepreneurial skill can only truly be forged where and when the art of filmmaking is tempered by the business of securing both finance and an audience for the work' (MacPherson, 2009).

Returning to Fran, despite her frustrations she generally sees the value in a formal film education, concluding that there are associated benefits beyond the taught element of the course:

"I keep seeing recurring arguments, and stuff, online and people debate whether film school is the way to go or whether you should just spend the money it costs to go to film school, if you can even call MA I did a film school, on just making a film. I find that an interesting argument because I don't feel like the course content was of value to me, even nearly enough. However, the contacts that I made and just the experience of being thrown in, like, right, you've got a year and you've got try and learn as much as you can. I could have bought a load of books that was on the reading list and read those, but you know, unless you've got discipline you couldn't have... because people say film schools, they don't really teach you how to make films and how to sort of produce and direct. I absolutely agree with that, but what they do is a foundation. They create kind of a bubble for you to then make of it what you will and meet the right people and so, yeah, for what it's worth I suppose I'm kind of pro-film school as long as you're the right sort of person to make the experience what you want it to be." [Fran: 102]

Tailored industry training seemed to be a better source of knowledge which several of the participants benefitted from. Beth found that these courses offered perspectives and knowledge that she had not previously considered:

“I’ve done a lot of courses so I’m always doing training courses. I did a brilliant course last year on sales and distribution and I learned all kinds of things that I haven’t really understood before you know about how things work and how the money works. I’m doing a course at the moment called the Compass Course, which [COMPANY B3] doing – which is about business skills, so I’m getting stuff on negotiating skills and managing creative people and just all kinds of – and all this things just all feed into your kind of skill base all the time.” [Beth: 11]

Even though it was felt that these training courses provided better value than academic education there was still some cynicism about the motivation of training providers. Andrew was critical of his regional screen agency’s marketization of knowledge:

“In terms of the training and support that they can offer, some of the courses that they run I think are very good and I think that it’s probably no coincidence that the things that you have to pay for they’re really good at providing and you will get in.” [Andrew: 74]

Gareth also commented on attending several courses; however, he too was ambivalent about whether they really provided all of the skills emerging producers needed to progress. He had attended a highly regarded European professional development course that provided insights into negotiating film financing but thought it was less useful for the kind of day to day organizational skills of project management:

"I'd done courses like [COMPANY G7]¹⁵ which was a good course to do. I think it's come to [PLACE G1] a few times. So I kind of theoretically knew what I had to do, but I didn't have a lot of the skills like doing a film budget and stuff like that." [Gareth: 14]

Gareth also noted the limitations of the script development course he had attended:

"I've done all those theory courses. I know all the beats and all that, but a lot of it's instinct." [Gareth: 35]

Gareth's attitude towards these sorts of training courses was generally dismissive and he expressed a sense of self-reliance, that he did not need their information. However, Gareth is one of the more experienced of the participants and has now produced several features. It is less surprising that in hindsight he takes such a take it or leave it attitude towards the acquisition of knowledge as his perspective is a little different. However, he does note that in the early stages of his career his was less confident and more eager to access trade know-how:

"...everybody feels like they've got a secret that you don't know about. [Edited] How do you sell a film? And you think "Oh, someone, sales agent tell me the magic. Tell me the magic." [Gareth: 35]

For Dawn, an additional benefit of a training course she attended was that it provided a mentor, something she felt that she sorely needed. Despite being well under way with her production the course offered her a valuable support and a fast route to knowledge:

"I was quite fortunate that exactly that same year I was accepted on the [COMPANY D1] program. And they were saying, "well you don't really need us, because you've got your film" and I was like, "no I really need you, I really need a Mentor." And luckily, they took

¹⁵ As noted previously all information that could potentially be used to identify the participants has been withheld in agreement with the ethical procedures of USW and in line with the signed consent forms (See Appendices 3 and 4).

me on, because I was emailing my mentor, about certain things, because I had no clue.”

[Dawn: 7]

Mentors serve as another key source of information and knowledge for the participants and, as noted by Beth, provide essential lessons that helped them manage their first production and illustrated in the following (edited) extract:

“I had a really interesting mentoring session with a guy called [PLAYER B12] quite late toward the end. [PLAYER B12] was great, his really clear about the money, really clear about the process... basically he said feed them information because when you don’t feed them information, they worry and that’s when they’ll get on your back. And so he taught me to manage upwards and how to sort of treat my execs with respect, but also in a way slightly keep them off my back by giving them what they wanted.” [Beth: 40]

Chris actively sought out a mentor as he thought that would be a valuable source of knowledge:

“we took the view that we would...we would learn from as many people as possible and we wouldn’t go into meetings and say, hey I know everything you should trust me with your money. I should go ‘I need to learn, help me’. That’s why we went to [PLAYER C2], we went to [PLAYER C2] and said look we want to learn everything we can from you, he gave us great advice” [Chris: 27]

Chris was convinced of the merits of emerging producers attaching themselves to mentors and thought that more should be done to facilitate those relationships in order to form a virtuous circle of learning:

“I think that people with more experience need to help the people with less experience to understand how projects are made, the right projects that should be made, and also helping them put the projects out there to then become the experienced people, to

become the people with the financial backing to then start the next process, encouraging the next group of people” [Chris: 124]

Fran certainly felt that she would have benefitted from this kind of mentored support but instead found access to information quite difficult and found many to be protectionist over their knowledge:

“You’re just craving knowledge of... you just want to know how people are doing it and what other people are doing because it’s constantly kind of new found land and everybody’s very kind of protective over how they’ve done things and how well their films have done and financially.” [Fran: 109]

Ethan did not have a mentor but closely observed how industry insiders worked and by asking them questions:

“I was trying to speak to the distributors on other projects, you know, and it was just... you sort of start to learn what they’re looking for or how they see things” [Ethan: 86]

“I learnt sort of in talking to enough of them what kind of things work, what don’t, in terms of how to market a project, how they view things” [Ethan: 87]

All of the participants sought knowledge from mentors, industry experts or both and actively sought out what information they could in order to equip themselves with the skills they needed to produce their first features. However, the most valuable lessons they learned were from actually doing the job of the producer; echoing the comments of Grove that filmmaking cannot be taught, ‘*You have to learn it by doing it*’ (Grove, 2014, p. 1). These lessons were the hardest won and the most informative for the participants. Many of the participants found that the knowledge acquired through the process of making their feature film was actually unreplicable and they also questioned the value of short filmmaking as a worthwhile training ground for a

producer. Comments on this issue from Gareth have been noted above, but Andrew and Dawn also questioned the value of shorts to emerging producers:

“most things you can train and you can learn and you can do your job and you can get better at it but directing and producing they’re hard things to create the opportunity to practice at and a short film is not practising feature film, methods, productions, techniques and all the rest of it” [Andrew: 100]

“all sorts of things that I’d never, ever come across before and you don’t come across it in short films, is things like E&O insurance, Error & Omission insurance, legals, you know, things for copyrights, checking – all that kind of thing was like complete unknown and I had no idea that was kind of waiting for me [laughs] and it was a bit of a “what do you mean, I need an E&O insurance?” “What do you mean; I need to make this...?” You know, “clear this script?” or whatever. It’s completely logical when you think about it but I’d never done it for shorts.” [Dawn: 6]

As noted above the real lessons for the participants were learned during the actual production of their feature films. On this note, each of the participants shared similar sentiment:

“...you learn by experience, you learn the hard way” [Andrew: 70]

“...learned a lot, done it. It’s, I couldn’t be doing what I’m doing now without having done that. So I have nothing, but positive things and the difficult stuff is the most useful stuff actually.” [Beth: 120]

“there’s a lot of those kind of considerations that I think you gain an understanding of that through experience of doing it.” [Chris: 32]

“I have never been to film school so I think that was kind of my film school two years packed in six months, but with a real kind of case study. Yeah, I know I think it was. And it was a great experience” [Dawn: 55]

"it was a kind of a baptism by fire" [Ethan: 41]

"...it was an experience. I learnt a lot from it and it served a purpose in respect of me launching a career" [Fran: 100]

"I think what you do is you learn from your mistakes" [Gareth: 63]

The participant's initial feelings of inexperience and naivety were overcome by acquiring relevant knowledge from a variety of sources. In the context of the main theme the lack of knowledge represents an obstacle that they need to transcend in order to increase their status within the film industry.

6.3.3 Theme 3 - Drive: Hunger to succeed

During interview, whilst describing the challenges they faced as producers, participants often conveyed a sense that there was some sort of internal mechanism that was propelling them forward, often against adversity and each displayed a strong will to succeed. When such examples were noted in the interview transcripts they were initially coded in a variety of ways - the most common of which were: drive, self-motivation, determination, work ethic, self-sufficiency, persistence and resilience. Thematically, these codings have now been grouped together as they have generally been used to describe the participant's hunger which they utilise to push through hardship and towards their goals.

The theme 'drive' represents the participants willingness to attain their goals and has been noted in other studies of producers. Ortner has described this drive as 'agency' and notes:

'just about every producer on the planet agree that a producer needs to have what social scientists call "agency". The idea of agency in social science jargon comprises a number of interrelated ideas revolving around self-confidence, around the ideas of being able to make things happen in the world, around activity rather than passivity, around energy and will' (Ortner, 2013, p. 158).

Ultimately, however it is described (drive, agency, tenacity) the theme shows that the participants here are certainly committed to pushing their projects forward. There are many examples of this occurring throughout each of the participant transcripts; however, I have just used some of the stronger examples to illustrate the theme and related them to the individual motivations for each participant.

Andrew was very focused on the future of his career and production company. He was very bought into a 'where there's a will, there's a way' attitude and considered the consequences of failure to be fatal to his career and his ability to lead as a producer:

"...we'll do it, we'll find a way, there is always a way, you don't have the answers for everything but the minute you lose faith and belief in what you're doing why would anybody follow you?" [Andrew: 24]

Beth's personal desire to make the film drove her to make the difficult choices she needed to progress. She describes how she 'had' to do certain things, almost as if there were no other options and included having to replace key personnel:

"...we had to deliver to these deadlines and I wanted it so bad, you know I really, really wanted to get to make this film. So, I was kind of prepared to do what had to be done"
[Beth: 34]

Chris focused on the need for constant momentum. He discussed the intensity of making the film and the need to stay positive in the face of adversity:

"...you just kind of have to feel this sort of relentless forward motion, it's the kind of shark that never stops swimming, you're always pushing forward. And you just brush off the bad things, because if you let yourself get too affected..." [Chris: 78]

Dawn also noted that drive and momentum are essential characteristics of producing and discussed the need to be able to move passed problems:

"it's trying to find solutions basically, which is what a producer usually does you know those are nightmares or like how can you kind of surmount it and move forward" [Dawn: 28]

"...certain things are kind of quite tough, production by definition is tough. But you know you kind of have to have someone driving it." [Dawn: 46]

Ethan was driven by a sense of urgency, that he had a chance at making his career now and that he was going to take it, fearful that it might not last forever:

“Just keep doing them and doing them and then, you know, if one day the wheels fall off and I can’t make anymore, at least I’ve done as much as I could” [Ethan: 59]

Fran noted her ‘desperation’ to succeed and desire for constant forward momentum:

“I’ve just been desperate to just keep going and try and forge a career” [Fran: 8]

Gareth notes the hardship he had to endure during his feature and the need for self-belief in order to keep moving forward:

“...you have to really believe in what you’re doing, to love what you’re doing and have faith in what you’re doing to keep it going that time, particularly when sometimes you’re getting by on less than the minimum wage.” [Gareth: 23]

6.3.4 Theme 4 – Hopes and Fears for Future Status

This sub-theme explores how each of the participants imagines their future career as film producers. It considers the issues that are important to them in order to have successful careers such as their reputation and career longevity.

6.3.4.1 Reputation and industry acceptance

The issue of growing reputation and industry acceptance is linked to the section on the participant's fear of isolation and sense of insignificance within the industry. That theme situated the participants as outsiders but their focus on reputation is about their long-term goals. The participants show an appetite for career progression and a demonstrable desire to move from outside of the industry to the inside. The participants do not necessarily seek to define what 'being on the inside' means to them individually but there is definitely a sense that as their careers progress they need to cross a threshold that brings with it some form of elevated status. In fact, for some of the participants their first feature production is simply a means to that end:

"...my whole motive for doing this is to get a foot in the door as a producer" [Ethan: 27]

"...this is about being able to get in that arena to play, to keep making films" [Andrew: 98]

Having completed their first features films all of the participants were concerned with where their careers went next. Furthermore, it was important that the next steps were on an upward trajectory. For Beth, her next project would be important as it was her intention that it should bring more power and influence:

"the thing I suppose I'm most excited about if I can pull it off is a film about [Person B1], I've bought the rights to her autobiography and there is a very well developed script and I've just embarked on a relationship with a much more senior producer as it were who's

got a lot more contacts. And if we can pull that off that will be a much higher budget you know it will be over £5 million and it will be, so that will be a big leap for me into a kind of, I suppose into the kind of, not quite the premier league, yeah maybe the premier league whereas at the moment I feel I'm a little bit down at the bottom of the first division, if you know what I mean." [Beth: 4]

Beth's account incorporates the sense of power to which she aspires through the acknowledgement of more 'senior' producers and invokes the notion of rising through the 'leagues' or stages of her intended career path.

Other participants already felt that their journey was underway and that the process of making their first feature had indeed helped to grow their stature within the industry. Chris reflects:

"And suddenly that put us on the map, having just finished a film, and then having a new thing going on. And everyone wanted to meet with us because we had interesting projects and interesting directors, and we managed to set those up with the [COMPANY C1] and [COMPANY C2], which kind of brought us into the industry." [Chris: 4]

Dawn shared a similar experience:

"...it basically enabled me to kind of establish myself a bit more in the industry you know. People would then know who I was, you know?"

EC: It's done that for you, yeah.

Dawn: Yeah. And the second you say you're working on a feature people see you differently you know?

EC: Why do you think that is?

Dawn: Because you've kind of grown up a bit more. You know it's not a short, it's a feature. And then when you have a feature distributed, you know with a sales agents like people recognise, that's again another level. So I think it really does help into kind of positioning you in the industry." [Dawn: 63]

By discussing distribution and sales agents, Dawn recognises the importance of process. For the participants it is not necessarily good enough to just produce a feature but how the feature is produced and released that will have a bearing on their standing and reputation within the industry. Many of the participants felt that they needed to perform tasks in a certain way and to produce their film through a traditional route via established industry gatekeepers. Fran, whose career is in an early stage than any of the other participants, was particularly occupied by this need to prove herself in a recognised way. Her thoughts on distribution illustrate this point:

"...there was still that prestige of getting your film an actually proper distributor." [Fran: 70]

"...self-distribution existed but I mean, still arguably it's not really the done thing" [Fran: 26]

Fran was very keen to do things in a professional way; during the interview she described the need to undertake processes '*properly*' or in a '*proper*' way no less than thirteen times. Fran hoped that demonstrating her ability to perform tasks to an accepted industry standard would pay dividends and get her (and her director) noticed:

"We just wanted to have a film that got released professionally because it looked good for both of us" [Fran: 59]

At the other end of the spectrum, Gareth, who has now completed several feature films as a producer notes that completion of these films has helped him build a reputation and garner trust from the industry players he needs to continue with his career:

“What I’m finding now is that whilst I’ve made a lot of money on the films I’ve made, that particularly people like the tax investors and stuff like that, trust me because they know I can finish a film. And that’s a big thing as well. They know that it will look like money’s been spent on it. It’s not going to look like a five bob film. It looks like something proper.” [Gareth: 50]

Ethan also notes that success has allowed him to:

“...become a viable producer in the industry who makes money and that investors and distributors want to work with” [Ethan: 114]

From the participant’s interviews we might conclude that reputation and acceptance by the industry is important for emerging producers. Many of the participants were also keenly aware that reputations can be both good and bad and several of them wanted to make sure that I wouldn’t be attributing their real names to comments they made about people that they worked with in the industry. Comments such as the following were made:

“I am a bit nervous that I am too open, I’ve just divulged loads of stuff that if that was to, if you were a journalist and that was to get typed up and go out there would be a lot of repercussions to what I’ve said”

“this is not going to be attributed...yeah?”

“I’d be interested to know how much of that are going to, put in the verbatim. I mean there are certain bits that I wouldn’t want necessarily to ... make public”

Out of respect for the participants I have not disclosed who made these comments in this instance. Of course, their names have been changed as has other information that might be used

to identify them. However, it underlines the nature and the perceived fragility of their reputations which they feel need to be closely guarded if they are to fulfil their ambitions.

6.3.4.2 *Career longevity*

The theme focuses the participant's desire to have long careers as producers and can be linked to the idea of 'sustainability'. Doyle has argued that the film industry under the New Labour government was fixated on the idea of sustainability and there were efforts to push producers towards self-sufficiency (Doyle, 2014, pp. 4-5). Whilst not all of the participant's comments articulate the same sense of what that might mean they are all focused on long term plans. Long and Spink note:

“Whatever sustainability means, it has pertinence here for the questions we ask about the quality of working lives, of the nature and meaning of work for individuals who have felt that opportunities exist to make films as a means of making a living and to plan, maybe hope for, a career as a producer.” (Long & Spink , 2014).

The majority of participants clearly have a long-term vision for their future as producers. During interview only Beth and Gareth were vague in describing where they see their careers going. However, for Gareth, having produced several features his career is now slightly further along than the other participants and he is closer to fulfilling some of his ambitions. He does talk about having plans and next films but the extracts of text are not particularly illustrative of this theme so it has been decided not to include them. Similarly for Beth, she does briefly discuss her next project but, for the purposes of this sub-theme, not in a particularly illuminating way and so her comments have not been included.

The remaining participants were each very concerned with cultivating a long-term future. Chris focused on the elements he needs to so well in order to make that future a reality:

“I’m quite early on in my career in terms of producing, having done two films, I think I’ve developed a lot and I’ve read a lot, and I’ve thought a lot about it, and talked to a lot of people who are much more experienced than I am, and that’s it really, you’ve got to have this real instinct for this...this...this idea, this element can be a film in this way, and it’s the ‘in this way’ bit, the way you put stuff together financially, creatively and structurally in terms of cast and crew, that really sorts out the producers who stick around and the producers who flash and disappear.” [Chris: 32]

Chris clearly does not want to be a producer who simply ‘disappears’ and considers what will set him apart so that does not happen. For Chris, his producing longevity is dependent on the ability to perform well in three different areas or ‘*financially, creatively and structurally*’ as he puts it. For Andrew, only one of those issues has any real importance:

“once you find commercial success, meaning financial success, how much did your film cost to make, how much money has it made and what’s been the return to its investors, once all those numbers are really good I think then you are on a trajectory and you can build and you can keep going outwards like that, raising the bar each time. And that’s, that’s the holy grail for me as a producer and for the future of the production company really.” [Andrew: 11]

The importance of proving himself to investors is vitally important to Andrew. He considers his future to be entirely independent and does not see a future where he expects to receive finance from any of the regional film agencies. Therefore, his ability to prove himself as a reliable source of return for investors is essential to his success. He goes on to say:

“the film has to yield a profit and a dividend for in any way for this business plan to remain sustainable, otherwise...that’s...yeah, we’re washed up” [Andrew: 29]

We can see that Andrew's long term priorities are not necessarily tied to creative endeavour; he certainly sees this as important but in his capacity as a producer his priority is to create a sustainable career. Both Ethan and Dawn express similar priorities:

"I'm trying to make a catalogue, you know, a catalogue of titles. I'm trying to build a company, not a film, know what I mean and that is the difference". [Ethan: 61]

"it's not the project that's actually going to matter the most to me because you know hopefully you won't do one project. I mean you are going to do 20, 30 you know you are going to try and do that for years to come." [Dawn: 44]

As we can see from these extracts the participants focus on long term aims; '*building*' companies and being around for '*years to come*'.

Fran's certainly shared the sense that she wanted to be producing for the long term. However, her ambitions are perhaps more modest than some of the other participants:

"I want to be able to say I've got a career as a producer. I'm earning a comfortable living. I don't want to be Harvey Weinstein and make an absolute fortune. I just want to be making good films that I want to make and be making a decent living from them" [Fran: 95]

Owing to the fact that Fran is still in an early stage of her career the uncertainty and risk of working as an independent film producer weighs on her mind quite heavily and her future seems to be tied up to her ability to earn a living. Nonetheless, despite its modest nature there remains a sense that her future is as a film producer; something that all of the participants clearly have in common.

6.3.4.3 *Anxieties: Fears for the Future*

"making it against all the odds" [Beth: 107]

Participants reflected on the inherent difficulties of producing and considered what that might mean for their long-term career prospects. Several themes emerged through the analysis that focused on such issues as self-doubt, fear of failure, insecurity and pessimism about their futures. These anxieties are common themes in debates about cultural labour with similar issues such as self-exploitation, precarity, multi-tasking, anxieties about low pay and job insecurity being prevalent concerns of media industry workers (Gill & Pratt, 2008; Paterson, et al., 2016, p. 4).

Film producing was seen as a difficult and complicated undertaking and participants often talked about the feelings of having 'survived' an ordeal which was done so, as Beth's quote illustrates, against all the odds. Many of their experiences translated into anxieties about the next stages in their career. In particular, several of the participants focused on the financial risks of producing and how they might continue to survive in future. Clearly, they were concerned about the implications that these risks had for their ambitions.

Chris, who found several stages of film production an '*incredibly grinding and soul-destroying experience*' [Chris: 40], was particularly vocal about this issue and talked at length about how difficult it was to make a living as a film producer, complaining that film financing in the UK seemed to be structured in such a way that it regularly disadvantaged producers:

"We made a movie where we took minimal fees, again, there's an assumption that the producers put all of the risk on the back end, don't get paid upfront, because what right do you have as a producer to get paid upfront." [Chris: 121]

He argued that the consequences of this would be detrimental for other emerging producers, particularly those who were not from an independently wealthy background, and the long term future of the industry itself:

“Because otherwise you end with an industry full of trust fund people who have been able to afford to survive for this long, not through their own abilities but through just having the financial backing of their family and neither myself nor [CREW C1] have trust funds, or people who are backing us, and so we had to raise the money, but barely, and if I was a bit older, and I had a kid that I needed to put through school, I certainly wouldn’t have survived as a producer...”

EC: Yeah

CHRIS: ...doing that. But it’s, you know, you make that investment to get to the stage where you can. And I know lots of people who’ve fallen by the wayside because of it, good people. [Chris: 122-123]

Andrew also felt that producers were required to take a disproportionate amount of risk and used language to evoke the sense of jeopardy that that they had to face:

“producer’s take all the risk, they’re going out into something really sketchy with an entirely new idea and there is perils and pitfalls the whole way and you’re lucky to get to that side of the chasm” [Andrew: 39]

During his interview Andrew was focused on how he had to manage his company and film projects effectively as this was the only way he could be successful. He felt that failure to do that would mean that, ultimately his ambitions would fail also:

“if it’s not built on a solid business foundation then you are always grasping at straws and chancing to try and get more money each time. It’s almost stepping stones and you can go backwards on these stepping stones” [Andrew: 11-12].

Ethan also displayed some anxiety about the difficulties and uncertainties of film producing and warned of the inherent risks but, unlike Chris or Andrew, seemed much more willing to embrace

them and sees it as an essential component of his success; in this way, his comments tie in with the theme of career longevity:

“Nothing is certain whatsoever - about anything, there’s nothing, it’s...you’ve got to be someone who’s willing to take a risk and that’s why a lot of...there’s a lot of talented people out there that never get anywhere, because they can’t see past stability. It’s very stable people which is great, I would love it, sometime I would love to be one of those people who are....who love stability, love security, you know, but while I would like that stuff, I just....I don’t know, I’m just built to take risks...” [Ethan: 51-52]

“...when it comes to this, I just know that as hard as it is, you’ve got to take risks, you’ve got to think it’s the....if you study anyone who’s ever been successful at any level, you know whether it be big level or a modest level or whatever, there was always...there was always risks taken. No one ever gets anywhere without taking a risk and...and getting out of your comfort zone as well, you know, it’s so uncomfortable, it’s really uncomfortable taking these risks but you’re not going to get anywhere otherwise, that’s what I felt. Like I thought I was saying to myself “you’ve got to do it” and that is, you know, hopefully then get in to a position where you take enough risks, that you’ve achieved a position where, you know, it’s not such a risk anymore and you have stability”
[Ethan: 52-53]

Other anxieties felt closer to home; literally in Gareth’s case. Gareth was fully aware of the consequences of taking significant risks and his first production almost had a huge personal cost:

“God, I’m in this situation where I could lose my house now,” and because you’ve got such blind faith... I’ve not done that since and I’ve almost learnt my lesson from that”
[Gareth: 23]

Dawn and Fran, who had both made microbudget features, located their anxieties in their (in)ability to make a living through film producing:

"I've produced works but nothing has made me any money yet in that respect. Maybe it never will" [Fran: 9]

"I was doing the corporate stuff and I am still doing the corporate stuff. Until I get money from feature films I have to carry on juggling both" [Dawn: 3]

6.3.5 Theme 5 – Desire for Independence

“The new breed’s most important characteristic is their sense of independence. Self-employment is rarely a stepping stone to employment in a larger organisation. Most people who are self-employed in the cultural sector want to stay that way. They do not want to work for large organisations: they recognise that employment has become more insecure and unstable; they do not want to be told what to do; they do not want to be part of a corporate culture or formal career structure; they prize their small scale as the basis for the intimate and creative character of their work. They opt for self-employment or micro-entrepreneurship because independence will give them a sense of authorship and ownership: it is the best way for them to develop their own work”
(Leadbetter & Oakley, 1999, p. 22)

Discussing ‘Britain’s new cultural entrepreneurs’, Leadbetter and Oakley describe the attitude of many people who seek work in the UK’s creative industries. This need for independence is part of what Hesmondhalgh and Baker have described as ‘good work’ (which consists of: decent pay, hours and safety; autonomy; interest and involvement; sociality; esteem and self-esteem; self-realisation; work life balance; security (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 17).

The desire for independence was clearly a significant factor in the participants’ accounts.

6.3.5.1 *Desire for Autonomy*

Autonomy can be seen to be a central driver for each of the participants and is linked to issues such as agency, entrepreneurialism and independence (Ortner, 2013, p. 160). For the participants their autonomy is linked to a desire to make things happen and an understanding that they have to create their own opportunities. Furthermore, the participants express a general sense of frustration at having to rely on other people and having to wait for opportunities to arise. Their autonomy was central to their ability to overcome these obstacles.

Acting autonomously was clearly essential for several of the participants who felt that they had to make their own opportunities owing to several different factors. For Beth, age was a decisive factor in her need to act autonomously:

“to start in that sort of industry context to start at 40 and work your way up the usual way is really hard. Nobody wants to take on a runner [laughs] who’s 40 - it just feels really weird. So I was kind of forced - because of my age and because I’ve had this whole other career path - sort of forced to start on my own and sort of work my way from the outside in as it were” [Beth: 3]

Her insistence that she was ‘forced’ into starting her own career may demonstrate a reluctance to act in this way but Beth felt that in order to get the opportunities she wanted there were very few other options.

Andrew also acted out of a sense that he had limited options and considered that there was little in the way of structured career development that might be found in other professions:

“there’s no path, there’s no ‘so you do your apprenticeship here and you get your job there and that’s how it works” [Andrew: 6]

The lack of progress frustrated Andrew and led to his conclusion that in order to have the opportunities he wanted then he would have to make them himself. That frustration was compounded by a feeling that somehow he had to wait on other people and various circumstances in order to move forward with his desire to make films:

“...why am I sitting here waiting, why am I not in control of what’s going on here”
[Andrew: 13]

“it’s about this not waiting for permission again” [Andrew: 17]

Gareth also felt a frustration at having to wait for circumstances to favour him before he could move forward with his production:

"It's waiting for things. Almost you're relying on other people." [Gareth: 36]

Throughout his interview Gareth was very clear about his need for autonomy:

"I'm going to spend all these years working on this film. I want to make the film that I want to make" [Gareth: 6]

In order to achieve that he would often take control of certain elements of production that would ordinarily be performed others and particularly those in creative roles: *"I just do it myself"* [Gareth: 7]. In this way, Gareth was able to ensure that he was doing what he wanted rather than rely on other people who may change his producerly vision for the film.

The reliance on others is a problem for several of the participants. Fran in particular thought relying on others to be an obstacle to such an extent that she found it to be incompatible with her personality. Asked what she thought made her suitable to producing she replied:

"I'm a control freak, I think, is what it is and I think there's pros and cons to that attribute in a producer. I'm very pedantic, in an annoying way, and I like... I just... yeah, and I irritate people because I'm constantly like, "Have you done this"? "Yes, it's done". But, yeah, there was certainly a time where I'd just try and do it all myself. I wouldn't want to rely on anyone else to do it." [Fran: 32]

The notion of having to wait for permission and feeling of being reliant on other people heightens the sense of powerlessness that the participants felt in the early stages of their careers. The concept of permission evokes a sense of authority, almost as if there was an industry establishment telling producers when they were allowed to make films. In order to overcome this frustration the participants felt a need to take control of events. There seems to be a moment of realisation for many of the participants that they have the freedom to act when they choose:

"...of course you can do anything you like. But the thought process it was like a penny dropping I think." [Beth: 73]

A realisation of this kind, that 'you can do anything you like' is the transitional concept that allowed Andrew to break free from the illusory authority of the 'industry' and act of his own accord. This realisation had an empowering effect:

"as I was saying before you can wait for things to happen or you can decide to take control and make things happen" [Andrew: 40]

"it's just again about being in control and being empowered" [Andrew: 42]

The importance of taking control and being free to act as they saw fit is important to several of the participants, including Chris. One of the central reasons for his wanting to become a producer was to be able to make decisions unilaterally:

"if we were going to do it, and if we were going to continue to do it, which was absolutely something we wanted to do, that we'd do it for ourselves, so we'd make our own decisions and we wouldn't be in kind of hoc to someone else's decisions." [Chris: 3]

Chris had had prior experience in an associate producer role that he claimed had not been a pleasant one. His decision to produce was to provide some freedom from the choices of others and give him the level of autonomy that he had not previously had. There is a feeling here that not being in control, not having the power to make decisions creates a situation where the person is a slave to fortune, completely unable to shape events. For Ethan, who like Chris had experienced previous disappointment as a filmmaker, the need to be in control was central to his decision to become a producer:

"I always wanted to be a film maker but basically I'd written and directed a couple of films. The first one was a very small thing, homemade type of thing and the second one was a bigger budget piece, I think it was like 100,000 or more budget and I've written

and directed that and basically there was four producers and none of them were me, and basically that film didn't work out because a lot of them fell out with each other and a lot of issues came up and, you know, which obviously I'm not blaming anyone, it's just how it goes but the film never got released as a result. So then I was just like ok well, you know I stood back and took stock and realised that I needed to produce these films as well, so that didn't happen again, so all of the work didn't go down the swanny." [Ethan: 1]

As we can see many of the participant's decisions to become producers is based on a desire not to have to have to rely on other people and a sense that they need to act of their own accord in order to secure opportunities. However, there is a fundamental problem inherent to filmmaking that undermines a producer's ability to act autonomously. In order to achieve their aims producers need investment and support from players within the film industry who, as condition of their support, exert power and authority that usurps that of the producer.

6.3.5.2 *Dependency: Praise and Criticism of Industry Gatekeepers*

"There are people along the way who you need and you have to work with, who don't take risks and will always be paid, thank you very much. So that might go from your legal and your accountancy side of things right through to your sales and your distribution...and your cast members and anyone that has got an agent attached to them they will always be paid, thank you very much, they don't care about your journey and your problems" [Andrew: 40]

This theme explores the participant's interaction with and perception of industry gatekeepers. There was a common perception throughout the interviews that although these industry gatekeepers provided some support in key areas they also asserted considerable power over the participants, often by exerting control over creative issues and, at times, obstructing the

participant's aims and ambitions. This experience was frustrating for the participants who often found many of the practices deeply unfair and exploitative.

Before examining how the comments of the participants relate to the theme a brief definition of the term 'gatekeeper' will be attempted. Quite often the term refers to distributors who determine '*which films get made, marketed and distributed*' (Finney, 2010, p. 14); however, here it refers to all of the industry 'players'¹⁶ throughout the film value chain that producers typically rely upon to get their film to market. Specifically, it relates to distributors, public funding bodies, investors and sales agents. They are 'gatekeepers' because ultimately they control access to markets and can decide who and what projects get to be seen. Descriptions of these 'players' can be found in Chapter 3.

In order to achieve their aims, participants have each had to negotiate support from several gatekeepers throughout the film value chain. One of the major stages for each participant was to attract investment and/or finance to their film. One significant source of finance was public subsidy available through national and regional film agencies and other various schemes (hereafter referred to as 'subsidy gatekeepers'). Of the seven participants six of them applied for or enquired about these funds with three receiving substantial production funding and two others receiving other awards for development or completion. Unsurprisingly, the participants that received substantial production funding were more generous in their assessment of the subsidy gatekeepers. Beth found them to be '*massively supportive*' [Beth: 118] when she most needed them as did Gareth who found that they were:

"...brilliant and really supportive to me as a person and to my company and I will be eternally grateful for that" [Gareth: 22]

¹⁶ 'Players' is the term used in Bloore's independent film project value chain to describe the organisations or freelance individuals who work within that value chain. It is preferred to 'actors' or 'agents' because of the other meanings that those words have within the film industry.

For Chris, the funding he received was crucial but he was also keen to highlight the constructive input of their funders:

"...they tend to have good notes, they tend to fight...they tend to fight for what they believe in, in terms of the way your film should be, but they're also prepared to back that up with finance, and so I've found it good, and I know people have had varying experiences with them, ours was ninety percent positive I'd say." [Chris: 86]

For the other participants there was a sense that these subsidy gatekeepers had the wrong priorities. Specifically, they found that they were, at best, more interested in prestige than the commercial prospects of their chosen productions and, at worst, guilty of elitism. Andrew in particular felt that the industry was operating a certain kind of clique:

"We'd never get support from BFI, Creative England, Film Agency Wales it doesn't happen, we don't, we're not on a gravy train anywhere, we're not in any golden circles" [Andrew: 29]

He hopes things will change in the future and that funding will be:

"...more merit-based in that projects that are rising and that will find their finance are based on their qualities rather than the traditional nepotism of the industry" [Andrew: 48]

The sense of elitism was a major factor in dissuading Ethan to apply for public funding. Having had some prior experience working with them he found their motivation suspect:

"that's what it's really like because what they do, the jerk you around a bit, pretend that they're interested and they're actually not because you're not a known entity or you're not sort of dialled in to....you don't know someone, you're not dialled in to a certain agenda they have" [Ethan: 75]

Further to the perception that the subsidy gatekeepers were actively elitist there was also the suspicion from some of the participants that they were less interested in the commercial prospects of the films they chose to support but were more focused on a particular style or genre. Gareth, who had received support, recognised that:

"You almost have to go down the more art route to get that support, you know." [Gareth: 64]

Andrew and Ethan also highlighted the perceived lack of commercial imperative driving the subsidy gatekeepers:

"As is the way with a lot of the industry, it's not commercially driven, it's not about making a return or getting bums on seats, it's more about the cultural impact of the film." [Andrew: 74]

"I mean they're trying to make these classy art house films [TEXT REMOVED] they plough in like a million a year to movies and none of them really have any commercial legs" [Ethan: 75]

Chris sees this as a wider problem that fundamentally undermines the viability of the UK film industry:

"Film suffers from being seen as a creative art, and I think there's more...too much emphasis put on the fact that it's creative art, to the detriment of people seeing it as a business. Film should be a business. So few people are able to make money out of doing it, that it's not really perceived as a business, it's seen as a bit of a kind of cottage industry, and it's daft, it's....film should be a business." [Chris: 97]

Criticism of the subsidy gatekeepers was not confined to their criteria for awarding funding. There was also the perception that in return for any funding they exerted high degrees of control

over the projects and made demands in creative matters. Gareth found that the nature of the relationship was very heavily weighted:

"...it feels a little bit like a master and servant relationship" [Gareth: 48]

He explains the nature of their input:

"The problem was with what we had to do in developing the script often was we had to take on notes from the regional agencies to shape the script, and there was a script before the one we shot that I actually preferred. But that got knocked down by the regional agencies." [Gareth: 28]

"I'd say an endless editorial process with input from agencies wasn't the best bit."
[Gareth: 46]

Beth also found the power dynamic to be overwhelming. Although she was keen to point out that they were supportive there was clearly the sense that her autonomy was taken away once she had been selected for a particular funding scheme which she described as being like 'a treadmill' [Beth: 34]. Furthermore, she felt pushed into actions that required her to 'humiliate' herself [Beth: 32]. There was a distinct loss of creative control and described being 'pushed into' script changes and other creative decisions [Beth: 96]. Ultimately, she describes the difficulty of managing the creative process:

"that was one of the most difficult things about it that actually there were so many voices. Not just the three writers, the director and the producer but also the three executives." [Beth: 30]

Chris' experience also related to power and control exerted by his subsidy gatekeepers:

"We didn't always agree creatively and they like to flex their muscles sometimes." [Chris:

87]

Apart from the award of a small completion grant for post-production, Fran received little support from the subsidy gatekeepers. Furthermore, she feels that her chances of establishing a relationship with them have worsened following a reorganisation of the regional screen agencies in 2011. Her view corresponds with the idea that the subsidy gatekeepers wish to exert control in return for funding. When asked to make wholesale plot changes to a script she had presented for funding she refused:

"We said, "No, we're not going to do that". So we didn't get any money" [Fran: 66]

Subsequently, her overriding review of the current iteration of subsidy gatekeepers is a negative one. She believes that most other independent film makers feel the same way:

"most of them kind of don't have any belief or faith in the government funding methods.

They just kind of see it as a bit of a jumping through hoops, waste of time." [Fran: 68]

The idea that the subsidy gatekeepers are guilty of 'bureaucratic nonsense' [Ethan: 75] is shared by several of the participants. Gareth found that securing the finance from this source was:

"...really, really hard because there's so much meetings and form filling and box tick[ing]"

[Gareth: 21]

However, despite only having received a relatively modest award for development funding, Andrew was most critical about this bureaucracy and found that it was:

"...a lot of red tape and agro to deal with. It was the most difficult money to secure and manage out of all of it." [Andrew: 72]

He went on to explain his sense of injustice at the subsidy gatekeepers exploitative practice of charging exorbitant legal fees against the equity they award projects:

"we give everything up to feed their lawyers on a zero risk...jobs for the boys stitch up and it's outrageous, it's absolutely outrageous, it should be competitive, our accountant

doesn't behave like that, he's got templates, he knows what he can wangle and what he can't and he does it in the best interests of the film without shooting himself in the foot of course. And they're just, they've just got this rate card 'Bom! Sorry, we give you this but we're going to charge you that, out of your equity'. It's criminal." [Andrew: 77]

The perceptions that industry gatekeepers act against the best interests of the producer are common throughout the participant interviews and are not exclusively related to subsidy gatekeepers. Sales agents/companies and distributors are also criticised; particularly for a sense that they are exploiting producers. This suspicion is adequately summarised by Gareth:

"What other business do you get where you give something to sell and they take nearly all the money first?" [Gareth: 39]

With regards to sales agents/companies, Chris felt that they were an obstruction:

"Sales companies and agents share something in the...in common, which is that they are inserting themselves into a process. It's never going to be an entirely happy relationship, to someone who is effectively putting themselves between you and where you need to be" [Chris: 64]

Ethan's experience of sales agents led him to the conclusion that it was best to attempt to bypass them altogether:

"I'd had enough experiences of talking to sales agents and seeing what they've done on other projects to know that it looks good, but it's not worth it cause you're not...you're getting someone else taking a piece of the pie and it's not....it's not going to be profitable for you." [Ethan: 84]

Andrew, who ended up firing his sales company, was angered by their behaviour and found that their self-interest actually damaged his films reputation:

“the sales company are one of those culprits, if you like, who got deluded by the bigger picture that any minute now we’re going to get a multi-territory deal from Sony and it’s all going to be gravy so don’t worry, sit tight. In the meantime all the people who did want the film and were making offers on it were getting pissed off because they were being left in the dark, so they fell aside...I think three territories were closed more out of the need to cover the sales companies expenses than anything else than what’s best for the film” [Andrew: 34]

Beth found that the sales company’s mismanagement cost them the opportunity of playing at an important film festival:

“But they were waiting to hear from Toronto and they kept waiting and waiting and waiting and in the meantime they kept not replying to Warsaw and in the end, basically Warsaw basically said, “fuck you! You know, we’ve programmed something else now. We offered you three weeks ago and you haven’t even responded.” And they must have known that we were waiting for Toronto and then of course we didn’t get Toronto. So that was a massive screw up, really.” [Beth: 86]

Of course, there are benefits to sales agents, Beth [83] and Gareth [18] both point out the credibility having a sales agent brings to the production in terms of securing finance or actors. However, the general feeling was one of inconvenience and missed opportunities. There was a similar perception of distributors. Fran found her distributor showed a real ‘neglect towards’ her film [Fran: 73]; this was shown through a lack of marketing and general care:

“...the fact that there was no marketing at all, they just kind of put it on the shelves and online stores and that was kind of it.” [Fran: 74]

Beth had a similar experience:

“So they only spend, they spend less than 10 grand on P&A. And I reckon on three or four of that it's just on logistics. So the amount of money they are spending on press and advertising and ... is virtually nil you know.” [Beth: 89]

Chris and Andrew’s problem was with the marketing strategy employed by their respective distributors:

“...then we found this huge disconnect with the UK distributor and our marketing efforts it was kind of like ‘yeah, yeah boys do what you like’” [Andrew: 34]

“And the US distributor tried...decided to sell it as an action movie, and then people came out going, well, that wasn’t really an action movie.” [Chris: 106]

Dawn attempted innovative new ways to distribute her film online. Her strategy entailed releasing her film online for free for a limited period of time, in order to gauge public interest, before obtaining a theatrical release and a simultaneous Video on Demand release via iTunes. Whilst this does not completely invert the traditional release window pattern¹⁷ it does alter it significantly. Furthermore, there is some justification in her claim that this strategy was innovative; multi-platform simultaneous releases were not common place until some time later with Screen International only describing it as a ‘new way’ for distributors to ‘respond to shifting public viewing habits’ in 2013 (Wiseman, 2013), four years after the release of Dawn’s own film. However, this ‘innovation’ failed to gain any support from the wider industry:

“...we were actually one of the first British film, feature film to being released back to front, but with a reverse distribution strategy, but without any industry support because a lot of people I think were watch and going, “they are going to go flat on their face!...”

¹⁷ Release windows are: ‘The different chronological stages at which a film is exploited, starting with theatrical, then home video, pay-TV and free-TV, etc’ (Finney, 2010, p. 225).

“...you know people were looking at me going, “you’re doing what, a micro budget? You’re doing what? Reverse distribution? It’s a complete waste of time.” [Dawn: 36]

The participants perceived that various industry gatekeepers operate in such a way that it is a disadvantage to them as emerging producers. As a result the participants have felt at times exploited and at others neglected. There is a sense of injustice at the behaviour of the gatekeepers and a deep concern that a continuation of this model is unsustainable for producers. Chris suggests that the problem lies in the way that the industry gatekeepers value producers in the UK:

“there’s this kind of assumption, that is an inherent assumption, that producer’s should not get paid for what they’re doing, they should get no support to do what they’re doing, it’s fine to pay a director a retainer, it’s fine to pay a writer sixteen grand to write two drafts of a script, but a producer shouldn’t be getting paid for what we’re doing, makes no sense.” [Chris: 119]

“And I don’t understand where this assumption has come from, but it’s absolutely ingrained in every level of the financing in the UK.” [Chris: 121]

6.3.6 Theme concluding remarks

Some of the more controversial claims in the theme findings was the suggestion that the national and regional screen agencies were elitist, that they asserted power over producers and they were not interested in supporting commercial films. Whilst each of the participants had their own individual positions on these issues there was a general consensus that several 'industry gatekeepers' were somehow obstructing their career progress. Ultimately, the truth of those claims is beyond the scope of this research. However, I now offer an extended reflection, with reference to extant literature, on why I believe the participants might have felt this way.

The participants would not be the first producers to feel negatively towards the screen agencies. A 2008 report noted that *'many producers expressed dissatisfaction with the attitude and approach of public agencies to their projects'* (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 4); an appendix to the report, which focused on low and micro-budget film production also noted that *'producers are frequently distrustful of strategic film agencies'* (Northern Alliance, 2008a, p. 5). However, the report itself, which was based on the survey responses of approximately 200 film producers, provides little qualitative evidence to support these assertions. As such, the comments from the participants included in the findings help to support the earlier report and to further illuminate an issue which seems to affect a number of producers.

There is further evidence that the screen agencies do not always act in the best interests of producers. A 2014 paper by Doyle which evaluated the strategies of the now defunct UK Film Council had noted that that agency often behaved in a way that was detrimental to producers (Doyle, 2014, p. 10). Citing a conversation with Peter Watson of Hanway Films the paper notes that:

"the way they comported themselves was more like studio executives than people who were there with a public service ethos... They were extremely tough with producers on terms of trade... They demanded aggressive positions when it came to credits on films..."

They fought producers tooth and nail to get the best recoupment position for their money... In squeezing the producer that way they weakened the producer” (ibid.)

Of course, these comments are about an historical agency and one which reviewed and softened their practices over time (by the time the UKFC was closed down they had established much better terms for producers), but it was operational at the time the several participants of this study were making their films. Furthermore, the comments generally relate to more established producers of higher budget films, but it does suggest that the UKFC were not afraid to assert their power over producers as has been suggested by the participants of this research. And it raises the question: if the agency was happy to assert authority over established producers how have they acted towards emerging producers or those with less experience? In light of there being no previous research on emerging producers the findings provide some limited evidence that they have been happy to assert that authority.

With regards to the regional screen agencies, Newsinger has commented on their policies and practices. Newsinger’s paper focuses on EM Media¹⁸ and their administration of a short film scheme (Digital Shorts); the scheme, which was designed as part of a ‘stepping stone’ system, was intended to be the first stage of a system that encourages the ‘linear career progression’ of new filmmakers that they wanted to support. The paper makes some interesting points:

‘the pressures imposed by funding agencies in the development process that work to proscribe form and content towards traditional narrative modes. It also illustrates the way that this process can operate externally – the way that the agendas of funding agencies work to determine what sort of projects they receive and what sorts of projects are developed in the first place’ (Newsinger, 2009, p. 50).

Newsinger’s paper, and the above quote in particular, is interesting for several reasons. First, the quote brings up the issues of ‘the pressures imposed in the development process’ by RSAs; this correlates with observations made in the findings, specifically by Gareth, Chris and Beth who

¹⁸ RSA that administrates film activity in the East Midlands

each had direct experience of developing publicly funded films and had complained that such pressures took away or restricted, what Newsinger had called, *'their creative autonomy'* (ibid.). It is also interesting for the use of the word 'agenda' and what that might mean. Andrew and Ethan had been particularly vocal on this issue and complained in their interviews that the RSAs operated an anti-commercial 'agenda' when selecting films for support but that they would 'never admit to' it; claiming that the RSAs are generally looking for 'classy', 'worthy', 'arthouse' films that ultimately have no 'commercial legs'. Newsinger himself notes that the RSAs operate a *'narrowly perceived commercial formula'* that filmmakers needed to adhere to be selected for support (ibid, p. 52). On the face of it this would appear to lend credence to Andrew and Ethan's claim. However, the wider points of the article actually seems to contradict them in that the films EM Media have supported have been genre fair ('comedy, crime, horror') rather than more aesthetically challenging or politically radical films that have previously been the focus of British cultural cinema. If anything, Newsinger's paper seems to argue that the EM Media's selections are overly commercial (ibid, p. 49). The wider point of the article is that UK film policy, and its administration at regional level, is designed to promote commercial interests over cultural ones. That is not to say that Andrew and Ethan do not necessarily have a point about the commercial priorities of the screen agencies, but it is a complicated issue. What is clear is that the national and regional screen agencies have a difficult job to do with limited resources (something that Andrew recognised himself). Ben Roberts, the director of the BFI's Lottery Film Fund says that the success rates for people applying for funding for first films is 'low' (Roberts, 2016) and strategy documents for UK film acknowledge that there is not enough funds available to support all the needs of UK film production (BFI, 2012, p. 24). It is worth noting that at the time Andrew and Ethan made their films their RSA was only partially funding 2-3 films per year; so regardless of whether or not the RSA was interested in supporting commercial film the odds of being selected for funding are still stacked against individual filmmakers.

It is clear that all of the screen agencies (in operation now and under the UKFC) value the commercial potential of the films they support and state as much in their guidelines (Davies & Wistreich, 2007, pp. 395-411). However, at the same time, many of the screen agencies also recognise that there is a need to take risks on new talent because quite often private equity investors are not prepared to take those risks (SPI Olsberg, 2017, p. 7). The BFI webpage that outlines their conditions for production funding states that:

“We welcome production applications from new and established filmmakers. Priority will be given to projects and filmmaking teams that demonstrate a bold vision and creative excellence, and that are unlikely to be fully financed by the marketplace.” (BFI, 2018)

In another example, Ffilm Cymru Wales note:

“Our funding is intended for projects that are unlikely to be fully financed by the market and so require National Lottery support” (Ffilm Cymru Wales, 2018)

It is this point that I think Andrew and Ethan are making when they complain that the film agencies are not commercial. I suspect that from their perspective commercial means being able to raise finance from the market, or more specifically, from private equity investors that are looking to back low risk projects and who often take a more aggressive approach to recoument than the public funding agencies (Finney, 2010, p. 63; Davies & Wistreich, 2007, p. 102). Reviewing the interview transcripts reveals evidence of what these two participants might perceive commercial to mean:

“So first of all you go to the investor and you say ok, well there’s market potential....you’ve basically got to demonstrate market potential with the business plan and show them that’s it a viable investment opportunity.” [Ethan: 8]

“once you find commercial success, meaning financial success, how much did your film cost to make, how much money has it made and what’s been the return to its investors”
[Andrew: 11].

With this in mind it is understandable that their idea of what 'commercial' means is about the financial transaction between them and their investors. In contrast, the screen agencies almost seem to contradict themselves on this issue and it raises questions: How can the screen agencies claim to want to support films with 'commercial potential' whilst also admitting that the films they support are too much of a risk to find funding from the market? How do they define what 'commercial' means and how is it applied when they choose which projects to support?

If that can be seen as there being ambiguity and contradiction in their funding guidelines, then it is unsurprising that it leads some filmmakers to conclude the support of 'commercial' films is not actually a priority. Is it possible that filmmakers imagine the agencies make decisions not on commercial potential but on the more codified, subjective and less measurable terms in their guidelines such as 'creative excellence' and 'bold vision'? This is something that I believe is indeed possible, not only because of the comments from Andrew and Ethan but it is a sentiment I have heard many times from lots of filmmakers that I have encountered. It is certainly not an unusual sentiment amongst filmmakers, especially those people at an early stage of their career and something that I believe is at the heart of Andrew and Ethan's 'distrust' of these agencies. However, it is acknowledged that this is a controversial subject and it must also be considered that Andrew and Ethan might in fact simply be resentful about rejection or whatever other experiences they have had with their RSAs and have simply used the opportunity of the interview to criticise them. It is noted that the pair have lots of similarities in the types of project they have made, not least in the fact that they both describe the specific horror film genre they work in as 'schlock' [Andrew: 48; Ethan: 112]; I suspect that even they would recognise that this style of film does not fit the screen agencies idea of 'creative excellence'.

The 2008 report previously mentioned might help to illuminate why Andrew and Ethan feel the way they do. The report, which surveyed the attitudes and ambitions of low and micro-budget filmmakers, identifies a 'type' of producer that seems to describe Andrew and Ethan quite well.

The report highlights a group of producers who:

“feel themselves to be unsupported by (or even oppositional to) the mainstream industry and often (arguably invariably) the network of strategic agencies in the UK. For many of these individuals the practice of making films is a struggle, confirming their sense of opposition, feeling that industry structures and strategic agency interventions are constructed in such a way as to deny opportunity and block talent.” (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 21).

The idea that Andrew and Ethan feel themselves, and their projects, to be oppositional to the screen agencies is compelling especially when considering they used words such as ‘nepotism’ and ‘snobbery’ to describe the RSA’s strategic activities; words which highlight the sense of exclusion that they have felt.

In conclusion it must be repeated that, ultimately, understanding the ‘agenda’ (or lack thereof) of the screen agencies is beyond the scope of this research. Whilst it is true that the agencies have published guidelines to help them assess the qualities of individual projects the subjective preferences of those making the choices (and interpreting those guidelines) is less well known. However, it is noted that some of the participants have felt, sometimes strongly, that they have operated in such a way as to exclude them for a variety of reasons. As noted above, the truth to those claims are complicated but it does appear that those claims are somewhat supported by a limited amount of available evidence.

6.3.7 Superordinate-theme 1: Summary

This super-ordinate theme has focused on the ambition of the participants who, as emerging film producers, hope to achieve a set of career aims. However, they also recognise that their goals are not straight forward and that there are a number of potential impediments to their career progress. Here follows a summary of the findings of this theme:

Outsiders: Feelings of Insignificance

Participants have expressed a feeling that they lacked any power of influence within the film industry at the beginning of their careers. Participants discussed feeling isolated and unsupported.

Overcoming Inexperience

Participants discussed a sense that they were naïve and inexperienced at the outset of producing their first feature. However, in order to overcome this naivety/inexperience participants attempted to acquire knowledge from a variety of sources; however, they found that the best way of learning is via the doing of film producing.

Drive: Hunger to Succeed

Each of the participants has expressed a strong desire to succeed and that they were incredibly motivated to do so.

Hopes and Fears for Future Status

Participants were particularly focused on their own reputation and a need to gain acceptance and legitimacy from those working within the industry. They felt that this would aid their ability to have a long-lasting career. However, they also harboured some doubts about their chances of doing this and cited industry practices and the financial risks of producing as their main anxieties that might prevent them from doing so.

Desire for Independence

Participants discussed a desire for autonomy, the need to create their own opportunities and to be in control of their own destiny. However, this is problematised by their dependence on 'industry gatekeepers' who participants often felt put barriers in the way of their career progress and project goals.

6.4 Superordinate Theme 2

6.5 Focus on Creative Purpose

This theme explores the participant's sense of purpose within the creative realm of film production. Whilst participants had different ideas about the scope of their creative responsibilities as producers there were three common themes that unified their experience. The first showed that the participant's use their taste to inform their decisions and was a vital component in their pursuit of a market for their films. Secondly, the participants each intervened in the creative process in order to guide their productions but were careful to maintain certain boundaries. Finally, once reaching an audience the participants reflected on the reaction to their films and how that provided a sense of validation for their efforts.

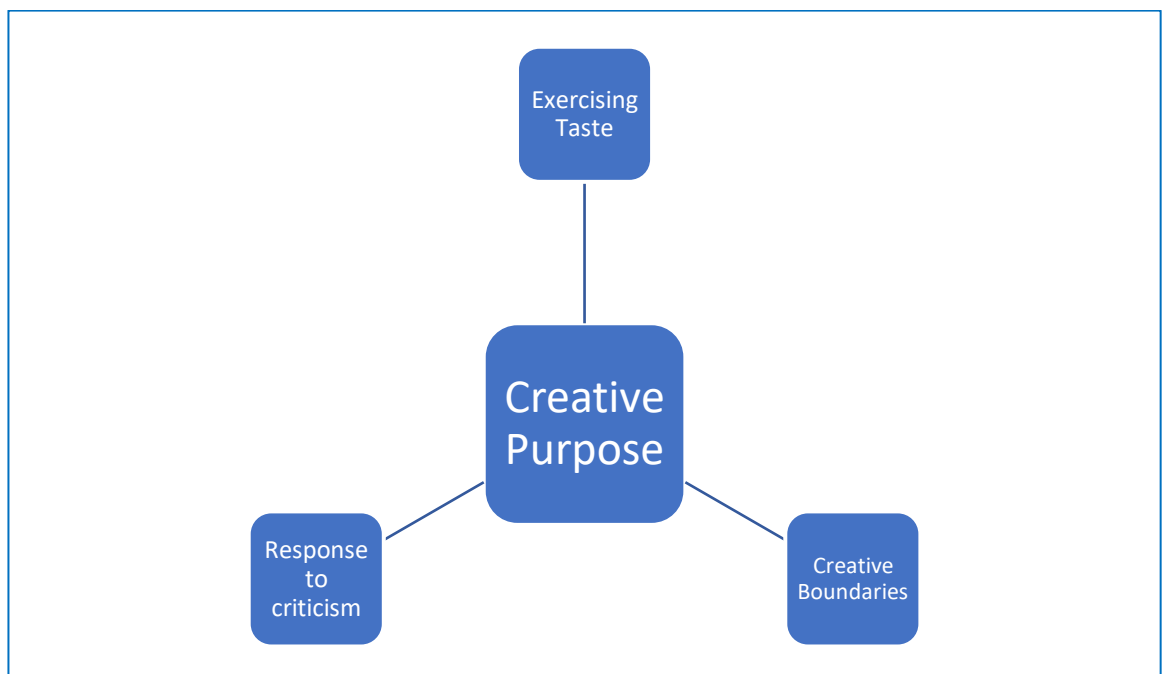


Figure 6.2 Radial Cluster of Creativity themes

What 'creative' means in the context of this research

The literature review has shown that there are a number of ways to conceive of the 'creative' role of the film producer. Several industry commentators and academics have noted that the producer's creative role goes beyond the 'implied artistry' of filmmaking and in to the way that they administrate and finance their projects. Lyons summed this up well by noting that producers:

"need to be 'flexible' and 'enterprising' to a nexus of entrepreneurial and artistic activities, which might range from the identifying and optioning of material, the contracting and managing of collaborators, through the arrangement of production finance to the positioning and marketing of the finished film" (Lyons, 2014).

Pardo has defined an 'indirect' form of creativity, where producers are not directly involved with artistic decision making but exercise creativity through their overall supervision of the film project (Pardo, 2010, p. 10). However, whilst I accept the proposition that producers exercise creativity in this broader sense it is not what I believe 'creative' has meant to the participants as they articulated their thoughts on their own practice. The participants have tended to focus specifically on their interventions in the artistic side of filmmaking; their choice of material, the management of their creative team and their reflections on the artistic merits of their film (and how that observation has, in part, been mediated by their interactions with an audience). As such, it is their attention to those aspects of film production directly related to its 'artistry' that have been considered 'creative'.

It is also worth restating that in IPA the purpose of the semi-structured interview is to allow participants to speak freely about issues that are important to them rather than being prompted by the interviewer. In other words, they are being asked to reflect on their own understandings of their world rather than to reflect on pre-conceived ideas that the interviewer may have about their world. As such, when the semi-structured interviews turned

to discuss the participant's 'creative contribution' to their films they tended to focus on the development process and, to a lesser extent, production rather than any other stages in the value chain such as post production. This is apparent in the analysis; particularly in the theme on 'Intervention and boundaries in the creative process.

Of course, I acknowledge that this is all subjective, and the interpretation of 'creative' is qualified by my own, and the participants, fore-understanding of what that term implies.

6.5.1 Theme 1 - Exercising taste: connecting creative endeavour with commercial aspiration

“I think the majority of independent producers, and certainly good independent producers...are people who have a completely nailed understanding of the financial side of things, who know how to put films together, who know how to raise money, and people trust. And the second element is they have very good taste. I think that having a good understanding of the financial side is an absolute requirement; you cannot get away without that. But I think what...given that, given a level playing field where everyone has that, a producer stands or falls on their taste. Do they have an instinct for saying this book with this writer, this director, will reach this audience? And that is the fundamental thing the producer needs to have. Because if you don't pick the projects, you're just going to have a very frustrating time awaiting development forever.” [Chris: 31]

This sub-theme looks at the participant's sense of taste and its utilisation to inform their decision making on project choice with the intention of reaching audience. The notion of taste and quality was quite varied with each participant having different assumptions about what was good and the type of films they wanted to make. This difference in taste is reflected in the spectrum of film styles in their productions; from arthouse to '*B movie schlock*' (as one of the participants described their own work).

On this spectrum both Beth and Gareth were keen to develop films that would appeal to arthouse audiences. Beth was very determined to produce films that reflected her taste:

“I realised that I really only wanted to produce things that I would want to see.” [Beth: 2]

She discussed her taste at length and how it was important to her decision-making process. Her vision for the film was influenced by European arthouse cinema and noted that she did not have much interest in producing anything in the prevailing style of UK film drama:

“I had it in my head that I really didn’t want to make a piece of sort of British social realism.” [Beth: 21]

In order to achieve a European feel Beth felt that it was *‘really important to have a very, very cinematic director’* [Beth: 21]; this was important as it would help avoid the film becoming too *‘soap opera-ish’* [Beth: 19]. Following a long search Beth was able to attach an Eastern European director to her production. Her relationship with the director was important as it allowed Beth to share her taste and vision with the person who was ultimately responsible for delivering it:

“...we talked a lot about Michael Haneke’s film Hidden which both of us loved and we – that was a kind of inspiration point. [EDIT] But because it’s a film we both love we sort of shared that taste you know” [Beth: 81]

Beth attached a lot of significance to her taste, seeing it as the key tool that would help propel her towards her ambition of success as a film producer:

“I have to get really great projects and that’s the only thing that will sort of push me through.” [Beth: 4]

However, Beth was ultimately unable to marry her sense of taste with an ability to find an audience; a fact that she implied was very frustrating for her. She was told by sales agents that, despite its quality, they would be unable to sell it [84]. Reaching an audience proved difficult and it failed to attract significant festival screenings, high profile press coverage or word of mouth hype. Lamenting the film’s lack of success, Beth considered that her intended market may not have been the right demographic:

“Ours was basically a film for older women you know, and older women don't go to movies in the same way the younger men do you know.” [Beth: 91]

Gareth expressed similar sentiments to Beth in that his choice of project was informed by the style of film he enjoyed. He felt that this could be seen in the finished film:

“I find it really goes into a European film, and that was intentional. That was what we always wanted it to be. It felt like a Dardennes Brothers type thing, and I loved that.”

[Gareth: 31]

He was also able to express his taste by focusing on the styles of films that he didn't want to make:

“I mean, I don't really want to make genre movies and stuff like that.” [Gareth: 24]

Gareth's taste is informed by the need for satisfaction with his own work, its long term impact and his film's ability to engage with an audience:

“...what do I look for in a script, and it's a script that moves me or a script that makes me laugh. And it's got to make me laugh for years or make me move for years. So often when it's generic and you know what's happening, it's not going to surprise you.”

[Gareth: 40]

Ultimately, taste and sense of quality was a motivating factor for the choices he makes on projects:

“You know, you always want to make something that's completely a beauty” [Gareth: 41]

Gareth was clear about his desire to make the films that he wanted to make; however, he pondered the wisdom of that position:

“I’ve always done things that I wanted to do and that’s a bit of a problem sometimes because sometimes what you like isn’t necessarily what everyone else likes” [Gareth: 17]

Gareth suggests that he has prioritised his taste above the other imperatives of reaching an audience and goes on to say that he may need to weight these priorities differently in order to achieve his commercial aspirations:

“It’s difficult to make a film that actually goes out anywhere. That’s the thing, and almost you think the goal is making the film but the goal is making the film and getting it distributed. But you almost think “I’ve got to make the film” and you almost say “I’ve got it. I’ve made the film.” But it’s how you actually get it out there as well that’s important.”

[Gareth: 45]

If Gareth noted the danger of overlooking commercial appeal in favour of following taste Chris was more focused on finding the right balance and considered it to be the key to growing his reputation within the industry. He noted the elements he felt producers need in order to make this happen:

“I think there’s a lot of producers who are very good blaggers, but don’t necessarily understand story, don’t necessarily understand the creative side of things, and [EDIT] how you marry that creative instinct for this is a really cool story, with this is a good movie” [Chris: 32]

During the interview Chris regularly talked about the need for elements of the film to ‘make sense’; a meeting point of creative, financial and structural elements. Doing this helped him to demonstrate ‘a market appetite for the film’ [Chris: 34].

For both Dawn and Fran their taste was less important but still informed their decision in choice of project. Less committed to involvement with the creative side of the film production both participants exercised taste in a more basic way:

"I really liked the script, it was a political thriller called [FILM D1] – I really, really liked it"

[Dawn: 4]

"it's like well 'I like it, I think it's good, so let's make it'; it wasn't a 'well is this ..?' You know, it was never any more thought-out than that and at the time" [Fran: 49]

For Fran, her decision to make a horror film was based on her assumptions about her audience's needs:

"There's always that niche audience for horror films and they don't necessarily care who's in it. They just want to see good horror films, blood and gore and violence and stuff. So that was very much a business decision." [Fran: 48]

Dawn was also focused on maximising her creative endeavours to reach an audience despite limited means:

"It's just kind of trying to see how you can make things a bit different, a bit more interesting, a bit more attractive, a bit more commercial you know, so you get an audience" [Dawn: 67]

Like Fran and Dawn, Ethan was working in micro-budget, genre films. However, he had a highly combative approach towards accepted definitions of 'quality'; finding that they are all too often prescribed by a liberal elite. That prescribed idea of quality was one that he completely rejected, finding it had no bearing on his ability to find an audience:

"...it might be true in the art house world where reviews matter and stuff like that, but in this world where you're doing commercial genres for the DVD market, it doesn't matter." [Ethan: 20]

Ethan was very market focused and during his production prioritised the need to be a businessman over being a creative. However, his decision to pursue a micro-budget horror feature film as his first production was rooted in his own taste:

“...my first film experience was going in and seeing good covers of horror movies and schlocky B-shit, do you know what I mean, like video nasties and stuff that you feel like you need a shower after. But the covers were awesome and I’d go in and see these things and they were brilliant and my first being blown away by a film was not in the cinema, it was at home watching a video, it was at home. So if anyone wonders why I make straight to DVD B movies and, you know, horror movies, that’s why, because that was my first experience with film and that was what really blew my head off, as in yes, this is what I want to do.” [Ethan: 111]

Ethan used this taste and his ‘need to be a businessman’ [Ethan: 11] in order to begin the process of linking his efforts with an audience:

“I looked around and what was the climate in horror at the time and it was remakes and it was...it’s all brand names and that was why everyone was doing in the studio game, which filters down to the independent game too, that’s what distributors are looking for” [Ethan: 4]

Andrew’s experience was similar to Ethan’s; both worked in the horror genre. Both were concentrating on the business side of producing over its creative side despite having contributed to the writing of their respective scripts and both had alternative careers as directors. And similarly to Ethan, Andrew looked to the (then) current market trends to inform his creative vision. Describing the process of coming up with the film’s premise Andrew said:

“OK, well, start with a good idea! There’s a template that works, let’s fit it within that and let’s work outwards without spending bucket loads of money. And then it was just the momentum of the project I think, there was something very fortuitously timely about [FILM A1], with its underlying premise of something dark about social media I think was the first inspiration for it and, yeah, of course there was a lot of fears in the media and everyone shares those fears” [Andrew: 14]

Andrew was able to tap into those fears to push his aim of producing a feature closer to reality:

“...that was pitched to private investors they’ve all got kids and they’ve all got fears and concerns about the future and their child’s online security and so on, so I think that it just tapped right into that, I hate to use the word zeitgeisty but it was a bit because there was a bit of a media bandwagon going on about that at that time and everyone saw the potential” [Andrew: 14]

Participants connected their personal tastes and choice of material with their own commercial aspirations. Taste and the ability to choose material with an audience in mind has been well noted in the literature about film producers. It has been linked to the producer’s ‘showmanship’ (Spicer, et al., 2014), and their instinct (Zafirau, 2009; Mayne, 2012); and that it is their role to find projects they are passionate about and share them with others (Evans, 2013). The findings add an empirical basis to the claims that good taste is an important part of the producer’s skillset and situates it as a tool within the armoury of the emerging producer.

Ortner’s ethnographic study about independent film making is particularly insightful on the subject of producers and taste and resonates with the participant’s own comments. Ortner notes that *‘taste plays a role at every stage of making a film but it is most significant in the initial stages of choosing to work with a particular project’* (Ortner, 2013, p. 156); this is clearly the case in the findings with all of the participants relating their own taste to their choice of project. Ortner goes on to say that when choosing material producers rationalise those choices via a language of ‘love’ or ‘attraction’. That is, producers tend to talk about how much they have loved a particular piece of work or are that they are ‘drawn to’ a specific script, writer or director (ibid.). This is generally true of my own findings: Beth, Gareth and Ethan all described the types of films they loved and how that influenced their choice of material; whilst Fran and Dawn also talked about being drawn to the qualities of their script. Andrew and Chris were more objective

and related their ideas about taste towards the needs of their audience rather than their own personal preferences.

Ortner also notes that not only do producers love or become champions of the projects they choose to produce but they also have confidence that they are able to find an audience (ibid, p. 156-157). The theme and transcript extracts clearly supports those observations.

6.5.2 Theme 2 - Intervention and boundaries in the creative process

Each of the participants performed a creative role as they produced their films. However, their involvement in the creative process differs significantly from one participant to the next; ranging from being very involved to arm's length. This sub-theme explores the participant's interventions in the creative process and their sense of boundaries as they collaborate with other creative players.

This collaboration is key to the producers role, it has variously been observed that a good producer is an 'inspirer of creativity' (Houghton, 1991), that they should care for and protect their creative team (Ortner, 2013), they need to provide a nurturing environment (Jones, 2005) and that they are responsible for organising the conditions on which creativity occurs and act in enabling, nurturing and accommodating ways (Engelstad & Moseng, 2014; Spicer, et al., 2014). Below the participants describe how they have contributed to this collaboration.

Andrew

Of any of the participants, Andrew provided the least insight into his role in the creative process. Ironically, he was also most involved in the conceptual development and writing of the film's script. Andrew tended to compartmentalise these roles, often 'switching caps' between one role and the other rather than undertaking both simultaneously. Therefore, whilst operating as producer, Andrew devoted his efforts to the business functions of producing. The rigid compartmentalisation of his roles was highlighted during an exchange about his position:

“EC: If anyone ever asks you what do you do, what do you tell them?”

ANDREW: I'm a producer.

EC: You're a producer?

ANDREW: Because that's in concrete” [Andrew: 6]

He claims to have learned difficult lessons about spreading himself too thinly whilst operating as a writer, producer and director on a short film:

"I learnt the hard way the need to really specialise and try and take on one role if possible." [Andrew: 5]

From this we could surmise that by compartmentalising these roles he had set boundaries for himself as a producer and did not see it as his responsibility to operate within the creative sphere. However, it is possible that his failure to disclose details about his creative contribution is not necessarily an indication that that contribution did not take place; rather it is possible that there was a reticence to disclose it or some other reasons that prevented him from doing so. Andrew was clearly a very creative person and spent a lot of the interview diverting questions to discuss his latest feature film which he had directed (and co-produced). He talked about producing as being 'painful' and that he 'adored' directing; giving his reason for not directing the first feature that he had not felt ready to undertake the challenge. Late in the interview Andrew made a comment that might reveal that he had more involvement in the creative sphere than he had (willingly) disclosed. As the interview was coming to a close he was asked if he had the chance to produce his film again what he might do differently, he replied: *'Direct it myself'* [Andrew: 100]. When asked why he had said that he responded:

"I'm sure if you interviewed the director he would take the view that it was a bit of a poisoned chalice for him to take on that role because it was such a personal thing to me"
[Andrew: 101]

Andrew's response implies that there may have been conflict between himself and the director on creative matters. Given his otherwise creative impulse and considerable input into the conceptual origins of the film it would not be difficult to imagine that he would have exercised his producer's influence in creative matters. However, to draw such conclusions might be overly

speculative and as this issue was not probed further we must concluded that Andrew's influence in the creative field, as a producer, was limited.

Beth

"I'm very hands on with that; I'm very sort of interactive with the writers and directors I work with." [Beth: 15]

If Andrew was not overtly involved in the creative process then Beth was at the other end of the spectrum. Throughout the production she was very focused on managing project development and key creative talent. For Beth, who displayed a very optimistic outlook (*'I was thinking okay, it will all be fine'* [Beth: 26]), her commitment to the development of her film was undermined by the difficulty of the process. She described the development process as *'intense'* [38], *'chaotic'* [94] and a *'struggle'* [23].

Beth described her role in the development process not as someone who directly contributed ideas but rather someone who enabled, influenced and facilitated the creativity of others:

"I don't see myself as a creative individual in the sense that I don't sit in the room and great ideas come to me. That doesn't happen to me at all, but what I am quite creative at is [EDIT] when directors and writers bring things to me and they say, "this is my idea." I think what I am quite good and creative at is saying, right well I think it's a really interesting core of that idea there and if you strip away you know those bits and actually build up this bit and then it takes this shape then you've got something really exciting."
[Beth: 15]

Despite her need to divert time to production management issues she remained closely involved with the creative processes and claimed to have exercised influence over the writing, casting and choice of locations (among other things) and contributed to the creative dynamic during

production. However, despite her presence on set she was careful to set boundaries and not interfere with the director:

"I think I tried to sort of not interfere, because that in itself could be undermining" [Beth: 54]

Beth implied a strong bond between the director and herself founded on a 'shared vision' and that they had formed an effective creative partnership:

"...we trust each other absolutely completely. I trust her to do a great job visually, intellectually, performance wise and she trusts me" [Beth: 80]

Chris

Chris held strong opinions about the development process; claiming it to be his '*biggest thing*' [38]. Throughout the interview he talked at length about the perfect 'model' for developing film scripts and was passionate about establishing creative environments, free from ego and politics, to allow development to flourish. As his career progressed he felt that he was learning how to be most effective as a creative producer:

"...what I've been studying and what I've been absorbing all the information I can about, is an understanding of how to take something that is good but not quite there, and make it work. I think that's what, in my mind, is what a producer should be doing." [Chris: 51]

Many of the lessons he learned about development came from the frustrating experience he had of producing his debut feature which, he claimed '*was not my ideal process.*' [Chris: 47]. Chris conveyed a sense that he was shut out of development; he claimed that he lacked any '*ownership*' of the material and had been excluded from the development by the writer/director who was very '*protective*' over the material. Although there was an exchange of notes on drafts

of the scripts, Chris noted that the writer/director wrote in solitude and that it was *'not a collaborative process'* in the way he would have liked it to have been.

Chris suggested that the director's reluctance to allow him to enter the development process was due to a lack of established trust. Chris felt that development works best when there is a bond between the creative players and that bond can only be created over time:

"If I say to you that's really shit [EDIT] you're going to go 'don't be an asshole, this is my work' and stuff. If we've been working together for ten years, you'd go 'oh Christ, yeah, what's a better idea, tell me a better idea', that becomes an incredibly constructive process." [Chris: 44]

As a first time producer working with a first time director that bond simply didn't exist:

"...we were feeling each other out, all of us were at an early stage in our career, and we hadn't gained this kind of understanding of the way development needs to work" [Chris: 47]

Despite his sense of frustration at the way the development had worked out Chris continued to respect the director's creative boundaries:

"You can force yourself into any process, as a producer, you can just say 'hey, I'm the producer on this, you've got to do what I say', that's not going to create a happy atmosphere." [Chris: 61]

Dawn

Dawn did not have a great deal of involvement with the creative process on her film. At the time she became involved with the project the development was already at a reasonably advanced

stage. Dawn did not prioritise her creative responsibilities as a producer but did not shy away from them either:

"I do read the scripts, obviously and I do say my two pennies worth of whatever I think of. I'm not a script expert it's all more gut feel and logic or common sense kind or reaction or feedback or queries. You know why is so-and-so doing this now or why would that happen or – so it's not structural or technical feedback I give at all. But yeah I do like it at that stage, and also kind of contributing is quite nice. And you get more engaged with the script, but contributing for the sake of contributing, don't really see the point."

[Dawn: 14]

As demonstrated from the above extract Dawn enjoyed her role in the creative process but did not consider it to be essential. She was comfortable with a plurality of voices in development and found that it benefitted from '*different perspectives*'; seeing her role within that to steer the group towards '*compromise*'. Ultimately, she was quite clear about the boundaries between her responsibilities as a producer and those of the director and writer:

"...at the end of the day it's also down to the creatives you know. Otherwise I need to write it, I need to direct it, I need to draw it, do you see what I mean?" [Dawn: 16]

Ethan

Like Andrew, Ethan was heavily involved with developing the project from the ground up and wrote a first draft of the script. Also, like Andrew he had previously directed but his priority was to focus on the business functions of the producer. However, there was certainly no ambiguity about the extent of Ethan's creative input once the director was on board:

"I didn't really want to give loads of creative notes, because if I wanted to do that, I would have just directed it myself. So a lot of producers I think give a lot of creative notes, because they are never going to direct, so they feel like they need to get their ore in

creatively whereas I'm just like, no well I'm a director too so if I direct a film I will have full creative control, but when I produce a film I will allow my director to have full creative control" [Ethan: 26]

As such his input into the script was purely to veto any ideas he considered to be unaffordable on their micro-budget. Apart from that Ethan removed himself with from the creative sphere and allowed the director to work as he pleased:

"I was committed to letting him make his own film" [Ethan: 27]

Fran

Fran's inexperience informed much of her (lack of) creative input into the film development. Motivated by a desire to learn the skills of a producer (which she hoped would subsequently launch her career) Fran did not consider her creative input to be a priority. Such was her conviction to the learning process that she overlooked most other factors, including the development of the script:

"...unless I absolutely thought it was a pile of shit, we were just going to make it" [Fran: 50]

She claims to have some limited input into development but suffered from confidence issues and deferred most of the scriptwriting duties to her writer/director:

"EC: And how involved were you creatively with the development of the film, if at all?"

FRAN: Yeah, a little bit. I mean, I can't remember exactly how much. Probably not as much as I'd have liked to have been, but I didn't... to be honest, I didn't really have a lot of confidence in myself as a storyteller really. I was kind of happy to... and [CREW F1] always has been very confident in his ability to tell a story. So I did kind of leave the majority of it up to him" [Fran: 50]

Despite not taking an active role in development her contribution to the creative process was unwittingly significant. Managing meagre resources and with very small 'window' of opportunity to get the film into production many important creative decisions (such as cast, locations) were made on the basis of taking advantage of what was available:

"...it was logistical, practical. It was scaled down and adapted to what we had available, not necessarily what was better for the story, just because that's the way we had to do it." [Fran: 53]

In hindsight Fran regretted the underdevelopment of the script and her responsibility towards that. However, in an interesting reflection Fran notes:

"I don't think my producer hat was really worn at all until post-production." [Fran: 47]

Overburdened by the demands of production management she gave very little attention to the creative process. The comment above implies that development is what separates her perception of producing from production managing. Her subsequent career and focus on development would suggest that to be the case.

Gareth

Gareth was drawn to producing because he wanted '*to do creative things*' [Gareth: 25]. He was very committed to his involvement with the creative process and had a vision for the direction he wanted his film to take. His commitment to that vision was such that he was unconvinced by the input of anyone outside of the core creative team of himself, the director and the writer:

"I was involved in the development of that but I also bought script editors in and you think "Oh, they're saying these pearls of wisdom," but after a while I kind of thought "I'm saying my opinion to somebody. It's going through a filter who's saying what they want."

Now I'm going to spend all these years working on this film. I want to make the film that I want to make." [Gareth: 6]

Gareth found the input of script editors to have been detrimental to the process and claims to have not used them since and instead favours his own creative judgement.

Despite his professed commitment to all areas of the creative process his ability to influence it was limited for several reasons. He noted that the writer and director of the film were partners which put him at a disadvantage when it came to pushing a creative agenda:

"...in a way whilst I have a good relationship with [CREW G3], obviously they've got a closer relationship. So in a way that was a little bit unusual. I mean it's not something I've done since or perhaps would seek to do it again because obviously they can sort out things between them as a fait accompli" [Gareth: 28]

He also noted that the director was 'vastly more experienced' [26] and as such that affected his ability to influence proceedings:

"...at the time hadn't had enough experience of production to know how to influence that, to say "Let's lose this scene or let's lose that scene." [Gareth: 58]

As a first-time producer he felt unable to sway someone with a lot more power and industry experience. Gareth noted that he has worked with the director several times since and their creative relationship is now more evenly balanced.

6.5.3 Theme 3 - Feelings of validation gained from critical and audience reaction

Zafirau writes that the question of how producers relate to their audience is important in understanding why they make the decisions they do (Zafirau, 2009, p. 190). This subtheme explores the participant's feelings towards the critical and audience reaction to their films. Despite many working with limited budgets the participants either received a sense of validation from positive reactions or were able to justify negative ones.

Andrew

During his interview Andrew claimed not to have been motivated by audience reaction and considered making a return for investors to be a far more important driver to his sense of achievement (*'if it's making money...who cares?'* [Andrew: 98]). However, he did gain satisfaction from the film's performance and expressed his elation at having been selected for a prestigious film festival (*'hallelujah'* [Andrew: 32]). Despite his claim to the contrary audience response was important to his sense of self-worth. In particular he was interested in comments being made on online film forums which had generated a debate about the quality of the film. He noted how the film had polarised audiences:

"It was getting a great response when it came out, bit of a Marmite movie, some people absolutely adored it and then you've got your haters" [Andrew: 35]

The 'haters', a group of people expressing vociferous opinion, were a source of consternation for Andrew and his team and threatened low self-esteem (*'you can take it really personally'* [Andrew: 97]). However, he noted a change in their attitude when many of these 'haters' were informed of how much the film had cost to make.

"...when they realised how it was made and that it was a micro-budget, entirely independent movie it was suddenly a whole load more favourable to the film and supportive once they saw what it was but I think when you put a film out there and you

just put it on a pedestal and it's competing against whatever else is out there at the time, if its low budget it's in trouble right because it's got its obvious parameters and shortcomings but as soon as people realised what it was I think again people were a lot warmer towards it" [Andrew: 36]

Andrew described the significance of the audience contextualising his film in terms of its relative budget against competing films (*'we can't put the film out next to Godzilla'* [Andrew: 88]) and how that changed their perception of the film. He gained a sense of satisfaction from delivering a high production value but with very limited amount of resources at his disposal.

Beth

Beth's felt an overall sense of disappointment at the way her film was received. She had hoped that the film would perform well but after struggling to find a distributor she realised that the film would need critical support to raise its profile:

"with a small film [EDIT] you need big reviews. You know, you need massive festival success or you need Peter Bradshaw to give it 4 Star or 5 Star review. [EDIT] And we didn't get that" [Beth: 87]

Much of her reflection on the promotion of the film focused on the failure to reach an audience and there was a sense of disappointment at various players who had not pushed it with more conviction. However, her film's selection at a US festival was a source of great pride rooted in the sense that she had finally found the correct audience for her film:

"...these are articulate, intelligent, educated, middle class Americans" [Beth: 122]

How this audience responded to the film was very validating for Beth; she was very complimentary towards them noting how savvy and *'film literate'* they were. She also noted how well the audience responded to discovering the context of the film production, in terms of budget, and how that reaction validated her own sense of achievement:

“somebody put their hand up which they always do, there is always a moment, someone put their hand up and said, what was the budget? And you know Americans are really interested in money and they are great about money because they get money.

EC: Mm.

BETH: They really understand what it can do and how important it is and they use it in the right way. They said, “what was the budget?” and I said, “oh it’s about \$500 thousand.” And this huge round of applause broke out. And it was like, ‘yeah good job’ you know [laughs] and that for me I suppose was one of the best moments because I do think it looks like more than £300 thousand, I do think it looks like a million pound film.”

[Beth: 123].

Chris

Chris described the importance of his film’s critical success to his reputation. Throughout the interview Chris was very focused on his standing within the industry, therefore, the critical success was significant:

“...critically it’s been really well received, and that’s been a real, for us, a really big deal, you know, that people are taking notice of it.” [Chris: 23]

Beyond the sense that this success would provide him with a better future he also described how it justified his commitment to the process:

“I think that critical reaction to it felt like a kind of vindication of, yeah, of all the time and effort and the money that went into making it.” [Chris: 103]

However, there was a major sense of disappointment at the film’s failure to reach a paying audience. This was not due to disinterest from the cinema going public but because of piracy which he claimed ‘killed’ the film’s chances of success at the box office. His feelings on this were a mix of anger (especially at the incompetence of a distributor who had allowed it to leak online)

and a sense of resignation *'there's nothing we can do about that'* [Andrew: 75]. Despite the 'hurt' he felt by this piracy he was able to find the positives. He noted the profile the film had received as a result of it being illegally downloaded and implied a sense of awe and pride at the impact of the film:

"just after it was released on Pirate Bay, we went on IMDB from being the like four hundred and fifty thousandth most talked about movie, to the seventeenth in the world, on the third biggest website in the world, we were...there was a list of the best thrillers of the year, it was...number one was a Tom Cruise movie, number two was [FILM C1], number three another Tom Cruise movie, overnight." [Chris: 73]

Dawn

Dawn noted how she was *'over the moon'* at the critical reaction her film received in an internationally renowned publication and the benefits that had for their promotional efforts. The publications helped this awareness by:

"...giving us some really good quotes. So you know, they're kind of good people to have you know, supporting your project." [Dawn: 58]

This reaction was a payoff for the emotional stress of the production. She also found releasing the film to be a very stressful process and gave thought to the response to the film. Dawn found her sense of achievement was not necessarily based on a positive response but by the debate the film caused:

"I don't actually mind if people don't like it. Like really dislike it. You know you've touched a chord. [EDIT] It's the indifferent. You know if something is indifferent then you kind of go, oh I've missed a big trick, but if people really dislike it, or really like it, then you've touched something. And if people can talk about things, then I think you've managed to succeed as well." [Dawn: 59]

She described how many people that saw it 'really enjoyed it' and noted how the film's success has helped her move her career forward. However, unlike Andrew and Beth, she is not sympathetic to the idea that the audience looks more favourably on a production if they are aware of things like budget or other production issues. For her, regardless of the context of production, the most important thing is the quality of the film:

"I'm really proud of what we did for the money and for the time and what we had you know, had we had more money obviously we would have done certain things differently, but you know one thing to remember is the people who are downloading your film or watching it on TV or in the cinema, they don't really care how much money you had. You know, they really don't care so it's not really a, great I did it on 5p who cares is it good enough to kind of be out there." [Dawn: 56]

Ethan

Ethan was clearly not motivated by favourable critical response or positive audience reaction. He did not feel that he needed that sense of external praise to validate what he was doing; for him making films was its own reward and his sole motivation was to be able to keep doing that. Despite this he noted that his film had generated a lot of comment online and that a large contingent of 'haters' had given negative feedback in forums. He was completely unphased by this criticism and gave his thoughts on what that commentary meant to him:

"I didn't really give a shit, I mean at the end of the day it's not....it's not going to affect my life that, you know, Darth Balls from Ohio thinks I suck [laughter] you know what I mean? I don't care, you know what I mean? It's not going to change anything, so that's the way I was looking at it." [Ethan: 14]

He returned to the subject of 'haters' throughout the interview and found that rather than it being a discouragement actually spurred him on as a filmmaker which, ultimately, gave him his sense of achievement.

Fran

Fran sought the positives from the reaction to her film. Despite some mixed critical reviews in well-known newspapers and film magazines she sought to justify the negative reactions. Notably she alluded to the well-known contrariness of one liberal broadsheet as a reason for their poor review after film premiere, an event that had otherwise had a very positive reaction from the assembled audience. She also noted her pleasure at having received a three star review in a national film publication; the review appeared next to a major release:

"It was a Johnny Depp film and that got, like, two stars. So we were quite impressed with, you know, it being perceived as a better film to a Johnny Depp film." [Fran: 80]

As with some of the other participant's the context of the film's production was a factor in how she processed external reactions. The following extract shows how Fran was comforted by people's defending its micro-budget origins:

"...people were saying, 'well, yeah, you can see its low budget but from what they had it's really well done and it's really cool'. So, yeah, I mean, it is reassuring and it's nice to have nice comments." [Fran: 81]

Fran also shares a point of view with other participants that reviews were not her motivation for making the film; the reviews were merely a nice consolation:

"...if someone said if you got all negative comments but you made all your money back and were able to pay the investors back, I think I would have probably gone with that one, but it's not... it sort of justifies it in some way. We did alright, people think the film was alright. It's kind of... it's some consolation, I suppose, in a way, at least we got some

good reviews. We've not made any money from it but we got some good reviews and I think it's... certainly, for me, it helped me sort of progress." [Fran: 81]

Although she was not motivated by reviews they did help Fran achieve part of her aims by moving her career forward. Finally, picking up from comments made by Chris, Fran describes the mixed impact piracy had for her sense of validation. On one hand she focuses on the positive feedback the film received but on the other laments the sense of powerlessness she had over the situation (which was also very undermining to her efforts of giving a return to her investors):

"Within a week of it being pirated, it had like 30,000 hits on one site and so there were loads watching it online and even on the forums, it was getting quite good feedback and said they were enjoying the film and I remember going to [PLAYER F4] and saying 'it's on this site and it's even on YouTube' and she's like, 'yeah, there's not much you can do about it really'." [Fran: 75]

Gareth

Gareth also gained satisfaction from some high profile critical reviews:

"It got pretty good reviews from people like Mark Kermode and all that kind of stuff, which was really nice to see." [Gareth: 30]

Despite receiving good critical reviews, he was cautious about the significance of them to his career. Like some of the other participant's Gareth reflected on the context of his production and the relative value of critical and audience reaction to his sense of worth:

"it's weird when '[FILM G1]' came out, I think it was reviewed next to Tim Burton's new film in Empire and got the same number of stars. His film was probably £40 million and this was less than one. You realise it is a product, but you also realise that when you've made a film, people don't go "Well done. You've made a film." And almost you think to

do it is the thing, and they don't go "And it's next to that Tim Burton's film." I think the thing to realise is you're competing on a world's stage and it's hard." [Gareth: 56]

6.5.4 Superordinate-theme 2: Summary

This superordinate theme has described how participants focused on and responded to creative aspects of film producing. The three areas of their concern are summarised below:

Exercising taste: connecting creative endeavour with commercial aspiration

Participants discussed their own sense of taste and how they chose projects based on their own commercial goals. There were stark differences between the tastes of individual participants and this is reflected in the kinds of film they have made.

Intervention and boundaries in the creative process

This theme explored the participants involvement with the creative process at various stages such as development and production. Participants generally took different approaches with some being more 'hands on' than others but all were careful to compartmentalise their efforts and tried not to overstep boundaries on to the roles of other creative contributors to their films.

Feelings of validation gained from critical and audience reaction

Participants expressed a range of emotions in response to the ways that their films were received by critics and audiences including disappointment, pride and joy. However, each of the participants found positives in the feedback they received and used that to justify the choices that they had made.

6.6 Superordinate Theme 3

6.7 The Value of Relationships and Networks

This final superordinate theme looks at the how the participants developed and utilised their relationships in order to seek opportunities and enable their productions. Working with people is a vital component of film making and one recognised by the participants who were able to exploit their relationships in three different ways: by mining networks to seek out opportunities, by recognising the importance of attitude as they assembled their cast and crew and finally, by relying on their compliance and willingness to work in difficult conditions.

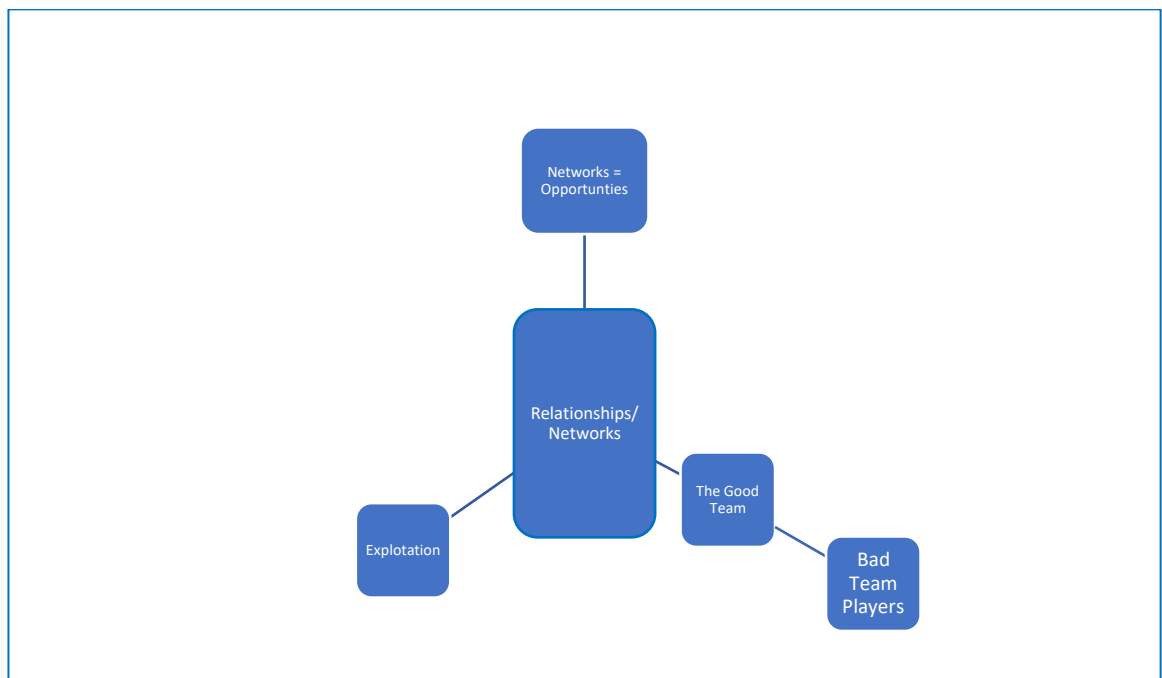


Figure 6.3 Radial Cluster Networks and Relationships

6.7.1 Theme 1 - Exploiting contacts and networks as a source of opportunity

A recurring theme throughout the participant interviews was the importance of exploiting contacts and networks in order to create opportunities. The importance of networks in the creative industries is well documented. In the film industry Blair has noted that networks help to limit the insecurities of employment and aid individuals to build their reputation (Blair, 2003).

Six of the seven participants all discussed how their networks have been critical to their performance as producers. This subtheme addresses how the participants experienced that process.

Beth, conscious of her standing in the industry, noted the importance of connections to increase her own leverage as a producer. In her interview she highlighted the many networking events that she attended in order to meet influential people. She describes an exchange she had with a sales company executive at one of these networking events:

“So I said, “well the thing I really need is an executive producer. I need somebody more connected, somebody who could pick up the phone to sort of big agents or the head of BBC films or whatever in the way that I can’t.”” [Beth: 8]

Whilst the executive was unable to provide that level of assistance she did provide a number of contacts that eventually led to Beth’s meeting with her film’s director. Beth considered the importance of her networking to the development of her career:

“I suppose the only method is just to keep talking to people because if I hadn’t had the conversation with [PLAYER B2] I wouldn’t have got in touch with [PLAYER B1]” [Beth: 9]

Also conscious of his standing and reputation in the early stages of his career, Chris was fortunate to have a mentor that was a very well-known and powerful industry player. Chris acknowledged that his connection to this person was able to create opportunities:

“I think in order to get in the room with people, in order to make people understand that you’re serious, there’s a certain sense of validation that comes from, you know, being introduced to someone by [PLAYER C2]. [PLAYER C2] is saying that you’re okay, that means a lot, to a lot of people.” [Chris: 26]

Ethan concentrated his efforts on developing his network with film business contacts. Prior to the beginning of his production he spent time developing contacts within the film business world as he knew this would benefit him in the long run. He also described how his diligence to cultivating these contacts was something that separated him from other emerging producers:

“that’s something that I think producers forget is that, you know, you really need to get like contacts with distribution and understand the marketplace and what they want, because there’s no point labouring on, on a film in my view for like two or three years and then suddenly you get to distribution and no one wants to buy it.” [Ethan: 2]

Gareth did not give the impression that he had spent a lot of time purposefully cultivating a network in the early stages of his career. He did gain a network but one that was developed organically through his work; meeting people working in film led him to meet other people working in film and so on. Such a chain of connections led him to meet the director of his feature debut but prior to that had set him on the road to becoming a filmmaker:

“I knew a lot of good film makers from doing the short film festival, it was probably a good way into it” [Gareth: 4]

Dawn had a similar experience of making significant contacts through her work. She describes how her contacts began a chain of events that led her to produce her first feature:

“...in 2008 a friend introduced me to a friend of his, who’s a writer/director who wanted to do his first feature – and so that’s kind of how suddenly from a short, random question I kind of ended up eight years later on a feature.” [Dawn: 2]

However, the types of contacts she made were not always able to help her push her production forward when she most needed them to. Focusing on her own relative inexperience and the inexperience of her peers she described how she often found it difficult to capitalise on opportunities. Following a situation that could have provided her film with some valuable publicity she lamented not having an influential network:

"I didn't have the contacts you know, and it's the researching and no one I knew was working on it had contacts either." [Dawn: 29]

Fran began her filmmaking career whilst at university and at the time she started on her feature had the least industry experience of any of the participants; as such her contact base with active industry players was virtually non-existent. However, she was very active in attempts to build a network:

"I was just taking every opportunity and talking to as many people as possible and trying to make the most out of it." [Fran: 24]

Despite not having many industry connections Fran mobilised her own personal network to further her aims as a producer and finance her film. The experience of making the film proved to be a difficult one; however, Fran recognised the one of the main benefits of the experience was a broadening of her network which has helped her push her career forward:

"...no experience is bad really if you're meeting new people and you're broadening your network" [Fran: 94]

6.7.2 Theme 2 - Focus on the enabling qualities of a 'good team'

This sub-theme addresses the participant's focus on assembling and working with cast and crew for their feature films. Each of the participants noted that the crew have the ability to enable them as producers, making their jobs easier and helping to deliver a quality film. However, it is noted that the participants had mixed success in getting together a team that provided that support. Most noted that the perfect team was difficult to assemble for a new producer as they simply don't have enough experience of working with people or a large enough contact base. Rather the first film is seen as the first stage in finding compatible crew members that they can take into their later careers.

Andrew

Putting together a strong team was vital to the progress of Andrew's production. As a emerging producer Andrew felt that his crew provided many of the skills and experience that he lacked and gave him essential support as he attempted to fulfil his own potential:

"...if we're the least experienced people, like we're standing on the shoulders of people who are bigger and better and more accomplished than we are then they can help raise our game" [Andrew: 9]

Further to the idea that the crew enabled him to do his job well, Andrew was enthused by the idea that the crew were an integral component in the creative process of filmmaking:

"When you've got a really strong, accomplished cast and crew behind you, you're all working to the same goal whether you're a producer or a director or both that's when the joy starts to happen because you're actually crafting something that you want everyone to be able to see and they're helping you to bring it to life" [Andrew: 10]

In hindsight Andrew considered the components of his perfect team and what criteria he would look for on future productions:

"...you've got to find people who are not only experienced and competent and creative but also people that are fun to work with and that you spark off each other..." [Andrew: 52]

However, his actual experience of his feature was less than perfect. Andrew felt that it was not necessarily possible to find the perfect team on his feature and believed that building a team needed to be refined over time:

"...there's no way on earth that you can do that straight out of the gate on your first film" [Andrew: 52]

Despite finding some 'diamonds' that he has gone on to work with since he found that, inevitably, first productions are going to be crewed with some people who are more difficult than others:

"...it's like it's the dating process again, there's a lot of bad eggs and we found most of them" [Andrew: 67]

Beth

Beth highlighted how her crew enabled her to perform as a producer. Early in the interview she noted the importance of a good crew and expressed the need for caution in hiring the right people:

"...you should really, really be careful about who you choose." [Beth: 7]

Prior to working on her feature Beth had had gained experience as a producer on a number of short films; from that experience she had learned the importance of a good crew and how they compensate for the producer's lack of technical expertise:

"I suppose you hope that your crew will be kind to you and not expose you for the kind of, the numb-nuts that you really are." [Beth: 10]

Beth noted how crew members can quite often protect the producer from the pitfalls of film production. In fact, Beth noted that crew members can often protect the producer from other crew members. Implying a sense of crew hierarchy, Beth, described an occasion where there was potential crew mutiny over the need to shoot later than originally scheduled:

“...the gaffer said, “I don’t have a problem with this,” and once the gaffer says it’s okay because they always the grumpiest bastards on the shoot you know, once the gaffer said it’s okay then it’s okay.” [Beth: 104]

As has been stated elsewhere Beth was very much focused on the creative responsibilities of her role as producer. As such when discussing the functions of the crew she often referred to specialist members who allowed her to concentrate on those creative duties. Singling out one of her assistant directors and her line producer Beth described how they enabled her to keep a broad view of the production rather than getting overwhelmed by micro-management:

“...it was great for me because I could just handover over all that nuts and boltsy side to her.” [Beth: 52]

Chris

Chris felt that finding the right people to work on his film was one of the essential responsibilities of his role as producer. Doing that successfully would make his life much easier:

“I think if you’ve got the right people on board then...I mean, to be honest, fundamentally a producer’s job is to hire the right people, if you’ve hired the right people you’ve actually got nothing to do.” [Chris: 63]

However, there was a divergence between his vision for the ideal team and his actual experience. Chris felt that the crew should have an important role in the creative process; however; the production location allowed the crew to go home in the evening which

fundamentally undermined a sense of camaraderie essential to the formation of a creative environment:

“there is something very creative about that mentality of all being away together, shutting yourself up in the evening, talking about the film, and talking about what we’re going to do the next day and making plans, and what we didn’t really have was that kind of after-hours experience of coming up with creative ideas, because everyone basically sodded off home at the end of the day” [Chris: 57]

Dawn

Dawn was very focused on the value of having a good team. In her interview Dawn noted how crucially important her crew was to her experience of producing. She found that the crew were enabling and very supportive when faced with challenging production conditions:

“...everyone was quite lovely. And they really wanted to make the film which is really nice you know even when we were faced and God knows how many times we were faced with challenges. You know it’s nice to know that you kind of have the backup, you know the support of people you are working with and people are not – you’re not fighting against everything. No, I had ... we had a great team and that just so, so key I think that’s what I love about this, it’s all – it’s a people industry. So you know it really relies on the people and the team you’ve got. And I think for me that was one of the crucial points really.” [Dawn: 42]

Not only were crew able to protect her from the difficulties of production but she also conveyed a togetherness and sense of shared purpose:

“...you got that same vision and you want to take the project in the same direction.”
[Dawn: 44]

Like Beth, Dawn also found the value in specialist crew members who were able to take the pressure off her own role. She described how the first assistant director was able to solve scheduling problems:

"...this is when I realised the amazingness of a first AD. She just went don't worry, give me all the dates he can and can't do and I will re-jig everything and I have no idea how she did it." [Dawn: 24]

Ultimately, Dawn was very focused on the nature of working with people and creating a team that was enabling and creating an enjoyable working environment. For her, building a team on her first feature was about building a base for future productions:

"the key thing is the team behind and also forging relationship and hopefully work with some people over and over again, which I think that's the nicest thing." [Dawn: 45]

Ethan

Ethan's priority whilst hiring his crew was to blend experience with inexperience. Very aware of the limitations of his budget he found that this was the only practical way of crewing up:

"...it's great if you get, you know, professional people who are happy to do it, and we did get a lot of professional people who worked on it and then we got some others who weren't too experienced and you just had a mix of people and that was the team you end up with on a low budget." [Ethan: 48]

As with some of the other participants Ethan found that this approach yielded mixed results with some enabling him as a producer whilst others caused difficulty. He expressed the idea that it takes time to build up a trusted crew and sometimes, on a first feature, a producer is less able to control the characters he brings on to the production. He has taken steps to rectify this for the future:

“...you’ve got to get to know people a little bit I think and try and make sure they they’re the right kind of people who fit and thankfully now though, I have quite a hard core team of people who work on the same things project after project so that helps.” [Ethan: 43]

Fran

Fran’s crew was mostly made up of students from her university course and as such were had little experience working on a feature film production. For Fran, having the right attitude was just as important as experience:

“If somebody’s really good at their job but they’re an absolute idiot or there’s just something about them that you can’t really rely on them, then I’d sooner just get somebody else who’s maybe not quite as good, not quite as experienced, but has the right attitude because then I know I can rely on them and I can sleep at night knowing that they’re going to get the work done or get the job done.” [Fran: 34]

Gareth

As with some of the other participants Gareth expressed the idea that he was looking for a reliable crew that he could continue to work with on future productions. He also acknowledged that for a producer’s first feature it is not always possible to get a crew together that fits that brief. Noting his own inexperience Gareth describes how he was only able to rely on some of the crew he hired:

“Actually production itself is getting a team that you really feel strong with and because I hadn’t had that experience of crewing at that level before, there’s people who I felt I could rely on there and people that I couldn’t” [Gareth: 61]

As noted by some of the participants their first film as producers was a test to assemble a crew that they could rely on and one that they wished to take with them on to future productions.

Consequences of bad team players

In contrast to the benefits of assembling a good cast and crew, four of the participants discussed, sometimes at length, the consequences of having individuals on their set who were disruptive or difficult to work with which made their job more challenging. Much of this focused on the attitude of the individuals involved and the expectations they had of being on set. Some of their comments are presented below:

“as soon as you get one bad egg who starts stamping their foot and being a shit to other people which I think there’s absolutely no need for then the problems start” [Andrew: 55]

“I needed [CREW B6] to be on my side. And I always felt he was ... always busy having a fag and being matey with the crew and I needed him to be on my side, on the management side not on the side of the crew. And I think that was the real problem” [Beth: 104]

“he just rampaged round our set like a...having a problem with everyone and everything, but you know it’s kind of...and I’m not bitter about it, but it did make things difficult for me” [Ethan: 39]

“it can be a nightmare if there’s somebody there that’s just not doing the work properly or they’ve not got the right attitude” [Fran; 35]

6.7.3 Theme 3 - Exploiting human resources as a necessity of micro/low budget film producing

This subtheme explores the participant's feelings about the working conditions of their cast and crew. In describing their productions, the participants often commented upon the terms of employment offered to the people they relied upon to work on their films. Of the six participant's that reflected on this issue there was a mixture of feelings; however, there was an ethical dimension to their comments and suggestive of something essentially exploitative about working on a micro/low budget film production.

The theme provides an interesting perspective on some of the debates on cultural labour. Whilst it has been noted above that cultural work can often be low paid and insecure it is useful to see what producers, the people paying the wages think about these kinds of practices (especially considering their sense of anxiety about their own careers articulated in an earlier theme). Despite there being a general sense of uneasiness about this, the participants were of the mind that it was fairly standard and unavoidable given the financial pressures they were facing themselves. Blair has noted that '*employment in the film industry involves long hours and structured job insecurity, arising largely from the cost pressures experienced by producers*' (Blair, 2003, p. 182).

Another thing to consider here is that:

"first time filmmakers working on low and micro-budgets do not fulfil the full requirements of the legislative environment, many are undoubtedly unaware of the detail, its applicability to them, or techniques for ensuring that the filmmaking process complies efficiently with all relevant legislation. There appears to be a continuing need to provide training and other support to fully professionalise practice in this respect. However the research provides some anecdotal evidence that a small minority of

filmmakers deliberately ignore minimum wage and other employment law.” (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 49).

Whilst there is no suggestion that participants deliberately or unethically tried to evade employment law it is entirely possible that many of them were not aware of legislation that they were required to comply with.

Andrew

Andrew was conflicted about his sense of duty towards his cast and crew and the inevitability of unfavourable working conditions as a result of low budget. To balance the demands of the budget, paying cast and crew ‘properly’ was not an option. As such negotiating terms with prospective crew was difficult and he was wary of those with demands he could not meet:

“Fair enough mate, I understand, you’re a professional, you need to pay your mortgage like the rest of us this isn’t the film to do that” [Andrew: 69]

He also needed to utilise college students and other industry entrants as trainees; a form of free labour to complete the crew. He described how beneficial this source of free labour was to his production:

“that was the first real boost that made it, one of the things that really made it happen because we’re getting production value without spending investor’s money, so I was getting a fee for that and the fee was going back into the production and we’re getting the workforce without any cost to the company so that was great” [Andrew: 71]

Despite giving their time for free Andrew noted that their efforts did not translate into respect from other, paid, crew members. Andrew felt indignant at this and made efforts to put a stop to it:

“...you treat that person who is volunteering their time and services for free with full respect as a human being” [Andrew: 52]

One of Andrew’s major concerns was the sense of duty he felt to the people that had given their time for free. He expressed an intention to repay them by reemploying them on future productions:

“you can’t make a feature film then and then turn your back on the people that you’ve worked with.” [Andrew: 58]

However, he expresses a fear that the realities of producing on low budgets creates a vicious cycle, one that he sees as either unsustainable or based on the constant exploitation of workers:

“when you start again you’re back to square one and you’ve got to build it up from nothing again, ok, people know that you can do it but people’s expectations get higher, the budgets get lower or the people you’ve already worked to death for less than minimal wage, expect to be paid properly for their time next time” [Andrew: 28]

Beth

Beth was less conflicted than Andrew about this issue. She readily accepted that cast and crew did not get paid a rate that they would normally have expected, and that part of her job was *‘trying to persuade people to work for peanuts’* [Beth: 84].

However, any sense of guilt she might have felt about this was mitigated by how she had managed the expectations of those people from the outset:

“Everybody knew they were coming into, a low budget film and a first time film and they knew the nature of the scheme, they knew they nature of the money. So I think everybody as it were knew what they were getting into.” [Beth: 110]

Despite this she did convey a sense that as a consequence of the low budget cast and crew were subject to some levels of discomfort during the shoot noting that there were *'quite a lot of privations'* and that they were *'really roughing it'* [112-113].

Chris

Chris, who's film is not technically classed as a low budget feature¹⁹, nevertheless commented upon what he saw as a potential problem for lower budget films and the industry as a whole in that low pay disincentivises performance:

"If you were a company that made products, and you decided not to pay your designers or production managers anything until the product came out, and became successful, why the hell would they do a good job for you?" [Chris: 121]

Chris noted the sacrifices cast and crew have to make to work on lower budget films; however, he was able to turn that to his advantage. He describes the benefits of location shooting near to the homes of most of the cast and crew:

"...we weren't taking people away from their families. And that's...it's a good way of...I mean from a purely producing point of view it's a good way of getting good rates for a cast and crew, because they're staying at home." [Chris: 56]

Dawn

Dawn described the difficulty of convincing cast and crew to participate in the film with very little leverage and focuses on her inability to pay them a wage:

"I just had to make it work for a minute amount of money. So, you just blag and try and convince people, you know, they have to come and work for you and with you and for nothing" [Dawn: 5]

¹⁹ Northern Alliance definitions (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 9)

Dawn considers this state of affairs to be an inevitability of micro-budget filmmaking, a rite of passage for emerging producers or, as she puts it, *'the journey of the filmmaker'*. In noting how unlikely it is for a first time producer to attach themselves to projects that can raise significant finance she highlights the nature of micro-budget film making and the inherent inability to pay crew:

"...if you can get on a film that kind of pays you and you have a line producer, you know crew that you can pay and everything properly, brilliant!" [Dawn: 54]

Ethan

Ethan debated the moral complexity of asking cast and crew to work without a fee; his first feature asked them all to defer payment. However, he was able to justify it to himself as he did not take a wage himself:

"I think it's immoral when a producer takes a big fee up front and asks the cast and crew not to work for a fee, I think that's....that's very immoral and I've never done that. I don't take a fee out...I didn't take a fee up front and I didn't even take expenses up front on that." [Ethan: 49]

He also noted the privations that cast and crew had to endure as part of the shoot:

"It's just a bunch of us crammed in these cottages and it's going to be a little bit, you know, kind of swallow your pride and get on with it. I mean, you know, it was still...it was not like we was slumming it as homeless people, we still had everything there, you still had, you know, food and shelter like but it wasn't glamorous" [Ethan: 34]

Fran

Fran noted the difficulty of shooting on location and the extreme conditions of working on what was essentially a student production. She noted the cramped conditions they stayed in:

“Basically, we shot three of the four weeks in this house near [PLACE F2] and all the crew lived there like sardines in sleeping bags in all these rooms.” [Fran: 30]

Fran recognised the conditions were not good and that, in other circumstances, they would not have been able expect the crew to work in them:

“...we worked 23 hour days sometimes. That wouldn’t... you’d never be able to get away with that now. The minute you go into overtime, most students I’ve worked on, there’s no budget for overtime, we can’t afford overtime. So you kind of run over a little bit but people don’t like it, but on [FILM F1] it was a completely different ballgame because everyone was just there. Everyone was staying at the house anyway. We were filming in the house. I think a few people got cabin fever” [Fran: 41]

Reflecting on the process, Fran offered a reason why people would accept to work in such poor conditions for low or no pay:

“This is their future” [Fran: 41]

6.7.4 Super-ordinate theme 3: Summary

Exploiting contacts and networks as a source of opportunity

Participants have noted that their networks were critical to their own performance and helped them achieve their goals. Contacts varied from established industry players to the participants contemporaries.

Focus on the enabling qualities of a 'good team'

Selecting a good and reliable cast and crew often made the participant's jobs as producers much easier. They also helped to raise standards and elevated the producer's own performance. Participants expressed a need to hire the right people, noting that that was not always possible. Some of the participants reflected on the consequences of having individuals with bad attitudes on their film productions.

Exploiting human resources as a necessity of micro/low budget film producing

Participants expressed conflicted feelings about employing people on their projects when they were working with small budgets. Some participants felt a sense of duty towards cast and crew but this was occasionally tempered by an acceptance that these employees were fully aware of the conditions of employment from the outset.

6.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the findings of the data analysis and identified three main themes of concern to the participants.

Participants were focused on their ambition and struggle for status within the film industry. As emerging producers, participants highlighted their own lack of significance within the industry and expressed a sense of isolation and that somehow they were being excluded from accessing vital support structures. They also focused on their own naivety and inexperience and their attempts to overcome that naivety by acquiring relevant knowledge. Looking into the future participants considered the personal importance of attaining future status in the industry; acknowledging their desire for industry acceptance and a long career but noted the potential obstacles to attaining those goals. Participants desired independence and a degree of autonomy however, they noted that they were also dependent on a number of 'industry players' who often prevented them from achieving their project objectives.

Participants expressed how they acted in a creative capacity. There was little consensus about the participant's own sense of responsibility to the creative process however, they did demonstrate similarities in a number of key ways. First, each of the participants used their taste to inform key choices on issues such as project selection and audience engagement. However, each participant recognised limits to their own creative persona and understood that boundaries were needed to enable other key creative players. Finally in this theme, participants discussed the sense of validation they received from the critical and audience reaction to their films.

The final theme focused on the participant's professional relationships and how they enabled them to perform to a high standard. Participants recognised that their contacts and networks were a source of opportunity. When they entered production they focused on their good team members and how they provided a platform for the participants to perform their duties as

producers to a high standard. Finally, as most the participants were working with low and micro-budgets they recognised an ethical dilemma about expecting professional cast and crew to work for low ways suggesting that somehow this transaction was essentially degrading.

This chapter has described the experience of participants producing a first feature film. The chapter now needs to be complemented with a discussion that draws together these themes and places them in context with the extant literature.

7 Chapter 7: Concluding Chapter

7.1 Evaluating the research

7.1.1 Summary

This thesis has described exploratory, empirical research on emerging UK film producers who have shared their lived experiences of producing their first feature film. There has been no previous empirically grounded research that focuses on emerging producers or on this critical stage in their career development so, given the importance of the producer's role, this is a vital first step in seeking to understand their attitudes and beliefs.

A phenomenological approach was adopted, specifically, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; this methodology was considered appropriate for data collection and analysing the exploratory, subjective and micro-levels accounts of the participants. Seven emerging producers were recruited to the research and data was gathered using semi-structured interviews which focused on: the participants route into producing, their reflections on the process of film production, their understanding of the creative aspects of production, their relationships and their feelings about the UK film industry. These were transcribed verbatim and analysed on a case by case basis before themes were cross referenced to produce a list of three super-ordinate themes.

Findings reveal that the participants were focused on their career ambitions of becoming established producers but acknowledged the difficulty of the task. They recognised that they were inexperienced, but this was something they needed to overcome. They focused on their drive to succeed, their hopes and fears about their futures and expressed a desire for independence but noted that there were obstacles in their way.

A second theme focused on the participant's sense of creative purpose: exploring their reflections on how they utilised their taste to choose material; their feelings on intervening in

the creative process; and their sense of validation received from critical and audience reactions to their films. Finally, a third theme interpreted the participant's feelings on their relationships: considering their focus on networks as a source of opportunity; the value of employing a good cast and crew; and their opinions on the employment conditions of people who worked on their films with several of the participants considering the ethical issues of working on low budget features.

This is a valuable piece of research; it is the first that has explored this vital stage of the producer's career development and lays down the foundations for future work. It is anticipated that the research may help other emerging producers set expectations about the challenges they face in the early stages of their careers. Furthermore, the research provides film educators and policy makers with a deeper understanding of the sentiments and needs of this emerging class of producer; sensitivity to those needs is critical to their own interests in the long term.

However, in its current form it is uncertain how the thesis would be immediately accessible to those stakeholders. As it is currently presented, the findings are a particular and subjective interpretation of the data. Stakeholders, particularly emerging producers, may benefit from having site of more of the original transcripts. As such it is proposed that the data could be written up as extended case studies with additional extracts from the interviews. This could be presented in the form of a book or as an amended report (however, I would need to get further permission from the participants to release any publications that were not purely for academic purposes: as per the 'Invitation to Participate'. See Appendix 3).

Furthermore, there are several limitations to the research which I now set out below.

7.1.2 Limitations

As part of an evaluation of this thesis I now set out the limitations of the research. This section addresses issues with the research that were not envisaged at the beginning of the process and what I might do differently if I were able to start the research again.

Limitations as a result of being a novice researcher

It is possible to consider my own inexperience as a limitation of this study. I am at an early stage in my (academic) career and this process has been about learning many of the skills required to perform at a satisfactory level. Despite great effort taken to acquire those skills I cannot discount the possibility that mistakes were made. I am particularly mindful of the data gathering stage and consider my effectiveness as an interviewer. In some of the early interviews I admit to feeling nervous and may not have probed or challenged participant responses as well as I might have liked. As a result, I may have missed opportunities to gain deeper insight into their lived experiences. I feel that this nervousness was less of a problem as the interviews went on and I was much more comfortable with my performance as they progressed.

Despite those shortcomings I note the parallel that can be drawn between my own experience as a novice researcher and those of the emergent producers I interviewed. Like them this experience has essentially been one of learning and I am confident that I will be a more fully formed researcher when I take on future academic work.

Timing

Participants of the research were recruited and interviewed during the spring and summer of 2014, with many of those recruits having made their films in a period between 2009-2013. This period coincides with an upheaval in the UK film industry. In 2010, it was announced that the UKFC was to be closed down and replaced by the BFI with subsequent changes in film policy. Regional Screen Agencies were also overhauled. This was not an ideal backdrop against which

to discuss the experiences of emerging producers and several of the participants were producing their films during this change over.

Despite this inconvenience many of the previous administrations policies were still in place as the participants films were made. Therefore, the findings should be considered as part of that specific historical milieu.

Limitation of Method

IPA, which is a method concerned with lived experience and the sense-making of participants, has its own limitations. IPA is an avowedly subjective method and recognises that both participant and researcher bring their own preconceptions to the research. However, Caldwell has warned that disclosures by producers are often subject to spin and self-interest (Caldwell, 2008, p. 14). Although this has been mitigated by the offer of anonymity to the participants, the level of interpretation and the fact that they are not established or senior industry figures who need to manage their disclosures, it cannot be certain that participants have not done exactly that. It is also noted that the interpretations and presentation of the findings are my own subjective work; it is plausible that a different researcher may have interpreted the interview transcripts differently.

Sample Size

It would be possible to perceive sample size as a limitation. Although the sample size here is consistent with the aims of IPA research it is acknowledged that with only seven participants it is impossible to safely generalise the findings to a wider population. However, to reiterate points that have already been made at length, IPA is an idiographic research method that focuses on the particular details of the participants lived experience; this is entirely appropriate for the kind of exploratory research I have aimed to conduct. Furthermore, whilst it is accepted the findings

may not be generalisable to all emerging UK producers they do reveal a number of important issues that can form the basis of future research (see below).

Sample Criteria

Further thoughts are given to the homogenous, purposive sample criteria and the ways in which the participants were recruited. At the beginning of the research the main aim was to recruit emerging producers who had recently produced a first feature and had had it distributed. No further criteria was stipulated that differentiated between the backgrounds of the participants or the circumstances in which they produced their films.

In hindsight, I feel that additional criteria may have been beneficial. For example, it may have been useful to include criteria that stipulated that participants should have all produced low or micro-budget films. The participants that were recruited produced films at different budgetary levels with some producing films at over £1million whilst others were classified as 'no budget' (less than £50,000) and it is acknowledged that these differences may have had a bearing on their experience. Other possibilities would have been to focus on recruiting participants from a specific geographical area or on producers who had raised money from a particular source. Adding additional criteria would have made it easier to evaluate the findings and to consider them against the structures of a discrete sector of the UK film industry.

Recruitment

Further vetting of the participants may also have been beneficial. For instance, it only transpired once we were at the interview that Fran had made her feature as part of her Master's degree programme. Questions have been raised about the validity of her experience and whether or not she can be thought of as a producer in the same way as the other participants. I am confident that she can: she has gone through the same stages of production, managed to get her film distributed and even successfully applied for funding from her regional screen agency. However,

the questions over her legitimacy may have been avoided if I had been more selective of participants rather than recruiting each participant as they made themselves available.

Findings

Interpretation in IPA relies on a process of abstraction and subsumption (grouping together related emergent themes) in order to generate super-ordinate themes. This process provides the researcher with a way of finding the deep meanings in individual accounts and a way of seeing the links between cases. However, because it is interested in finding the shared experiences of the participants it can mean that some emergent themes within individual cases are not represented in the write up. Furthermore, themes that were present in less than half the cases were also not included. Finally, although large amounts of data was generated and many emergent themes were grouped together, only one or two examples from each case were used to illustrate super-ordinate themes. Taken together this means that some interesting insights have been, to borrow a term from film production, left on the cutting room floor.

7.1.3 Recommendations for future research

This exploratory research has opened up a number of exciting opportunities for future research. I outline a number of recommendations to build on the foundational knowledge about emerging UK film producers that this thesis provides.

A quantitative study might help to generalise some of the findings of the research. A 2017 report on the state of the UK independent film sector reported that between 2007-2015, 1,612 films were made on budgets of less than £500,000 (SPI Olsberg, 2017, p. 3). It is not known how many of those were made by emerging producers working on their first feature but another report on low budget films suggests that it may be as high as 69% (Northern Alliance, 2008, p. 16). Whilst this research has not focused solely on low budget producers these figures do suggest that there is potentially a large number of emerging producers working on their first feature. However, whilst we may be able to infer from these reports that many emerging producers may be currently at work there is no other research, quantitative or qualitative, that specifically focuses on them. New research may be able to give a clearer picture as to how many emerging producers are working on their first features; a survey could further our insight into their attitudes and beliefs.

One particular attitude that has been revealed here is how some emerging producers have thought about screen agencies and the other gatekeepers they rely upon to finance and distribute their films. Whilst the research has been able to highlight *what* the participants have thought it has been less effective in describing why they feel that way. This needs further investigation.

Furthermore, agencies and other gatekeepers play a crucial role in helping producers get their films to market so it would also be beneficial for emerging producers to understand the filmmaking process from their perspective. However, it is anticipated that getting access to

executives within these agencies and asking them to discuss why they have made funding decisions might be difficult due to the business sensitive nature of those disclosures.

Ben Roberts, Director of the BFI Lottery Film Fund, recently warned that the film industry is one that *'has some very high drop off rates along the way'* suggesting the difficulty that many entrants and emerging filmmakers have of staying within the industry (Roberts, 2016). The data for this research was collected in 2014 so a longitudinal study would be beneficial. Although many of the participants were at different stages of their career at the time of the interviews it would be useful to reengage with them to enquire about their career progress, whether they are still producing films and to ask how they feel now about the value of producing their first feature film.

7.1.4 Original Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge in two specific ways:

It is the first empirical research that has focused specifically on emerging producers and their lived experiences of producing a first feature film. The research is specific to producers in the UK, but it is noted that research of this kind has not been conducted anywhere in the world.

The research has also made a methodological contribution. Caldwell has asserted that studies of cinema and media industries '*need a bigger methodological toolbox*' and has asked what might happen if phenomenology was used to better understand how media is made (Caldwell, 2013, pp. 158-160). This research has provided a response and has used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the subjective, embedded and micro-level accounts of the participant's experiences of producing a first feature film.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendices Content

- APPENDIX 1: Reflection on development of the interview schedule
- APPENDIX 2: Reflection on development of the sample criteria
- APPENDIX 3: Invitation to participate
- APPENDIX 4: Consent Form
- APPENDIX 5: Ethics Risk Assessment
- APPENDIX 6: Screenshot example of annotated analysis transcript
- APPENDIX 7: List of alphabetised emergent themes from transcript 'A'
- APPENDIX 8: Screenshot of Excel Worksheet 'Theme Organisation'
- APPENDIX 9: Superordinate themes for single case 'F'

8.2 APPENDIX 1: Reflexive note on development of the interview schedule

NB This note was written as I was developing the interview schedule and has been included to show the thought process and evolution of the research questions.

Reflexive note on developing the research question and interview schedule

The purpose of this note is to introduce the reader to the main and secondary questions being asked in the research. Furthermore, it will introduce how the interview schedule will be utilised to access the research participant's lived experience but also, how and why it must be used flexibly. Finally, the researcher will reflect upon the process of devising the interview schedule, the theoretical and personal assumptions that have influenced the schedule and any problems the researcher envisages during the field work and analysis stages of the research as a result of taking the interview schedule forward.

Main research question

Following several months of background theory and immersion in the research area, a central question has been devised which clearly highlights the phenomenon the researcher wishes to discuss: the experience of the first time film producer.

How do first-time feature film producers experience the process of producing in the contemporary UK film industry?

Secondary/exploratory research questions

Whilst the above main research question is the focus of the research it is noted that in order to adequately answer it, it needs to be broken down in to smaller, more manageable secondary questions which seek to aid the exploration of the central phenomenon. These questions break the research down and generally correspond with the aims of the research. Those aims are to understand: the background of the producer and the route they take to become a producer; what they do in film production; the challenges they face; how they interact with the creative aspect of filmmaking and how they feel about the environment in which they are making films. As questions:

1. How do new film producers experience the process of becoming a film producer?
2. How do new producers describe their role in film production?
3. How do new film producers cope with the challenges they face when making their first film?
4. How do new film producers experience the creative collaboration at play in feature film production?
5. How do new producers evaluate their own contribution to their feature film?
6. How do new film producers feel about the working in the UK film industry?

Breaking the main research question into these secondary questions allows the formulation of an interview schedule which should allow the participant to open up about their experience. It is noted that *"often, research questions are pitched at the abstract level and so it is not usually helpful or effective to ask them directly of the participant. Instead, we aim to set up the interview as an event which facilitates the discussion of relevant topics, and which will allow the research questions to be answered subsequently, via analysis"* (Smith, 2009: p.58).

As such an interview schedule has been devised with questions that correspond to the appropriate research question. In addition prompting questions have been considered which anticipate the conversation to come; they are further aids to manage conversation (Rubin & Rubin, p. 165). However, they are flexible and should not be seen as a fixed part of the interviewer's schedule.

RQ#	Research Question	IS#	Corresponding question in Interview Schedule	Prompting Questions
1	How do new film producers experience the process of becoming a film producer?	1	Can you tell me about your background leading up to your involvement with X*? *X = name of film.	<i>Had you had any academic or professional development/training? Short films? Other projects?</i>
		2	Why did you start producing? (or Why did you become a producer? or Can you tell me what was it that made you want to move on to producing feature films?)	<i>What is it that you like about producing? What don't you like? What drove you to produce? /What motivated you?</i>
		3	So tell me how did you become involved with X?	<i>How did you find the material? What was it about the material that appealed to you? How would you describe your own instincts for material? Why did you want to produce that piece of work rather than anything else?</i>
2	How do new producers describe their role in film production?	4	Can you talk me through your involvement through each stage of producing X? (or Can you describe the process of producing X?)	<i>Development? Finance? Pre/Prod/Post? Distribution? What was the day to day operation of producing actually like for you?</i>
		5	Can you describe what it was like for you personally when you were producing X?	<i>How did you feel about yourself? What was the hardest part? What did you enjoy the most about it?</i>
3	How do new film producers cope with the challenges they face when making their first film?	6	Can you tell me about what challenges you faced?	<i>How did you deal with those challenges? What was it like? How did you cope on a personal level? What was the most difficult part of the process? For you what was the worst thing that happened during the production? How was it resolved?</i>
		7	Do you feel that being a first time producer helped or hindered the process? (or How much more difficult do you	<i>Why do you feel that? How did you prove yourself to others? How did you win/earn respect and trust? When did you first feel like you had become 'a producer'? When did you first</i>

			think it was for you as a first time producer?)	<i>feel you had earned the right to call yourself a producer? What had happened?</i>
4	How do new film producers experience the creative collaboration at play in feature film production?	8	How involved were you with the creative process of making the film?	<i>What was your relationship like with the writer and director? How much were you let in? Do you feel that your level of experience affected the way that the creative team saw you? Was critical success important to you? How did you feel about the way the film was received? Do you consider yourself to be a creative producer?</i>
5	How do new producers evaluate their own contribution to their feature film?	9	How do you feel now about your contribution to X?	<i>What were your personal goals when you started out? Do you think you achieved what you set out to do? Do you think it was a success or failure? Why?</i>
		10	How has your understanding of being a film producer changed since you began producing X?	<i>What have been the most valuable lessons you've learned? How do you feel about the experience now? What would you do differently if you could do it again?</i>
6	How do new film producers feel about the working in the UK film industry?	11	Do you feel confident about your future as a producer?	<i>Based on your own experience do you feel that there is a good filmmaking culture in the UK for new producers to thrive? What do you think could be done to help them? If you could give your younger self some advice on producing what would it be?</i>

Finally, the participant will be asked if they have anything else they would like to add or discuss before the interview is drawn to a close.

It is noted that the secondary/exploratory questions are a guide and the participant should be able to talk freely about their own experience. After all, the purpose of the semi-structured interview, as noted by Smith, is *“to allow the participant to tell you what it is like living in their personal world. You are not trying to find out what they think about your views of their personal world”* (Smith, 2009: 61). As such: *“interview schedules should be short, starting with broad, general questions that allow the participant to set the parameters of the topic, not the other way around. This is so that the researcher does not impose their understanding of the phenomenon on the participant’s narrative”* (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011: 757).

It is emphasised that the purpose of these secondary questions, and the subsequent interview schedule, is to act as a guide. As noted by Kvale, the semi-structured interview schedule is a guide which: *“will include an outline of topics to be covered, with suggested questions. It will depend on the particular study*

whether the questions and their sequence are strictly predetermined and binding on the interviewers or whether it is up to the interviewer's judgement and tact how closely to stick to the guide and how much to follow up on the interviewee's answers and the new directions they may open up" (Kvale, 2007: 55).

In that respect it is the intention of the researcher to be flexible in all matters during the interviews. Owing to my own understanding of the research subject and having had the benefit of conducting a pilot interview it is considered that the scheduled questions provide a good platform for the discussion of first time film producer's with those in a position to answer them. However, it is noted that the process of writing the interview schedule is iterative (Smith, 2009: 60) and there is a possibility that there is a need to change and adapt questions as the interviews proceed. As pointed out by Rubin & Rubin: "*questions are not determined once and for all at the beginning of your research. As you learn more about what is important to your interviewees, you add main questions regarding issues they have raised that you know more specifically address your research concerns. On occasion, you discover that your initial main questions are so far off base that they need to be completely changed and then you need to re-interview individuals to ask these newer questions"* (Rubin & Rubin, 2005: 156).

NEED TO ADD IN THAT THE PURPOSE OF INTERVIEWING IS TO UNCOVER MEANING AS OPPOSED TO DESCRIPTION

Reflections on the interview schedule

There have been several iterations of the interview schedule having been through an extensive redrafting process. There have been a number of factors that have shaped these drafts: notably the researcher's own history which has shaped his assumptions regarding the subject under investigation; the researcher's reading of existing theory has been influential and a pilot interview which was initially carried out for the purposes of understanding the dynamic of the interview situation but has subsequently provided new insight into the experience of the new producer. The following reflections seek to provide some insight into these factors and how they have shaped the current draft of the interview schedule.

Pilot Interview

From the outset the purpose of the pilot interview was to test the quality of the interview schedule, in that I hoped that the questions would elicit 'meaning' level answers rather than merely factual, descriptive ones and to test my own technique as an interviewer. In both cases I was disappointed with the results. However, the lessons I learned from the process were extremely valuable and have gone a long way to re-drafting the interview schedule to a degree that I think will now be more successful in getting the all important meaning level responses that I require.

One of the main points taken from the pilot interview was my over use of questions phrased in such a way that only really gave the participant the choice of giving description. That is, lots of the questions began 'how did you...?'; clearly the only way to go with such a question is to provide a description. The new interview schedule still has questions that allow for such description, as this is appropriate, but there are now also more questions that seek evaluation and reflexivity from the participant.

Another cause of concern highlighted in the pilot interview was the lack of direction given to the participant which resulted in long responses to questions which, whilst linear, didn't really reveal enough meaning. Questions have now been designed which partially segment the process and gives clear indication to the participant of what is being discussed. So, in the pilot interview I asked 'Can you tell me about your background before you produced your first film?', which drew a long winded response and ultimately segued from the participant describing their background, into how they became involved in the film and finally how they produced the film. This made the conversation difficult to manage as it covered such a huge area. My answer to this has been to phrase questions in such a way that, I hope, will contain the participant to talk about specific periods and issues. My new questions dealing with

background are ‘Can you tell me about your background leading up to your involvement with X?’; ‘Can you tell me what was it that made you want to move on to producing feature films?’ and ‘So tell me how did you become involved with X?’. Whilst I remain mindful that I am not trying to impose my own ideas about producing on to the participant I believe that this way of questioning will be more fruitful and will allow me to better spot areas worthy of exploring as the participants discuss them. Previously that had been made almost impossible by the sheer size of the testimony.

I should also note that I failed to prepare the pilot participant for the interview in any meaningful way which, whilst having no preconceptions about the course of the interview, also gave him room to arrive at the interview with his own assumptions about what I wanted to discuss. I will not be making the same mistake again and briefing future participants will be more thorough.

Finally, the pilot interview was also useful in that it brought up some issues about producing that I had not previously considered and have now influenced some of the questions that have been written in to the new draft. For instance, the participant discussed how they had been heavily involved in the creative process of the film but was seemingly happy to disavow any creative ownership once the film had proved to be a critical failure. This opens up thoughts about how, precisely, the producer is a part of the creative process and how much they choose to be. As such some prompting questions have been included which pose questions of creative ownership to the participant.

Personal assumptions

The concept for the research stems from my own history attempting to enter the film industry as a producer. My own failure to do that has led to a number of assumptions/biases which can effectively be summarised in the statement: the film industry is hard to enter for new producers. This observation is supported by a number of sources including a job profile for the producer publishes by Creative Skillset: “Progressing in the film production world is traditionally very difficult” (Creative Skillset, 2011). As such I wanted to investigate how difficult it has been for my participants and this is reflected in the interview schedule. The first section on the producer’s background should give the participants enough scope to reflect on their route to producing and questions on the challenges they’ve faced and how they feel they’ve been perceived as a first time producer should open up that line of enquiry. Of course, all participants may very well have found it easy to become producers and then the task for me will be to find out why they found it so simple.

Another observation, made following extensive reading, has been that very few people seem to know exactly what a producer does. This is prevalent in much of the available literature on producers and even has producers themselves state that *‘every producer is different’* (Pollack, 2006), *‘there are almost as many ways to function as a producer’* (Puttnam, 2006) and that describing the role of the producer is *‘complex. And that maybe one of the reasons there are so few books about producers’* (Woolley, 2006).

It is important therefore to allow the participant’s to describe what it is they do and question 4 gives them the opportunity to do that. That being said, it is important to note that describing the role of the producer is not fundamentally important as a research outcome. For a start, if you were to accept the above statements from the likes of Pollack, Puttnam and Woolley on face value then it could be argued that it is impossible to answer the question ‘what do producers do?’. Therefore, participants will be asked to describe what it they have done on their own particular productions which will then provide context for the rest of the discussion. Furthermore, in line with the idiographic principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis the research is not seeking to use the data to make generalisations about new producers.

Another assumption I have made through observation is that, for several reasons (including disruptive digital technologies which are changing film business models), the UK film industry is going through a difficult period. Whilst the research does not seek to answer whether the industry is in crisis (or to what extent it is in crisis), it does look to producers to reflect on the environment in which they are working and how they feel it could be more or less supportive of their endeavours.

Finally, I have long believed that the producer is a highly creative individual whose decisions are important to the creative process. However, Film Studies has long since disregarded the creative efforts of the producer in favour of the director with Auteur Theory the primary avenue for discussing creativity in filmmaking. The purpose of the research is not to prove that the producer is a creative (or more creative than the director) but to ask producers how involved they are in the creative process and how they feel about it.

There may be other assumptions I have made that have influenced the construction of the interview schedule but the above represent the significant ones.

Theoretical assumptions

Further to my own personal assumptions that have influenced the interview schedule my research has involved an ongoing search and review of existing literature on film producers. Whilst much of the available material is not academic in nature, what does exist is illuminating. Much of the material on producer's can be found in relation to their creative contribution to filmmaking with several ideas on how, if not in a direct sense, the producer is a creative collaborator:

"the creativity of the producer is exercised not in a direct fashion through decisions that affect the actual production of the film – as in the case of the director – but rather in an indirect way, through the selection and supervision of the creative personnel that participate in the film; and, on the other hand, that his or her global control of a film assures a large measure of intervention at the beginning and end of the process, during pre-production and post-production" (Pardo, 2010: 10).

As such it is important for me to explore the creativity of the producer and beyond a main question that asks the participant how they are involved in the creative process, some prompting questions have been devised to explore this in more detail. However, it is accepted that there are different types of producer and some participants may feel like they do not exercise creativity at all in which case I will have to consider what to do with that line of questioning – whether to probe further or to drop it.

Another interesting idea that has been brought from the literature is the idea of the 'habitus' of the producer; that, the core traits a good producer requires to be successful. In her ethnographic study of independent cinema in America, Ortner suggests that the 'habitus' of the independent producer are their taste, relationships with key creative people and their personal drive or agency (Ortner, 2013: 154). It is considered that there are sufficient questions (both main and prompting) that will explore these areas.

However, in regards to both of these theoretical assumptions it is noted that it is not the intention to load the interview schedule with questions in such a way as to attempt to prove a pre-existing theory. This would defeat the purpose of IPA, they are simply stated here as a note that I am aware of the theory and that it has influenced my thinking.

Some general thoughts/reflections

Number of questions

In relation to the specific approach being taken towards this inquiry, it is noted that advocates of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis advise that six to ten questions will ordinarily be enough to cover the topic under investigation. According to Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez there is a tendency among inexperienced researchers to *'produce schedules that are too long, overly extensive and detailed, and therefore constraining. This appears to arise from the erroneous belief and fear that topics of interest to the researcher will not be covered'* (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011: 757).

EXPLAIN

I note that my interview schedule currently has eleven questions plus a final 'do you have anything more to add' opportunity for the participant to talk. Whilst I accept that limiting the number of questions is essentially arbitrary and not binding in any way (in that it will not invalidate the method by going over that number), I am concerned that there are clearly time based implications for conducting a long interview. The longer the interview lasts, the more time it will take to transcribe and analyse. Whilst this is not necessarily a problem in itself I am conscious that I only have a limited time left to complete the study. I am slightly worried about 'biting off more than I can chew'. Furthermore, I already have the conundrum of not knowing how many participants will be adequate for the study. Whilst I originally thought that eight would suffice I have recently seen a similar study from my institution that uses seven participants (handily setting a precedent). Combined these two factors have left me pondering exactly how much data I will generate in the course of the field work. I suspect it might be a lot. However, this is probably not something I can worry about until I get out there and begin the interviews. My worries might be unfounded; after all, my pilot interview lasted a little over an hour whilst generating a lot of data along the way. If I find that my first few interviews are generating two or three hours or more of data then I will have the opportunity to refocus. There is also a human factor to consider in that I may have one participant that will talk a lot will another less so. I am happy with the current iteration of the interview schedule and believe it will reveal a lot about the phenomenon in question so it is now simply a question of going to find out.

Concerns/musings about some of the questions

Whilst I am now confident that the current draft of the interview schedule is the best to date there are still some uncertainties which could, perhaps, call for further refinement. In particular I wonder if I.S. Question 5 (Can you describe what it was like for you personally when you were producing X?) could possibly be made a prompting question of I.S. Question 4 (Can you describe the process of producing X?).

Also, I think that I.S. Questions 9 (How do you feel now about your contribution to X?) and 10 (How has your understanding of being a film producer changed since you began producing X?) could, with some work, be tied in together as one question. The purpose of both of these questions is evaluative which I feel is very important. Previously in the pilot interview I had asked 'What do you think were the most important lessons you learnt from the process of producing your first film?' with the prompt 'Was the process of making the film how you expected?'. If anything, the main question from the pilot interview is a prompt at best and its prompt, while similar to the new question 10, is phrased badly. The new question should allow better reflexivity.

On the point of tying the questions together; currently, they are valid questions in their own right but two questions on how the participant evaluates their contribution to the film seems superfluous. Of the two, I favour question 10 and think Question 9 could become a prompt somewhere. But, whatever the decision, it needs to be made for a reason and not just for the arbitrary purpose of their being too many questions.

It is also possible that I could tie questions 5 and 9 together! But, whilst they might work I would have to answer how that would disrupt the flow of the rest of the schedule.

8.3 APPENDIX 2: Reflection on developing the sample criteria

Reflexive justification of the sample criteria

It is noted that the stated criteria does not stipulate many variables in the sample. That is because it is relatively rare, if not unique, to study producers in the way that has been proposed in this research; “*How the specificity of a sample is defined will depend on the study; in some cases, the topic under investigation may be rare and define the boundaries of the relevant sample*” (Smith & Osborn, 2008: 56). As such, the sample criteria merely needs to state that the research is searching for participants who have (relatively) recently become active as feature film producers, who produce their films in the UK and have had their work distributed to the public.

The reasons behind the choice of criteria for the sample are reasonably straight forward. The following will break down the criteria into relevant parts and reflect on why they have been considered for inclusion.

Worked/Worked as a film producer; Has produced at least one feature film (fiction)

Participants to be selected for inclusion in the study should have worked as producers and have produced at least one film; this is the bare minimum qualification for anyone likely to take part and ensures that they have produced a debut feature-length film. Without having met these conditions it is unlikely that they would have the required experience necessary to make any meaningful or insightful contribution to the study.

It is also noted that the criteria specifies that the participant should have made one ‘feature film (fiction)’ – the purpose of specifying that the film is fiction separates producers of ‘cinema’ with those who have made documentaries or a form of non-narrative film. Whilst there may be similarities between producing films from different disciplines it is considered that there will be enough, significant difference in the way that they have been produced to create too great a variability in participant experiences, which threatens to make the sample a heterogeneous sample rather than a homogeneous one. Why then have I selected fiction film over any other form of filmmaking? Simply because it is my primary interest! In his outline of the seven steps required to satisfy ‘*an organised, disciplined and systematic*’ phenomenological research study’, Moustakas noted that a research question should be ‘*rooted in autobiographical meaning and values*’ (Moustakas, 1994: 13); and it is this ‘*autobiographical meaning*’ that I am tapping into in the design of the research. My own background is in producing short form fiction/drama and I wish to investigate the experiences of others who have taken their careers onto the next level; perhaps so that I can understand my own shortcomings as a producer.

UK citizen & resident in the UK during the full period of production (including development); First feature film qualifies as British

The first requirement is, as the title of the research suggests, that the producer/participant should be British. Secondly, the purpose of stating that the participant should be a resident in the UK during the full period of production (including the development period), is to ensure that they have experienced the full process of producing a feature film within the confines of the UK film industry. At its core the research is asking what it is like for people, living in Britain, who aspire to produce feature films to take the steps of realising that ambition. The stipulation that the research be about UK residents and who have produced their film in the UK is as much a limitation of the study as it is an aim to understand something about the UK film industry itself. Whilst film production may now take place in a global market, there are still ‘*key territorial distinctions*’ (Finney, 2010: 3) which helps set filmmaking in the UK apart. The available literature shows how these distinctions affect film production (and film cultures); this is seen most vividly when observing the differences between the vertically integrated business model used by the Hollywood studios and the fragmented value chain of the independent sector (which includes the UK). However, this is not the place to take those observations further. It is simply stated to demonstrate that producing in the UK is different to producing in, for example, Hollywood. It is the purpose of the study to provide a

space for British producers to reflect on the environment in which they produced their film; by doing this we may come to better understand those 'key territorial differences' and how they make producing in the UK a unique experience.

In order to further ensure that the film making activities have taken place on UK soil, the criteria also states that the film should qualify as British; in particular, the film will have needed to have satisfied the British Cultural Test for Film, a points based system which any film production will need to pass in order to qualify for UK state funding and/or tax relief. The test awards credits when the film is (among other things): set in the UK; based on British subject matter; had at least 50% of the principal photography take place in the UK and that its cultural practitioners (including the producer) are UK citizens (<http://www.bfi.org.uk/film-industry/british-certification-tax-relief/cultural-test-video-games/summary-points-cultural-test-film>).

Of course, it is possible that a film could have been shot abroad without a British producer and still qualify as British. The purpose of its inclusion in the sample criteria is that the test should provide a minimum threshold for what constitutes a British film. It also acts as a useful framework that prevents me from arbitrarily defining what qualifies as British. I state that this is the minimum threshold because I am also in the fortunate position that I have some degree of discretion over who is selected to participate in the study. It is likely, that those that do end up participating will go far beyond this minimum qualification. However, I have included it as a criterion in case I need to broaden my search beyond the pool of potential participants that I know are available and hope will want to participate in the study.

Their first feature film entered principle photography after 1st January 2010

There are two principle reasons for stating, as a criterion of the sample, that the debut film should have been produced since 1st January 2010: firstly, because the experience will therefore be relatively fresh in the memory which will hopefully aid reflection; and secondly, because of radical changes that have happened in film production and distribution since the turn of the millenia. These changes mean that a producer making their debut feature in 1997, for example, would have faced very different conditions to those making their film in 2007, who in turn faced different conditions to producers working in 2014.

The digital revolution has been the cause of much of this disruption and has altered the way in which films have been made, popularising the likes of 'guerilla' filmmaking; to the way that film are distributed, thanks largely to the internet and the efficiency of delivery that the web can offer. Perhaps the changes to the ways in which films are distributed is the most significant challenge for new producers, as Franklin notes: "Digital distribution has an impact on every aspect of the film industry: it determines not just what film audiences see and how they see them but also how films are developed, produced and sold" (Franklin, 2012: 101). With film audiences rapidly moving on-line complications arise due to the things such as film piracy: "In its illegal form, Internet-enabled dissemination of film poses an existential threat to the film industry" (ibid). Beyond this digital revolution there has been other significant changes to the UK film landscape: the dissolution of the UK Film Council, austerity, changes to tax incentives to name a few. These challenges undoubtedly impact upon the experience of the producer. As stated above it is the aim of the research to give new producers a platform to reflect upon the conditions in which they made the film. By focusing on producers who have become active in the film industry's most recent history the sample provides a consistent platform for examining their experience. As a result it may be possible that we learn something about the sorts of challenges facing producers today.

It is noted that there is a caveat to this condition which is that the film need only to have entered principle photography from 1st January 2010 and therefore, does not account for time spent in development, financing or pre-production. Of course, these stages of film production take time and will be an essential part of the producer's experience. However, according to Blore, the average time spent in production can be between 2 and 8 years, whilst financing can take 6 months to 2 years (Blore, 2013: 45). With these timescales, stipulating that the film should have started development after 2010 could seriously reduce the pool of potential participants. As the research wants to speak to producers who have had their films distributed to the general public, it was considered to be too restrictive to look for a pool of producers

that had developed, financed and distributed a debut film since the beginning of 2010. Alternatively, the sample could have taken account of the long development timescales and asked for participants to have begun development no later than, say, 2002; however, it was considered that opening the start date for inclusion could, as above, make the conditions in which the participant worked too diffuse. As such the decision was made to state that films should have started principal photography at the beginning of 2010; thus, giving the best chance that the participants would have experienced a similar industrial environment when their films moved into actual production. In order to compensate for this complication, participants will have been expected to have resided in the UK for the period of development (as seen in the previous criterion) and questions have been built into the interview schedule to enquire about the films development, with further room for the participant to discuss finance and distribution if they feel that this has been an essential part of their producing experience (which would, of course, be expected).

Has been distributed theatrically, via DVD or available to the general public on at least one platform, in at least one territory

The purpose of this criterion is simply to ensure that the participants have been through all recognised stages of production and have achieved the ultimate aim of getting the film to an audience. It accounts for the difficulty of getting a film to market, as: *'it is arguably tougher to bring an independent film to market with success than it is to actually make one'* (Finney, 2010: 121). The stipulation that the film has been distributed theatrically (that is, in the cinema), on DVD or available to the general public on at least one platform (which could include Video on Demand, or online subscription service) ensures that the film has reached market via a recognised 'gatekeepers'. It is possible for a feature debut to have been made (and distributed via a site like Youtube) without the producer ever having engaged with a sales agent or distribution company; however, if they haven't it is unlikely that they will have experienced what it means to be a producer, at least in a traditional sense. There is, of course, a danger in ignoring new delivery systems and the new opportunities that producers have as a result of the disintermediation of the value chain bringing them closer to their audience. However, despite many efforts there is still not a successfully replicated model which monetises online self-distribution. It is considered that the sample criteria does take into account changes to the distribution system, as it has made way for delivery systems such as VOD, but films by producers chosen for participation will have to demonstrate that they have reached an audience; and the most efficient way of doing that is to ensure they have been through a recognised system of distribution.

What the criteria does not state

I have not stipulated that the films made by the producer/participant be of any particular budget. It is anticipated that the film will be either low or micro-budget but it is possible that I might find a producer who has raised several million pounds to make their film. It is considered that, regardless of budget, producers will have gone through a similar process to get their film from script to screen so the amount of money they raise is less important. There will also be factors involved in how much money they are able to raise such as genre and cast.

I have not considered any demographic factors such as age, gender or ethnicity as I think would any attempt to do so would need to be reflected in the research question and aims of the study. Quite simply, any inclusion of demographic factors into the study (other than the participants being British) would fundamentally change what the research is about.

8.4 APPENDIX 3: Invitation to participate in the research

Invitation to participate in a study concerning the experiences of new British feature film producers

(As part of a University of South Wales PhD research project)

Researcher: Edward Casey

Supervisory team: Professor. Chris Morris, Professor. David Smith

Thank you for your interest in my research concerning the experience of new British film producers. This invitation provides further information about the research, what would be required of you if you choose to take part and the terms of your participation in the study.

What is the research about? The aim of the research is to better understand the role of the producer in UK based film production. In particular, the researcher is concerned with how new producers experience the process of making their first feature film, how they respond to the challenges that arise during the course of production and how they feel about making films in the UK. Significantly, the research aims to move beyond a simple description of the process of film producing and instead seeks to uncover what the experience has meant to the individual producers that participate.

Why have I been asked to participate? So that the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of what it is like to produce a feature film for the first time in the UK. You have been purposely selected to participate because your experience as a film producer makes you ideally situated to offer insight into the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, your experience is of considerable value to the research.

What is expected of me? If you agree to participate you will be asked to attend a face-to-face interview with the researcher. The interview will consist of questions designed to explore your experience of producing your first feature film. Generally, the questions will relate to your experience of the production, how you managed certain aspects of the process and how you feel about the conditions in which you made the film. All the questions will be very open and have been designed to allow you to talk, in your own words, about the parts of the process that you feel are of most importance to you. It is anticipated that the interview will last approximately two hours and will occur at a time and place convenient to you. With your permission video and/or audio recordings will be made of the interviews and as such you will be required to sign a consent form before the interview takes place.

What happens after the interview? Once the interview is completed the researcher will transcribe the interview record and send you a copy of the transcription for your approval. You will be asked to read the transcript to ensure that it accurately portrays your recollection of the interview and you can request amendments if you feel they are required. You will be given ten days to approve the contents of the transcript; following which you will be asked to confirm (via email) that you are happy for the research to proceed.

It should also be noted that in the unlikely event that the researcher requires any further information following the initial interview he may wish to arrange a follow up interview or request additional information from you via email; you are under no obligation to participate in any of these follow up communications but to ensure the validity of the research your response would be appreciated.

What happens if I want to withdraw from the research? You are free to withdraw from the research at any time if you feel you no longer wish to take part. You are under no obligation to participate and even after the interview has been concluded you are free to withdraw and, if you are unhappy, you can request that any data you have provided to the researcher is destroyed.

What about my data? It should be noted that all data that you provide will be anonymised during the transcription process; that is, all names, places, institutions and products will be changed so that you cannot be identified. This information is made anonymous in line with university ethics proposal guidelines and to protect you and any other persons who you may wish to discuss during the interview. Any publications that are made as a result of the research (including the completed PhD thesis and any subsequent academic journal articles) will not use your name and you will not be identifiable. All data gathered about you will be securely stored by the researcher. Only the research group, which includes the researcher and his supervisory team, will see and hear the interview recordings. There will be no sharing of any material outside of that group.

Finally, it is requested that you do not share any information about this research or any research materials with any third parties unless you have been given permission to do so by the researcher and/or the supervisory team. It is also asked that you do not discuss the research with any other participants until after the research has been completed. Your discretion is appreciated.

Beyond the research Following the submission of the PhD thesis there may be an opportunity to further exploit the research through the publication of other media which might include a book or a documentary film. Any such publication might require revealing your identity. You are not being asked to agree for your information to be used in such a way at this time. However, if such an opportunity does arise you will be contacted for your permission and be given the chance to decline. If, at that stage, you do not want your information to be used in any further publications the data you have provided to the researcher will be destroyed.

What do I need to do now? Please keep this information sheet and make sure you feel comfortable with what you are being asked to do. Please also read the consent form that has been sent to you separately, you will be asked to sign this and present it to the researcher before the interview begins. Once you have familiarised yourself with these details and you are happy to proceed, please contact the researcher so that a place and time for the interview can be arranged/confirmed.

Thank you once again for your interest in this study; you are in an excellent position to make a unique contribution for which I am very grateful. If you have any queries arising from the information provided here, please contact me; I am more than happy to answer your questions.

Many thanks,

Ed Casey
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University of South Wales
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Other contacts:

Professor Chris Morris – Chris.Morris@southwales.ac.uk
Professor David Smith – David.Smith@southwales.ac.uk

8.5 APPENDIX 4: Consent Form

Consent form for participation in the University of South Wales PhD research study concerning the experience of new British film producers

Researcher: Edward Casey

Supervisory Team: Professor David Smith, Professor Chris Morris

Please read and sign below to confirm that you understand the following points (if you require any clarification please contact the researcher):

- It has been explained to me why I have been asked to participate and what the research is about.
- I have been provided with and have read an invitation to participate in the study; the invitation explains the terms of my participation.
- I will make myself available for a face-to-face interview with the researcher at a time and place agreed between us.
- I understand that video and/or audio recordings will be made of the interview; I give permission for the researcher to make (please tick as appropriate):
 - Audio Recording
 - Video Recording
- I understand that following the initial interview I may be asked to attend a follow up interview or respond to questions via email although I understand that I am under no obligation to do so.
- I will be provided with a written transcript of the interview; I will check the transcript for accuracy and respond, with any suggested amendments, within ten days of its receipt.
- I accept that the data I provide will be used to form the basis of a PhD thesis and any academic journal articles that the researcher deems appropriate.
- For the purposes of the PhD research my identity will remain anonymous; any reference to my name or any reference I make to other persons, products, institutions or companies that could be used to identify me will be changed in the written transcript of the interview and will not be used in the PhD thesis or academic research articles.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to participate and can withdraw at any time. I can request that any data held in relation to my participation is destroyed.
- I will not share or discuss any information about the research or share any research materials to any third parties without the permission of the researcher and/or his research team.
- I am over 18 years of age and give informed consent for my participation in this research.

Participant Signature Date .../.../.....

Participant name (printed)

Researcher's signature

Date .../.../.....

Researcher's name (printed)

8.6 APPENDIX 5: Ethics Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of New British Film Producers

Edward Casey

Persons at risk:

Researcher – Edward Casey

Participant – Eight individual participants (to be confirmed)

Task:

Semi-structured interviews

Length of each interview – approx 2 hours

Costs to participant – reimbursed of travel expenses (if any), refreshments

Venue:

Various locations to be arranged. Efforts will be made to conduct all interviews at the Newport City Campus of University of South Wales. However, if the participant cannot travel to Newport then the researcher will travel to them and arrange a suitable interview space in advance. The ideal location will be a quiet office space.

It is not anticipated that interviews will be conducted in a public space or at the homes of the participants.

Risks:

What is the risk? Physical harm

Who is at risk? Participant and researcher

Level of risk: Low

What will be done to mitigate the risk? There is no suggestion that the interviews will be conducted in a dangerous environment. Interviews will be carried out in a closed office environment. The participant will be required to sit in a chair and answer some questions. There is no physical element to the research. Efforts will be made to find a neutral, public space to conduct the interviews and it is unlikely that the researcher will ever have to enter the participant's home.

What is the risk? Psychological distress

Who is at risk? Participant

Level of risk: Low

What will be done to mitigate the risk? The research is designed to investigate the participant's professional career – all questions will be designed to enquire about their profession. The participant's are not vulnerable children or adults and will have signed a consent form to ensure that they have entered into the research voluntarily, free from any coercion or manipulation.

Prior to the interview the participant will be informed of the procedure of the interview and asked if they are happy to proceed. They will also be informed that they can request a break at any time during the interview if they require.

In the unlikely event that a participant does become upset or traumatised in the course of the interview they will be given the option to take a break and/or skip certain questions and/or terminate the interview.

Following the interview participants will be de-briefed to ensure they were satisfied with the way the interview was conducted.

For the weeks after the interview the participant will be provided with a written transcript of the interview to approve and request any amendments or additions to ensure they are satisfied with how the interview record has been made. The participant will be given a time-limited period to withdraw from the research.

What is the risk? Identification of participant

Who is at risk? Participant

Level of risk? Low

What will be done to mitigate the risk? Ultimately the data from the interviews will end up in the public domain via thesis, journal articles. There is a risk that the participant could be identified through these documents. In order to minimise this risk the participant will be offered anonymity, their name changed in all documents as well as any names of third parties, companies and products will be changed to protect that anonymity. Prior to publication all documents will be stored securely by the researcher on his home computer and backed up through password protected cloud storage and external storage. The researcher and research team (director of studies, supervisors) will be the only persons permitted to view the data until such a time it is ready for publication.

8.7 APPENDIX 6: Screenshot example of annotated analysis transcript

NB The screenshot shows a page of the annotated transcript with original verbatim transcript in the central column. The transcript was read several times before any analysis was attempted. The first stage was to read the transcript line by line making exploratory (descriptive, linguistic and conceptual) comments in the right-hand column. The transcript was read through for a final time with the exploratory comments generating ‘pithy’ abstract emergent themes in the left-hand column.

Emergent themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
Goal orientated p1	<p>EC: OK, so can you tell me about your background leading up to your involvement with [FILM A1]?</p> <p>ANDREW: Film production was something I'd always wanted to do...from a very early age so I think probably 19 I wanted to make films, didn't really know how to do it, went to college did an HND in design. From that, from the completion of that I went into the second year of a BA film course down in Portsmouth, finished there, went back home and worked on community TV channels and things like that just trying to find my feet. Moved to Leeds, set up a small production company doing charity work and corporate videos and all that sort of thing, worked in nightclubs for many years and so on to pay my way and just to keep my head above water. Started doing, this is...I'll keep this as brief as I can, started doing some quite interesting skate boarding and, this is before all the extreme sports TV stuff really took off. So I started filming at skate parks and putting little promo videos together and that got me some work on a magazine show, an international magazine show so I was working with another producer but shooting surfing and skateboarding type items which</p>	<p>-He 'always wanted to' – <u>self-knowledge</u>, understanding where he wanted to go in life.</p> <p>-Self-doubt, takes course in minority related subject but then goes to film school. There is a transition, an element of personal discovery in this journey. Self-discovery.</p> <p>-a rush <u>through</u>, no details, not important?</p> <p>-taking steps to a life he wants. It discounts the formal education and suggests that he is now out in the world and serious about going forward. Find my feet – stability, tentativeness.</p> <p>-entrepreneurial, risk taker, business minded</p> <p>-following a dream comes with sacrifices, risks.</p> <p>-thinks this part of his story is unimportant</p> <p>-an element of self-confidence: Able to think/see ahead of the curve. An innovator?</p> <p>-others recognise his talent; attributes small efforts to career development</p> <p>-collaboration.</p>
Search for stability p1 Entrepreneurial p1 Self-reliance p1		
Able to see developing trends p1 Ability to create opportunities p1 <u>Collaborating</u> p1/2		

8.8 APPENDIX 7: List of Alphabetised Emergent Themes from Transcript 'A'

NB Emergent themes were extracted from the transcript to organise into super-ordinate themes.

Emergent themes

Relevance of culture, creative engagement

Able to see developing trends

Ability to create opportunities

Access to money, hard

Accessing support network

Admits naivety; industrial complexity

Aggression towards individual

Aggression towards unreliable individual

Ambition; professional growth

Anger at individual

Anger

Anger; establishment as exploitation

Appearance; portraying calm exterior

Assessing talent; future risk

Assessment of reward; very limited

Assuming altruism; motivation of others

Assumptions about motivations

Assumptions; conflicting motivation self v others

Audience = consumer

Audience as critically diverse

Audience polarised

Audience; inability to control

Authority as enjoyable

Autonomy; control

Calculated risk-taking

Collaborating

Collaboration inspires confidence
Collaboration, exciting
Collaborative development, creativity
Collaborators are enablers
Commitment to creativity
Communication as relationship management tool
Communication breakdown; lack of coherent strategy
Complexity of finance, money as challenge
Complexity of resource management
Compromise
Conflict resolution; mediation
Conflict; managing relationships
Confounds low expectations; delivers quality
Conscious of future
Conscious of money
Conscious of others; consequence of own actions
Conscious of self-image
Conscious of time
Conscious of time/cost
Conscious of time/resources
Conscious of time; deadlines
Constant uncertainty
Continuous personal development
Control as reward
Control v circumstance
Coping with stress
Creating conceptual framework, inspiration
Creating talent networks
Critical of finished film
Dangers of misinformation
Daunted by responsibility

Defining self, growth
Demands of others
Derogation of right; exploitative
Determination; optimism
Determined; resourceful
Developing survival instinct
Disciplinarian; control
Dismissive of establishment
Doing as learning
Duty to others
Effective communication
Egocentricity of others
Endeavour as absurdity
Endeavour, effort
Engaged with critical response
Enjoy/joy
Enjoy?
Entrepreneurial
Error as learning tool; growth
Estab. motivated by kudos and profile
Establishment as agents of exploitation
Establishment as barrier/obstruction
Establishment as clique
Establishment as gatekeeper; patrician
Establishment as gatekeepers; anger, injustice
Establishment as self-appointed arbiter of culture
Establishment as self-interested
Establishment as self-regarding
Establishment as snit-commerce
Establishment as suppressing agent
Establishment barriers

Establishment practice as usury
Establishment; income generation is meritocratic
Establishment; mutual exclusivity of priorities
Establishment; prioritisation difficulties
Establishment; recognition of limited value
Excessive competition for public finance
Expectations; responsibilities
Expedience of self-interest; minimise risk
Experience = insight
Experience = knowledge
Experience as painful process
Experience as wisdom
Exploited by others?
Exploiting resources
Exterior appearance as reliable indicator
Feels fortunate
Film as living being
Film as living organism
Film as own entity
Film finance as mystery
Finance as main challenge
Financial limitations
Financial performance as indicator of reliability
Financial v artistic vision
Focus on audience; direct communication
Focus on audience; polarity of reaction
Focus on behaviour
Focus on control; need for autonomy
Focus on future
Focus on future
Focus on individual relationship as helpful

Focus on individual; assessing ability/resources

Focus on individual; questions reliability, trustworthiness

Focus on long term sustainability

Focus on money, security

Focus on money; failure

Focus on money; going over budget

Focus on money; responsibility, respect

Focus on others; behaviour issues cause problems

Focus on others; expects altruism/intrinsic motivation

Focus on others; extrinsic motivations as warning

Focus on process and individual; pay dispute

Focus on process; benefitting from tough decisions

Focus on process; competence, knowledge

Focus on process; constant challenge

Focus on process; implications of ill prepared finances

Focus on process; negotiation as dispute resolution

Focus on process; unwilling to compromise

Focus on promotion; seeking partners

Focus on relationships; offering opportunities

Focus on resources, money

Focus on resources, talent

Focus on self; creation

Focus on support networks; value

Focused on emotional pay off; pleasure v pain (enjoy/stress)

Focused on money, finance = sustainability

Focused on money; problems, exploited

Focused on process

Force as control method

Fun/enjoyment

Futility of dispute; powerlessness

Futility of stress

Future as unknowable value? Naivety?
Future; uncertainty
Goal orientated
Growth, learning
Guidance/Leadership
Gut instinct
Hopes for future
Importance of aspiration, aims
Importance of leadership
Importance on enjoyment/pleasure
Impossible relationships
Incentivisation/motivation; money
Independence = outside establishment
Independence = self-reliance and endeavour
Individual as incompetent
Individual as incompetent
Individual as intransigent
Individual as irrational being
Individual as liability
Individual as problematic
Individual as rogue agent
Individual as unreliable
Individuals spread disease
Industry as undemocratic
Industry intervention; threat to future
Industry; balance of priorities
Inexperience = disrespect
Influencing investors
Influencing others by example
Influencing others
Inherent dishonesty of establishment

Instinct = reliable

Instinct as relationship guide

Instinct as tool

Instinct as tool

Instinct v drive

Instinct v judgement

Intense process

Investor contribution; dynamic, active

Investor/collaborators are not altruistic

Invisibility; self as underappreciated; self-worth

Isolation; lack of support

Joy as transitory

Judging others; intrinsic v extrinsic motivation

Lack of career guidance

Lack of shared vision

Lead by example

Leadership, control

Leading by example; behaviour

Learning process unreplicable

Legal process; anger, perceived injustice

Legal process; value dispute

Limited options

Looking to the future

Loss of control

Loss of control

Loss of control; strategy failings

Loyalty to others

Loyalty

Luck as beneficial, control

Luck; process beyond control

Making connections

Malfunctioning relationships

Managing audience expectations; providing context

Managing conflict

Managing expectations of individuals

Managing expectations

Managing expectations; growing confidence

Managing expectations; responsibility, fairness

Managing expectations; trustworthiness

Managing investor relations

Managing relationships; communication breakdown

Managing resources; flexibility

Misaligned priorities; relationships

Misunderstanding? Miscommunication?

Momentum (process or self)

Momentum as autonomous force

Momentum as driver

Momentum as free agent

Momentum, drive

Money = reliability

Money as barrier

Money as enabler of creative vision

Money as incentive

Money is THE challenge

Money overrides art

Motivated by financial over critical success

Motivated by need to control

Motivated by profit

Motivation as necessity

Naïve self; prior-self

Naivety

Naivety; acts of irrationally

Naivety; future as unknowable

Need self-sufficiency

Need to compromise; resource management

Need to show authority

Negotiation complexity; compromise at group and individual level

Non-expert investors; persuasion

Obsession as harmful

Opportunity, momentum

Outside of privileged support network

Overcoming self-doubt

Own behaviour towards others

Partnership breakdown

Partnerships; uneven balance of risk

Personal aims, sustainability

Personal commitment

Personal growth

Personal sacrifice

Personal vision

Persuading others; tangible offerings

Persuasion as a skill

Persuasion as skill; selling self

Pessimistic about future acceptance

Philosophical about critical response

Pleasure v pain dichotomy

Poor management = chaos

Power of collaboration

Presenting self to others

Pressure from individual

Pride at achievement

Prioritising intrinsic motivations = loss of control

Prioritising responsibilities

Prior-self; childlike excitement

Proactive; taking control

Problem = consequence

Problem resolution

Problem resolution

Problem solving as game

Process as 'reality' – slayer of self-esteem

Process as arduous

Process as complex structure

Process as disease

Process as painful

Process as problematic

Process as suffering

Process; combustible, fragile

Process; contractual dispute

Process; distress, shock

Process; formality as certainty

Process; futility of position

Process; in kind v cash payment incentivisation

Process; in kind v cash payment incentivisation

Process; in kind v cash, incentivisation

Process; informal agreement = exploitation

Process; learning, formality = certainty

Process; preparation, self-righteousness?

Process; problems as inconvenience

Process; task as burdensome

Producer as causal agent; self as driver

Producer as problem solver

Producer functions as subordinate

Producers take all risk

Producing as menial task/subordinate

Producing as unpleasant
Professional growth
Projecting calmness
Projects external calm
Providing reassurance
Punitive against producers
Qualification, personal validation
Quest for sustainability
Questioning establishment; fairness
Realities of independence
Reality of independence; poorly resourced
Reality of independence; unsecure, unsustainable
Recognises difficulty of industry task
Rejects establishment model
Relationship breakdown; dispute, mediation
Relationship problems; learning for future
Relationship with investors, trust
Relationships as social bonding process; trial and error
Relationships as social bonding process; trial and error
Relationships require settling period
Relationships; chemistry required
Relationships; inevitably problematic
Relationships; persuasion
Relationships; reliability = trust
Relationships; respect issues
Relationships; talent spotting as key
Relationships; treated as unequal, inexperienced, naive
Relationships; trustability
Resource management
Resource management
Resourcefulness; resources

Resources as finite
Responsibility as burden
Responsibility to others
Reward; fleeting
Risk as experiment
Risk as self-determination
Risk unrewarded; anger, injustice
Risk v reward
Risk v reward proportionality
Role of others; hostile inter-relations
Role, process, responsibility
Saleable self
Search for stability
Self; compulsion
Self; energy, drive
Self; essential nature of role
Self; imagines negative perception by others
Self; role underappreciated, inconsequential
Self; satisfaction
Self; validation
Self-aware; cautious of negative perceptions of self
Self-confidence, certainty
Self-determination = long-term sustainability
Self-determination as leadership
Self-determination drives momentum; leadership
Self-determination
Self-determination; Drive
Self-discipline, use of resources
Self-esteem affected
Self-motivation encourages others
Self-reliance

Self-reliance
Self-reliance
Self-validation
Show of authority = respect
Situation as development opportunity
Situation as development opportunity; towards sustainability
Situation as stress
Subjectivity of audience
Success creates sustainability
Sustainability as long term goal
Swan – exterior calm
Switching from intrinsic motivation to extrinsic
Taste, closeness to material p
Teamwork as engine
Thankless task
Thankless task
Thankless task
The role of luck
Treating people equitably
Trust as finite; commitment to others
Ultimate culpability of producer; burdensome
Uncertainty of endeavour
Uncertainty of future,
Unpleasant consequences of decisions
Unsustainable nature of independence
Utilising experience of others
Validated by feedback
Validated by personal experience
Validation from experts
Value of instinct; managerial/recruitment tool
Value of non-financial support

Values formal training opportunity

Vital momentum

8.9 APPENDIX 8: Screenshot of Excel Worksheet ‘Theme Organisation’

NB Once emergent themes were generated they were extracted from the transcript document and placed into an Excel spreadsheet. There then followed several rounds of grouping similar themes together under a new heading.

Each emergent theme was tagged with an extract from the transcript that illustrates that theme.

The screenshot below shows this work ‘in progress’, taken from participant E.

AutoSave [Off] Emergent themes E - Excel Edward Casey

File Home Insert Page Layout Formulas Data Review View Help Tell me what you want to do

Clipboard Font Alignment Number Styles Cells Editing

Calibri 11 A⁺ A⁻ Wrap Text General

B I U % +.0 -0.0 Conditional Formatting Format as Table Cell Styles Insert Delete Format AutoSum Fill Clear Sort & Filter Find & Select

A15 P-Critical of industry; unsupportive

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1						
2	Critical of UK National/Regional Subsidy Bodies		Focus on working inside the film business		Challenges of managing a micro-budget production	
3	Industry Elitism		Focus on working with gatekeepers		Challenge of accessing finance	
4	P-COI; RFA as elitist	72	Disadvantages of working with a Sales Agent		P-Access to finance; challenge 63	63
5	P-Critical of industry; elitist/cliq	72	P-Sales agents; disadvantage to producer 84	84	P-Access to finance; via contact	3
6	P-COI; RFA elitist, self-interest	75	P-Sales Agents; punitive to producers (see G)	83	P-Access to finance; no track record 3	3
7	P-COI; RFA elitist	76	P-Sales Agents; theoretical value 83	83	Finance as limited resource	
8	Focus on prestige over commerce				P-Limited resources; challenge 64	64
9	P-Critical of industry; RFAs focus on prestige	20	Advantages of working with distributors		P-Focus on scale; limited resources	41
10	P-COI; elitist - prestige orientated	77	Considers needs of distributors		Time as challenge	
11	P-COI; RFA elitist - prestige orientated	75	P-Distributors; CONSIDERS NEEDS 5	5	P-Time as challenge	63
12	P-COI; RFA elitist - prestige orientated	77	P-Post Commercial focus; distributor needs	79	P-Limited resources; time and money 16	16
13	P-COI; RFA arbitrary notion of quality	77	P-Post Commercial focus; distributor needs 79	79		
14	Seen as unsupportive				19 Considers the unique challenges of Micro-budget	
15	P-Critical of industry; unsupportive				81 P-Unique problems of micro-budget	68
16	P-Critical of industry; unsupportive 72				88 P-Focus on scale; limits of micro-budget	78
17	P-COI; insincere and unsupportive				9 P-Focus on scale; limited resources 17	17
18	P-COI; dishonest 78				Increasing need for flexibility in micro-budget production	
19	P-COI; RFA overly bureaucratic				19 S-Adapting to challenges	67
20	P-COI; RFA questions expertise				20 S-Adapting to challenges	68
21	P-COI; RFA self-interest 77				80 Firefighting production issues	
22					P-Challenges; catering company	35
23					92 P-Overcoming production obstacles	65
24					86 P-Overcoming production obstacles	66

Windows User:
If you're a new producer with no track record, they will meet with you, they'll even take your script and give you loads of criticism and notes, but they will never, ever support you and finance your picture - not a chance.

PROCESS 1 GOALS CREATIVITY & COMMERCIAL VISION Relationships 2 Industry & Process ...

Cell A15 commented by Windows User

Type here to search 16:41 08/04/2018

8.10 APPENDIX 9: Superordinate themes for single case 'F'

NB Finally, themes were grouped together to create super-ordinate themes for each case. Below is a list of super-ordinate themes (in bold) with supporting themes below. Example taken from case F.

Focus on own performance in an industry context	Engagement with creative process	Relationships and networking
Considering factors related to the attainment of goals	Performance in the creative sphere	Focus on qualities of a good crew
Anxiety about performance (and subsequent legitimacy) in role of producer	Limited engagement with the development process	Networking as a source of opportunity
Difficulty of managing production	Reflecting on film reception	Issues surrounding personal integrity and responsibility
Inexperience and Learning		
Trust and control issues affect performance		
Considers self-motivation and work ethic		
Considers relationship with Regional Film Agencies and access to support		
Distributors as gatekeepers preventing access to goals		

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